

# Eternal Ganga

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

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## Incantation and incandescence

At an hour when the sun inclines towards the horizon comes the favourable moment, the celebration of âratî. Incandescent offering of the exalted and exuberant candelabra where fire is fructuously married in eternal the waters of Gangâ.

An igneous dance in the fairytale water that seems ablaze! Since times immemorial each twilight the âratî comes to enchant the splendour of the worthy river. I contemplate on the sparks that creep in the dusk air, myriad embers beating animatedly as hearts that the water keeps in its vibrating litanies.

What worthier gesture than the culmination of fire in the thousand-year-old ritual, forever new, celestial by birth, saluting the divine water essentially!

Bhâgîrathî-Gangâ that slithered indolently through the milky-way in reverence to the smouldering asceticism of king Bhagîratha, to redeem the souls of his ancestors and that could only be received due to the benevolent intercession of Shiva, who collected the impetuous torrent in his chignon decorated with the two celestial luminaries.

Embodiment of pristine water forever charged with the initiatory intention of redemption the final journey of the body in the eternal voyage of the soul.

On the winding ghâts that punctuate the banks of the river - from its Himâlayan source, Gaumukh, till Gangâ-Sâgar in the Bay of Bengal, fire comes to celebrate water of Gangâ in the multitude of rites performed day after day. Gangotrî, Uttarkhâshî, Rudraprayâg, Deoprayâg, Rishikesh, Haridwâr, Allâhâbâd, Vârânasî, Gangâ-Sâgar... as many names of enchanters that remain threaded within the length of the immortal river.



Inspired...by the sources...

In the infinite stone paths, I walk mesmerised to where Gangâ descended from her celestial abode. The fog came to our meeting, his chrysalis wrapping us in a diaphanous veil. It is necessary to climb the unsuspected paths where solitary yogis walk in quietude, mystic sâdhus and sannyâsin who have renounced all for the One. Beings of the enthusiast light of absolute. Appearances between ground and sky that the sudden proximity presents sharply!

Quiet amplitude of space; eternal beauty of sky, the glittering bejewelled peaks make one sigh in awe...

Here the last parabola, before the sources where the sky is draped with clouds, is collected as a prelude to the rumbling storm overhanging the monolithic bed of the mythical river. Perpetual music of the contemplated spheres!

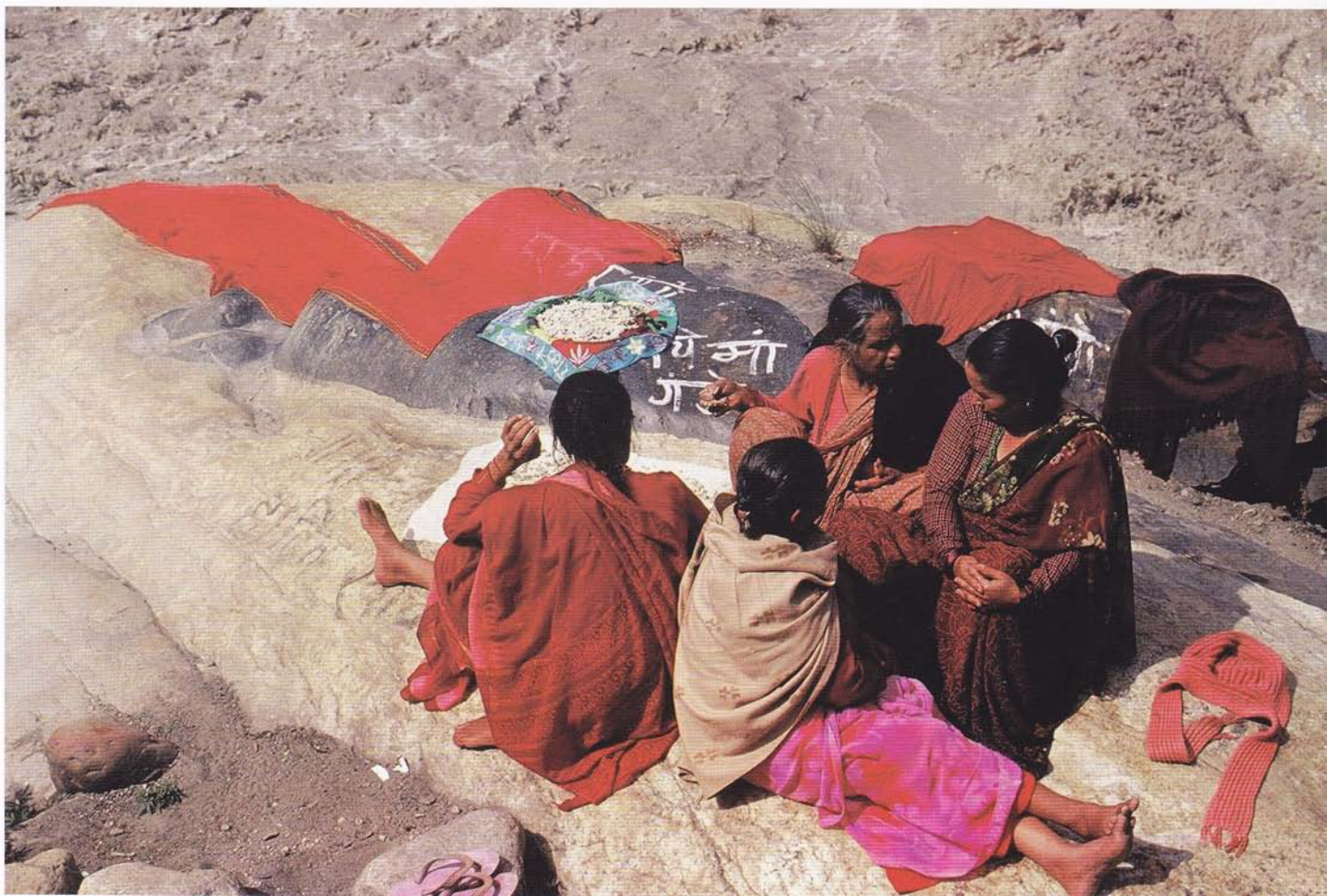
Here finally Gaumukh, the masterly glacier, umbilical cord with its broad veins encrusted like jade, from where spout out, uttered by the fairy-like arch, immense and prophetic water... Bounteous advent of the glorious water that sublimates the heart with wonder!

It is the time of monsoon, the month of Shrawan and the pilgrimages, or "icchâ yâtrâ". As the days recede in the year - between the black Moon "amâvâsyâ" of July and that of August, Shrawan is undoubtedly the primordial month dedicated to Shiva that the pilgrims honour. One comes to collect water from the vivifying source, the invaluable 'Gangâjal', to entrust oneself in return at sanctuary of the Lord armed with the three-pronged fork, his weapon reminiscent of his three pronged power, Shiva-Gangâdhara, the eternal yogi, who had accepted the river in his matted locks.

Gangâ witnesses this time of auspicious returns and the enthusiasm of the rites scanned through the astral movements stressed in the vault of





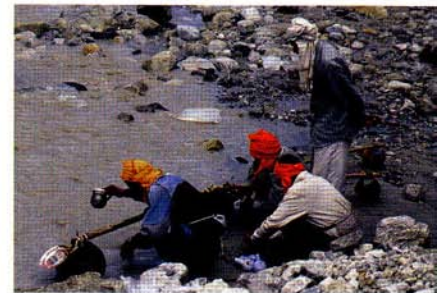


heaven, memorable rhythmic gestures granted to men. Gangâ becomes the resplendent goddess, Devî and mother benefactress. 'Mâ Gangâ', whom one calls upon while walking towards each 'tîrtha'; fertile Shaktî, the power which invites one to the sources of plenary life; Gangâ, the Initiator and the Inspirer.

Intoxication in the 'Land of the gods' that culminates in sublime joy of Vârânasî...

Enchantment in the altitude that leads to the Himâlayan "chardhâm": Yamunotrî, Gangotrî, Kedarnâth and Badrinâth. In each of these four ancient renowned places in the 'Devabhumî', the 'Land of the Gods', in Uttaranchal spouts the holy water that merge together subsequently. The sumptuous floods of its effluents join at the five junctions, the 'panchprayâg'. At Rudraprayâg the dark Mandakinî river combines with the white waters of Alakânandâ. In Deoprayâg, the initiatory valley, they are linked to give birth to Gangâ that launches the unrestrained gallop of its despatch riders foaming towards the Eastern plain of Bengal, liberally irrigating the large plains of India, up to the ultimate point of their dispersion in the vast ocean with Gangâ-Sâgar.

At Allâhâbâd, she braids herself with Yamunâ and the invisible Sarasvatî. Here, in the trifoliate waters emerges the Triveni Samgam, it is requisite to break the coconut before the ritual bath prior to reaching Vârânasî, the antique 'Kâshî Vishvanâth', the city crowned beyond all others. The primordial sound at 'Kâshî' the glorious city of light that hides in its dark mysterious labyrinth the memorable union of Shiva and Pârvatî sealed formally here. A fabulous event of esteemed Gangâ as she hems her way in its meandering handles through this great voyage, the obscurity of birth and beyond.





The first immersing of the rays of the sun in the luminous water of dawn renders itself pink and amber. Outlining a silver trace plated on the serene water, our boat drifts of its own inkling towards the ghâts where the arc in the extraordinary sky mirrors the immense crowd, pressed together. Each one comes with folded hands to immerse in the transcendental waters. An inclination towards the primeval elements that one carries in oneself, alliance found in the vastness, unison beyond the self. A moment woven in eternity.

The unison of each being is sealed with the Infinite, "anânta", the dissolution of the singular in the joy of Absolute, "ânanda".

How this invoked river that irrigates the land also fertilises the hearts of mankind! How this water wires the enthusiasm of our life!

I admire the alchemy of the rites, poetry in act, the symbol in power that awakens the essence in man. Transcendence of ones birth!

What more beautiful a gesture than this penchant towards water!... On the wave thousand and one baskets of burning flowers approach and disperse. As a navigable offering with magical powers the small boat sails with the lamp burning bright and the articulate flowers that seal markedly the secret wishes of many a heart.

It is an imminent moment for the conscience awakened in vigilance and benevolence for the spiritual wellbeing of the self. Can the one come together from the East and Occident, called together to splendour of the river, to conjoin their spiritual prowess to safeguard the perennial water so often irrevocably endangered!

Homage to the eternal river, inspired by a cosmic wisdom that endeavours to revive, and awaken the minds of enthusiastic men!

What would Gangâ, of the sublime waters ageless through the passage of time, bear of these reminiscences?

**Mireille-Josephine Guezennec - Himabindu**









It is sometimes believed that one is born to a country and the soul transgresses another. While Mireille-Josephine Guezennec - Himabindu, was born in France, she found her soul-home in India. A teacher of philosophy, vedic astrologer of renown, an avid traveler, a writer and beyond the images she crystallises in time for us in the exhibition "Eternal Gangâ" at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Her diverse roles combine the best in her photographic creations that are always fresh vistas of the explored and often unexplored regions of India. With "Eternal Gangâ" homage to Gangâ, she presents a narrative in her images that unfold untold stories, of the past epics and literature, the present societies and their lives and the future that they hold amidst.

Her travelogues and exhibitions, in France and abroad, are the mediums that she uses to converse with us, a creative medium for her creative brilliance.

vikas harish

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