

WATER STRESSED CITIES

In present time, when man has even conquered the space and made remarkable progress in every sector, with help of latest scientific inventions and advancements, still there are few areas which are deprived of even basic amenities of life like power, water, education etc. As far as water and electric supply is concerned, not only rural hamlets but there are many urban cities also which are undergoing water crisis to a great extent. The average annual water availability of any region or country is largely dependent upon hydro-meteorological and geological factors and such water resources data is assessed basin-wise. The water availability per person is dependent on population of the country which is reducing due to increase in population. Also, due to high temporal and spatial variation of precipitation, some regions of the country may be facing water stress conditions. While giving reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Bishweswar Tudu informed that average annual per capita water availability in the year 2011 has been assessed as 1545 cubic meters. Further, based on the study of 'Reassessment of Water Availability in India using Space Inputs' (CWC, 2019), the average annual per capita water availability has been assessed as 1486 cubic meters and 1367 cubic meters for year 2021 and 2031 respectively. Annual per-capita water availability of less than 1700 cubic meters is considered as water stressed condition. Further, ground water is a replenishable resource which gets recharged through rainfall and other sources periodically. In some places annual ground water withdrawal is more than the annual replenishable resource, which results in 'overexploitation' of ground water resource and its consequent depletion. However, over-exploitation is a reversible process and can be controlled through judicious and holistic management of water. Major cities of the country adopting proper water management measures will not run out of ground water by 2030, since ground water is a replenishable resource and gets recharged through rain from time to time. Hence, the replenishment will be always there due to occurrence of rainfall. Further, beneath replenishable (Dynamic) ground water resources, there exists In-storage (Static) ground water resources which have accumulated over time. Water being a State subject, steps for augmentation, conservation and efficient management of water resources are primarily undertaken by the respective State Governments. In order to supplement the efforts of the State Governments, Central Government provides technical and financial assistance to them through various schemes and programmes.

OFF 'D' CUFF

Cycles of the Soul

be practiced by anyone of any age. In meditation, we withdraw our attention from the outer world and focus it within ourselves to have a direct experience of the divine. We tune out from the world outside, from our body and our thought processes, so we can become conscious of the soul.

To understand this process better, we need to understand the nature of our attention. Our attention is the outer expression of our soul. It is currently scattered throughout the body and exits into the world through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

Through these senses, we enjoy the world outside and remain focused on the outer world. To become conscious of our soul, which resides within us, we have to withdraw our attention from the world outside, and focus it at the seat of the soul, between and behind the two eyebrows. This point is referred to as the third eye and is the gateway into the inner worlds. As we withdraw our sensory currents, our attention begins to collect at the eye-focus. In the darkness around us, we perceive inner Light, not through our outer eyes, but through the inner eye. It is at this point that we become conscious of our soul. As we connect with this inner Light, the current leads us from physical consciousness into higher consciousness. How?

The Light we perceive is a manifestation of God. The other manifestation of God is the Sound. This Power of God flows out from God and also returns to God.

When the soul connects with this current, it can ride on it back to the spiritual realms from where it originated.

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj

Raksha Bandhan-a ritual of sacrosanct relationship

■ JACDISH CHANDER RAINA

Raksha Bandhan is holistically dedicated to the love & affection shared between a brother and sister. Here on this day, sisters tie a holy thread around the wrist of their brothers and pray for their long life and wellbeing. It means a bond of protection. The ritual takes place on the full moon day of the Hindu month of Shravan. Raksha Bandhan is not just a festival it also signifies the everlasting love, emotions and eternal bonding between brother and sister. Not just Rakhi and gifts the ritual is about a sacrosanct relationship with many dimensions.

A thread which sisters' tie is rightly called Rakhi & pulsates with sisterly love and transcendent sentiments. This ritual doesn't only strengthen the cemented bond of love and care between siblings but also surpasses the precincts of the family. While a sister ties Rakhi around the wrist of brothers, brothers in return concede the love with a promise to stand-by his sister during all good and bad phases of life. The below mentioned mantra is recited while tying the Rakhi or the Sacred Raksha Sutra, 'Yena Baddho Baliraja Daanavendro Mahaabala, Tha Twaamabhi Bandh Naami Rakshab Maa Chala Ma Chala' which means, 'I tie on you (the brother or devotee) the Raksha Sutra which was tied on Bali, the King of demons. Therefore O Raksha! Don't ever fail to protect this devotee, do not ever fail.'

India is a country widely known for its strong family culture system. Therefore, every year, Rakhi is celebrated with lots of anticipation & zeal. The auspicious festival of Rakhi symbolizes the sacred bond of love and affection that is strengthened by Raksha Sutra for brothers. The festival of Raksha Bandhan is been considered as a dedicated occasion for celebrating wonderful bond of siblinghood with the brothers. Raksha Bandhan stands for the celebration of siblinghood and is also known as Rakhi "the knot of commitment". People have a traditional belief that the sacred thread of Rakhi has a strong power to bring closer the lovely relationship of a brother and sister. He pledges to protect her from all miseries & dangers under all circumstances. Sister performs Religious Puja and Tilak Ceremony by applying Kumkum Powder on the forehead of her brother. She also does Aarti and prays for her brother's long life, good health & prosperity. In other words, Rakhi festival is synonym of pious love and cherished emotions shared amongst siblings. Since time immemorial, this festival is being marked as a day to cherish the most pious relation on this planet. The festival of Raksha Bandhan is widely celebrated all across India and its name changes from different place to place.

This unique festival is celebrated with loads of love and frolic in India. In addition to tying Rakhis on the wrist of dear brothers, savoring

tempting and gourmet delicacies, exchange of exciting gift items are also been part of this festival. All these events cumulatively make the vibrant festival of Rakhi more joyful. Thus, Rakhi is the most awaited & exciting festival among sisters & brothers. This festival falls on Shravan Purnima i.e., lunar day in the month of August. Brothers and sisters staying all across the world indulge into joyful and happy moments of festivals by tying attractive Rakhi and exchange of impressive gifts. This festival actually unites the whole family by bringing all near & dear ones together. This occasion is considered as the perfect time to enjoy with all by gorging on sweet delicacies & finger-licking dishes. This day is also marked by showering of blessings by elders on their young ones in form of wonderful Rakhi gifts wrapped with heartfelt sentiments. All those sisters who stay away from their brother and can't meet their brothers on the festival, like to send Rakhi along with their heartily wishes via courier services or e-stores. Thus, long distances and physical barrier cannot spoil the essence of Raksha Bandhan. This wonderful festival successfully reunites people by transcending borders, castes & creed and religious differences. There are numerous legends associated with Raksha Bandhan. As per Bhavishya Puran once there was fierce battle between the Devtas and Danavas (Demons) for twelve years. The Devtas including mighty Indra lost and prepared to fight again. Indra sought advice of Brihaspati Dev to vanquish the Demons. Brihaspati Dev advised Indra to tie a sacred thread powered by mantras on his wrist on the day of Shravan Purnima. Lord Indras wife Queen Shachi also called Indrani; tied the thread on wrist of Brihaspati Dev and Indra. The power of the sacred thread called Raksha Sutra helped the gods to attain victory in the battle over Asuras. As per another legend Lord Vishnu as Vaaman Avatar, pleased by Bali's commitment to donate him three steps of land, granted him boon in return of fulfillment of his words. As Demon King Bali was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, he prayed him to stay before him day and night. Agreeing on this, Lord Vishnu became the doorkeeper of King leaving his own about in Vaikunth. Goddess Lakshmi wanted to bring back Lord Vishnu to Vaikunth. Thus on the advice of Narad Rishi, Goddess Lakshmi went to Bali disguised as Brahmin Woman to seek refuge till her husband came back. On Shravan Purnima, Laxmi tied the sacred thread on the wrist of King Bali and requested him to allow Lord Vishnu to return back to his abode. Thus the festival is also called Baleva. The Ritual of Raksha Bandhan is also followed by Lord Yama (The Lord of Death) and his sister Yamuna. Yamuna tied rakhi to Yama and bestowed immortality and the Yama was so moved by the serenity of the occasion that he

declared that whoever gets a rakhi tied from his sister and promised her protection will become immortal. Raksha Bandhan finds a mention in epic Mahabharata also. While killing Shishupal, Lord Krishna got his finger hurt and Queen Draupadi tied a strip of her saree on the finger of Lord Krishna. When Draupadi was being stripped before others, Lord Krishna saved her honour intact by throwing a never ending cloth around her. This incident is said to have happened at Purnima of the Shravan month. During the war of Kouravas and Pandavas at Krukheshetra, Lord Krishna advised Yudhishthir to perform the Raksha Suter Ceremony to protect himself and his army. It is said that Kunti, the mother of Pandavas, tied Rakhi to her grandson Abhimanyu.

When Alexander invaded India in 326 BC his wife Roxana (or Roshnak) sent sacred thread to Porus, asking him not to harm her husband in battle. In accordance with the tradition Porus gave full respect to Rakhi. On the battlefield, when Porus was about to deliver a final blow to Alexander, he restrained himself from attacking Alexander personally. As per historians Mughal King Humayun also showed his respect towards the significance of Rakhi. He didn't take measures against attack of Shershah Suri and went away to save and help the widow Rajput queen of Chittaur; Karnavati who had sent a Rakhi to Humayun. It is thus a celebration crossing the barriers of religion, caste and creed. 'Raksha' means protection and 'Bandhan' means bound or binding. It portrays pure love between brothers and sisters. Popularly this festival is marked by the tying of Rakhi or Holy Thread (Raksha Suter) by the sister on the wrist of her brother. On this day frequencies of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Saraswati reach the earth in greater quantities and both the siblings benefit from this ritual to maximum extent. The spiritual energies in both get greater boost. Just as brother is bound by a promise to protect the sister after getting the sacred string tied onto his wrist so also the sister prays to god for his protection and blesses him. The application of 'Tilak' on forehead of brother by the sister is a symbol of awakening of soul-consciousness and signifies victory against vices of anger, lust, greed, attachment, ego, pain etc. Praying for her brother's long life sister puts a sweet in Bhaiya's mouth. Brother reciprocates by presenting Rakhi Return Gifts to sister and promises to guard her against all hardships in life. This simple Rakhi ceremony symbolizes and strengthens the eternal bond of love between a brother and sister. The festival of Raksha Bandhan assumes all forms of Raksha or protection, of righteousness and destroyer of all sin. The ritual of Rakhi tying has become so important that come what may, brothers and sisters try to visit each other place on this particular day in

order to bring back the oneness of the family, binding the family together in an emotional bond of love. The Raksha Bandhan is celebrated in different ways and in different names in various states across the country:

Lumba Rakhi: Traditionally followed as custom among Rajasthani and Marwari community where sisters tie Rakhi on the Bangle of the brother's wife (Sister-in-Law). Bangle in Marwari is called as Lumba and thus the Rakhi tied to the bangle is called the Lumba Rakhi. These days most of the communities are adopting this tradition.

Gamha Purnima: Raksha Bandhan is celebrated as Gamha Purnima in Odisha. On this day domesticated cows and bullocks are decorated and worshipped. Different kinds of country made eakes called Pitha and sweets are made and distributed among families, relatives and friends. Narali Purnima: In coastal areas of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa this day is celebrated as Narali Purnima. On this day people make offerings of Coconut to the sea as a mark of respect to the Lord Varuna, the God of the sea. This day also marks the beginning of the fishing season for the fishermen.

Shravani or Jandhyam Purnima: Jandhyam in Sanskrit is for sacred thread and the people of Kumaon region of Uttarakhand celebrate Raksha Bandhan and Janopuny on the Shravani Purnima. It is the day on which people change their Yagnopavit (Sacred Thread).

Kajari Purnima: In central Indian states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand the day is celebrated as Kajari Purnima which is an important festival for the farmers as the day marks the beginning of the New Agricultural Season. Sowing of Barley and Wheat on this day is considered auspicious.

Jhulan Purnima: In Bengal, this day is also called Purnima and apart from celebration of Raksha Bandhan on this day people pray to Lord Krishna and Radha Rani.

Pavitropana: In Gujarat this day is celebrated as Pavitropana. On this auspicious day most of the people offer water to the Shivalingam in the nearby temples and offer prayers to Lord Shiva and seek his blessings. Thus Raksha Bandhan is a day of brotherhood, well being, happiness and prosperity in life and in today's scenario, the day has a different perspective. The occasion involves a pledge of life-time practice of moral, cultural and spiritual values. The values and the sentiments attached to the rituals of this festival are worth inculcating by the whole human race, the sentiments of harmony and peaceful coexistence.

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Elevation to eternity- journey of life span

■ P K MAM

Life is not only human prerogative; it belongs to the whole universe. There is life in insects, birds, animals & plants; in the sea, on land. In fact, all around us are in different dimensions of life. Why one is insect and someone is bird is a mystery. The theory of Karma and dear fate butts in. In a normal life cycle, one who is born has to die after aging. Degeneration of body cells takes place automatically after attaining some age and thereafter, whatsoever, rich nutritional and healthy diet the individual takes, it merely adds to his age by few years more, but cannot altogether stop his death.

In the evolutionary history of all living species through various geological time scales, eradication of living invertebrate, vertebrates has taken place. Ferocious dinosaurs in cretaceous time are extinct but arthropods like Trilobites (three lobed form of marine species found in Cambrian lived and is one of the oldest invertebrate that thrived on earth). All these are guided by natural process of evolution. The concept of living for eternity is ingrained in human mind as a desire for inertia and tendency to continue in the same state--with a false concept to remain forever alive as if nothing can destroy his existence. This false impression is in all living organisms but humans at higher level of understanding are more active nourishing themselves, take immunity enhancing medications to remain fit. Human's adaptability with environments and for that matter all living beings are adapting to prolong their survival.

All deaths are premature in the sense that no one is ever ready for his death. The life we live is partial and perishable. We are inwardly driven by a need to survive or assert ourselves over, to say as death 'thou shall die'. That given, human beings, to the extent they are tinged with the thirst for immortality, cannot and should not die like animals. The challenge is to live in Sync with immortality even amidst this flow. The great thing

empowering truth is that this is possible. The extremely valuable human life is attained only through the grace of God, at the end of many births, as per scriptures. The human life has a higher and noble purpose and the destiny of human being is to move higher up in the cosmic order to reach perfection, to realize permanent and supreme bliss in the realm of God. The invaluable time allotted to this life should not be wasted in indulging in the perishable, impermanent enjoyments of the world.

Humans are intelligent, superior living beings and aspire to know the reality of their existence and utilise their brain power to make themselves fit to dream for living for eternity and utilise all energies to unravel the hidden Nature's secrets in all domains in scientific researches, astronomical studies and study of planetary systems, then indulge in study of Black holes, study of origin of earth (Big Bang theory) and many more fields of scientific exploration. Life span has shown a remarkable rise in the last 4 decades. There is a price to pay for every blessing; aging brings with it numerous challenges. YET, man has even been doing research on prolonging the life spans with aspiration to prolong life, with an aim to live for eternity. Life is as uncertain as a drop of water on a lotus leaf. We can say in this mad race of competition, stresses and unforseen circumstances, we are just like toys of clay in hands of Nature's play of forces. In fact, world is facing a legion of humongous issues like poverty, ecological imbalance, disparity, pandemic and global under nourishment - all the more strange! Even during our uncertain life, we are consumed by disease, sorrow and arrogance. When a worm can take care of its survival pretty well, why should those gifted with basic intelligence not easily address the survival issue by a small part of life energies? The rest should be focused on your inner well being enabling you to live a joyously exuberant life. It is time for every individual to sit and mull over the uncertainties that

abound our lives and find solution to them. Fear grows in the darkness of the mind. It vanishes with the light of knowledge like the morning mist. Arrogance and fear of failure are two enemies to be beware of. Fear will not let you start and arrogance will ensure you have fall. Cessation of fear is the beginning of being. Even after all these tremendous efforts of humans there are limitations to our efforts and hardly can stop our death. The man is dependable on natural forces and surrounding influences for his survival and longevity which is in the spiritual domains and lead us to believe in our Karmic cycles in our life spans. Human being is bestowed with all knowledge to distinguish between good or bad doings should do good for all planetary species and preserve environment for better and harmonious living for all to lead a peaceful and balanced life. Need to learn to love ourselves. If you dislike you and wish to be like someone else, you will never be like someone. You will never be content. You would not be happy. Everybody has a different path, a different journey. Life is all about discovering and following your own path, but need a lot of courage so that you upgrade your feelings and thoughts. When mind expands to accommodate the higher, you get disengaged from the lower. You grow into a towering personality, independent of the world. Ultimately, you take that giant leap into the realm of the Infinite. True hope gives the confidence that nothing is ever really lost, and that following the deprivation, for a natural and divine law a greater gift will come. Our sages have divided our life span of hundred years in four segments of twenty five years each. These are called Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaspratha, Sanyas. While each step of the individual's journey along the path of realisation is a preparation for the succeeding stage, in the dharmic tradition the quest does not end with Self actualization but goes beyond into the transcendence of Moksha, a state of being

which is totally free of all earthly constraints and compulsions. To reach a level of higher self the Seeker has to gather the aptitude, ability, caliber with a stern determination through spiritual practices, concentration, meditation (may seek guidance of a preceptor) which enhance our inner consciousness, awareness and alertness for betterment of self and others devoid of any attachment. The second most important aspect of human existence is service that invokes unabated desire to serve humanity with pure consciousness to achieve the target in a selfless manner. According to Ramakrishna Paramahansa to such a Yogi salvation is not the final and only goal of life. Perceiving that human life is beset with sorrow, he embarks on a mission to eradicate ignorance that envelopes his mortal frame. He helps the Jiva to raise above all sense identifications and reunite with him. Here, the oft quoted aphorism in Kashmiri, one has to cross 3 phases in his journey of life a) Pathon (budding child who brings destiny earmarked due to his karmic earnings) b) Poorun (it is his struggle to do job with sincere efforts and with less attachments/desires but to fulfill his obligations as per his standing in society and lastly towards the end phase) c) Aand Watun (Wish everything to be peaceful, serene, and ultimately thank God for fulfilling his life's journey of Karmic cycle under his abode of graciousness and submission. Ultimately, one steers the boat of his life by the grace bestowed by Karma, known as 'Dass Darun Havailey' (Pre-Ordained Indebtedness). In sum, the span of life lived in harmony with Nature-- with Sat Chit Ananda (Truth, Consciousness, Bliss) - state is more useful than living a long life so called life of eternity where we get negativity by our Karmic doings in the defined life span as per our destiny or Karmic doings in life period. Happy Shravani Purnima.

YOUR COLUMN

Knowledge Keepers

Dear Editor,

There are an estimated 476 million indigenous peoples in the world living across 90 countries. They make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures. Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. Indigenous peoples' conceptualization of health and well-being is generally broader and more holistic, with health

frequently viewed as both an individual and a collective right, strongly determined by community, land and the natural environment. The important role of indigenous communities in preserving, reviving, retaining, and transmitting the traditional ancestral knowledge in various fields of communal activities, including but not limited to effective and sustainable climate solutions, use of natural resources, protection of biodiversity, ensuring food security, promoting native languages and culture, and managing indigenous science and medicine is of utmost importance in this day and age. Article 24 of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to their traditional medicines, to maintain their health practices and to access social and health services without discrimination. In order to raise awareness of the needs of these popula-

tion groups, including their health needs, every 9 August commemorates the International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples, chosen in recognition of the first meeting of UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in Geneva in 1982. Indigenous traditional knowledge can offer solutions to many of our common challenges. More than 28 per cent of the global land area is owned, used or managed by indigenous peoples, including more than 40 per cent of terrestrial protected areas and 37 per cent of all remaining natural lands. The importance of indigenous peoples for conservation is only slowly being recognized. Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' rights to land, benefit sharing and institutions is essential to meeting local and global conservation goals. Now, the world has started to recognise the fact that Indigenous women are the backbone of indigenous peoples' commu-

nities and play a crucial role in the preservation and transmission of traditional ancestral knowledge around the environment, traditional medicines, food systems, preservation of language and cultural heritage. This is also the theme and UN Secretary-General António Guterres' message for this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The world must highlight the role of indigenous women in preserving and passing on traditional knowledge. Indigenous women are knowledge keepers of traditional food systems and medicines. They are champions of indigenous languages and cultures. They defend the environment and indigenous peoples' human rights. To build an equitable and sustainable future that leaves no one behind, we must amplify voices of indigenous women.

Vijay Garg.