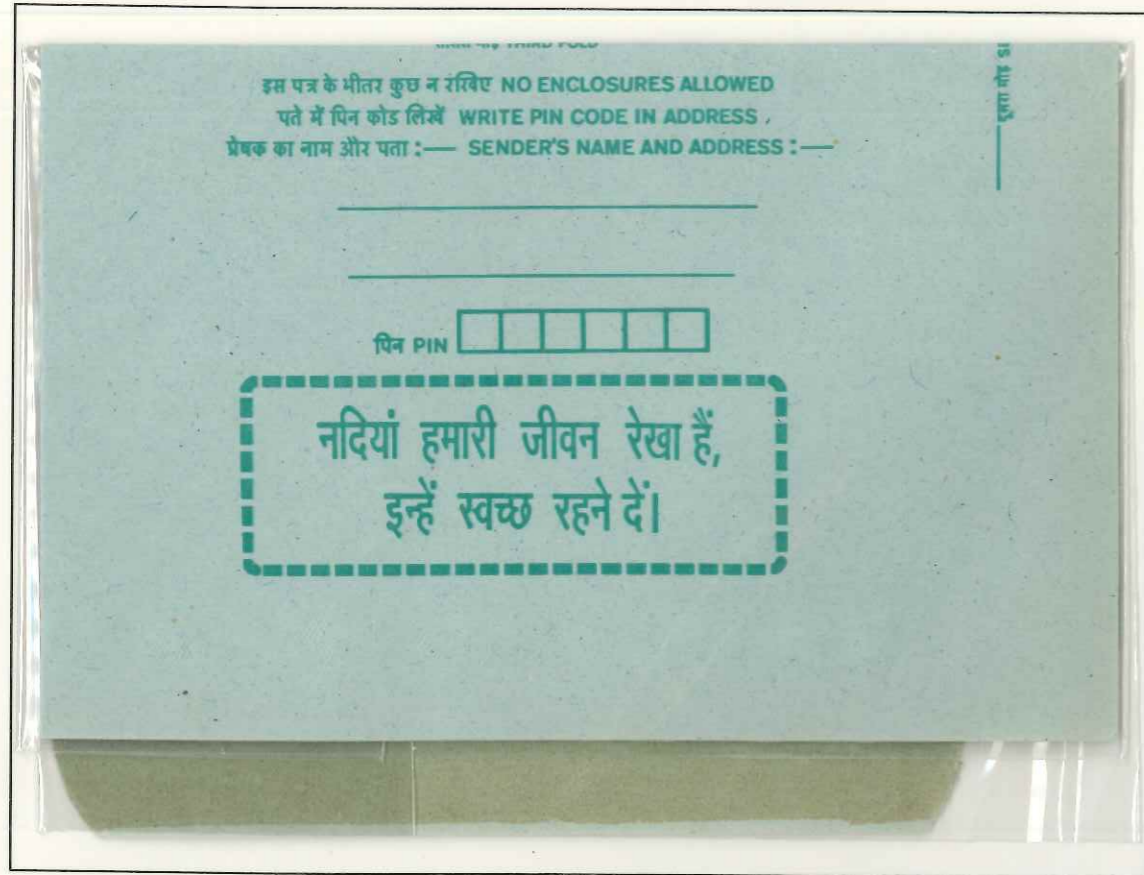


### 3. SACRED GANGES

The Rig Veda has the famous Nadi sukta (River Hymn RV 10-75). The poet/ seers regarded the rivers as life bestowing, life nurturing and life protecting Divine Mothers.

"O Goddess Ganga! You are the divine river from heaven, you are the saviour of all the three worlds, you are pure and restless, you adorn Lord Shiva's head. O Mother! may my mind always rest at your lotus feet." (Ganga stotram)

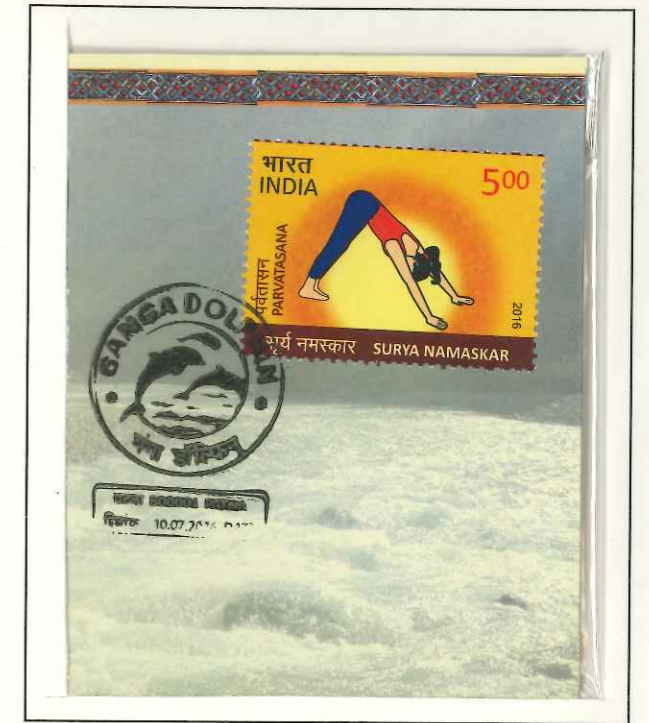
In the canons of Indian art, Ganges is visualized as voluptuous and beautiful, carrying an overflowing pot in her hand. The vessel conveys the idea of abundant life and fertility, which nourishes and sustains the universe. The second distinguishing aspect of Ganga's iconography is her animal mount, which is often shown serving as a pedestal for her. This is the *makara*, a hybrid creature having the body of a crocodile and the tail of a fish.



'Rivers are our lifeline and we need to to keep them clean' slogan on Inland Letter Card



In Rome's Piazza Navona, there is a famous sculpture *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (fountain of the four rivers), a marvelous sculptural and architectural creation by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, set up in 1651. It symbolizes four of the world's great rivers (the Ganges, the Nile, the Danube, and the Río de la Plata), representing the four continents known at the time. The picture alongside shows River Ganges as visualized by Bernini.



Ganga accepts both the lotus and the *kumbha* (water pot) as symbols of auspicious blessings. Ganga's living water is the only thing that can cool down Siva's *linga*; without Ganga, Siva will remain the burning *linga* of fire. Ganges resides in the head portion of Shiva.



Lord Krishna enlightening Arjuna



If someone is dying, she or he will try to spend their last days at the banks of the Ganges. When Bhishma felt thirsty, Arjun with the help of arrows breaks the ground and Ganga water gushes out to quench the thirst of Bhishma, the son of Ganges.