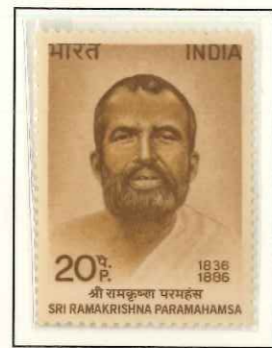


3. SACRED GANGES

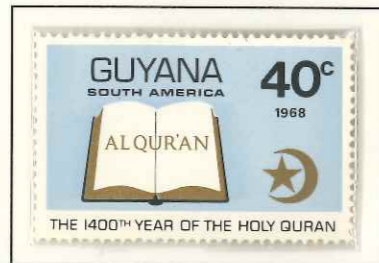
Jawaharlal Nehru, a religious iconoclast himself, asked for a handful of his ashes to be thrown into the Ganges. "The Ganga," he wrote in his will, "is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga." **Mahatma Gandhi** said "Hinduism is like the Ganga, pure and unsullied at its source but taking in its course the impurities in the way. Even like the Ganga it is beneficent in its total effect. It takes a provincial form in every province, but the inner substance is retained everywhere" (Hindu Dharma, 1950). **Rabindranath Tagore** stayed in a houseboat on the Padma River (the main channel of the Ganges River), in close contact with village folk, and his sympathy for them became the keynote of much of his later writing. Tagore came to love the Bengali countryside, most of all the Padma River, an often-repeated image in his verse.



"Some try to find the Guru by shaving their heads at the Ganga, but I have made the Guru my Ganga." – Shri Guru Granth Sahib



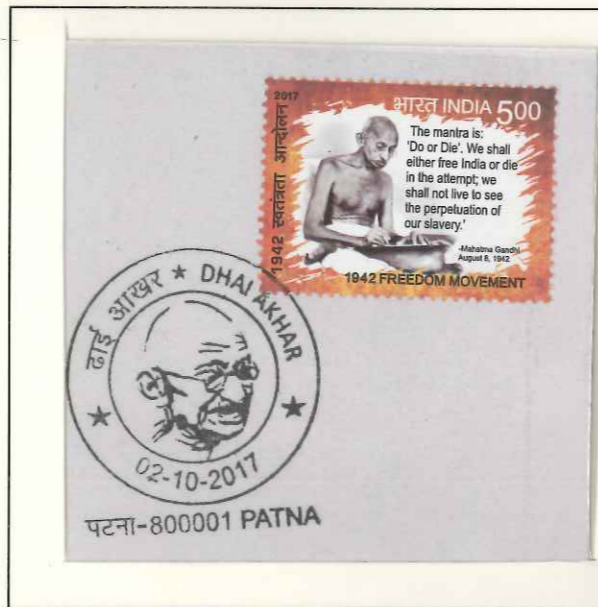
"A bath in Ganges undoubtedly absolves one of all sins." Ramakrishna Paramhansa



"Water is the source of all life." – The Qur'an



Adi Shankaracharya considers Ganga as the chief of all Gods and Goddesses and is the 'redeemer of the fallen'.



"I reached Rishikesh the next morning. I took a dip in the Ganga—a river I had heard so much about, but was seeing and experiencing for the first time in my life." APJ Abdul Kalam

"The holy sight of Ganga gives knowledge, splendours, name, fame etc. The gravest sins like Bramhatya (killing of a Brahmin) and Gauhatya (killing of a cow) get absolved by the mere touch of Ganga holy water." Swami Vivekananda, in "The Ganga-A River Of Life".

