

Ecological Tales from India



Water crisis

Background:

Our planet is approximately 70% water. But salt water accounts for more than 97% of the water on earth. Out of those 3% of freshwater, less than 1% is accessible for direct human use. Water is therefore a limited resource that has to be used judiciously.

Possible discussion questions:

1) Millions of women and children spend many hours a day carrying water from distant, often contaminated sources. Water-related diseases are one of the important causes of disease and death in the world. **Why is it difficult for one-third of the world's population to find clean drinking water?**

- Geography, climate, and weather affect water distribution (drought, floods...)
- Pollution from industry, agriculture... Find examples of industries that greatly pollute water resources (dyeing industry, paper industry...)
- Collapse of ecological traditions related to water conservation.



2) Our ancestors seem to have understood better than us that water is a limited resource to be used with extreme care. In every culture, water has been valued. Water is a sacred element. Water is a purifier. Everywhere there have been sacred springs, sacred wells, and sacred rivers. In India, rivers have always been sacred and lots of temples were built along their course. South Indian

temples have sacred tanks inside their premises where water is harvested during monsoon. In Ancient Egypt, the river gods were all important. The people worshipped god Hapi to let the Nile flood the land with precious water to make it fertile. In the Andes Mountains, on the border of Peru and Bolivia, Lake Titicaca was a sacred place as it was believed to be the home of the Inca's creator god. In Europe, the Celts had sacred healing springs and wells. Because rivers, lakes, springs were held sacred by our ancestors,

sources of water have always been well protected from pollution.

Study the reverence your ancestors had for water. What were the sacred sources of water in your region? Research the myths and legends about those sacred rivers or lakes.

