The settlements of Jogeshwari are filled with many sources and stories of water. While I was conducting fieldwork, residents told me of the various ways in which they obtained water prior to state recognition. Many spoke of purchasing it from considerate neighbors. Others would point to wells or describe how they got water from the ground by digging shallow pits. But perhaps most remarkable was the story of a spring located at the heart of a settlement. To this day, the spring continues to push water out of the earth, all day, every day.

Neighbors are uncertain about the source of this water. Is it from a leaky water main? Or is it rainwater runoff? No one really knows. But the water is saturated with memories—memories of how it made settlement possible. Here, I present Durga Gudilu’s memories of the spring told through her film Yaadé, made in the series Ek Dozen Paani.

There is a spring. This spring is older than when the Sanjay Nagar basti first came up here. The water of this spring keeps flowing like this for twenty-four hours. In the beginning Sanjay Nagar’s residents used to fill water from this spring. And [we used to] go there to wash clothes, utensils. . . . When I was twelve, thirteen [years old], I would go with my sister to the spring to fill water. My sister used to carry a big handi [vessel] to fill water. I had polio as a child . . . so I could not carry a heavy handi. My mother, too, would not allow me to take along a big handi. I used to feel very bad that my sister and everyone [else] would come with such big handis and I would be given only a small handi to carry! (D. Gudilu 2008)

The work of collecting water from the spring was in some ways not unlike the labor necessary in other households at water time. It is a social activity that is generative of relations, meanings, and subjectivities. Through her story, Durga describes how her disability was revealed in her childhood because
of her inability to labor for water as her siblings and friends did. Her being afflicted with polio meant she could not fully participate in water’s social life.

Now, Durga’s household receives water at 7:00 in the morning through a tap outside her home. The water comes at the same time every day, with good pressure. Accordingly, Durga’s family does not go to collect water from the spring anymore. Yet it continues to flow, promising to make other lives possible. These days, Durga tells me “Bihari people” use it to collect water, to bathe, to wash their clothes. As newer migrants, they have difficulty obtaining proper connections from the city water department. So, they use this water for their daily needs. They visit the spring more often in the morning than the evening, Durga said. There is a correct time to use this water, even as the spring continues to flow all day every day.