



Concept of Water Depicted in Vedic Literature

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Introduction : Water has an important role in this creation and it has been observed that water is present before creation, during creation and also at the time of destruction. This paper focuses on the concept of water depicted in Vedic Literature. Vedas are the treasure of infinite knowledge and science. Manu has said that Vedic science is admirable in all times and circumstances- “भूतं भवद्भविष्यञ्च सर्वं वेदात् प्रतिसिद्ध्यति”ⁱ According to the Vedas, when there was no created universe, the entire space was filled with inactive cosmic particles, in which all activities were inherent. The ancient Hindu scriptures like Vedas and Upanishads reveal the most scientific approach of our ancient Vedic sages who possessed the highest knowledge, examined the five gross elements in creation with their subtlest thinking power and scientific approach, which also includes the water element. This paper highlights water elements mentioned in the Vedic literature.

Keywords : Water, Devat, Purāṇas, Vedās, Rīgveda, Brāhmaṇas, Manusmṛiti

Concept of Water Depicted in Vedic Literature: Starting from the Vedas, water occupies an important role in literature like Itihāṣas, Purāṇas, and so on. Vedic sages have called this entire universe as “सर्वमापोमयं जगत्” and considered water to be the reason for the entire creation. The creation originated from water only. When the Creator God was alone, he thought –“एकोऽहं बहु स्याम” i.e. may I become many from one. In the 6th chapter of Ītāpathabrāhmaṇa, the sequence of the creation process has been described-“सोऽकामयत भूय एव स्यात्प्रजायेतेति। सोऽश्रामयत स तपोऽतप्यत। सः श्रान्तस्तेपानः केनमसृजत। मृदम् शुष्काऽपमूसिकतं शर्करामश्मानमयो हिरण्यमोषधिवनस्पत्यसृजत। तेने मां पृथिवीं प्राच्छादयत”ⁱⁱ That is, water first appeared in the entire creation. It is said in the 11th Kāṇḍa of Ītāpathabrāhmaṇa that “आपो वा इदमग्रे सलीलमेवास”ⁱⁱⁱ. That is, the creator

of the world, fulfilling his desire for creation, first created water. elaborating on this in detail, Mahamahopadhyay Madhusudan Ojha in his book 'AḥbhovÁda' –

अद्भ्यो हि सृष्टिः प्रवभूव सर्वा सर्वं यदाप्नोत् तत आप एताः।
यतोऽवृणोत्सर्वमतश्च तद् वारतो वदन्त्यावरणात् प्रसृष्टिम्॥^{iv}

It is also mentioned in VÁyu PurÁĒa that God created water for the creation of various subjects.

ततः स्वयम्भूर्भगवान् सिसुक्षुर्विविधाः प्रजाः।
अप एव ससर्जदौ तासु वीर्यमवासृजत्॥^v

Manu has also described the same sequence in Manusm^aiti as-

सोऽभिध्याय शरीरात्स्वात्सिसुक्षुर्विविधाः प्रजाः।
अप एव ससर्जदौतासु वीर्यं अवासृजत्॥^{vi}

According to the opinion of Gopath BrÁhmaĒa, when God contemplated the creation, he labored and did penance to fulfill it, due to which a stream of sweat (sweat) flowed from his forehead.

अस्य श्रन्तस्य तप्तस्य सन्तप्तस्य सर्वेभ्यो रोमगतेभ्यः पृथक् स्वेदधाराः प्रास्यन्दत॥^{vii}

It is told in Aitareya BrÁhmaĒa that the water which emerged from the sweat of the original element in the form of soul, is prevalent in all the four worlds in four states under four names. Their names are- Aḥbha, MarÍchi, Bhara and Àpa. Among these, Aḥbha is the water which. It is also spread in the upper regions of the solar system, Maha½, Jana½, Tapa½, etc. worlds. The water that is prevalent in the space is in the form of MarÍchi and the water that is involved in the creation and production of the earth is Bhara, and the water that flows on the earth or comes out after digging the earth is famous by the name Àpa½. Many states of water have been described in the Vedas, such as-

ॐ या दिव्या आपः पयसा सम्बभूवुर्या आन्तरिक्षा उत पार्थिवीयाः।
हिरण्यवर्णा यज्ञियास्तान आपः शिवाः शंस्योनाः सुहवा भवन्तु॥^{viii}

That is, the water which is full of its essential essence and the water situated in space and on the ground, that pure water which has the color like vermillion is suitable

for Sacrifices. May that water become beneficial and pleasant for us. In this mantra, three types of water have been described - one is divine i.e. of the heavenly world (सूर्यलोकस्थ), the second is of the outer space and the third is of the water situated on the ground. In Rigveda, in 49 Sukta of the seventh Mandal, sage VaḍiŌŌha has described three divisions of terrestrial water (land-related):

या आपो दिव्या उत वा स्रवन्ति खनित्रिमा उत वा याः स्वयंजाः।
समुद्रार्था याः शुचयः पावकास्ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु॥^{ix}

May those divine waters which are obtained from the sky (through rain), which are always moving in the rivers, which are dug out from the wells and which flow through the sources themselves towards the sea, protect us. All these are different divisions of existing water.

In BrÁhmaÆas, UpaniŌads, PurÁÆas etc., even though there is mention of water in the beginning of the creation of the universe, but there this place is not water, but the meaning of the word 'Àp' or 'Aḷbha' is a substance in the form of juice. This is said to be the origin of Ap. The name Àpa½ is prevalent everywhere in the universe. It is told in Veda mantras that the moon runs inside Àp. Àp is present in the sun world and in the sun also. Sun and fire are born in Àpa½ only. When Lord Surya comes in the sunrise, due to his rays, Àp (water) leaves its place and moves away, but whenever the rays of the Sun slow down in any region, Àp gathers there and gets condensed and becomes like gross water. The form rains. The Vedic sages were very fond of the sea, rivers and Ponds. For this reason, the ashrams and settlements of sages developed on the banks of rivers. everywhere in Rigveda, water has been addressed as Àpo DevatÁ in four hymns. Water has been praised in its 16-23rd mantras of the twenty-third hymn of the first chapter of the Rigveda, whose seer is MeghÁtithi KaÆva. In the 47th and 49th Sukta of this seventh Mandal, MantradraŌtÁ Rishi VaḍiŌŌha has praised water in the form of God 'Àpo'. Here in the 49th Sukta, the ocean has been considered the eldest among the water bodies. Such as-

समुद्रज्येष्ठाः सलिलस्य मध्यात्पुनाना यन्त्यनिविशमानाः।
इन्द्रो या वज्री वृषभो रराद ता आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु॥^x

The oceans in which JyeŌŌha is located, those water flows are always coming from space. May the Water God, whose path has been paved by Lord Indra, protect us.

Description of many oceans is found in Rigveda itself. According to the second and third mantras of Rigveda (3.33), two rivers named İtudri (Sutlej) and VipÁḌa (Vyas) fall into the sea like chariots. It was a prosperous RÁjputÁnÁ south of Punjab,

extending to the south and east of the ÀrÁvalÍ Mountains. Even today, the salt water lakes and salt beds in the womb of RÁjputÁnÁ indicate that once upon a time this region was inundated by the waves of the sea.

It is known from the mantra of 36th Sukta of 10th Mandal of Rigveda that two seas existed in the east and west of Punjab.

वातस्याश्वो वायोः सखा यो देवेषितो मुनिः।
उभा समुद्रावाक्षति यश्च पूर्व उतापरः॥^{xi}

That is, Muni is a horse capable of traveling by air. They are companions of the wind. The gods desire to have them. He resides in both the eastern and western Oceanmentation in two other mantras of Rig Veda (9. 33.6 and 10. 47.2). Such as-

रायः समुद्राँश्चतुरोऽस्मभ्यं सोम विश्वतः। आ पवस्व सहस्रिणः॥^{xii}

That is, Soma, bring to us the four oceans of wealth from all four directions and also bring the limitless desires. Here the meaning of the four seas is the ownership of the land consisting of the four Oceans. The second mantra is-

स्वायुधं स्ववसं सुनीथ चतुः समुद्र धरुणं रयीणाम्।
चकृत्यं शंस्यं भूरिवारमस्मभ्यं चित्रं वृषणं रयिं दाः ॥^{xiii}

That is, Indra, we know you to be a beautiful weapon and a beautiful protector, the one with beautiful eyes, the one who fills the four oceans with water, the bearer of wealth, the one who is repeatedly praised and the remover of sorrows. You give us amazing wealth. In this way the Vedic Àryans had a monopoly on all water power and resources. The Vedic Aryans were great devotees of rivers. They loved to live on the banks of rivers. Description of many rivers has been mentioned in Rigveda. In Rigveda, the words सप्तसिन्धवः and सप्तस्रवतः have been used many times which means seven rivers.

इमं मे गङ्गे यमुने सरस्वति शुतुद्रि स्तोमं सचता परुण्या।
असिक्न्या मरुद्वृधे वितस्तयार्जीकीये शृणुह्या सुषोमया॥^{xiv}

Even in Veda mantras, this divine water has been prayed to destroy the sins of mind, speech and body.

इदमापः प्र वहत यत्किं च दुरितं मयि ।
यद्वाहमभिदुद्रोह यद्वा शेष उतानृतम्॥^{xv}

In Maharishi Valmiki's GaÉgÁ-Stotra, the Waterelement has been clearly described in a single verse.

ब्रह्माण्डं खण्डयन्ती हरशिरसि जटावल्लिमुल्लासयन्ती
स्वर्लोकादापतन्ती कनकगिरिगुहागण्डशैलात्स्खलन्ती।
क्षोणीपृष्ठे लुठन्ती दुरितचयचमू निर्भरं भर्त्सयन्ती
पाथोधिं पूरयन्ती सुरनगरसरित्पावनी नः पुनातु॥^{xvi}

May this divine river, breaking the universe, beautifying MahÁdev matted hairs, descending from heaven, colliding with the stones on Mount Sumeru, and meeting the ocean, destroying all the sins of the earth, purify us all.

While describing the divine type of water, internal water, in Aitareya BrÁhmaEa, it has been told that the Sun, which is called MÁrÍchi, is the internal force present in the entire space, which is created by the mutual rubbing of the sun's rays, it is named 'YamunÁ'. are being given. Therefore, YamunÁ is also called SuryaputrÍ because it originates from the sun's rays. In Vedic literature, GaÉgÁ is considered as divine water, YamunÁ as internal water and the water of all other rivers is considered as terrestrial water.

The name of the 75thSukta of the tenth chapter of Rigveda is Nadisukta. It has ninemantras in Jagati-chhand, and its sage is – Priyamedha son of Sindhukshit. In this Sukta, names of many rivers full of water have been mentioned. In its fifth mantra, the names of the rivers of the eastern bank of Indus are mentioned and in the sixth mantra, the names of the rivers of Indus and its western border are mentioned. The names of these rivers are found in Vedic literature - Anshumati, Anjasi, Anitabha, Asikni, ÀpayÁ, Arjikiya, KubhÁ, Kulishi, Krumu, GaÉgÁ, Gaumati, JÁnhavi, Tristama, Drishdwati, Parushni, Marubrudha, MehalÚ, YamunÁ, YavyavÁtÍ, RathsyÁ, RasÁ, VarÆavatÍ, VitastÁ, VipÁÐÁ, VibalÍ, VÍrapatnÍ, ShifÁ, ShutudrÍ, SvetyÁ, Sarayu, SaraswatÍ, Sindhu, SudÁmÁ, SuvÁstu SuÒomÁ, Susartu, and HariyÚpiyÁ.

In Indian literature, the water of GaÉgÁ has been called the water stream of the upper universe. It is written in the PurÁÆas that GaÉgÁ remained in ViÒÆupad, ĪivajatÁ etc. for thousands of years. It is said in ViÒÆupurÁÆa-

वामपादाम्बुजाङ्गुष्ठनखस्रोतोविनिर्गताम्।
विष्णोर्बिभार्ति या भक्त्या शिरसाहर्निश ध्रुवः।
ततः सप्तर्षयो यस्याः प्राणायामपरायणाः।
तिष्ठन्ति वीचिमालाभिरुह्यमानजटाजले॥^{xvii}

On the basis of their discovery, our sages and sages had considered GaÉgÁ water as supernatural divine water on the basis of its special properties. It is told in Bhisma Parva of MahÁbhÁrata that-

तस्य शैलस्य शिखरात्क्षीरधारा नरेश्वर।
विश्वरूपाऽपरिमिता भीमनिर्घातनिःस्वना॥
पुण्या पुण्यतमैर्जुष्टा गङ्गा भागीरथी शुभा।
प्लवन्तीव प्रवेगेन हृदे चन्द्रमसः शुभे॥
तया ह्युत्पादितः पुण्यः स हृदः सागरोपमः।
तांधारयामास तदा दुर्धरां पर्वतैरपि॥
शतं वर्षसहस्राणां शिरसेव महेश्वरः॥^{xviii}

In the scriptures, the person who takes bath in GaÉgÁ has been described in many verses as the result of AḌvamedha RÁjasÚya etc.

In this way the Vedic scriptures had come to know about the special importance of water. Its importance has been acknowledged in the Vedic sentence by saying “सर्वमापोमयं जगत्”. The earth is called “पुष्करपर्ण” because it originates from water.

Conclusion : In Conclusion, we can say that the glory of the nectar that nature has created for our life in the form of water, since the Vedic period. We have had utmost faith in all the sources of water. Due to the disappearance of those beliefs, we have forgotten our sense of duty towards it and are getting trapped in the quagmire of materialism by considering water as a chemical composition. It can be said that water plays an important role in the quality of our life. This has further strengthened the status of water for the old and new generations in the society.

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