

Divine, Panacean, and Emancipative: Water in the Vedic Religion¹

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ජලය වෛදික ප්‍රජාව අතර බිය මුසු ගෞරවයට පාත්‍ර වූයේ ඒ සතු අසමසම බලය සහ බහුවිධ රූපාකාර හේතු කොට ගෙන ය. වෛදික සාහිත්‍යයේ විවිධත්වය තුළ ජලය පිළිබඳ ව හමුවන තොරතුරුවල විශේෂතා ද පවතියි. ජලයේ සම්භවය, යඥබද්ධ අභිචාර සහ දෛනික ජීවිතයේ කාර්යයන් සඳහා එහි උපයෝගිතාව මෙන් ම ජලය විසින් සිදු කෙරෙන අතිමානුෂීය වික්‍රමයන් සහ විනාශයන් සාග්වේද සංහිතාව තුළ වර්ණනා කෙරෙයි. එහෙත් දේවවාදී වෛදික ආගම කෙරෙහි සාපේක්ෂ වශයෙන් අඩු බලපෑමක් එල්ල කරති යි සැලකෙන අවර්ථවේද සංහිතාව වනාහි ජලය සතු විකිත්සක සහ මුක්තිසාධක බලය ද, ජලාශ්‍රිත අධිමානුෂ බලවේග සහ මිනිසුන් කෙරෙහි ඔවුන්ගේ අයහපත් බලපෑම් පිළිබඳ ද විසිතුරු ලෙස විග්‍රණය කරන්නකි. බ්‍රාහ්මණ සහ ආදිකාලීන උපනිෂද් කෘතිවල ද ජලය පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු අන්තර්ගත හෙයින් එමගින් වෛදික ආගමේ විවිධ පැතිකඩ හෙළිදරව් වන බව ද සැලකිය යුතු කරුණකි. සංහිතාවන්හි සහ සූත්‍ර සාහිත්‍යය දක්වා වූ පශ්චාත් වෛදික සාහිත්‍යයේ පිළිබිඹු වන පරිදි වෛදික ආගමික සන්දර්භය තුළ ජලයේ භූමිකාව කෙබඳු දැ යි සැකෙවින් විමසීම මෙම අධ්‍යයනයේ අරමුණ යි. එසේ ම, ජලය හඟවනු පිණිස පරිභාවිත බොහෝ පදයන්ගේ අර්ථ සනත්වය විභාග කිරීම ඔස්සේ වෛදික ජනශ්‍රැතිය තුළ හමුවන බහුවිධ වෘත්තාන්ත සහ සංකල්ප සමග ජලය පිළිබඳ කල්පනා කෙතරම් සියුම් ලෙස බැඳී පැවතියේ ද යන්න අනාවරණය කිරීම ද මෙහි දී සිදුකරනු ලැබේ.

*yāpo divyā uta vā sravanti khanitrimā uta vā yāḥ svayañjāḥ
samudrārthā yāḥ śucayaḥ pāvakās tā āpo devīr iha mām avantu.*

Waters which come from heaven, or those that wander dug from the earth,
or flowing free by nature, bright, purifying, speeding to the Ocean,
here let those Waters, Goddesses, protect me.²

Abstract

Fused with ancient Indian ethos and deemed more than an essential need for all forms of life in both this very life and the hereafter, water was highly revered for its unparalleled prowess and multiform presence. Whereas water's status of both divinity and a daily consumable helped Vedic Indians strengthen trust in and familiarity with it, its detrimental faces such as deluge and avalanche maintained an unsurpassable gap necessary for being deemed unimaginably mightier than humans. The *Rigveda* highlights Vedic views on the origin of water, its sacrificial and practical import in addition to its recognition for the deeds beyond human capacity. In contrast, the therapeutic plus salvational/ emancipative strength of water, aqua-related spirits and their influence on humans are vividly depicted in the *Atharvaveda*, which is arguably less contributive to the classical interpretation of the Vedas and 'the religion' formed out of them. Moreover, in the Brahmana and early Upanishadic literature, several Brahmanic perspectives on water that unveil diverse aspects of the Vedic religion remain traceable. The present study attempts to explore a literary terrain as broad as pertinent and possible so that we may form a richer picture of water in the Vedic religion in the light of the Samhitas and subsequent literature up to the Sutras. Further, it examines the semantic density of the terms denoting water and thereby unveils how water remained associated with numerous legends and concepts of the Vedic lore.

1. Introduction

One's idolatry of an object, physical or metaphysical, along with lack of self-confidence and psychological resilience in its absence, is recognized as one of the hallmarks of what religion is all about. Indeed, the subsistence of mainstream religions and hundreds of recorded and unrecorded cults across the world depends on their being followed by devoted followers. However, can any religious object remain, at the same time, to be both an imperative daily consumable and an idol, without which the life of its followers remains impossible? There would be very few to cite if we explore the contemporary world, be it civilized or uncivilized, but we may well answer the question affirmatively by looking back at Vedic India.

As we learn from the time-honoured literature, fused with ancient Indian ethos, water was highly revered for its unparalleled prowess and multiform presence, and considered more than an essential need for all forms of life in this very life and the hereafter. Beyond the horizons of our current knowledge of water which relies completely upon scientific underpinning, the honours received by water in the Vedic religion solemnly fill us with awe and insist that we ponder over our mechanical wheel of life rushing towards an increasingly chaotic tomorrow.

The Vedic religion, if we may call it as such, may fall anywhere in the realm unfolding from the boundaries of utter mythology to those of a well-rounded religion. Be it introduced as theriomorphism, anthropomorphism, animism, or animatism, the streams of genuine thoughts unreservedly flown out of Vedic muse prove how sincerely the people depicted therein incorporated all wonders of nature into their life. However, while water's state of being both divinity and a daily consumable helped Vedic Indians build up stronger trust in and more sensible familiarity with it, its detrimental faces like deluge and drought maintained an unsurpassable gap which compelled them to envision it as mightier than humans. This paper briefly examines the role of water broadly in the context of the Vedic religion, in the light of the *Samhitās* and subsequent literature up to the *Sūtra* literature.

While the *R̥gveda* (RV) highlights Vedic views on the origin of water and its sacrificial and practical import in addition to its recognition for the deeds beyond human capacity, the *Atharvaveda* (AV), although, arguably, less contributive to the classical interpretation of the three Vedas and 'the religion' formed out of them, vividly depicts aqua-related spirits, their influence on humans, and the therapeutic and emancipative strength of water. Moreover, several Brahmanic perspectives on water that unveil diverse aspects of the Vedic religion can be traced in the *Brāhmaṇa* and early Upanishadic literature. An attempt is, therefore, made here to cover a scope as broad as pertinent and possible so that a richer picture of water in the Vedic religion can be formed.

Interestingly, water is referred to with many expressive terms in the Vedas. Being highly loaded in its religio-cultural setting, it is also often identified with milk, ghee, honey, or *amṛta* (ambrosia). The feminine nominal stem "ap-"³, which is declined only in the plural,⁴ is found most widely used in the Vedic literature to denote water. Its plurality has, as I contend, two major connotations: (a) its obvious uncountable nature and (b) the people's deference paid to it. Given the latter view, which might be quite arguable, I would like

to relate it to the practice of using plural forms for singular addressees in Sanskrit grammar to esteem or, in the case of personal pronominal inflexions, to show humility.⁵ In addition to “*ap-*”, a few synonymous terms such as *payas*, *udan*, *pānīya*, and *vāri* are also found in varying degrees of frequency in the Vedic literature. Moreover, in the AVs. 3.13.1-4, there is an elaborate account of the etymologies of several terms referring to water. Accordingly, the term “*nadyah*” (lit. shouters, i.e., rivers) came into existence because waters shouted (*anadatā*) in delight at their escape from *Vṛtra*’s captivity, *āpah* (lit. meeters, i.e., waters): because Indra met (*āpnot*) them, *vār* (lit. choice, i.e., water): because *Indra* chose (*avīvarata*) them to release, *udaka* (lit. up-breather, i.e., water): because the gods breathed in fast (*ud āniṣur*) at the speed of water flow.

2. Water in Non-Sacrificial Contexts

It will be erroneous to claim that the Vedic people glorified water’s significance only in divine terms. Their understanding of the practical importance of water and bodies of water should be acknowledged as equal to or even beyond ours.

The geographical information retrievable from the Vedas reveal that, in addition to rain as the major source of water, rivers, lakes, fountains, and other reservoirs⁶ were accurately recognized and named according to their characteristics, location, and people’s impression thereon. In the RV are found in varying frequency more or less thirty names of rivers⁷, including the famous *saptasindhu* (seven rivers) and *pañca-āp* (five-waters)⁸ which debatably covered the area now known as Punjab. It has been hard to pinpoint them precisely since, on one hand, those may include the names of main stem rivers as well as their tributaries and, on the other, some of them may either go unnoticed today as a result of remaining dried up or have changed their course.⁹ It should not be surprising to observe that almost all the rivers mentioned in the Vedas have feminine names¹⁰ ending in elongated vowels, which alludes to, in the Vedic poet’s eye, their beauty, gait, motherly qualities, and abundant rewards.¹¹

The significance and recognition ascribed to rainwater prove into what extent the Vedic communities were grateful to that celestial source of life. It is because being surrounded by water-rich pasture lands was regarded as one of the greatest gifts of nature. In a drought-stricken land haunted by numerous natural evils that persisted for a long time, a rainfall may certainly have been

perceived and welcomed as a perfect divine gift. Remarkable here is that the Vedas do not tell us whether rainfall was taken for granted because it was, as understood from pertinent hymns, invariably a much-anticipated phenomenon handled by divinities. Water from rain constantly remained as delicious as any other delectable drink on the earth available to them, such as milk¹², ghee¹³, or honey¹⁴. Unwrapped from their poetic garb, these expressions do show the amount of appreciation and recognition given to water.

Upon seeing the rainclouds forming, Vedic people became elated. Clouds often meant rainclouds, which are represented by numerous metaphors in the hymns. The metaphor cow outnumbers all other metaphors that include udder (*ūdhar*), mountain (*parvata*), fountain (*utsa*), cask (*kavandha*), pail (*koṣa*), and leather bag (*druti*) etc. Moreover, clouds were known as fortresses which the heroic god *Indra* shattered down with his *vajra*, the weapon of a thunderbolt, winning his epithet “*purbhid*” (destroyer of city/ fortress). Clouds referred to as lowing cows may be clouds in motion with thunder, while those referred to as mountains may be stationary clouds.¹⁵

Our recognition of water as a religious idol in the Vedic literature is strengthened by the fact that water’s abodes or bodies of water also became subject to veneration. Precisely similar to the way the constructions erected to house religious idols or the mountains or rocks deemed to be possessed by spirits are treated as hallowed, any body of water becomes a sacred place worth being venerated. Once water is released from clouds and reaches the earth, rivers become both the receptacles and carriers of that priceless divinity. We often come across the hymns that address rivers with immense respect and gratitude for their being bounteous and purificatory. For instance, to the river *Sarasvatī* as a purifier (RV. 1.3.10), granter of vitality (RV. 10.30.12), progeny (RV. 2.41.17), wealth, and nourishment (RV. 7.95.2; 8.21.17; 9.67.32; 10.17.8, 9) is applied the epithet *subhagā*¹⁶ which has several positive nuances. Likewise, water as the goddess who bestows prosperity is implored, along with other gods, in the renowned matrimonial hymn of the *R̥gveda* to anoint together, i.e., to unite, the hearts of the couple.¹⁷ In some hymns, Vedic poets attempt to establish a strong and friendly bond with water, while requesting her not to become friendly with their adversaries.¹⁸

Below is an excerpt from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*¹⁹ in which an insight into the import of water has been given in such a way that may be called more scientific or logical.

*āpo vāvānnād bhūyasyah | tasmād yadā suvr̥ṣṭir na bhavati
vyādhiyante prāṇā annaṃ kaṇīyo bhaviṣyatīti | atha yadā suvr̥ṣṭir
bhavaty ānandinaḥ prāṇā bhavanty annaṃ bahu bhaviṣyatīti | āpa
evemā mūrtā yeyaṃ pṛthivī yad antarikṣaṃ yad dyaur yat parvatā yad
devamanuṣyā yat paśavaś ca vayāmsi ca tṛṇavanaspatayah śvāpadāny
ākīṭapataṅgapīlakam | āpa evemā mūrtāḥ | āpa upāssveti |*

Water is greater than food. Therefore if there is not sufficient rain, living beings fail from fear that there will be less food. But if there is sufficient rain, they become happy because there will be much food. This water, by assuming different forms, becomes this earth, sky, heaven, mountains, gods and men, cattle, birds, herbs and trees, all beasts down to worms, midges, and ants. Water itself assumes all these forms. Meditate on water.

Water's practical significance supersedes its sacrificial value as was understood by those who lived several millennia ago. Their deifying of that daily consumable does not thus represent ignorance or inanity but instead, as substantiated henceforth, gratitude and moral discipline.

3. Divine Waters

As the scholarship on the subject has so far attested us, the Vedic religion shows several stages of development with peculiarities in each. Although such stages may bear the characteristics ranging from, in our modern reading, so-called polytheism to henotheism to monotheism but arguably finally to monism, the evolution of the Vedic religion was rather a continuum without chronologically discernible phases. Moreover, depending on the degree of significance of and prayers' desire to win rewards from, a particular divinity or group of them received more imploration and oblations than others at a given ritual.

The goddess of water (*āpah*) is one of the deities which Vedic scholars recognize as subordinate²⁰ or auxiliary. Feminine²¹ in gender, she is directly addressed by four complete hymns and in some hymns²² dedicated to other associated divinities such as *Indra, Agni, Varuṇa & Mitra, Marut, Parjanya* and *Viśvedevāḥ*. Waters are often metaphorically mentioned as cows but compared to other highly zoomorphic or anthropomorphic deities water's graphic representation is mostly incipient and appellative. Her appearance as wives or maidens who bow down before the youth,²³ follow the path of other

gods or stay beside them²⁴ is notable but the most emphatically depicted is her inherent virtues such as motherliness, benevolence and accountability.

Water treated as the maternal element deserves special recognition in our study. Maternity lifted to divinity is not a concept confined to the Vedas because of its presence in the religions and cults of the prehistoric world even beyond India. Not only archaeological findings but genuine references in the literature too from the past substantiate how divinely maternity was treated with thick layers of beliefs, superstitions and myths wrapped around it. In the Vedic literature as well, water's maternal role has several denotations. First, water taken to be "maternal" connotes Vedic people's inseparable, strong bond therewith and understanding of own inability to maintain life on the earth without it. Second, the water is thereby placed before any other life-sustaining elements.²⁵ Further, we are convinced of the great extent to which Vedic communities were candid to waters in comparison to their *pro tempore* and opportunistic approaches to the other deities on the same level of the hierarchy. In addition to direct addresses such as 'waters are our mothers' (*āpo asmān mātaraḥ*)²⁶, there is a strong implication on water's role in the parentage of life on the earth. The river *Sarasvatī* which contains and carries motherly waters is also addressed as 'mother (*ambā*)'.²⁷

Further, apropos water in her maternal role, a divinity known as *Apām Napāt*, literally the 'child of the waters'²⁸ can be considered another vital aspect worth being examined in brief. What is precisely designated by these couple of terms has much been debated while the sun, lightening in the clouds, a water spirit, god *Varuṇa*, *Soma* drink and the moon are among the interpretation so far offered.²⁹ Further, as Gonda³⁰ has highlighted, *Apām Napāt* in the Vedas also means the child of young women who is to be attended to, suckled and fed since by the genitive plural *apām* is implied the poet's interest in the feminine or motherly aspect of life. The generally accepted meaning thereof is 'fire' in the form of lightning in the rainclouds but the exact meaning of *Apām Napāt* common to all its occurrences in the Vedas is not yet terminally fixed. However, comprehensible is that water was his mother or source in general. As evident in one (RV. 2.35) of the entire hymns dedicated to *Apām Napāt*, several poetic expressions including *rihanti* [(they) kiss],³¹ *dhayati* [(he) suckles], *didhiṣanty annam* [(they) feed food]³² and so on are found to be attesting water's motherliness.

In our discussion on water's maternity, *Trita* or *Trita Āptya* is another minor deity³³ who has his epithet³⁴ *āptya* derived from 'ap' which then means

the ‘descendent/ son of waters’. He helped *Indra* slay water-restraining forces³⁵ but is also mentioned to be associated with *Agni*,³⁶ *Soma* and *Maruts*. Scholars provide different interpretations to *Trita Āptya* too though widely accepted is that he is a god of lightning or fire replaced by *Indra*’s dominant presence in the same role.³⁷ Again, the god *Varuṇa* has been recognized in the later Vedic literature as the child of the waters since his adobe is inside the most motherly waters.³⁸ Accordingly, as onomastic studies may reveal, matronymics too are found as often as patronymics and lineage names in the Vedic literature and water is thus significant in her contribution to the parentage of some deities.³⁹

The strong sense of gratitude to such divinely maternal waters enriches many hymns in the Vedas and emphasizes an active interaction between the devotee and his idol, one of the characteristics of a living religion. Having comprehended how rewarding the Goddess water has been to them, Vedic devotees could not resist acknowledging it with sincere words resonating commitment and happiness, as the following example from R̥V. 1.23.18 proves.

apo devīr upa hvaye yatra gāvaḥ pibanti naḥ |
sindhubhyaḥ kartvaṃ haviḥ |

I call the waters, goddesses, wherein our cattle quench their thirst;
Oblations to the streams be given.

4. Water and Other Divinities

Why water received such veneration is associated with into what degree water related to the activities of other distinguished divinities in the Vedic religion. While water itself was a divinity having a strikingly minimum number of zoomorphic forms compared to other deities of a similar calibre such as *Agni*, the fire god, how other deities in the Vedic pantheon linked with water is therefore worth inquiring into. Notably, in the Vedic religion, divinity was applied to water both in the terrestrial and celestial realms.

Regarding the divinities related to waters, *Varuṇa* deserves a special place particularly in the later Vedic literature but largely including the AV. Primarily *Varuṇa* was the most frightful god at whom prayers implore in supplication for release from any sinful acts done by them since he maintained the cosmic order (*ṛta*)⁴⁰ transgression of which causes the most hideous results one may experience. However, *Varuṇa*, along with *Mitra*, is well-known for his involvement of meteorological phenomena in the world. The dual

compound *Mitrāvaruṇau* is often come across in the Vedic literature while *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* as a pair receive several epithets such as *sudānū*⁴³ or those who have beautiful drops, *dānunas patī* or the lords of drops, *jīradānū* or those having rapid drops and *sindhupati*⁴⁴ or lords of ocean/ rivers. To mention briefly how they deal with waters,⁴⁵ *Varuṇa* and *Mitra* have rainy skies and streaming waters and send rain and refreshment from the sky;⁴⁶ rain abounding in heavenly water comes from them;⁴⁷ they have the power of bestowing rain.⁴⁸ *Varuṇa* as the regulator of waters, being clad therewith,⁴⁹ caused the rivers to flow⁵⁰ and moves amidst waters sweet and clear.⁵¹ In the AV, *Varuṇa* appears to be divested of power as a universal monarch but stays only in control of waters. His connection with waters is as *Soma*'s with mountains.⁵² As a divine father, he sheds rain waters and dwells in the waters.⁵⁴

Although⁷² there are several divine forces prominently associated with water in the Vedic religion, *Indra*'s precedence as the conqueror of waters (*apsujit*) is indubitable. In addition to his dipsomaniac trait provoking him to fight the notorious that disturb universal harmony, within his role as a pluvial god, *Indra*'s involvement in rescuing waters for sustaining life on the earth is lavishly depicted in hundreds of hymns in the R̥V. Having been implored, *Indra* smites *Vṛtra* with his *vajra*, the thunderbolt,⁵⁵ cleaves mountains, i.e. clouds, makes cows, i.e. celestial waters, come out⁵⁶ most notably again and again whenever invoked. This alludes how Vedic people optimised *Indra* rituals when rain was desperately needed⁵⁷ while textual evidence supports the existence of such a practice in Vedic India. Accordingly, *Indra* has performed valorous combats in conquering of waters many days and many years⁵⁸ and will be doing as such when invoked again in the future.⁵⁹ Such an assurance explicates *Indra*'s indispensable involvement in winning pent-up waters for all beings. Moreover, once the rescued waters⁶⁰ reach the earth, digging out channels with his weapon⁶¹ and letting the flood of waters flow into the sea⁶² remain to his credit. However, as mentioned above, *Indra* is the leader in the water-battle but other gods too, especially *Maruts*, helped him slay *Vṛtra*.⁶³ Given the depiction of *Maruts* as a group of wind gods mainly allied with rain⁶⁴ and raising water from the sea to the sky and discharging them from the sky onto the earth,⁶⁵ it is accurate to posit that the whole hydrologic cycle is encapsulated there.⁶⁶ Their pluvial role is so broadly developed that the waters which *Indra* sheds have epithets like *marudvatīh* (attended by *Maruts*)⁶⁷ while *Maruts* themselves are known as *sudānavah*⁶⁸ (dripping well) or *purudrapsāh*⁶⁹ and *drapsinah*⁷⁰ (abounding in drops).⁷¹

*Parjanya*⁷² is the next deity worth looking into but again, in the present context, concisely. He is the most straightforwardly recognizable pluvial divinity in the Vedas among others also paying some part in water-related activities. In *Parjanya's* paternal⁷³ role with the earth as the other parent,⁷⁴ he is the impregnator who places the germ in plants, cows, mares and women⁷⁵ and is therefore invoked for fertility.⁷⁶ Noted here is that *Parjanya* is besought for rain⁷⁷ and again, having rained enough, for stopping it as well.⁷⁸ Rainfall in a drought is certainly the most anticipated to enliven the world but needs to be stopped when it exceeds the boundaries of necessity and perseverance. Vedic community's turning towards and reliance on *Parjanya* for both objectives, having rain shed when desired and withheld when enough, shows the degree of his enduring relationship with water and life on the earth. The *Mandūka Sūkta* or frog hymn (RV. 7.103) is, as its *anukramaṇikā* says, a panegyric hymn to *Parjanya* which imparts considerable information to us on the hopes for rainfall in a drought. Scholars have debated views on what or whom the frogs there represent but widely accepted now is that they are not physical amphibians on the earth but rainclouds in the metaphoric sense.⁷⁹

Despite the detailed descriptions of conquerors of water, the efforts incurred in obtaining it and why gaining access thereto was regarded as a triumph imply how harsh droughts and subsequent famine could have been in Vedic India. Once life-sustaining water is back on the earth, Vedic people were overjoyed and, as we learn from the hymns, earnestly lauded the forces behind the victory. Of special note here is that, in the RV, there is no direct reference to water being considered 'divine' while in the custody of *Vṛtra* or *Viśvarūpa* who imprisoned it but often after becoming physically accessible in the form of rain and terrestrial waters.

Furthermore, what or who holds celestial water back deserves a considerable amount of attention. The metaphorical representation of drought and its aftermaths in the form of serpentine monsters (*ahi*) comes in here. Along with the monstrous figures such as *Cumuri*,⁸⁰ *Dhuni*,⁸¹ *Śambara*,⁸² *Rauhin*,⁸³ *Pipru*,⁸⁴ *Śuṣṇa*,⁸⁵ *Vala*⁸⁶ and *Namuci*,⁸⁷ the most prominent enemy of water-seeking Vedic people is *Vṛtra*⁸⁸ who is etymologically⁸⁹ what or who 'encloses' or 'imprisons' water mandatory to the life on the earth. Consequently, the water's being held back was considered an iniquitous crime which the divinities were invoked to act against.

In numerous hymns on water, both fully dedicated ones and the scattered among other hymns, *Vṛtra*⁹⁰ and his being slain by *Indra* are depicted in highly

poetical wordings. Many lengthy and weighty examinations of the *Vṛtra* myth in scholarly works⁹¹ so far teach us how significant the constant quest for water and ecstasy upon gaining it was taken to be in the time of the Vedas. Though no attempt is made here to explicate water's being released by *Indra* with the help of other deities by defeating water-restraining forces, I would like to put forth a couple of points relevant to our understanding of such forces better. Waters held back in the clouds are mentioned as thrall-wives (*dāsapatnīh*) in a few places of the RV.⁹² Once released, they escaped hurriedly and joyously⁹³ over *Vṛtra*'s and his mother's dismembered bodies.⁹⁴ Quite obvious is that, as many interpretations on *Indra*'s slaying *Vṛtra* and releasing waters confirm, this incident is a poetic portrayal of rainclouds bursting after thunderbolts hit them and causing downpours. However, an anthropological perspective thereon may detect some convincing nuances of a historic conflict between Aryan and indigenous tribes.

Often observed in the Vedic hymns on water being rescued from the constraining forces is the presentation of clouds in the forms of cows,⁹⁵ lowing, dark in complexion and anxious to escape from where they are held back. This may have been as such due to several reasons of which a few can be mentioned as follows. The semantic density of the Vedic term *payas* is a major one. The compound '*payodhara*', i.e. 'that which bears *payas*' refers to both 'cloud' and 'udder' since *payas* there means 'water' and 'milk' respectively resulting in the meanings 'that which bears water' and 'that which bears milk'. As convinced in others compounds with *payas* as the head and -da and -muc as modifiers such as *payoda* (giving milk/ water) or *payomuc* (discharging milk/ water), cloud and udder (of ruminants like cows) often share a common semantic property. Further, the synonymity between water and milk to Vedic mind plays a significant part in drawing similarities between clouds and cows. The hymns where waters (*āpah*), mostly the waters used in rituals, are frequently mentioned figuratively as milk⁹⁶, ghee,⁹⁷ honey,⁹⁸ Soma⁹⁹ or containing *amṛta* (ambrosia)¹⁰⁰ singularly stress the degree of respect paid to, desire and ecstasy of obtaining them. When it comes to the panegyrics of rivers, we find, for instance, the river *Sarasvatī* pouring milk and ghee¹⁰¹ and her sister tributaries being milch cows.¹⁰² It is thus obvious that having perceived the irreplaceable significance of water as the life-sustainer, nomadic Vedic populace equated water with cows, their treasures of all times.

However, Vedic attitude towards water should not be considered to have overly and instinctively been deferential. The RV hymns also obviously

reveal how Vedic communities experienced the harsh aftermaths of water's overabundance in their surroundings. If looked at from a non-predetermined standpoint of religion, their doing so asserts a major characteristic of devotion, i.e., recognizing a fear-provoking face of their idol. For instance, in the prayer to *Parjanya* in RV. 5.83.10 to stop rain after having poured down enough of it as aforementioned, there lies a humble tone of a Vedic Aryan willing to have an undisturbed life after having a substantial rainfall.

5. Primordial Waters

At the formation of the world, water was subsequent to none.¹⁰³ Such an approach may connote that Vedic people could not think about another preceding substance from which water was derived. However, was water given a unique significance by that line of thought? Further logical arguments are well required to reinforce this assumption but I do not deal therewith in the present study.¹⁰⁴ However, irrespective of the complex blend of mutually consistent and inconsistent views on other forces of formation/ creation such as *Tvaṣṭṛ*¹⁰⁵ or his later counterpart *Viśvakarman* who placed the seed in the cosmic waters to create the earth and the sky etc., there is enough evidence for us to conclude that water was indeed a primary element in the formation of the world. Moreover, water's amorphous (*apraketa*)¹⁰⁶ nature has been crucial in causing others being formed.¹⁰⁷ Again, despite any meticulous thinking thereof, what is simply understood from water's role in creation/ formation mythologies remains to be how irreplaceable water was in early human thoughts even on philosophizing the origin of something.¹⁰⁸

The well-known hymn, *Nāsadīya Sūkta* (RV. 10.129), the content of which is rather seminal to our understanding of the creation/ formation myth questions the presence of water in the very beginning (*ambhaḥ kimāsīd gahanam gabhīram*).¹⁰⁹ That scepticism does suggest a philosophically dense approach to the formation of the world but also implies that water was among the best primaeval 'things'¹¹⁰ within the realm of probability, at least in the mind of the composer of the hymn under discussion.

The aforementioned account of water's maternal role strongly supports the creation/ formation myth in the Vedas as well. Primaeval water as the mother of all is found in some other Indo-European mythologies underscoring the antiquity and spread of the concept. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*¹¹¹ (ŚB) clearly states that waters were what the whole universe was born from. Note that waters are designated as good wives (*janayaḥ, supatnyah*), a key

point which indicates the water's being only the maternal elements of the parentage where paternal element¹¹² must be present to complete the process. Furthermore, the simile 'like a mother bears the son on her lap' well depicts the anthropomorphic representation of *Hiraṇyagarbha*¹¹³ in the form of *Agni*¹¹⁴ being born from primordial waters.

*janaya ityāpo vai janayo'dbhyo hīdam sarvaṃ jāyate supatnīrityagninā vā
āpaḥ supatnyo māteva putram bibhṛtāpsvenadini
yathā mātā putramapasthe bibhryādevamenadbibhṛtenyetat |*

The wives, doubtless, are the waters, for from the waters this universe is produced; and in Agni, the waters have indeed a good lord; 'bear it on the waters, even as a mother (bears) her son!' that is, 'as a mother would bear her son on her lap, so bear ye this'.¹¹⁵

Even though the water as *the* principal element of creation is vaguely traceable in the early Vedic literature, the later Vedic texts and allied literature seem to have given an unconditional priority to water either as the sole creator or the primary substance¹¹⁶ out of which the creator created everything else. The Upanishadic literature should especially be mentioned in this regard. In summary, the philosophical speculations of formation or creation of the world from all ages do not deny at all the involvement of water due to its irreplaceable import not only in life but also in thought.

6. Panacean & Emancipative Waters

Water in relation to the maintenance of one's good health would be another vital facet of the present study for us to recognize it more comprehensively as a religious idol healing the world. As verified in the literature, water is a panacea¹¹⁷ which both prevents and eliminates all diseases. Furthermore, any type of medicine can be found therein.¹¹⁸ As in the AV replete with *bheṣajya sūkta* or medicine hymns, water treatment cures many internal diseases/ discomforts including *kṣetriya* (heredity disease),¹¹⁹ *āsrāva* (excessive bodily discharges),¹²⁰ *rapas* (frailty), *amīvā* (pain or distress),¹²¹ *yakṣma* (a disease in general)¹²² and *āhruta* (dislocation of limbs)¹²³ and diseases related to the heart,¹²⁴ eyes or limbs.¹²⁵ Similarly, waters are unique healers over and above mortal physicians.¹²⁶

The Vedic literature also substantiates that, water is, again to the credit of their motherhood, venerated as the most motherly physicians for all beings, mobile and immobile (*yūyam hi śthā bhiṣajo māṛtamā viśvasya*

sthātur jagato janitrīh).¹²⁷ Why water's motherliness and healing prowess are integrally combined is well understood since, in addition to her latter characteristic, she is often found in the RV being besought for strength,¹²⁸ nourishment,¹²⁹ protection¹³⁰ and longevity¹³¹ while looking after one's health in his household.¹³² In consequence, water's blessings and help are heartily implored¹³³ and even other deities are reminded to appreciate¹³⁴ water's unique role in doing as such.

Of considerable importance here is the mention of amṛta or immortality¹³⁵ in the context of water's rewards to her prayers. Understandably, amṛta does not necessarily mean in the Vedic context the drink of immortality sprung up at the time of churning the milky ocean as found in the Puranic and Epic literature. However, Soma, the divine drink by having which Vedic poets pompously proclaim¹³⁶ to have become immortal, is closely associated with water and suggests us to read amṛta as a drink of immortality similar to its Greek counterpart, ambrosia. Becoming immortal, at least within the purview of the Vedic religion, has no implication necessarily on 'absence of death' but often on becoming united with the divinity, an undying hope which requires being devoid of defilements and having plenty of merits.

The river Ganges and many others¹³⁷ like that flow for millennia across the lives of people on Indian soil carrying away all they want to get rid of. From daily lavation in the river Ganges to ablutionary conventions in highly esoteric rituals across India and her neighbouring lands, water's time-honoured role as *the* purifier is distinguished. Fire, another major purifier known as such, being confined more often to religious contexts, may not supersede water due to her broader applicability and higher detergency. Throughout the Vedic literature, there are both direct and indirect references to water's aforementioned forte.

As is to Hindu devotees today and has been for ages, water to Vedic people was the unique purifier of both corporeal¹³⁸ and moral defilements.¹³⁹ A plethora of stories can be found in the Vedic and classical Sanskrit literature on many divines and human beings ranging from great deities and sages to common masses resorted to waters for purifying themselves. For instance, *Indra* who killed *Viśvarūpa* became sinful and was afraid of committing another heinous crime by slaying *Vṛtra*.¹⁴⁰ Although the crime was committed being incited by others, he consequently had to seek shelter in waters to elude his sin's chase as he did after defiling in adultery the nuptial bed of *Ahalyā*, the wife of Sage *Gautama*.¹⁴¹ Water is thus again a sanctuary for fugitives and the sinful.

Back on water's role as the purifier of physical pollutes, the Saṃhitās contain many scattered references thereto. For instance, one requests (RV. 10.17.14) purification from water and wishes to leave her as a purified (pūtaḥ) and bright (śuciḥ) being (RV. 10.17.10). Similarly, there are plenty of instructions in the later Vedic literature on how to cleanse one's own body with water. Numerous types of baths such as naimittika (on certain occasions), samavartana (at the end of one's studentship), avabhr̥tha (ablutionary) and kāmya (when the prayer is desirous of divine rewards) have been prescribed depending on the activity the bather (snātaka) expects to engage in thereafter but in general nityasnāna (daily bath) is recommended.¹⁴² Water's cleansing capacity is so highly esteemed that, as the ŚB clearly states, a prayer may implore divine waters while bathing and then putting on unsoiled cloths to cleanse him from the sins committed in such a straightforward way that a serpent casts off its slough.¹⁴³ However, as the later Vedic literature underscores, it must not be concluded that bathing in the water necessarily does all lavation. Greater is the internal purity (*śaucamābhyantaram varam*).¹⁴⁴ As similarly as aquatic beings, though constantly in water, are not 'pure' in the true sense of the word, one's purity has to be achieved internally as well through proper ritualistic injunctions if he desires of true purification.¹⁴⁵

Accordingly, worth examining "though in brief" here is water's capacity to remove mental dirt including moral guilt, sins or cursing etc.¹⁴⁶ In the Vedic religion, the divine forces deemed fully capable of such a purge are limited. Most of them among which *Varuṇa* is inarguably prominent, either provoke the mortal to commit sin¹⁴⁷ or penalize them with both physical and mental ill-health for their *actus reus*. As a result, the approach of an already terror-stricken prayer towards such a divinity is laden with pusillanimous confession of his sins, beseeching for liberation and sincere pledges of gratitude in return. Remarkable in the case of water is that hardly any reference can be located in the Vedas to her causing the mortal to become sinful. On the contrary, underscoring again her motherly compassion towards the impulsive and ignorant, water remains constantly and unconditionally accommodating sinners to sanctify themselves from the iniquities committed both consciously and unconsciously. Examine the following excerpt in support of such a role of water.

*idam āpaḥ pra vahata yat kiṃ ca duritam mayi
yad vāham abhidudroha yad vā śepa utānṛtam*

Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have wrought.
If I have lied or falsely sworn, waters, remove it far from me.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, the use of numerous terms for the causes of sin such as *durita*, *durmati*, *amati*, *aṃhas*, *abhidudroha* and *anṛta* and those for the unpleasant aftermaths thereof such as *āga*, *kilbiṣa* and *pāpa* and *ena*¹⁴⁹ implies the seriousness of the matter in question within the social setting of the Vedic period. In the sacrificial context, as the ŚB mentions,¹⁵⁰ water is even a means of healing anything done wrongly at a sacrifice, a means of lustration. The Vedic rituals on the *saṃskāras* of human life are inseparably linked with the use of water in different forms and proportions. The *Grhya Sūtra* literature,¹⁵¹ for example, elaborates on domestic rites where the prescribed use of sacred water is of high significance.

In summary, water, as particularly found described in the later Vedic literature, has been a great tool for us to understand monism or the supreme reality, *Brahman*. Its anomalousness and capability of assuming numerous forms signify the true essence of *Brahman* and the true source of life.¹⁵² Similarly, even a drop of water taken out of the ocean bears the same properties such as salinity, texture or composition, as its source, the ocean, does.¹⁵³ Going further on to the identification of water with *Brahman*, *Mahanārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*¹⁵⁴ provides the following illustration of how the whole universe was created by water which is the supreme.

āpo vā idaṃ sarvaṃ viśvā bhūtānyāpaḥ prāṇā vā āpaḥ
paśava āpo'nnamāpo'mṛtamāpaḥ samrādāpo virādāpaḥ
svarādāpaśchandāṃsyāpo jyotīṃsyāpo yajūṃsyāpaḥ satyamāpaḥ
sarvā devatā āpo bhūrbhuvāḥ suvarāpa om |

Verily all this is water. All the created beings are water. The vital breaths in the body are water. Quadrapeds are water. Edible crops are water. Ambrosia is water. *Samrāt* is water. *Virāt* is water. *Svarāt* is water. The metres are water. The luminaries are water. Vedic formulas are water. Truth is water. All deities are water. The three worlds denoted by *Bhūh*, *Bhuvāḥ* and *Suvaḥ* are water. The source of all these is the supreme, denoted by the syllable *om*.¹⁵⁵

On a final note, water played a role several times broader, deeper, and greater than what we see it does outside religious contexts despite the position given to her in the hierarchical pantheon of the Vedic religion. A dedicated scrutiny of the Vedic literature bolstered by sufficient knowledge of the subtly

nuanced Vedic language and its dialects and our unprejudiced mind would help us read water's role from wider perspectives while inspiring many other facets worth a series of research.

Abbreviations

A	- <i>Aṣṭādhyāyī</i>
AU	- <i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
AVp	- <i>Atharvaveda Paippalāda</i>
AVś	- <i>Atharvaveda Śaunakīya</i>
BD	- <i>Bṛhaddevatā</i>
BP	- <i>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</i>
ChU	- <i>Chāndogy Upaniṣad</i>
HGS	- <i>Hiraṇyakeśī Grhya Sūtra</i>
Ā	- <i>Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā</i>
KU	- <i>kaṭha Upaniṣad</i>
LP	- <i>Liṅga Purāṇa</i>
Manu	- <i>Manusmṛti</i>
MBh	- <i>Mahābhārata</i>
MNU	- <i>Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad</i>
MS	- <i>Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā</i>
ṚV	- <i>Ṛgveda</i>
ŚB	- <i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
ŚBh	- <i>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam</i>
TMB	- <i>Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa</i>
TS	- <i>Taittirīya Saṃhitā</i>
VS	- <i>Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā</i>

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Endnotes

1. An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the 37th Spalding Symposium, Merton College, University of Oxford, UK, in 2012.
2. ṚV. 7.49.2 in Griffith's translation (1896).
3. PIE *ab-, *ap-.
4. In classical Sanskrit, ap is inflected in plurals only but in the Vedas singular inflections too can be traced.

5. Even if the addressee is one person, using plural form to refer to him is widely used in classical Sanskrit. Consider bhavadbhiḥ [by you (taken to be single)], yuṣmākaṃ [of you (taken to be single)] or asmāsu [upon me]. Cf. A. 1.2.59 “asmado dvayoś ca”[After the first person pronoun base asmad, a plural (number termination) optionally occurs for one or two objects.]. Cf. Mahābhāṣya 3.1.87.
6. The term samudra (RV. 6.17.12; 7.6.7; 8.3.4; 9.2.5; 10.45.3 etc.) is often used in the sense “water reservoir” or “ocean” which does not flow. There are a few more terms referring to the bodies of water that are not rivers, such as “arṇa, arṇava, udadhi, vistap, saras, and hrada”. Macdonell (1897: 59) thinks that arṇa should be rendered as “streams” rather than rain or deluge. Arṇava, which means “ocean” in classical Sanskrit, may however suggest, due its semantic proximity, arṇa, which is a term for “mass collection” of water.
7. See RV. 10.75, 3.33; Thomas (1883: 357 - 377) gives us an excellent account of rivers as in the RV and how they were related to Aryans’ migratory life.
8. See MacLagan (1885: 705 - 719) for a detailed discussion.
9. For debates over the identification of the river Sarasvatī, the oftenest mentioned river in the RV, see Habib (2001: 46 -74), Stein (1942: 173 - 182), Ghose et al (1979: 446 - 451), Oldham (1893: 49 - 76).
10. Wilkins (1901: 468) mentions about two ‘male’ rivers, i.e. Soṇa&Brahmaputra.
11. See MNU. 1.62.
12. RV. 1.166.03 *ukṣanty asmai maruto hitā iva purū rajāmsi payasā mayobhuvah.*
13. RV. 1.64.5 *duhanty ūdhar divyāni dhūtayo bhūmim pinvanti payasā parijrayah.*
RV. 10.78.4 *vareyavo na maryā ghr̥tapruṣo 'bhisvartāroarkaṃ na suṣṭubhah.*
14. RV. 1.85.3 *bādhante viśvam abhimātinam apa vartmāny eṣām anu rīyate ghr̥tam.*
RV. 1.87.2 *ścotanti kośā upa vo ratheṣv ā ghr̥tam ukṣatā madhuvarṇam arcate.*
Here ‘*madhuvarṇa*’ can be taken, I assume, to be both ‘of the colour of honey’ and ‘of the quality of honey’ since ‘*varṇa*’ means both ‘colour’ and ‘quality/ nature’ in addition to its other meanings.
15. RV states the number of fortresses Indra smashed as 90, 99 or 100.
Cf. RV. 2.14.6; 2.19.6; 8.17.14; 8.87.6, see Macdonell (1897) 60.
16. RV. 1.89.3; 7.95.4,6; 8.21.17.
17. RV. 10.85.47 *sam añjantu viśve devāḥ sam āpo hṛdayāni nau.*
See, Gonda (1989: 21), Gonda (1980: 151).
18. MNU. 1.53.
19. ChU. 7.10.1
20. ‘Being considered subordinate’ in the theistic categorization does not necessarily imply its being ‘insignificant’ or ‘deserving less attention’ but rather, I contend, having ‘less tension’ to deal with. *Indra*, *Varuṇa* or *Agni*, for example, do occupy greater space in the Vedic religion since interactions therewith leave the prayers or devotees in a stronger scrupulous setting.

21. RV. 1.23.17; 7.49.1, 3, 4; 10.30.4
22. RV. 7.47; 7.49; 10.9; 10.30
23. RV. 10.30.13
24. RV. 7.47.3; 10.30.1; 1.23.17
25. Cf. Macdonell (1897: 12) ‘...one phenomenon preceding another is spoken of as its parent’.
26. RV. 10.17.10; cf. RV. 1.23.16; 10.9.2, 6.50.7; TS. 1.2.1.1; AVś. 6.51.2; AVp. 6.3.4; VS. 4.2; Ā. 2.1; MS. 1.2.1; 10.1; 3.6.2: 61.7; ŚB. 3.1.2.11
27. RV. 2.41.16; Note that *saras +vat +ī* > *Sarasvatī* literally means ‘who possesses waters’. Cf. *Sarasvat* as the husband of *Sarasvatī* who bestows fertility, protection and plenty. Many scholars but deny his being *Sarasvatī*’s husband. See Macdonell (1897: 88)
28. For rich discussions on *apām napāt*, see Louden (1999), Findly (1979), Magoun (1898), Magoun (1900)
29. See Findly (1979: 164-168) for the positions of Max Müller, Roth, Ludwig, Beigaigne, Schroeder, Macdonell, Keith et al.
30. Gonda (1957: 56)
31. RV. 2.35.13
32. RV. 2.35.5
33. RV. 1.109; 5.41; 8.47; 10.8
34. Another epithet to Trita in the RV is *vaibhūvasa* though found only once, i.e. RV. 10.46.3
35. RV. 8.7.24; 1.52.4,5
36. RV. 10.115.4
37. See Macdonell (1897: 67-69) for further discussion. Note that evils are removed to Trita Āptya as mentioned in RV. 8.47.13-17 which connotes the healing power of water discussed here later on.
38. VS. 10.7
39. See Kane (2003: 292 - 309) for a rich discussion on this point.
40. Seneviratne (2008: 275 - 285)
41. RV. 5.62.9; 4.41.8
42. RV. 1.136.3; 2.41.6
43. RV. 5.62.3; 7.64.2
44. RV. 7.64.2
45. RV. 5.68.5
46. RV. 7.64.2
47. RV. 8.25.6
48. RV. 5.63.2-5; TS. 6.4.3.2

- 49 ṚV. 9.90.2; 8.69.11, 12
- 50 ṚV. 2.28.4; 5.85.6
- 51 ṚV. 7.49.3
- 52 AVś. 3.3.3
- 53 AVś. 4.15.12
- 54 AVś. 7.83.1, Cf. ṚV. 8.41.8 where he is a concealed sea (samudro apīcyah).
- 55 ṚV. 1.80.11; 2.11.9,10; 6.17.9; 1.32.5; 1.61.10; 10.89.7; 1.52.15; 3.32.4; 5.32.5 etc.
- 56 ṚV. 1.57.6; 10.89.7; 1.61.10
- 57 See Macdonell (1897: 59) for the prayer (jaritā) said to have placed the thunderbolt in Indra's hand (ṚV. 1.63.2), an implication which reasserts the necessity of sacrificial approach to obtaining rain.
- 58 ṚV. 4.19.8
- 59 ṚV. 8.78.4
- 60 ṚV. 1.57.6; 2.11.2; 1.103.2; 1.32.11; 3.26.6; 4.17.1 etc.
- 61 ṚV. 2.15.3
- 62 ṚV. 2.19.3
- 63 ṚV. 3.32.4; 10.73.1,2; 8.85.7
- 64 *Maruts* are clad with rain (ṚV. 5.57.4), shed rain (ṚV. 1.38.9), impel rain (ṚV. 5.59.1) or blow through the two worlds with rain (ṚV. 1.64.6; 8.7.16). Rain too follows *Maruts* (ṚV. 5.53.10). Creating darkness with clouds when shedding rain (ṚV. 1.38.9), *Maruts* cover the eye of the sun (ṚV. 5.59.5).
- 65 AVś. 4.27.4
- 66 The following opinion by Bergaigne (1978: 253) cannot, therefore, be entertained.
 'it is rigorously true that all waters used by man come to him from heaven. No doubt, a more advanced knowledge of physics would establish for the earth the primary origin of these waters, because heaven only returns to the earth what it has borrowed from her. But the Vedic Aryans, or at least those who created their mythology, had not yet reached this stage of knowledge. They were content to recognize the immediate source of this precious liquid and they located this source very legitimately in the clouds...' (my Italics)
 Also see AVś. 6.24.1 for the awareness of melting snow that causes streams to flow from mountains.
- 67 ṚV. 1.80.4
- 68 ṚV. 1.172.2
- 69 ṚV. 5.57.5
- 70 ṚV. 1.64.2; 8.7.19; VS. 34.56; MS. 4.9.1
- 71 Cf. ṚV. 8.20.23 for rain-water brought down by *Maruts* and thus designated as *Marut-medicine* (*mārutasya bheṣajasya...*)

- 72 For detailed studies, see Buhler (1859), Polsky (1981)
- 73 For Parjanya with the epithet ‘father’, see RV. 7.101.3; 9.82.3; AVś. 4.15.12; 12.1.12
- 74 RV. 5.83.4; 7.101.3; 1.160.3
- 75 RV. 7.102.2
- 67 RV. 5.83.7; 6.52.16; 7.101.1, 5
- 77 V. 7.101.5
- 78 RV. 5.83.10
- 79 Gubernatis (1872: 372, 373) explains the grounds on which arguments can be raised against Max Müller’s interpretation that the hymn is a satire on Brahmins.
- 80 RV. 6.18.8; 6.20.13; 2.15.9; 10.113.9, AVś. 20.37.4 etc.
- 81 RV. 6.18.8; 6.20.13; 2.15.9; 10.113.9, AVś. 20.37.4 etc.
- 82 RV. 6.18.8; 1.112.14; 9.61.2; 1.101.2, AVś. 20.34.11,12 etc.
- 83 RV. 1.103.2; 2.12.12, AVś. 20.128.13, AVp. 12.15.3 etc.
- 84 RV. 1.51.5; 4.16.13; 6.18.8 etc.
- 85 RV. 3.31.8; 10.111.5; 6.18.8 etc.
- 86 RV. 8.14.14; 1.62.4; 4.50.5, AVś. 20.88.5 etc.
- 87 RV. 8.14.14; 5.30.7; 6.18.8, AVś. 20.29.3 etc.
88. RV. 6.18.6, 9
- 89 *yṛ* = to cover or constrict, Cf. PIE **uer*-5 (**suer*-).
- 90 *Vṛtra* encompasses waters (RV. 6.20.2), lies around it (*pariśayānam*) (RV. 4.19.2) and by lying on it (RV. 5.30.6) obstructs access to it (RV. 2.14.2)
- 91 Benveniste & Renou (1934), Buschardt (1945), Bulliet (1983), Lahiri (1984), Pathak (2001) etc.
- 92 RV. 1.32.11; RV. 8.96.18; AVp. 12.13.1; RV. 5.30.5, Waters are wives of Varuṇa as in TS. 5.5.4.1
- 93 RV. 1.32.8, Cf. AVś. 3.13.1
- 94 RV. 1.32.7-10
- 95 RV. 4.17.10; 1.6.5; 1.2.5; 1.7.3; 9.69.4; 3.55.17; 1.82.6; 10.28.7; 2.23.18; 6.73.3 etc.
Water, both celestial and terrestrial, is in general compared to cows. Cf. Bergaigne (1978: I. 259, 260). See RV. 5.53.7; 1.32.3; 1.61.10; 1.130.5; 1.155.4; 5.69.2; 5.55.5; 2.35.3
- 96 RV. 4.57.8; 5.32.2; 10.17.14; 1.64.6; 10.30.13; 5.85.4; 5.63.5; 1.153.4 etc.
Cf. Macdonell (1897: 10) ‘the rainclouds as containing the waters, as dripping, moving and roaring, are peculiarly liable to theriomorphism as cows, whose milk is rain...’
- 97 RV. 5.83.8; 9.49.3; 10.17.10; 7.47.1; 10.30.13 etc.
- 98 RV. 4.58.1; 4.58.10,11; 7.47.1; 10.30.7; 4.3.12; 10.64.9
- 99 RV. 10.9.6; 10.30.3

- 100 ṚV. 1.23.19 (apsvantaramṛtam), Cf. ChU. 3.1.2 (tā amṛtā āpaḥ)
- 101 ṚV. 7.95.2
- 102 ṚV. 7.36.6
- 103 ŚB. 6.1.1.9 states Vāc or language, being what water was born from. See Baatmans (1990: 213)
- The account of water being born or produced seems, to me, a later interpolation happened in the later Vedic period and a distortion of the original notion.
- Cf. Manu. 1.8 (āpa eva sasarjādau...) for waters being produced by Svayambhūh.
- 104 In his extensive work, Baatmans (1990) discusses how water's role in the creation myths of Vedic and Hindu religions has been recognized.
- 105 Noteworthy in particular is that nowhere in the ṚV is found Tvaṣṭṛ to be the creator of waters but in the AVś. 9.4.2, dubiously the/ a creator or model of waters (apāṃ yo agre pratimā babhūva).
- See for further discussion, Brown (1942: 88-91), Kramrisch (1963: 256-285).
- 106 ṚV. 10.129.3, cf. ṚV. 10.3.8
- 107 Cf. ŚB. 6.8.2.3; ṚV. 10.72.6,7
- 108 Cf. ŚB. 14.3.2.13 (adbhyaḥ svāheti āpo vai sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanam tatsarvā) for water as the foundation of everything.
- 109 ṚV. 10.129.1, Cf. ṚV. 10.82.5 (kaṃ svid garbham prathamam dadhra āpo) where the pre-existence of water is implied. Other hymns on this matter are ṚV. 10.121; 10.90; 10.130; 10.190; 10.81; 10.82; 10.72 etc.
- 110 Cf. ṚV. 10.82.6; 10.121.7
- 111 ŚB. 6.8.2.3, Cf. ŚB 6.11.9 where the origin of water is ascribed to the motherhood of Vāc or language. Further ŚB. 14.3.2.13 admits that all were derived from waters (adbhyaḥ svāheti āpo vai sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanam).
- 112 Cf. ŚB. 1.6.3.23 where water (in the form of Soma) and Agni are parents by whose intercourse life is born.
- Cf. ṚV. 10.30.10 (janitrīr bhuvanasya patnīrapo...)
- 113 For an elaboration on Hiraṇyagarbha in water, see ṚV. 10.121.7, 8; 10.82.5, 6; AVś. 10.7.28;
- ŚB. 6.1.1.10,11; ChU. 3.19; KU. 4.6 etc.
- 114 Cf. ṚV. 10.121.7
- 115 Max Müller & Eggeling's (1972) translation.
- 116 AU. 1.2
- 117 ṚV. 10.137.6 (āpaḥ sarvasya bheṣajīḥ). Here sarvasya (for all) have two meanings; for all diseases and for all types of patients requiring treatment.
- Cf. ṚV. 1.23.20 (āpaś ca viśvabheṣajīḥ), AVś. 6.91.3; 3.7.5, AVp. 5.18.9
- 118 ṚV. 10.9.6 (apsu me somo abravīd antar viśvāni bheṣajā). Cf. ṚV. 10.9.5; AVś. 6.91.2 and

- RV. 7.50.3 for gods being implored to remove poisonous substances in waters.
- 119 AVś. 3.7.5; 2.10.2
- 120 AVś. 2.3.3-5, here the spring water seeping up through holes on the ground dug by ants (upajīvika) is meant.
- 121 AVś.3.7.5; 6.91.3; AVp. 3.2.7; 5.18.9, Cf. RV.10.137.6 (āpo amīvacātaniḥ)
- 122 AVś.19.2.5; AVp. 8.8.11 (ayakṣmaṃ karaṇīr āpaḥ)
- 123 AVś. 19.2.5, cf. RV. 8.20.26
- 124 AVś. 6.24.1 (hṛddyota)
- 125 AVś. 6.24.2
- 126 AVś. 19.2.3 (bhiṣagbhyo bhiṣaktarā āpo), Cf. AVś. 6.24.2 addressing the waters as the best healers (subhiṣaktamāḥ).
- 127 RV. 6.50.7, Cf. 10.9.2
- 128 RV, 10.9.1, 4; AVś. 2.29.5,6
- 129 RV. 10.9.9; Cf. MNU. 10.54
- 130 AVś. 11.6.23
- 131 RV. 1.23.21, here the phrase ‘jyok ca sūryaṃ dṛśe’ (in order to see the sun for a long time) is charged with a highly rhetorical value and denotes the prayer's taking the life to be bright and death to be dark and cold. Cf. AVś. 1.6.3. which is also notable where prevention is requested rather than cure from diseases already present.
- 132 HGS. 2.4.5
- Cf. AVś. 3.12.9 where prayer describes water as ‘devoid of diseases’ (ayakṣmā) and ‘destructive of diseases’ (yakṣmanāśaniḥ) when securing prosperity of a house.
- 133 RV. 7.47.4, 7.49.1-4, 10.9, 10.30.11; AVś. 6.24.3
- 134 RV. 1.23.19 (praśastaye devā bhavata vājinaḥ)
- 135 RV. 10.30.12; 1.23.19
- 136 RV. 8.48.3; TS. 3.2.5.4 (apāma somaṃ amṛtā abhūma)
- 137 For the river Sarasvatī as a purifier, see RV. 1.3.10
- 138 RV. 10.17.10, 14
- 139 RV. 10.9.8
- 140 Cf. RV. 1.32.14 for Indra being terrified of the waters he released. This however needs further examination to confirm.
- 141 Cf. ŚBh. 6.3 on how Indra suffered due to his crimes.
- Gubernatis (1872: 330), Cf. BP. 9.11.14, BD. 6.150-153
- Cf. Vāc hiding in waters after committing a misdeed; TMB. 6.5.10-13, TS. 6.1.4.1, MS. 3.6.8, CE. 23.4. Another aspect of the above story is that, when Vāc was rescued by gods, water was given the boon not be polluted again with any dirt thrown into her by people. Why waters in rivers etc. which may seem to a scientific eye to be unclean is never taken

to be as such can then be justified.

As seen in the Mahābhārata, even Vṛtra hid in waters for protection, Cf. MBh. 14.11.9

142 See Kane (1974: 664-667) for a detailed account.

143 ŚB. 4.4.5.23 (... sa yathāhistvaco nirmucyetaivaṃ sarvasmātpāpmano nirmucyate); Cf. ŚB. 4.6.9.13. See Max Müller & Eggeling (1972: 406, 407)

144 LP. 1.8.31

145 LP. 1.8.33-35; Cf. MNU. 30.1,2

146 ṚV. 1.23.22; 10.9.8; 5.53.14; 10.137.6; 10.9.5-7, Cf. AVś. 7.64.1 for a request for removal of misfortune caused by an ominous bird.

147 See Seneviratne (2008) for a detailed account.

148 ṚV. 1.23.22 in Griffith's (1896) translation.

149 ṚV. 7.86.3

150 ŚB. 1.9.3.4, see Gonda (1989: 125)

151 In the Gṛhya Sūtras like Sāṅkhāyana, Āsvalāyana, Pāraskara or Khādira.

152 Cf. ChU. 7.10.1

153 Cf. ChU. 7.12.1-3 where the dialogue between Śvetaketu and Uddālaka Āruṇi illustrates how Brahman remains intangible but can be proven to be present as salt in water.

154 MNU. 29.1

155 Vimalānanda's translation (1957: 198)