

ĀPAH : Divine and Purifying Substance

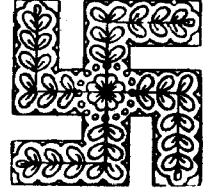
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Four entire hymns of the *RV* (*R̥gveda*) and many stray *ṛks* celebrate the divine character of *Āpah*,¹ but we can hardly speak of their possessing any mythological personality as such. The element, water, is nearly always plainly recognizable behind them. The waters are deified also in the *Avesta* and are invoked as *Apo*. In the *Avesta*, one also comes across the singular *āfs*, which word means 'water' as well as 'a river'². In the *RV*, the personification of *Āpah* is very slight, perhaps being in no way greater than that of *Pṛthivī* (earth).

In the *Naighaṇṭuka*,³ the water is reckoned as terrestrial only. But, according to Keith,⁴ in some of the cases, at any rate, it is clear that the celestial waters are meant. There is also the view⁵ that the celestial waters were probably looked upon as an ether-like medium on which the luminaries made their fixed journeys along the Zodiac (*ṛta*), and that the blocking of them by *Vṛtra* was supposed to prevent the rise and movements of these luminaries, thus causing long darkness. It is further suggested⁶ that water is a subtle and complex concept, the basis and source of various facts of thoughts, ideas and notions of the Vedic culture and is closely associated with every problem in the Vedas. According to Barnett,⁷ water to the ancient Hindu represented life, animal and vegetable, fertility, health, generative power.

In several cosmogonic accounts, *Āpah*, the waters, hold a prominent place as the female principle. It has been pointed out by Teape⁸ that the primeval waters, which are here represented are regarded by these ancient philosophers as the waters we now behold still with us and still connected, and thus yet one flood, although in the great masses of the clouds and the ocean and in the lesser volumes of lakes and in the runlets of the streams they are sub-divided, albeit momentarily ; for these allocates were observed to be perpetually passing into and out of each other. For these philosophers, Teape further adds, with this unity of the waters ever in their mind, the waters came to be regarded as the standard image of the One. They were regarded as the primordial substance or substratum and in almost all later cosmogonic versions the 'starting point is either *Prajāpati* desiring offspring and creating, or else the Primordial waters, on which floated *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the cosmic golden egg, whence is produced the spirit that desires and created the universe'. *RV* X.82.5-6 clearly shows that the waters were believed to have existed even before *Viśvakarmam*. The *TS*⁹ also supports this view. The *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*,¹⁰ on the other hand, says that *Soma* was produced from the waters by *Prajāpati* at the beginning of creation. Speaking about the cosmogonic speculations in the *RV* and referring to the verses mentioned above, the author of *Vedic India*¹¹ observes : "The waters, it is said there, received the first germ containing all the gods.....who does not see how easily this germ could become the World-Egg... floating for ages un-numbered.....on the primeval waters of Chaos, until the *Brahma*...sprang out as *Brahmā*..." In this connection, it is also remarked¹² : "The disturbances of the atoms of the etherial matter are responsible for transmitting heat and light which are indispensable for the existence of the worlds. *RV* X.72.6-7 says that the worlds and the Sun (who is source of heat, light and energy) that had remained unmanifest in the primeval ocean were produced when



~~the atoms of Salila were disturbed.” The same writer further says : “It is noteworthy that according to RV X.190 the creation of the universe started from the kindled heat.” Bhagavad-datta¹³ says that *Pāvakas* and *Śucayas* are the two kinds of atoms of the waters.~~

According to the *ŚBr*¹⁴, creation is brought about by the union of *Prajāpati* with waters, earth etc. In another *Brāhmaṇa*-text the term *Āpaḥ* is etymologised from the root *ap*, to obtain : *abravīt (brahma) ābhīrvā ahamidam sarvamāpsyami yadidam kiñceti tasmādāpo’bhavamstadapā-maptvam*. Brahman said, ‘with these I will obtain all this’. Thence originated the waters and so are they called.¹⁵ It is also said that from heated water the worldly things one by one were produced.¹⁶ The cosmogonic accounts in the *TS*¹⁷ presuppose the priority of *Prajāpati* to the Waters in the same manner. In one of the *Sūtra* texts,¹⁸ in the context of an optional animal-sacrifice called *Svargah*, it is enjoined that one who desires heaven should offer the subsidiary oblations of water with the *Nāsadiya-sūkta*. Here, presumably, the same cosmogonic significance of the waters is implied. The *TBr*¹⁹ seems to refer, in one passage, to the quantity of primordial water. *Asita*, the son of *Devala*, once said : *etāvatīrvā amuṣmimloke āpa āsan yāvatiḥ prokṣaṇīriti* ‘As are these *prokṣaṇīs*, so much was the water in the world’. The idea of the so-called two waters—terrestrial and celestial—also seems to be referred to in a *Brāhmaṇa*-passage²⁰ where it is said, *yā rocane parastāt sūryasya yāścāvastādūpatiṣṭhata āpaḥ* ‘At both sides of the sun the water exists ; above and below’.

This brings us to the consideration of terrestrial waters. For man—ancient or modern—importance of water is beyond doubt. May be that the speculation about the primordial waters actually evolved out of his daily experience. The useful qualities of water are referred to many times in the Vedic literature. Keith²¹ notes : “The connection (of waters) with honey is of interest : it confirms the view that the essential conception is that the waters in their refreshing drink are the honey as they also are in *Soma* : thus the myth of descent of *Soma* is no more than the tale of the descent to earth of refreshing rain when the storm breaks forth.” Water is man’s most basic need. It is said²² that even after being used so often the water does not cease to be ! (*āpaḥ etāvati bhoge bhujyamāne na kṣīyante*). Water exists even in the breath !²³ It is water that fills the body with liquid :²⁴ (*āpo hyetamaṅgebhyo rasam sambharanti*). Water is the base of all.²⁵ One can speak only when the breath is full of water²⁶ ! Everything is produced from water.²⁷ These worlds are verily situated in water.²⁸ The water is inside, and the flesh outside : (*antarā hyāpo bāhyāni māmsāni*)²⁹. Particularly it is stated that all the food is (produced by) water ; with water, things are eaten.³⁰ Especially the strength is regarded as the outcome of waters !³¹ Once the waters said to *Prajāpati*, ‘All the wishes live in us. Make the offering to me and then all the wishes will cling to you ! You will then know what the heaven is !’³² It is said in the *JBr*³³ that *Agni* divided water into so many types so that some people make their livelihood on the water dug up, some on the still one, some on the moving one. Thus *Agni* brought the food in this world. So it must have been on account of the food to which they are instrumental in producing that the waters were glorified the first stage. Their cleansing and purifying character must have been the second factor on account of which the waters are glorified. In the *Sūtra* texts, where the cleaning operation occurs frequently, this fact is indicated very clearly. For example, in the recitation that accompanies the act of cleansing of sacrificial post this quality is referred to.³⁴ At another place, in the context of touching the water (by wife of the sacrificer), waters are referred to as *śuddhāyuvah*.³⁵ Thus the waters are referred to as the source of life as well as of cleanliness. It is, presumably, on account of this that the *ŚBr*³⁶ characterises *Āpaḥ* as *pavitram*.

Regarding the healing power of waters, Griswold³⁷ says : “The waters are nourishing, strengthening, life-giving. It is only an extension of the same idea, when the waters are called medicinal, and are conceived as the source of healing and immortality. It is the extension by analogy from physical cleansing to moral cleansing.” The *Āpaḥ* are said to be the essence of plants.³⁸ They are also the very tranquillity (*śāntiḥ āpaḥ*).³⁹ As if to confirm the statement that waters are the very essence of plants, it is said that that is why only when both—waters and



plants—are eaten together, one is satisfied ; then only they are *sa-rasa*.⁴⁰ The ritual act of taking up of oily portion of flesh for *Vasāhoma* is followed by the recitation of the *mantra* : *apām tvauṣadhīnām rasam grhṇāmi* (I take the essence of the water that is of the plants).⁴¹ The waters are further said to possess a special quality, namely, *madhu* (sweetness).⁴² It is pointed out that one may get such water having honey, in all the worlds.⁴³ Can this honey be regarded as denoting just the medicinal power or healing power of waters ? With perhaps the same significance, waters are called ambrosia.⁴⁴ In some *Brāhmaṇa*-texts, the waters are said to represent consciousness in connection with the animals.⁴⁵ In the marriage ceremony, waters are sprinkled on the head of the bride with the formula, “May the waters that are auspicious, the most auspicious, and the most calm, prove to be medicinal for you.”⁴⁶ Thus we find that the medicinal quality of the waters which must have been a thing of common experience, was expressed in mythological, and more particularly ritual, terms.

The position of *Āpaḥ* was thus generally regarded as quite honourable in Vedic mythology and ritual. Ethical significance also is seen to be attached to them. It is, for instance, averred : *āpo hi vai satyam/tasmādyenāpo yanti tat satyasya rūpamityāhuḥ* “The waters are the very truth. Hence they say, ‘whereby the waters flow, that is a form of the truth’.”⁴⁷ It is also claimed that the waters are established in *Om*, and the earth is based on the waters.⁴⁸ In another *Brāhmaṇa*-passage,⁴⁹ it is said that the waters are based by the Truth. In ritual also, this ethical aspect of the character of *Āpaḥ* is referred to. In the *Āp.Ś.S.*,⁵⁰ in the context of the offering of animal’s organs, it is enjoined : “They should sprinkle themselves with water with, ‘May the waters make us free from the sins—from speaking untruth or from committing adultery.’”

It was but natural that with these characteristic features the *Āpaḥ* were regarded as possessing divinity. They are often referred to as *devīḥ*.⁵¹ In the *TĀ*,⁵² they are glorified thus : *āpo vā idam sarvam viśvā bhūtānyāpaḥ prāṇā vā āpaḥ paśavaḥ ... annam ... amṛtam ... samrāt ... virāt ... svarāt ... chandāmsi ... jyotīmsi ... yajūmsi ... satyam ... sarvaḥ devataḥ bhūrbhuvah svar ... om*/The *Āpaḥ* are this all—all the creatures, breaths, animals, food, ambrosia, *Samrāt*, *Virāt*, *Svarāt*, metres, luminaries, yajuses, truth, all divinities, earth, mid-air, heaven, *Om*—all is the waters only ! Incidentally, we find a reference to them even in the re-cremation-rite. After the description of the rite it is said that one, whose bones are re-cremated in this manner, as also one who, indeed, knows this (ritual of re-cremation),...him the water touches ; he is not cut away from the proximity...with water.⁵³ In this reference from the *Bau-Pitṛ* the waters are brought in connection with other divinities, and their divinity is thereby confirmed.

The procreating power of the *Āpaḥ*, like those of the other female divinities, is often stressed in Vedic literature and ritual. The waters were regarded as the root-cause of the universe, and then as the original female principle. This is what seems to be indicated in the following *TBr*.⁵⁴ passage : The waters said to *Prajāpati* : “*O Prajāpati*, all the wishes (*Kāmas*) are clinged to the waters ; and we are the waters. So indeed sacrifice unto us. Then all the wishes will cling to thee and after that you will know what is the world of heaven !” We are further told : *adbhyaḥ sthāvarajaṅgamo bhūtagrāmaḥ sambhavati*. All the things, movable and immovable, are born of the waters.⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, this procreation aspect of the waters is suggested in many ways. While explaining the importance of the *vasu vāma*, which is a *sāman* known after Vamadeva, it is said that, through the sexual intercourse between the waters and Vayu, *vasu vāma* was born !⁵⁶ In the same way, in another passage, it is said that after having practised penance the waters came to have an embryo, and from that embryo this sun was born in the sixth month !⁵⁷ Sometimes instead of the sun, the golden egg is mentioned in this connection,⁵⁸ but the character of the female principle does not change. Another *Brāhmaṇa*⁵⁹ passage reads : *āpo vai devānām patnaya āsan/ta mithunam aicchanta/ta mitrāvaruṇau upaitam/ta garbham adadhata/tato revatayaḥ paśavo’srjyanta*/waters were the wives of the gods. They wished to have sexual intercourse. They had it with *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*. They bore an embryo from which animals were born. The mother-aspect of the *Āpaḥ* is further expressed through the statement : Sun is the son of waters. Therefore it is for the rising sun that they flow to the east and it is for the

setting sun that they flow to the west. So if one asks 'for whom do the waters flow?' one may answer that they flow restlessly with the sun in mind.⁶⁰ A reference to the mother-aspect of Āpaḥ made in the *Śātyāyana Br.*⁶¹ reads : *indrāya śatasahasrānyāpo'nnam prajāpatiḥ prayacchat, ta ambaya iti/* In the ritual also, the progeny-bestowing aspect of the character of the waters is often emphasised. There is, for instance, the following rite that occurs in connection with the *patnīsa-myāja* offerings : The *Hotṛ* should place the yoke-halter in the cavity of the hands of the sacrificer's wife supported with his palm and, with the right hand, pour out the water from the vessel over the yoke-halter with the formula, 'May I not scatter away the progeny-bestowing waters that are still (?). I pour you in the ocean. Go by your own way.'⁶² Here the pouring of semen may be said to be represented by that of the waters. It is perhaps from this very point of view that, in a rite, which occurs in the context of the animal-sacrifice, water is sprinkled on the bodies of the performers with, ...*yad vā śepe abhiruṇam/...mā tasmād enasaḥ...muñcantu amhasaḥ/* 'May I be relieved from the sin that is committed with my (male) organ'.⁶³ In cosmological contexts also this relation of waters with the semen—and so indirectly with progeny—is clearly seen. It is said that the waters are produced from the semen of the Primordial Man.⁶⁴ It is also stated that the waters turned into semen and entered into the male organ : *āpo reto bhūtva śīśnam prāviśat/*⁶⁵ And so, while enumerating the various divinities placed in a man, it is mentioned that the waters are stationed in the semen.⁶⁶ For obtaining male-progeny the Āpaḥ are praised like other female divinities. In the *Pārvana śrāddha*, while giving *arghyas* to the Brāhmaṇas, one recites after the dripping water the verse relating to the waters, that dripping water is collected and applied to the mouth of one who wishes male-progeny.⁶⁷ It is said that the waters that spring forth from the male-organ⁶⁸ are *aghnyā*.⁶⁹ While pouring out the accepted *arghya*, the wish is expressed : 'May I be bestowed with progeny'.⁷⁰ In the rite of *Medhājanana*, a jar full of water is kept on the head of the mother with the formula, *āpaḥ ... yathā deveṣu ... evamasyai suputrāyai jāgrata* "O waters, be vigilant with regards to this woman that has a good son, in the same way as with regards to the gods."⁷¹

As pointed out elsewhere, in the *Sūtras* the divinity of Āpaḥ is often referred to. In the *Rtvigyaṇa* rite the *hotrāśamsins* say, 'Goddesses Āpaḥ are divine *hotrāśamsins* ; permitted by them, we shall officiate assistants of the *hotṛ* for you.'⁷² In ritual Āpaḥ are often called as the 'Goddesses'.⁷³ In the *grhya* rites, the Āpaḥ are clearly anthropomorphised. They are referred to as the presiding divinity of Soma, and are called forth thus : I call forth the waters who have female forms, have white complexion, are seated on crocodile, have a cord and a jar with them and have ornaments of pearls on their bodies.⁷⁴ We find that the jar, mentioned in the foregoing description, becomes a symbol of the divinity, namely, Āpaḥ. Thus, in the *svastivācana* or *upayamana* rite (in marriage ceremony), a jar full of water is worshipped formally.⁷⁵ This is, of course, symbolical.

As pointed out elsewhere, in the *Sūtras* the purification-aspect of Āpaḥ also is often referred to. In the context of the *Agnihotra*-offerings, for instance, we have the following passage : The sacrificer about to offer the *agnihotra* should touch water with the formula, 'You are the lightning, I am approaching the Truth from *Ṛta*, remove my sins. The faith (may be) in me !' After the offering has been made, he should touch water with the formula, 'You are the showers. Cut away sins from me. I have approached the Truth from *Ṛta*. May faith be in waters !' It is, indeed, enjoined that in this manner, the sacrificer should touch water before and after the offering in all sacrifices.⁷⁶ This purificatory aspect of waters seems to be specially emphasised in the case of the *Jāmadagnyas*. It is said in the context of *Agnihotra*-offerings, that for the sacrificers belonging to the *Jāmadagnigotra* the officiating priest should take out fifth spoonful with 'I draw up from the waters and plants'.⁷⁷ In the *Varuṇapraghāsaparvan* sacrifice, flushing of water on the navel of altar is to be made with, 'O waters, flow away the vile.'⁷⁸ It is also said that the flowing of water from all the directions should be treated as a main criterion for the selection of cremation-ground.⁷⁹

Incidentally, something may be added here about the different kinds of waters used in



vedic ritual in different contexts: ~~Vasatīvarī are the waters which are fetched from a stream~~ flowing on mountain,⁸⁰ (originally) made up of different currents. One fetches the *Vasatīvarī* waters before sun-set (on the day preceding *Sutyā*).⁸¹ One mixes these waters with the *Ekadhānā* ones (*vyanayana*).⁸² They are called *nigrabhya*, they serve in the preparation of Soma, *Somopasargārtha*.⁸³ The *Pannejanī* water, on the other hand, is to be filled 'up in' an earthen jar by the wife of the sacrificer during the morning pressing.⁸⁴ She is enjoined to pour that water upon her thighs during the third pressing while the *yajñāyajñīya stotra* is being chanted.⁸⁵ The *Prokṣaṇī* waters are used to sprinkle over the sacrificial utensils.⁸⁶ The *Praṇītā* waters, on the other hand, are to be sprinkled at four directions with the sacrificial grass.⁸⁷

Incidentally, some information may be given here also about *prokṣaṇa*, *avokṣaṇa*, etc. The *prokṣaṇa* (or the sprinkling of water) is one of the most common rites in a ritual even to this day. Wherever this rite is mentioned, it is stated in clear terms that the purpose of *prokṣaṇa* is to render the entity which is sprinkled, sacrificially pure.⁸⁸ The *avokṣaṇa* means to sprinkle water with the hand turned crosswards; whereas the *abhyukṣaṇa* is to be performed with the hand turned downwards.⁸⁹ The *pariyukṣaṇa* means sprinkling water around a thing. It is meant to serve as a protective factor. Thus waters are specially calculated to consecrate and purify things when sprinkled over with it.⁹⁰

It is also found that the waters tend one's mind so that he possesses faith for sacred actions.⁹¹ With this sacredness of water in view, that the *Āpaḥ* are equated with the *Adhvaryu* priest in the *ṣadhotr*-formula, namely, *vāghotā/...āpo'dhvaryuḥ/...vāto'bhigaraḥ/ prāṇo haviḥ*.⁹² This equation would seem to suggest high sacredness of this divinity in ritual. This sacred character of the waters is not lost sight of even in the minor matters. It has, for instance, been prescribed that one should never run through the rains.⁹³ Because the waters are ambrosia, and one should never interrupt the (shower of) ambrosia. This is an injunction for a *brahmacārin*. The passage further prescribes: 'He should not urinate or pass excrement into the waters. He should not spit into the waters'. The waters were thus invariably regarded as a sacred entity. Their sacredness is further illustrated in the formula about *dravya*, etc., whereby it is said that waters (*Āpaḥ*) are the *dravya* for the ocean.⁹⁴ Even the place, where the water existing in a particular position are noticed, was treated as possessing certain special qualities. In connection with the selection of a place for a house, it is said that, where the waters flow at the middle from all directions and then after going round the sleeping-hall flow towards the east without noise, that entire spot should be regarded as *samrddha*.⁹⁵ It is further said that the place where the water flows from all the directions should be known as being conducive to prosperity and deterrent to gambling.⁹⁶

Besides bestowing sacredness on a thing, the *Āpaḥ* also have the capacity of destroying one's enemies. In the context of the *Agnihotra*-prayers, sprinkling the ground with water three times is said to be accompanied by the formula, 'O lord of the waters, this is your portion that belongs to the waters, the enemies are scattered away, scattered away, scattered away'.⁹⁷ In another context from the *Agnihotra*-prayers, it is enjoined that the sacrificer should wash his hands with *...idamaham duradmanyam niṣplavayāmi bhrātṛvyānām sapatnānām aham bhūyāsam uttamah/ apām maltrād ivodakam/* 'I, here, by this, wash away the evil-thinkers. I will be foremost with the highest powers among all the enemies, just as the *Udaka* with the help of (friendship with) the waters'.⁹⁸ In connection with the evening milking it is enjoyed that, with the formula, 'O waters, be vigilant' the performer should cover the pitcher with a wooden or iron vessel full of water.⁹⁹ So also during the offering of omentum in an animal-sacrifice, the officiating priest collects water in the cavity of hands, with 'may the waters be friendly unto us', and sprinkles the performers and himself with water by 'May they be inimical to that who hates us and to him whom we hate'.¹⁰⁰ Here also the water's capacity of removal off of the inimical forces is suggested. Thus waters are specially calculated to keep things safe from the *rāksases* and the fiends.¹⁰¹

The vigour-bestowing capacity of *Āpaḥ* is particularly noticeable in the *Rājyābhiṣeka* in which the sprinkling of waters constitutes the main rite. In the *Agnihotra*, the sprinkling of water on the head of the sacrificer is followed by the recitation thus : '...With which (water) the gods sprinkled Indra for kingship, with that I sprinkle myself vigour'.¹⁰² In the context of the *Vaiśvadevaparvan* sacrifice, applying the water to the sacrificer's hair is said to be accompanied by : 'The divine waters may wet the body of yours for long life and vigour'.¹⁰³

For the satisfaction of the manes also the water is prescribed to be served.¹⁰⁴ The *Āpaḥ* officiate as it were as the agent between the manes and the offerers. After being taken out from the pitcher, water is poured out upon each ball with 'The water-goddesses may go unto the manes carrying strength...'.¹⁰⁵ In the context of the *Plīṭmedha*, the kinsmen are said to offer the water upon the earth with "This *udaka* for you, of the waters (*āpaḥ*)".¹⁰⁶ In the *Māsika-śrāddha*, one pours the vessel full of water with, 'These waters full of honey, satisfy the sons and grandsons. At the same time, they—the divine waters—yield the ambrosia to the manes'.¹⁰⁷

In the *Antyeṣṭi* rite, we find that, like other divinities, an oblation is made to the water-goddesses with 'To the waters, *svāhā* !'¹⁰⁸ Thus we find that the various capacities such as bestowing a man with vigilance, faith, long life, vigour etc.; removal away of enemies, sins ; satisfying the manes and so on are attributed to this water-divinity.

It would seem that some kind of difference between *Āpaḥ* and *Udaka* was thought of by the authors of the ritual texts. In the *Sūtras*, the divine *Āpaḥ* are invoked to flow with unending *udaka*.¹⁰⁹ So it seems that the term *udaka* denotes the element of water. On the other hand, in some *Gṛhya*-texts, the word *udaka* denotes a god. For instance, on the day before the marriage, an offering of *sthālīpāka* is made for the bride to *Udaka*.¹¹⁰ But it may be noted that, in this context, the *Āpaḥ* also occur in the form of *Udakānī* as the female counterpart of *Udaka* as it were. It is enjoined that the bride, after approaching *Udaka*, should be bathed and an offering of *sthālīpāka* should be made with the *mantra*, 'To *Udakānī*, *svāhā* !'¹¹¹ Here the both terms—*udaka* (male) and *Udakānī* (female)—denote the Water-divinity.¹¹²

Attention may now be drawn to certain peculiar features of this divinity. In the *Mān. Ś.*,¹¹³ it is suggested that the north-east direction is related to the *Āpaḥ* in a special way. In another *Sūtra* text,¹¹⁴ however, the *Āpaḥ* are said to be related to the east or north. Another feature is that the constellation *āṣādhās* is specifically related to the *Āpaḥ*.¹¹⁵ Further, *Āpaḥ* are also believed to possess some unfavourable aspects,¹¹⁶ as is indicated by the *mantra* occurring in the *TĀ*,¹¹⁷ namely, 'The aspect of the waters which is cruel, impure or violent, may that go away !'

It is also interesting to note the significance of the various sources of the waters. As Keith¹¹⁸ has pointed out, with the growth of the ritual a distinction came to be made and developed between the various sources of waters. Firstly, a clear distinction is made between the ordinary water and the water of the ocean. It is, for instance, said in the *GBr*¹¹⁹ : (Prajāpati) saw into the waters his own image. While doing so he dropped the semen into them. Then the waters divided themselves into two : the semen that was highly saltish, unfit for drinking, tasteless and violent made up the sea ; and the semen that had exactly opposite qualities remained where it was. On this background it is significant that another *Brāhmaṇa*-passage¹²⁰ reads that the putrid body of *Vṛtra* killed by Indra extended everywhere ; and the sea also is extended everywhere. In the *Rājasūya* sacrifice the waters of the ripples which are produced when the victim is thrown into them are offered. These waters are said to be capable of granting kingdom to the sacrificer.¹²¹ Apart from this broad division, there is also some further classification. In the consecration-ceremony seventeen kinds of water are collected.¹²² They are enumerated thus : water from the river *Sarasvatī* ; from the two waves which flow away in the different directions after an animal or a man has stepped or plunged into it ; from the wave which rises in front of the man ; from the wave which rises up behind him ; the flowing water ; the water that flows off the main current ; the sea-water ; water from a whirlpool ; what standing pool of flowing water there is in a sunny



spot that water, such water as it rains while the sun shines, water from a pond, water from a well, dewdrops, honey, embryonic waters of a calving cow, milk, clarified butter, (moist) sun-motes—these are seventeen kinds of water. It may be noted that the sea-water is included in this list not under the name *samudra*, but *nadīpati*. It may also be noted that the water of the river *Sarasvatī* is mentioned first in the list. *Sarasvatī* herself is regarded as a separate divinity in the Vedic literature and ritual. Another noteworthy mention is that of the dew-drops. The *Brāhmaṇa*-passage¹²³ adds : 'With that (water) he sprinkles : it is with food he thereby consecrates him.... For even as this fire burns up (the wood) so does that sun yonder, even in rising, burn up the plants, the food. But those waters coming down, quench that (heat), for if those waters were not to come down, there would be no food left remaining here'. The *Brāhmaṇa* reference¹²⁴ to the sun motes is also interesting. Those sun-motes, it is said, are indeed self-ruling waters, since they are flowing, as it were, and, not yielding to one another's superiority, keep being now higher now lower. Elsewhere, in the same *Brāhmaṇa*, interesting statements are made about the flowing water : Every thing, even this (wind) that blows, takes rest ; but these flowing waters do not take rest !¹²⁵ Further, in another passage it is said that the non-stop flow of these waters is caused by killing of *Vṛtra* by them.¹²⁶ In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*,¹²⁷ incidentally, some kinds of water, with their special qualities, are mentioned. It is said there that such water as it rains while the sun shines possesses *brahman*-splendour ; that from the well has brightness ; the still one is characterised by stability ; the flowing water is said to be vigorous. A comparison is made between the waters that flow in a channel and those that do not flow in a channel. Those of the waters which flow in a hollow (channel) are the chieftains, and these stray waters are the clansmen.¹²⁸ Here one is reminded of the statement quoted above that the flowing waters are vigorous and the still ones have stability.

There are a few other interesting references to the sources of water. It is, for instance, said : 'From the rock water springs forth ; from the arm-pit water springs forth.'¹²⁹ In the context of the expression *aśmannarjam*, it is further remarked that the water is, indeed, contained in the rock, in the mountains.¹³⁰ In the same *Brāhmaṇa*,¹³¹ one comes across the following statement : 'These are three kinds of water, to wit, the frog, the lotus-flower and the bamboo-shoot.' Elsewhere, in the context of the description that from *Prajāpati*, worn out and heated, the waters were created, it is said that the waters are generated from a heated man !¹³² In the context of the *Apasyāḥ* bricks, we have the following passage from the *ŚBr* :¹³³ 'In the abode of waters I settle thee !' the abode of the waters is the eye, for there water always abides : in the eye he settles this one.¹³⁴

The Vedic texts often speak of a water-cycle in the universe. It is said in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*¹³⁵ that the waters have four forms : the cloud, the lightning, the thunder, and the rain : *catvāri vā apām rūpāṇi/megho vidyut/stanāyitnurvṛṣṭih/*. It is further said in that text that the waters make up a cloud.¹³⁶ On the other hand, the *Ait. Ār* ¹³⁷ says that the waters are produced from the smoke generated from Fire : *āpaḥ...yā agnerdhūmāj Jayante...* The *Tāitt. Ār*.¹³⁸ refers to the flame which originates from the middle of the waters. The commentator explains this flame as the *aurva-vidyut*. While describing the five *mahāsaṃhitās*, the *Tāitt. Ār*.¹³⁹ says of one : 'Fire is the lower form, sun is the upper form, waters are the union and the lightning is the uniting factor'. It is said : 'The seat of the waters is the sky, for in the sky the waters are seated... the home of the waters is the air : the womb of the waters is the sea'.¹⁴⁰ With this very water-cycle in mind, the foam is said to be the ashes of waters.¹⁴¹ Naturally the wind also comes into the picture. Wind is said to be the essence of the waters : *eṣa vā apām raso yo'yampavate*.¹⁴² In another passage it is said that the way of the waters is the wind ; for when the wind blows hither and thither then the waters flow !¹⁴³ Again, it is from the point of view of this universal water-cycle, that the waters are said to be incomplete because they are consumed : *kṣiyanta āpaḥ/...tena tānyasarvāṇi*.¹⁴⁴ While enkindling the sacred Fire, a formula relating to the waters is recited. In it the womb of waters is referred to.¹⁴⁵ It is said that the waters that are produced from the smoke (*dhūmāt*) generated from Fire should not be injured (*aghnyā*).¹⁴⁶ The following legend is

narrated in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmāṇa*¹⁴⁷ : 'Ūkṣa-Randhra, son of Kavi, wished to journey through waters (against the direction of waters) to the heaven. He was sure that he would be able to find out the way concealed in the waters. He chanted a particular *sāman* and he was able to do so.' In ritual the relation of heaven with the waters is expressed in a different way. As pointed out above, an oblation of water with the *Nāsadiya*-hymn is offered in a sacrifice for one who desires heaven. So also for one who desires to attain the heaven, the second oblation in the fifth *iṣṭi* is made to the waters.¹⁴⁸ In a daily *Gṛhya*-rite, *bali* is offered on a jar with 'O *Parjanya* to you, O waters to you'.¹⁴⁹ Incidentally, it may also be mentioned that in the *ŚBr*,¹⁵⁰ waters are enumerated among the various optional doors to *Brahman*.

Various gods are related to the waters. *Varuṇa* is called the ruler of them.¹⁵¹ It is said that the waters together with him originated from the mind.¹⁵² The moon is described as the flower of waters.¹⁵³ The waters are even equated with all the gods!¹⁵⁴ Elsewhere it is said that waters are the abode of all the gods!¹⁵⁵ With the waters are connected not only the gods like *Agni*, but also various plants and animals. They are equated with plants.¹⁵⁶ *Darbhas* are said to have originated from the sacred and true part of the waters that were mixed with the dead body of *Vṛtra*.¹⁵⁷ In ritual waters are found to be connected with *Savitṛ*.¹⁵⁸

Notes and References :—

- 1 With Āpaḥ 'waters' (plural) may be compared *Uśāsaḥ*, the successive Dawns.
- 2 It is suggested that various meanings of *apas*, namely, work, food, active, etc., are envolved from the word *āpaḥ* itself. (Cf. F. Singh, *Vedic Etymologies*, 82-83).
- 3 II. 1. also I. 81.
- 4 *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads*, 141. Cf. Gangal : *Āpaḥ in the RV*, typescript, University of Bombay, 1962.
- 5 Cf. Apte : *History and Culture of Indian People*, I, 373.
- 6 Anantacharya, *Vedasamīkṣā*, P. 9.
- 7 *BSOS*, IV, 706.
- 8 *Secret Lore of India*, 161.
- 9 IV. b.23.
- 10 IX. 23.
- 11 P. 423.
- 12 Sharma, "Āpaḥ in Vedic Cosmogony", *Gode Comm. Vol.* P. 352.
- 13 *Vedavidyānīdarśana*, 61.
- 14 VI.1.1-2.
- 15 *GBr* I.1.2.
- 16 *ŚBr* VI.1.3.2-5 : *apām taptānām pheno jāyate/...sa mṛdamasṛjata...sa sikatā'sṛjata...Foam is produced in heated water... It produced clay... It produced sand... .*
- 17 V 5.5. VI. 2-4.
- 18 *ĀŚ* XIX.16.17-25 : a cow whose calf is not living to *Āpaḥ*, and subsidiary oblations of water with the hymn beginning with *nāsad āsīt*... Cf. *Śrautakośa* (Eng.), 893.
- 19 III. 2.10.15.
- 20 *Kauṣ-Br*. XXIV. 4. This theory of the cosmic circulation of the waters is not peculiar only to Indo-Iranian mythology, but is found in Greek and Egyptian mythologies also. Kramer (*Expedition*) VI, 44-52) is inclined to identify Dilmun with the Indus region. He further points to the significance of the facts that the great Sumerian water-god *Enki* was most intimately connected with Dilmun, and that the Indus civilization was characterized by the cult of a water-deity and sea-faring ships.
- 21 *Op. cit.*, 141-42.
- 22 *ŚBr* III.7.4.27.
- 23 *Ibid* III. 4.4.19.
- 24 *Ibid* III. 6.4.20.



- 25 *Ibid* IV. 4.3.14.
- 26 *Ibid* V. 3.2.16.
- 27 *Ibid* VI. 1.3.11.
- 28 *Ibid* VI. 5.1.17.
- 29 *Ibid* VII. 5.2.42. Cf. *BhG* II. 20, *HG* I. 10.4.
- 30 *ŚBr* XIV. 1.1.14.
- 31 *Ibid* IX. 3.3.10.
- 32 *TBr* III. 12.2.6 : *apsu vai sarve kāmāḥ śritāḥ/asmān nu yajasva/atha tvayi sarve kāmāḥ śrayiṣyante/anu svargam lokam vetsyasiti/*
- 33 I. 237-38 : *agnīḥ imā āpo vyudauhat .../tāḥ etaḥ paryudha anutkhayaika upajīvanti tiṣṭhantīḥ eke sravantiḥ eke/sa evam eta āpo vyūhya vinudyasmin līke'nnam adat/*
- 34 *Bau. Ś.* XX. 26.27.
- 35 *Ibid* VIII. 12.18, *Śrautakośa* 821.
- 36 I. 1.1.i.
- 37 *Religion of the Rgveda*, 292.
- 38 *ŚBr* I. 1.6.2.
- 39 *Ibid* I. 1.6.11.
- 40 *Ibid* III. 4.5.7, *Tān-Br* XIII. 9.16.
- 41 *Āp. Ś.* VII. 26.7, *Var. Ś.* I. 6.7.20.
- 42 *ŚK* 488, 265.
- 43 *Bau. Pitṛ.* III. 1-4.
- 44 *JBr* I. 351, *ABr* VIII. 434, *TĀ* I. 26.7.
- 45 *TĀ* I. 46.4 : *saṃjñānam vā etatpaśūnām yadāpah/ TBr* III. 2.5.4, *Kauṣ-Br.* VI. 1.
- 46 *PG* I. 8.6, *TBr* III. 2.8.1, *Kauṣ-Br.* III. 6.
- 47 *ŚBr* VII. 3.1.6.
- 48 *JUBr* I. 2.3.2.
- 49 *GBr* II. 3.2.
- 50 VII. 21.6, *ŚK* 840.
- 51 Cf. *ŚBr* I. 1.3.7.
- 52 X. 22
- 53 *Bau. Pitṛ.* III. 10, *ŚK* 1089.
- 54 Cf. fn. 32
- 55 *GBr* I. 1.29.
- 56 *Tān. Br* VII. 8.1. In this context, the concluding conversation may be quoted *kathamiva vāmadevyam geyamityāhuḥ/...yathā vāto'psu śanairvāti/* (9.11). also cf. *GBr* I. 1.3.
- 57 *Kauṣ. Br.* XXV. 1.
- 58 *ŚBr* XI. 1.6.1.
- 59 *JBr* I. 140.
- 60 *Ibid* III. 114.
- 61 Cf. Ghosh : *Lost Brāhmaṇas*, 99.
- 62 *Āś. Ś.* I. 10 (*ŚK* 427) : *mā'ham prajāṃ parisicam ya naḥ sayavari śhana/samudre vo ninayāni svam patho apītha/*
- 63 *Āp. Ś.* VII. 21.6, *Śāt. Ś.* XXI. 1.2.
- 64 *ĀĀ* II. 4.1 (21).
- 65 *Ibid* II. 4.2. (22).
- 66 *Śān. Ā* X. I.
- 67 *ĀG* IV. 8.13.
- 68 The relation of the waters with the male organ or semen explains the relation between the waters and *Viṣṇu*, who, originally, was the divinity presiding over the male organ. In the *Smṛti* passage quoted in *Śrībhāṣya* on *Vedāntasūtra* II. 1.9, waters are referred to as the body of *Viṣṇu*.

- 69 *AA* I. 3.5 (13).
 70 *Bhār. G.* II. 24.
 71 *Āgn. G.* II. 1.4.
 72 *Bau. Ś.* XX. 16, *ŚK* 11.
 73 *Bhār. Ś.* II. 4-7, IV. 6-7, VII. 12.8, *Śāt. Ś.* II. 7, *ŚK* 296.
 74 *ĀGP* II. 6.
 75 *Ibid* I. 11.20.
 76 *Bhār. Ś.* VI. 1-6, *ŚK* 106.
 77 *ŚK* 112.
 78 *Mān. Ś.* III. 7.3-4, *ŚK* 696.
 79 *ĀG* IV. 1.14.
 80 *Āp.Ś.* XI. 20.5.
 81 for the procedure of fetching the *Vasatīvarī* waters, Cf. *Caland* : *L'Agniṣṭoma*, 119.
 82 *Ibid*, 143.
 83 *Āp. Ś.* XI. 20.5, *Kāt. Ś.* VIII. 9.7 ; Cf. *Hillebrandt* : *VM*, I. 455.
 84 *Āp. Ś.* XII. 5.12, *Bau. Ś.* VII. 3.
 85 For the entire rite, cf. *Caland* : *op. cit.* 371.
 86 Cf. *Venkatacharya-Gajendragadkar* : *Samśkāra-kaustubha*, 1914.
 87 Cf. *Joshi* : *Śrautapadārthanīrvacanam*, 40.
 88 Cf. *Devasthali* : *Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas*, 86.
 89 Cf. *Bhide* : In *Bhāratīya Saṃskṛti Kośa*, I, 193.
 90 Cf. *Devasthali* : *op. cit.*, 95.
 91 *AA* II. 1.7.
 92 *Mān. Ś.* I. 8.1.1-20, cf. *TĀ* III. 6.
 93 *TĀ* I. 26.7 : *varṣati na dhāvet*/
 94 *Ibid* III. 10.3.
 95 *ĀG* II. 7.6.
 96 *Ibid* II. 7.11.
 97 *ŚK* 117.
 98 *Loc. cit.*
 99 *ŚK* 251.
 100 *Āś. Ś.* III. 7.1,13; *Bau. Ś.* XXIV. 36; *ŚK*, 820, 831.
 101 Cf. *Devasthali*, *loc. cit.*
 102 *ŚK*, 114-15.
 103 *Ibid*, 665.
 104 *Śāt.Ś.* II. 7, *ŚK*, 488.
 105 *ŚK*, 488.
 106 *Kauś. G.* V. 4.
 107 *Āgn. G.* III. 1.3.
 108 *VG* V. 1-6, *ŚK*, 1058.
 109 *Śāt. Ś.* II. 7, *Āp. Ś.* VI. 1-29, *Bh. G.* I. 25.
 110 *Kāth. G.* XXI. 1.
 111 *Ibid* XX. 2.
 112 In the mythology of Persia, there is a male genius of waters, who creates and shapes man, and defends and protects the royal glory, and a female genius, who is no other than Anaitis, or Venus, who assists women in labour giving men courageous companions (Cf. *Asiatic Mythology*, 42).
 113 III. 3-4.
 114 *Śāñ. Ś.* IV. 7, 9-11; Cf. *GBr* I. 3.1 : 'The waters flow towards the south'.
 115 *Śāñ. G.* I. 26.18, *TBr* III. 1.5.5. It may be noted that there is usually rainfall in the month of *Āṣādhā*.



- 116 This very aspect is seen with relation to the goddess Sarasvatī
 117 X. 1.
 118 *Op. cit.*, 142.
 119 I. 1.3.
 120 *ŚBr* I. 1.3.5.
 121 *VS* X. 2.
 122 *ŚBr* V. 3.4.3-21.
 123 Cf. Eggeling, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III, 78.
 124 last *kaṇḍikā* in the passage.
 125 III. 7.3.5.
 126 III. 7.5.14.
 127 I. 24.1-2.
 128 *ŚBr* IX. 3.5.9.
 129 *Ibid*, IX. 1.2.4: *agnītpariṣiñcati/...ahimsāya aśmano'dhyaśmano hyāpaḥ prabhavanti nikakṣān-
 nikakṣādhyapaḥ prabhavanti...*
 130 Fifth *kaṇḍika*.
 131 *Kaṇḍikās* 20.22 : *athainam vikarṣati/maṇḍūkenāvakayā vetasaśākhayā...tā haitāstraya āpo
 yanmaṇḍūko'vakā vetasaśākhā...*
 132 *ŚBr* VI. 1.3.1.
 133 VII. 5.2.54, Cf. Eggeling, *op. cit.*, 416.
 134 Cf. Teape, *op. cit.*, 208 : According to later scientific view all liquid existence is included
 under the term *āpaḥ*. That is the meaning of the term in the teaching *Uddālaka* gives to
 his son (Cf. *Ch. U.* VI).
 135 I. 24.1.
 136 25.2.
 137 I. 3.5. (13)
 138 IV. 11 (V. 10.7), *ŚBr* VII. 4.2.49, *JBr* I. 292.
 139 VII. 3.2.
 140 *ŚBr* VII. 5.2.56-58.
 141 *Ibid*, 48.
 142 *Ibid* V. 1.2.7.
 143 *Ibid* VII. 5.2.46. Cf. *Āgn. G.* I. 5.2 : *vāto gandharvastasyāpo'psarasah.*
 144 *JUBr* III. i. 1.11, ii. 5.7.
 145 *Kauś. G.* 82.21.
 146 *AA* I. 3.5 (13).
 147 III 150.
 148 *Kāph. Ś. Jr. of Vedic Studies*, II, 105.12.
 149 *Śān. G.* II. 14.13.
 150 XI. 3.2.1.
 151 *Pār. G.* I. 5.10.
 152 *AA* II. 1.7.
 153 *TĀ*, I. 22.1.
 154 *VG* II. 17.
 155 *ŚBr* XIV. 2.3-13.
 156 *Bau. Pitr.* I. 11-13, *Bhār. Pitr.* I. 9.12.
 157 *TBr* III. 2.5.1.
 158 *Bhār. Ś.* II. 4-7, *Bau. Ś.* V. 5-9, Cf. H. Stietencron : *Indische Sonnenpriester*, University of
 Heidelberg.

