

NOBILITY OF WATER IN VEDIC TRADITION

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Abstract :

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. And the people of the Hindu religion take refuge in some belief or entity and proceed on the path of eternity. They believe bathing in this holy water removes all the impurities from the heart. Holy water itself awakens self-consciousness. The question arises, how the existence of water has been recognized in Vedic literature? It says that water existed before creation. But this vow is not possible without water.

Only water can elevate them to godhood. Water is the only source of all desires. Adhvaryu sprinkles water from his kamaṇḍalu to ward off those who disturb the sacrifice or the enemies. The contribution of water in purification or sanctification is undoubtedly undeniable.

Vedic sages are also full of praise for water. He described the water as healthy, pure and pleasant. And it has more healing properties than the food-giving mother. And productive of immovable and movable nature etc. It is through this affection that divinity is revealed in the hearts of human beings. Śānti water is used even for barren women to give birth to children. Motherly water destroys unconsciousness and purifies. Water is purified through mantra.

This water moistens the land, gives medicinal fertility, and nourishes the plants, making it fit for consumption. However, different types of water irrigation are described in different Vedas. Moreover, regarding water conservation, it is said in Yajurveda that water should never be polluted-

mā'po mauṣadhīrhiṁsī rdhāmno rājāstato varuṇa no muñca/

There is also praise for not cutting down trees to protect water or water bodies. The contribution of holy water from Bhūmiṣṭha to Śrādhānuṣṭhāna is unimaginable. So all this water is considered to protect oneself from sin. So we cannot think of the origin of anything without water.

Key Words : sacrifice, praise, purification, irrigation, conservation.

INTRODUCTION

The greatness of water in the whole Vedic Bāṅgamaye and Yajña is immeasurable. By the bāri's touch, the bāri, the purity of the bāri is transmitted to the body and mind and then to the mind, intellect, and ego, and at once opens up self-consciousness. Water itself is holy. No

object or substance can purify the water of origin. Instead, water can purify all impure objects or substances. Mahākabi Kalidāsa, while describing water as the original creation of God, calls water as one of the visible eight forms of Maheswara –

yā sṛṣṭi sṛaṣṭurādyā bahati bidhihutaṁ...../ii

This description of Kalidāsa is consistent with the Śrauta concept of the order of creation. Because a similar description is available in Nāśadīasūkta of Ṛgveda. Again in the Taittirīa Upaniṣad, the order of creation is seen differently. But there exists the issue of water –

tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśa sambhūta ākāśadbāyu bāyoragni agnerāpa adbha pṛthibī pṛthivyā auṣadhaya auṣadhībhyo'nnam/iii

So from Paramātmā ākāśa, ākāśa from Air, Air from Agni, Agni from Water. In the Nāśadīasūkta of the Ṛgveda, Śalila or water is explained as apraketa, i.e. devoid of distinct signs. At the dawn of creation, all the physical worlds were shrouded in unconscious darkness and then–

tama āsīttamasā gūhamagre'praketaṁ salilam srvamā edaṁ/iv

The unperceived world was inseparably consistent with the cause in the unexpressed state. This Salil is called 'Ambha' in the first mantra of the Nāśadīasūkta –

ambha kimāsīt gahaṇam gabhīraṁ/v

The sage Parameṣṭī, while perceiving the origin of the visible universe shrouded in the terrible mystery of infinity, asked the question - Where was Salil, the cause of the deluge in the pre-creation stage? Water is used metaphorically in the Vedic tradition for the purity of nature and to point out the unfathomable mysteries of creation.

Although the Ṛgveda describes water as spiritual, its deity is also recognized there. The God of water here is Apāṅg Napāt (God of Water). Ṛgvedaeva is the form of this deity found in the second and tenth mandalas. The sage says that the water god (Apāṅg Napāt) resides under the sea. Holy water is required to prepare someras for Indra. Then the sages offered somrasa to the water god to appease him. From this, it can be understood that he used to drink somrasa. Then the God of water provided holy good water. As a result, the Somers were well purified. Then the ṛtviks chanted mantras and offered the purified delicious Somaras to Indradevatā in the yajña. Apart from this, the description of his (water god) body is also found in the second mandala. He is the soul of all living beings; He created the entire universe. So it is stated in the second chapter of Ṛgveda –

apām napātasūryasya mahnā viśvanyāryo bhuvanā jajāna/vi

She is the breeder of sea urchins. Pure water surrounds him. She is the giver of protection; she protects the worshipers from the perpetrators of violence, enemies. Besides, he is never pleased with people who are ungrateful, ungrateful, miserly etc. During monsoon, he helps in

food production by providing water. She became Satyaśīlā, Tejaswī Pavitravatī. The invoker gives the desired fruits to the hosts. He is the producer of medicines. The greatness of this goddess is infinite because Ila, Saraswati, and Bhārti hold food for the three Vedic deities. The place where he lives is Suvarṇamaya. So it appears in the Ṛgveda –

Hiraṇyārūpa sa hirṇyasaṃdṛgapā napātsedu hiraṇyavarṇa/

Hiraṇyāyātpari yonerniṣidyā hirṇyadā dadatyannamasmai/^{vii}

Since he (Apāṅg Napāt) exists in the depths of the sea as a fire, his appearance is lightning. Therefore, in the description, his shape is like electricity. And his body is rich in color. The western scholar Anthony Macdonell also thinks that the power of fire is Apāṅg Napāt, the water god. So he said— ‘The epithet Asu-heman swiftly— speeding applied three times to Apam-napat, which refers to Agni in its only ether occurrence. Hence, Apam-napat appears to represent Agni's lighting form, which lurks in the cloud. Besides being directly called Apam-napat, Agni is also termed the embryo (Garbha) of the water.’^{viii}

In the Ṛgveda, however, there are two forms of the Apāṅg Napāt deity. In Vedic Yajña, taking a vow is considered a crucial part. Taking a vow as the initial action of Daśapūrṇamāsa Yāga, which is the nature of all Iṣṭi Yaga, is prescribed. It is clearly stated in the Śatapatha brāhmaṇam –

Bratamupaiṣyan antareṇāhavanīyāñca gārhapatyāñca prāṇ tiṣṭhannapa’upasprṣati tadyadapa’upasprṣatyamedhyo vai puruṣo yadanṛtaṁ vadati tena pūtirantarato medhyā vā’āpao medhyā bhūttvā bhratamupāyānīti pavaittraṁ vā’āepa pabitttrapūto bhratamupāyānīti tasmādvā apa upasprṣti//^{ix}

As this Brahmanical Vidhi and Arthavada are combined, this Vidhi is enthusiastically praised later by prescribing the Vratadhāri to touch the water as a Vidhi. After taking the vow, the host will touch the water in the middle of the invocation and the domestic fire while facing east. He will touch the water for purification. Achieving the holy state is an integral part of the performance of Yajña. Because the Yajña cannot be performed unless it is purified and only water can provide this purity. The touch of water or the purity of water purifies the body of the host. You have to take the vow only when you are middle-aged. After being purified, the host will take the water in his hand and perform ācamana. By pouring water, the host makes himself prosperous and able to perform the yajna. The Yajman takes a vow as a pre-ceremony to the Yajña ceremony. As a result of taking the vow, he becomes possessed or purified in Medhya i.e. Yajna. By virtue of being pure, he truly attains divine status. This water alone can elevate him to the status of god. As a result of water contact, the host may declare –

Idamahamanṛtātsatyamupaimīti tanmanuṣyebhyo devanupaiti/^x

Hence the commandment of truthful speech is given for the vowed host –

sa vai satyameva vadet/^{xi}

At the time of taking the vow, Yajmana returns to human form. The purity he attained by becoming a man through deity, to regain manhood, he had to regain impurity. For that, he had to declare—

tadu khalu punrmānuṣo bhavati tasmādidamaham ya evāsmi so'smītyevam vrataṁ visṛjeta/
xii

So the promising message is constantly emanating from water touch and water touch as the means of passage to divinity; this touch often helps people attain eternal godhood.

Yajño vai āpa: Yajña is water. When one moves towards water, he is considered to be moving away from earthly things. He alone can take the virtuous and deity-connected host to the presence of God. So water is the only source of all the objects of desire. Water is prayed to as the protector of Yajña. The importance of water in Yajña can be understood from this mantra of Yajurveda-

devīrāpo agreguvo agrepuvo'gra idamadya yajña-

nayatāgre yajñapatim sudhātum yajñapatim devayuvam//^{xiii}

Our body is refreshed and cleansed by water. We have already learned in Śatapatha brāhmaṇam how vital this water is for sacrifice. ācamana Kṛyā is mandatory before Yajña or any Pujā-Pārvanā. If a ṛtvik does not perform this ācamana kṛya, the ceremony is considered incomplete. In addition, he bears the burden of that ritual sin. So the first task of the ritvik is to purify himself through ācamana, which can only be achieved by water. So it is said in the Vaudhāyana dharmasūtra –

tirapo hṛdayam gamā pivet/^{xiv}

An achamankari has to drink water thrice so that the water reaches the ācamanakāri's heart. Only then will he be pure. This matter of drinking water or ācamana is explained in Goutama dharmasūtra It says –

śucau deśa āsīno dakṣīno vāhuṁ jānvantarā kṛtvā yajñopaītyāmaṇi vandhanātpāṇīprakṣālya vāgyato hṛdayasṛṣāstrīscaturā'pa ācāmet/^{xv}

There are different methods of achaman for different castes or communities. However, before performing ācamana, ṛtvik should be fasted in a clean and pure manner. His hands should be kept between his knees. Then drink water two or three times. But they are prescribed for brāhmaṇam, Kṣatrias, Vaiśyas and Śūdras. brāhmaṇam will sip the holy water three to four times to reach the heart. Kṣatrias will drink water three to four times to get it to the throat. Vaiśyas will again take water to taste him and Śūdras will take water and touch it only on the lips. This method of ācamana by water is also clearly described in Manusmriti. And through this āchaman, ṛtvik or Yajmāna becomes innocent and free from defects. Sir Haradatta has explained this concept in his Mitākṣara commentary (ācamanādinaa nityam śuci śaktiviṣaye na muhurtamāpyaprāyata syāt/).

When a living being is ready for self-sacrifice, he is purified by holy water. One has to approach the water god with caution. And drinking water is ordered. Because these tasks have to be completed before the Yajña begins, so that the self-sacrificer does not suffer any harm. Again, before starting this Kriyā, the necessary materials of Yajña must be purified with water. Even the holy water destroys all kinds of evil forces no matter how many obstacles come in the way of Yajña. In other words, Adhvaryu sprinkles water from his kamaṇḍalu to drive away all the disturbers or enemies who disturb the yajña. Similarly in Śatapatha brāhmaṇam it is said –

Yadvai yajñsya riṣṭtaṁ vyadaśāntamāpo vai tasya sarvasya śāntiradbhirevaintacchāntyā śmyattetadeva tatra karma/^{xvi}

The sages of the Ṛgveda also praise water. They consider water as a divine and peace-giving substance. That is why they have given special respect to water as a god. They have expressed the greatness of water in four verses. Water is hailed as the greatest benefactor of animal and plant life. Praised as water god. In this case water is said to be healthy, holy and blissful. Sage Sindhukṣit while praising the waters prayed—

Āpa pṛṇīta bheṣjaṁ varuthaṁ tanbe mama/ jyok ca sūryaṁ dṛṣe//^{xvii}

Ṛṣi Kavaṣa is tireless in praising water for purity. In the Ṛgveda (10th) water's ability to provide multiple mundane and transcendental resources is declared. It can drive away all enemies of human society and is a source of vitality to the living world as a drink. Water is a benefactor of the living world, a destroyer, more healing than the food-providing mother, and rich in various virtues such as the producer of immovable nature. So the sage extolled the greatness of water and said –

Omanapo manuṣīrmṛktaṁ dhāta tokāya tanayāya śamyo/

Yūyaṁ hi ṣṭhā bhiṣajo mātṛtmā viśvasya sthāturjagato janitrī //^{xviii}

Drinking water enters our body medically, making it possible to witness the resplendent, enlightened, tamasānāśaka Suryadeva without disease for a long time. Located in a desert-like heart-shaped cave, it provides coolness. Just as a mother nourishes her child by breastfeeding, water also provides nectar as brāhmaṇam. The Snehars who keep the universe full of purity and vitality. And the amrita sneha-rasa reveals the divinity in the hearts of men. As a result, the mind becomes pure and the length of knowledge increases. This water is the source of wisdom and all kinds of happiness, the cause of birth and procreation of all beings. And being like a friend is protecting the descendants completely. It is invoked to increase male fertility. Shanti Jal project plays a unique role in the fertility of barren women. This water is addressed to us as the only source of happiness and ideal of inspiration. This water represents strength and happiness. Again, being a loving person, our children are cherished with love. Happily he gave permission to enjoy this abundance of water. As a result, joy is transmitted to the heart and helps keep the body radiant. So Trishira Ṛṣi is praising –

Āpo hi ṣṭhā myobhuvastā na ūrdha dadhātana/

Mahe raṇāya cakṣase//^{xix}

Water has always been revered as the birth-giver and treated with reverence. From this holy water all the animals and plants of the world have originated. Naturally, in the eyes of sages, water is motherly. Water, which has the infinite capacity to purify all substances, is always active in preventing all pollution of the environment. Water as nectar destroys the state of unconsciousness and makes one full of purity. Wind and sun are constantly purifying the water. When the water is warmed by sunlight, its impurities are removed. Ghṛta also reforms water, and the purification process of water can also be observed through Veda Jala-stuti. Apart from this, water also purifies the original and divinely powerful Jal Ripu of all. As a result, living beings can do good deeds. So it was sung with pride-

Āpo asmānmātara śuddhayantu ghṛtena no ghṛtāpba pūnatu/

Viśvaṁ hi ripraṁ pravahanti devīrudidābhya śucirā puta emi//^{xx}

India is a major agricultural and riverine country. Since ancient times, the attraction of agriculture has been ingrained in the hearts of Indians. Water and land complement each other to protect human civilization. Water is of immense importance among the basic elements of agriculture. It is possible to understand the importance of water in agriculture by reading Vedic mantras. This water moistens the earth, gives fertility to the land as medicinal in Vasudha, makes it juicy all around and nourishes the plants, making it fit for consumption:

Sam mā sṛjāmi payasā pṛthivyā sam sṛjāmyadbhiroṣdhībhi/

So'haṁ vājam saneyamagne//^{xxi}

He appeared in the form of irrigation of the earthly agricultural land. Parjanyaadevatā gives water to the agricultural land which helps in the growth of plants and animals. That pregnant Anadi is engaged in maintaining the life of living beings. Such sources and uses of irrigation are found in gveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. However, there are descriptions of different types of irrigation in different Vedas. For example, in the Rigveda four sources of water are used for irrigation. Namely—

1. yā āpo divya uta – i.e. water arising from clouds (space).
2. sṛbanti Khanitrimā uta – i.e. water produced by wells or excavations.
3. yā svayamjā – i.e water flowing towards the sea by itself or springs.
4. samadrārthā yā – means water produced from rivers.

Atharvaveda, however, mentions nine types of water, which have been used as irrigation in agriculture. They are:

1. bhanvānyā āpa/
2. anupyā āpa/

3. vārṣikī āpa/
4. kumbhe ābhṛtā āpa/
5. khanitrimā āpa/
6. snadhubhya āpa/
7. saniṣyādā/
8. haimavatī āpa/
9. utsyā te śam u snta āpa/

Currently, agricultural land is drying up due to lack of water, resulting in malnourished crops. Even today praises or prayers to Jaladeva, Parjanyaadeva can be noticed in various places. Therefore, from the Aryan age to the present age, all living beings have expressed their desire for natural water. The issue of water conservation is also described in the Vedas. Awareness about water conservation can be seen since Vedic times. Pure water is the water produced from the sun and streams. Apart from this water, any other type of contaminated water is directed to be treated and stored. It is also accepted in the Vedas to show respect and gratitude to the water without polluting it. This water is the only way to quench thirst and desire. It is said to conserve rain water and running water. And let those rivers, which have springs, by whose waters the universe is entertained, exist non-violently. Hence it is said in the Ṛgveda—

Yā pravato nivata udvata udanvatīranudakāśca yā/

Tā asmabhyaṁ payasā hinvamānā śiva devīraśīpadā bhavantu sarvā nadyo aśimidā
bhavantu//^{xxii}

Regarding the conservation of water, it is said in the Yajurveda that never do violence to water i.e. do not pollute it –

mā'po mauṣadhīrhiṁsī rdhāmno rājāstato varuṇa no muñca/^{xxiii}

As a result biodiversity may be destroyed. May this water stay with us like an ally. And may he never become hostile. That is, let him purify Dharitṛī with his pure water. Moreover, there is an order not to cut trees to protect water or reservoirs. Because the continuous trees located on the banks of the river are in the form of dams. As a result water or water bodies are being protected. So it can be said that the practice of water conservation was prevalent in the Vedic period. So the Atharveda Samhitā is enshrined in –

Yo va śivatamo rasastasya bhājyateha na/

Uśtīriva mātara//^{xxiv}

A sutra in the Dharmaśūtras prays to Apadeva for cleansing or purification by water. This water purifies the world and the pure or holy world purifies us. Brahmā and Banaspati are always engaged in our purification. Only water can free us forever from all the sins we are partakers of by eating junk food or bad food daily. In addition, this water also destroys the sins that have been committed as a result of the donations that we have received from the non-doers. So the contribution of water in purification or purity is undoubtedly undeniable. So the sage is praising in a loud voice –

Āpa punntu pr̥thivī pītā punātu mama/

Punstu brāhmaṇaspati vr̥hmapūtā punatu mama/

Yaducchiṣmabhojyaṁ yadvā duścaritaṁ/

Srva punantu māmāpo'stām ch pratigraha svāheti//^{xxv}

The importance of water is also immense in the field of charity. Before doing any work should be relieved with water. So the sage Āpastambha said—

srvānyadakyuravāni dānāni.^{xxvi}

Again it is said that if a person stands in a pond or water and recites the mantra- āyaṁ gau pr̥śnikramo/ three times, he is freed from all kinds of sins. Acharya Gautama also recognizes this sentence and says that if a person recites or chants the following mantra by going down into the water, then his willful sin or sin committed in ignorance is removed. So all these waters are considered to purify and protect oneself from any kind of sins. So the words of the sage have been revealed –

antarjale vā'ghamarṣaṇ trirāvartayansarvapapebhya vimucyate//^{xxvii}

This greatness and limitless importance of water in the fields of Vedic literature and Yagyagna editing is undoubtedly surprising. Water in the form of rivers and seas is always engaged in the eternal welfare of the world. Avabhr̥tasāna at the end of the Yajña, and Śāntibāri Prokṣaṇ endows the Yajña with unshakeable glory. The beginning of the yajna is also marked by water - which is famous in Vedic thought as Pranītāpranayana. Even Havimiśrita Yajmān Havishmān serves mixed water. Not only in the Vedic period but also in the present human society, the method of ācaman with water is unbroken. The contribution of holy water from Bhumiṣṭa to Śrāddha ceremony is undeniable. Without water, it is very difficult to protect the environment. We cannot think of the origin of anything without water. Therefore no ritual of Māṅgalika action except water is prescribed.

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- xvii. Ṛgveda -10/9/7
- xviii. Ṛgveda - 6/50/7
- xix. Ṛgveda - 10/9/1
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