

The Secret of the Waters

By David Frawley

The snow melt in the high country was greater and occurred faster this year owing to a wet winter followed by an early record heat spell in May. Hiking up through the higher mountains and looking at the cascading water in the flowing streams released by the melting snow, my mind began to meditate upon the meaning of water, not as an intellectual process but as an opening up to the inner powers of the universe. The forces of nature can teach us all the secrets of life, if we learnt to look at them with the inner eye and a yogic vision.

The five elements play an important role in yogic thought. But they are not simply elements in an outer or material sense. Each has its inner reality, which is spiritual, poetic and cosmic. Each is a doorway to the Infinite, a facet of Brahman. Each is a layer of our deeper and universal Self. Water is one of the most important of these elements.

The Cosmic Waters

Yogic thought recognizes the existence not only of earthly waters but of atmospheric and heavenly waters. Water is the main element behind life. Without water embodied life is not possible. This truth is evident in our own bodies, which consist of a special form of living water protected within the boundaries of our skin, energized by Prana and Agni, the main vital energies of the life-force and the vital fire.

Yet as the basis for life, water can represent all the five elements, which are all forms of water, waves or mediums of expression for the indwelling soul. In Vedic thought the universe is viewed as a series of oceans, much like the idea of the waters of the firmament in Biblical, Babylonian and other ancient systems. There is a universal continuum from the earthly to the heavenly waters to the waters beyond the worlds, and from the outer material waters to the inner floods of pure awareness. The worlds are but islands in these different levels of the all-encompassing waters.

Water and Space

In the Vedas, the waters are often a synonym for space or the ether. The Sanskrit term for waters, *Apas*, is a plural term that actually means the 'waves'. Water at an etheric level refers to the vibratory wave-like structure of space. An important Vedic chant is the *Apam Pushyam* or flower of the waters chant. It describes the sun, moon,

fire and other primary natural forces as flowers in the water. This means that they are certain vibrational designs, flowers if you will, formed in the waters of space. We are all vortexes of energy in the waters of space, which are the waters of consciousness. We are formations of that field of the Waters and how it expresses itself in various ways.

This watery vibratory quality of space allows it to condense or crystallize into various forms or energetic structures. Even our body is one such form. Yet these forms are nothing but a focal point of vibrations in the universal field. They are not separate entities and so must return to the water or waves from which they arose.

Our minds work the same way. The waters of consciousness get condensed through waves of thought. But must eventually return back to that ocean of awareness.

The Cosmic Cycle of the Waters

Water in Vedic thought originates in space, not on earth. Ether contains the seeds of all the other elements within it. Water is inherent in the vibratory and reflective quality of space. These are the heavenly waters. The Sun draws in these heavenly waters and projects them outward along with its rays. They are transmitted to the Moon, which serves to reflect the subtle essence of water to the Earth, where the waters form clouds in the atmosphere, gather energy, and condense and fall to the ground to create and sustain life.

Of course we are not talking modern science here but yogic science, which is mantric and poetic. Yet one can still experience this cycle of the Waters inside oneself. When the waters are ever flowing then we can understand the meaning of all life and go beyond all limitations.

The Oceanic Universe

The inner eye reveals the universe as a series of oceans placed one on top of the other, with descending streams linking them together.

Sometimes it sees the universe as a series of mountains, each with a large lake on its top. The waters stream down from the mountain of one plane of existence to another, forming another ocean or lake below.

The waters of the higher planes are clear and powerful, yet as the waters enter the lower worlds they become murky and stagnant, with the contact to their source forgotten. This is our position in the human world and its dense spiritual ignorance.

The Waters stream down from the higher planes like waterfalls. These waterfalls are the Shakti or Parvati (mountain stream), the power that descends from above. They carry an electrical force that sets everything in motion.

We see this fact in the story of Lord Shiva, the mountain God, who allows the heavenly river or heavenly Ganga to flow down his head. Without Shiva's head to hold them and break their fall, these waters cannot reach the Earth. Shiva here is symbolic of the crown chakra and the stillness power of meditation.

The Waters of Yoga and Meditation

On an inner level, meditation is often symbolized as a diving deep within. The waters are a symbol for the inner world of consciousness. Diving deep into the sea indicates withdrawal from the senses and entering into the deeper consciousness of the heart. We must drown ourselves within that sea in order to find the One. We must go from the outer waters to the inner waters.

Much of yogic practice consists of accessing or releasing the higher and purer waters, which means opening the inner currents and channels, the nadis, to the flood of grace.

Another metaphor for Yoga is following the stream back to its source in the higher mountains or higher oceans. The source of the Waters is the Divine bliss and love within us. This is tracing the current of our thoughts back to their origin in the heart.

One of the main Vedic metaphors found in many Vedic hymns is of the great God Indra (the power of the lightning-perception) who slays the dragon who lays at the foot of the mountain holding the waters, and releases the seven rivers to flow into the sea. This is also symbolic of opening the seven chakras and their nadis or channels.

The dragon (Ahi-vritra) is the concealment power of the ego, which dwells at the base of the spine keeping the Kundalini asleep or dormant. Indra is the lightning power of meditative insight which destroys the ego. This allows the higher waters to stream through all

the channels of the mind and body, breaking down all obstacles and clearing away all karmic impurities.

Water and Prana

Water carries energy or Prana, particularly as it flows or moves. Prana is the electrical force created by the currents of the waters. The higher great Prana exists and moves in the waters of space. To create space within us is to create Prana as well. Prana requires these inner waters to grow and to flow. Prana is the lightning of the waters.

In Vedic thought, the atmosphere (antariksha, intermediate realm of space between Heaven and Earth) is often regarded as the main realm of the waters, the source of the rains that create and sustain the earthly waters. It is the sphere of the Atman, which is the inner Prana.

Water and Life

Water allows life or prana to be embodied. The soul enters into the body and into the world through the element of water. There is an interesting Upanishadic statement in this regard (Mahanarayana):

In the shoreless Waters, in the center of the world, on the ridge of Heaven, greater than the great, through the inner radiance having entered into all forms of light, the lord of Creation stirs within the golden seed.

Which the Seers weave within the Ocean, which is the creation in the Supreme Word. From this is born the Mother of the world, who through the Waters, produces creatures on the Earth.

Water and Vibration

The calmness of meditation and of the spiritual life in general is like that of the water in a still or placid lake. It is not an artificial or rigid stillness, but a gentle self-contained movement, like a lake with gentle waves. To be like water is a great teaching. It allows one to adapt to everything and to find energy everywhere.

Water and Light

Water and light (Apas and Jyoti) are the two main factors of cosmic existence. Actually water is light in its reflected form. Light reflecting upon itself creates water. Water becomes a mirror for the light, but a

flowing mirror. So water and light are one. Light touches itself through water, which knows itself as light.

This essence of water becomes the chitta or reflective consciousness in the heart, in which the Self can be realized like light in a pure mirror.

Water allows us to see. At a physical level it is the clear fluid in the eyes that enables visual perception to occur, that can reflect light back to us. What is cleared by water allows the light to shine. Light is itself perhaps the purest form of water.

Bathing and Baptism

Ritual bathing is an important part of ancient yoga practices and of many religious rituals worldwide. This is symbolic for bathing the mind in the higher streams of awareness. Water cleanses away all impurities if we allow it to freely flow through us. This means that we must become like water.

The idea of a spiritual rebirth or baptism reflects an immersion in the stream of the heavenly waters. Outer rituals are just external means to help stimulate that internal process. We all need immersion in these inner currents for spiritual rebirth. The waters are the womb of Shakti through which the Divine Mother can bring about our inner transformation.

Water and the Chakras

The water element relates to the sex or water chakra, the Svadhishthana. Here we can experience the creative and formative power of water. Yet water exists in different forms in the other chakras as well. The waters of the heart are the waters of consciousness and of prana. The waters of the head and crown chakra are the ambrosial waters, the nectar or ananda.

One must learn to drink these inner waters. This is often done at the third eye where the stream of Shakti flows down from the higher planes. At that point one can breathe in the inner waters to satiate the thirst of the soul for immortal life.

Water and Fire

Water and Fire or Soma and Agni always go together. They are one in the tongue which can eat and speak (Agni) and taste and feel (Soma).

Fire is the child of the waters as the energy born in space and vibration. Water is the matrix for fire as the burning ghee. Only when water carries some heat of fire can it be liquid and flow.

Water and Happiness

The higher waters are Soma, the bliss, Ananda or nectar of immortality, or the streams of honey. Such waters bring about the rejuvenation of body and mind. They carry the essence, the rasa, the delight hidden in everything.

Water brings joy. Many of our recreational activities are performed through water, on the water or by the water. Certain special waters or beverages bring about intoxication. The Yogi imbibes the inner waters that intoxicate the Spirit and bring the soul to ecstasy.

Water and the Female

Woman is the essence of water, as the male is the essence of fire. She carries the special powers and sensitivities of Waters, as well as its capacities to flow and to carry electrical force (lightning or Shakti).

The Goddesses (Devis) are connected to Water. The rivers are great Goddesses, particularly those like Ganga that flow from high mountains like the Himalayas. They carry the rasa or essence of the mountains with them. Sarasvati is the great river of knowledge that provides wisdom and artistry in her flow.

The Goddess Lakshmi has her fountains. These are inner waters and currents that they open up for the devotee. That is her highest form of wealth.

Water and Ayurveda

Water is the basis of Kapha dosha, the biological water humor. Kapha people carry more Water but also at a spiritual level are more connected to the inner power of water and receptive power to nurture and support. They should meditate upon the healing and transformative powers of water to understand their nature.

Water and Sound

Sound is the vibration of the heavenly waters of space. All mantras are the songs of the inner waters.

As the great rishi Vasistha states in the Rigveda:

They know the origins of Heaven and Earth, the Waters listen as they flow.

Learn to hear the secret of the Waters, which is the Nada. The heavenly waters chant OM in their waves, while the electrical current within them forms the sound IM. These sounds of the Waters, or vibration of space, are the basis of all sounds.

Everything is hidden in the waters, which are both without and within. We are all the children of the waters and need to return to our universal flow.



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