

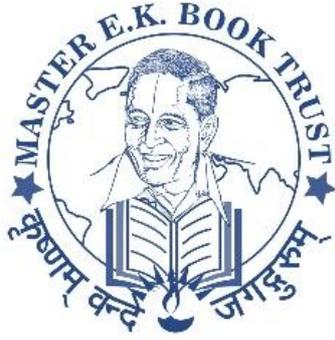
Bhagavān E. Anantacharya

# VEDIC CONCEPTS OF WATERS



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VISAKHAPATNAM – 530051

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## VEDIC CONCEPTS OF WATERS

**T**HE water is a subtle and complex concept, the basis and source of various facts and acts of thoughts, ideas and notions of the Vedic culture and is closely associated with every problem in the Vedas. In every practical performance of ritualistic details, the worship of the waters and the invocation of their powers are of primary, nay, utmost importance. The waters are the flowing waters of wisdom and intelligence of *Agni*

*apāṃ napānmadhumatīrapō dā yābhirindrō  
vāvṛdhē vīryāya yābhiḥ sōmō mōdatē harṣatē ḥa*

– R.V. 10.30.4 & 5

and proceed from his heart circulating through and encircling the universe in more than three concentric circles whose centre is therefore *Agni* alone, and not (*vidmā tē nāma paramaṃ guhā yadvidmā tamutsaṃ yata ājagantha* – R.V. 10.45.2) any of his many powers in their manifestations. It is from the womb of these waters that everything arises and even *Indra* and *Sōma* are reared by these waters. The waters at first assert themselves into seven distinct oceans as the seven mighty

mothers. *Agni* stirs them up and comes out as the eternal child or *Kumāra* for the purposes of further detailed operations of creation and manifestation in all states and at all levels, all of them being woven into the web of an inner-related network of subtle relations (*āpō asmānmātarah śundhayantu ghṛtēna nō ghṛtapvaḥ punantu viśvaṃ hi ripraṃ pravahanti dēvīrudidābhyaḥ śuḥirā pūta ēmi – R.V. 10.17.10*).

The *Brahmāṇḍa* is the consolidated concrete egg of the waters into a homogenous embryo with all kinds of potencies and powers called *Viśva-karma* from which is evolved the *Viśva-rūpa* or the whole manifested world of form which again the basic world of existence is grasped in mind as knowledge

*yō dēvānāṃ nāmadhā ēka ēva taṃ sampraśnaṃ bhuvanā yantyanā*

–R.V. 10.82.3

*tamidgarbhaṃ prathamam dadhra āpō yatra dēvāḥ samagaçchanta viśvē*

–R.V. 10.82.6

The entire sphere of the cosmos as a mental concept is named *Aditi*, the undivided, which through the process of understanding, is named as

time (*kalayati kālah*) and is then presented as the sphere of space. Even the three main divisions of the cosmos are named *Aditi* in an extended sense since each of these regions has its own offspring, in evolution from their three homogenous states (*aditirdyauraditirantarikṣamaditirmātā –R.V 1.89.10*). For specific understanding, the children of the sky (*div*) are termed *Aadityas*, those of the intervening space of *Prāṇās* (*antarikṣa*) as *Rudras*, while those of the solid existence of the earth (*Pr̥thvī*) are called *Vasus*. But it is only *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* that are foremost and primarily called *Aadityas*, they being the creators of even the waters as well as of *Aditi*, the *Brahmāṇḍa*.

They (*dakṣasya vāditē janmani vratē rājānā mitrāvaruṇā vivāsasi –R.V. 10.64.5*) are the twin powers of *Agni*'s will and they give rise to the waters themselves and bring them down through the three main firmaments as the showerers into the lower regions, as *Sarasvati* until they appear as tangible waters with their triple powers composed into the life-giving *Asura* of cloud which showers benignly on the world with the accompanying swift winds, flashes of lightnings, and thunderous sounds. *Mitra*

and *Varuṇa* are therefore said to be leaders of the waters (*apāṃ nētārau*) and the parents of *Dakṣa* (*dakshapitaras*), the intelligence, as well as his counterpart *Aditi*, the web or matrix. *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are the associate twins or parental powers of all creation emanating from the mind of *Agni*. They are said to be the foremost of all the Devas (*viśvēṣāṃ vaḥ satāṃ jyēṣṭhatamā gīrbhīrmitrāvaruṇā vāvṛdhadhyai* –R.V. 6.67.1) and with their unrivalled arms as their reins made of light-rays, they are the greatest controllers of all (*saṃ yā raśmēva yamaturyamīṣṭhā dvā janāṃ<sup>ṃ</sup> asamā bāhubhiḥ svaiḥ* –R.V 6.67.1). Like twin powers, they are powerfully related in their real and mutual assistance with the true conception of *Aditi* (*aśvā na yā vājinā pūtabandhū ṛtā yadgarbham aditirbharadhyai* –R.V 6.67.4). They are splendid relations, guarding *Aditi*, the conception of the light of truth. They are protectory of all, mobile and static (*viśvasya sthāturjagataśca gōpā* –R.V 7.60.2). The Veda says: “You *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, your thoughts of creation are of unbroken continuity” (*yuvōraçchidrā mantavō ha sargāḥ* –R.V 1.152.1). “You continue to improve your dwellings and

vestments wherever you are” (*yuvam vastrāṇi pīvasā vasāthē –R.V 1.152.1*). *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are most powerful over all creation not only in all regions of life, light and sound but in the creation and continuity of the operations of the primal waters of consciousness and of the cosmic sphere, right through every detail in every nook and corner of the developments of the universe. They create the waters and are also nursed by them. They are, therefore, called the powers that have control in many ways and through many ties (*bhūripāsāḥ*) for they supervise the many operations of the waters, of the cosmic sphere and of its differentiated parts (*drśyē ditimçāditimçā*). For the same reason, the ultimate *Agni* is said to be the primary cause and operator of the one *yajña* of existence as reality and of all its several variations (*vi jyōtiṣā brhatā bhātyagnirāvīrviśvāni kṛṇutē mahitvā –R.V 5.2.9*). He is the *Purōhita*, *Adhvaryu*, *Hōta* and the one *yajamāna* behind one and all whose wisdom none else could understand.

The knot of the complex concept of the symbolism of the waters has to be scanned and analysed (*prādēvīrmāyāḥ sahatē durēvāḥ śiśītē*

*śṛṅgē rakṣasē vinikṣē –R.V.5.2.9)* and traced to its basic foundations in the one supreme *Agni*, the life-power of all the unmanifest and manifest operations and who releases voluntarily his will into the component twin powers of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* with a further power *Aryama* for creative processes into all minute details through the parents. (*atūrtapanthāḥ pururathō<sup>1</sup> aryamā saptahōtā viṣurūpēṣu janmasu – R.V 10.64.5*).

*Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are the two powers behind everything, nominal and phenomenal and are the parents of the creation not only of animate beings but also of the gross tangible events and things. *Aryama* is the parent of creation through progeny. But *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are the two parental powers of the positive and negative poles in the subtlest forms of creation even in the spheres of *Prāṇa*, whose twin-powers operate as the particular twins of *Aśvins* prior to and at the dawn of tangible birth as *Naasatyas*, the twins of life-breath in the nose, like the twins of *dyāvapṛthvī*, *Sūrya-çandramasau*, *Indrābrhaspati*, *Indrāsōmau*, *Agnisōmau*, *Indrāviṣṇu* and *Agnāviṣṇu* in different twinships for different purposes at different levels of constitutions

at the same time in the same life of every organic being as in the cosmos (*indraśca yā çakrathuh sōma tāni dhurā na yuktā rajasō vahanti –R.V 1.164.19*). But the primal twins of all creation are *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* and they descend gradually down from the mental and psychological regions through the vital to the concrete ones, (*prapathē pathāmajaniṣṭa pūṣā prapathē divaḥ prapathē pṛthivyāḥ ubhē abhi priyatamē sadhasthē ā ça parā ça çarati prajānan –R.V 10.17.6*), and again through the mobile, luminous, gaseous, vaporous states into the stages of the least dense clouds, slowly descending down as oozings, particles, droplets, showerings, flowing streams (*yastē drapsaḥ skandati yastē amśurbāhuçyutō dhiṣaṇāyā upasthāt adhvaryōrvā pari vā yaḥ pavitrāttam tē juhōmi manasā vaṣatkr̥tam –R.V 10.17.12*), condensed hailstones and massive mountains of snow, fixed as well as floating on the polar seas and oceans of water, the lakes of floating, vaporous and cloudy waters i.e., the *Apsaras* (*tisrō dyāvaḥ saviturdvā upasthām̐ ēkā yamasya bhuvanē virāṣāt āṇim na rathyamamṛtādhi tasthuriha bravītu ya u taççikētāt – R.V 1.35.6*), the floating pools of water in the high

orbits of *Yama* and *Savitur* and above in the high unknown regions of vast firmament as *Urvaśis*, the dwellers of the high vastness (*Uru*), the greatest firmament. *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are said to move around the splendid lighting flashes (*vidyutō jyōtiḥ pari samjihānam mitrāvaruṇā yadapaśyatām tvā – R.V 7.33.10*).

The waters, their different transforming states, their powers and functions are not only true in themselves but also serve as a comprehensive formula to represent the one conscious autonomy of powerful homogeneity capable of moving through all states of existence even from the spiritual and mental regions, exhibiting the various formations and functions from their original state of homogeneity onwards, expressing into all states and forms in all regions, and are known as *Āapasaḥ* or *Nārāḥ*. *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, therefore represent the primary twin powers of *Agni* carrying on their operations before as well as after the appearance of the waters, i.e., they are component forces of the waters that are also fed and let by the water themselves to help the further work of their creations. There is the immensity or the disorder of

the extreme confusion of expansion of the powers outside and within the circumference of the widest circle of the *Çakra* of *Viṣṇu* which alone provides for the separate existences and also gives protection to the extra-cosmic order of *Prāṇās* and those of the intra-cosmic life within the fold of great cosmic sphere. That is taking place in the manifest cosmic order is only a distinct concrete shape formed out of immense subtle, unmanifest, and supra-cosmic *ātman*, the all-immanent *Viṣṇu*. The huge circle of *Viṣṇu* is said to be constantly growing beyond measure (*parō mātrayā tanvā vṛdhāna – R.V 7.99.1*) guarded by him all around the margin of the sphere by the fighting *Kumāra* ready to fight out any incursion (*kumāraḥ pratyētyāhavaṃ*). The indistinct is the subtle (*avyakta*) and beyond the conception of the mind and is the inexhaustible (*avyaya*). It is the experience of the *ātman* but it is inexpressible and immeasurable recognized as immensity alone. It is existence in fullness, unlimited and inconceivable to the limited powers of the individual mind reason and logic (*gahanam garbhāra māsīdidam sarvamapratarkya mavijñēyam*). But it is the source of the cosmos (*tvēṣam hyasya sthavirasya nāma –R.V 7.100.3*).

Viṣṇu's extension is beyond the limit of space (*kṣayantamasya rajasaḥ parākē* –R.V 7.100.5). The *ātman*, which can experience it, is therefore said to be as minute as the atomic in the atom and as vast as the ever-extending and immeasurable beyond all extension.

The states of water formulate the several stages of transformation and transmutation whether into the higher subtle spheres of the cosmos beyond the region of *Yama* or below it into the more concrete regions. At every stage of transformation in every arch of the firmaments, it is the *Saudhanvanas*, *Ṛbhu*, *Vibhavan* and *Vāja*, i.e., in colour, sound and power who renew creation with the renewals of the productivity of time as the year (*Vatsēmrāti vatsaraḥ*) (*Samvatsara*) out of the rays of light with their inherent movement, colour and sound. The waters of consciousness, remaining in the highest ocean, (*urau mahān anibadhdha vavadhārpō agniṃ yaśasaḥ śam*) or knowledge, they turn into the ocean of *Prāṇās* of life, light and sound and altogether form into the forms of vapour cloud from which descend as the several forms of particles, oozings, droplets, showers, streams,

hailstones and movements of show representing the showers of their powers into more and more concrete forms (*sa uttarasmādadharam samudramapō divyā asṛjadvarṣyā abhi* –R.V 10.98.5).

The waters and their properties remain occupied by the potent powers of *Devas* in their highest ocean

*asminsamudrē adhyuttarasminnāpō dēvēbhirnivṛtā atiṣṭhan*

–R.V 10.98.6

The cloud of vapour or *Asura* in the upper regions is therefore known as the source of life-giving showers of *Prāṇās* or *Asus*. The blue cloud is representative of *Asura*, the giver of life, since the one property of the *Devas* is life-giving *dēvānāmasuratvamēkaṃ*. The parallel and counterparts of the waters of the cosmos in the individualized organic constitutions are the *Aṅgirasas*, the floods of the body are the floods or *rasas* of all the portions of the bodies. The primary floods of the body are the floods of the *Prāṇās* (*praṇavai aṅgirasah*). The cloud of the creative waters of life is the *Śyāma-mēgha* or *Mēghaśyāma*, while the terrific, stormy cloud represents the

destructive *Asura*, the taker of life, the destroyer. The word *Asura* thus stands for one who has both the giving and removing aspects of life, i.e., the evolving and involving features, and the synthetic and analytical aspects of creative knowledge (*drapsam skannaṃ brahmaṇā daivyēna viśvē dēvāḥ puṣkarē tvādadanta –R.V 7.33.11*). The formation of particles and drippings of water from vapours, formed in accordance with the operations of the divine knowledge of the *Devas* have kept you, Oh! *Vaśiṣṭha*, in the lotus of the lake of waters in the superior region of the vastness. Since *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* have seen moving around the flashes of lightnings, people hold the birth of *Vaśiṣṭha* as being similar to that of *Agastya*

*tattē janmōtaikaṃ vasiṣṭhāgastyō yattvā viśa ājabhāra*

– R.V 7.33.10

He is the symbol of the two spheres of truth, giving them out in several thousands of ways

*sa prakēta ubhayasya pravidvānsahasradāna uta vā sadānaḥ*

– R.V 7.33.12

Wandering along the arch of the firmament of *Yama*, the *Apsaras* or dripping waters have created *Vaśiṣṭha*

*yamēna tataṃ paridhiṃ vayiṣyannapsarasaḥ pari  
jajñē vasiṣṭhaḥ*

–R.V 7.33.12

The two powers, *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, born in the sacrifice (*Satra*) when desired with obeisance, have equally separated their essence in the *kumbha* mansion, i.e., the water pot of the sky

*satrē ha jātāviṣitā namōbhiḥ kumbhē rētaḥ  
siṣiçatuḥ samānam*

–R.V 7.33.13

The proof of it arose from the midst of it and the brilliant Ṛṣi born from the exact centre of it, is called *Vaśiṣṭha*

*tatō ha māna udiyāya madhyāttatō  
jātamṛṣimāhurvasiṣṭham*

–R.V 7.33.13

The cloud formation, the genesis of the particles of vapour into the globules of mist, their dripping and showering, the accompanying flashes of lightnings and their thunderings, are all taken as symbols of the power of *Viśvē-dēvās* in their one state of unity, in their conflux of the sacrifice, capable of releasing the processes of creative activity. The creative process is thus found in the different regions with all their details in the transformations going on at the arches of the different firmaments and these details are expression of all subtler truth and are also the basis of the practical details of all sacrificial directions, as also the means for the study and understanding of the several principles involved and at work, behind the ritual practices of the sacrifices whether they take place in the total cosmic *yajña* or the microcosmic *yajña* of life-processes in the constitutions of individual beings. The showers of the knowledge of life, light and sound are symbolized by the drops of the showering waters from the cloud. An initial supply of nucleation of the particles starts with oozing, dripping and showering processes of the water drops (*drapsaśçaskanda prathamām anu dyūnimam çā yōnimanu yaśça pūrvaḥ* – R.V 10.17.11).

Similar is the process of the showerings of thought, of pulsation of *Prāṇās*, their sparks, flashes of light and the elements of sounds, along with the showers of impulses of life and movement. The driving intelligence behind all such processes is invoked as divine knowledge coming down from the higher regions of truth and is also said to be the source of inspiration and of utterance in trans-revelations (*dhiṣaṇāyā upasthita*) in man and is said to occur at the summits of intense brilliance of attention (*ṛtaṃ ca satyaṃ çābhīddhāttapasō'dhyajāyata* –R.V 10.190.1). Below the level of it is the play of the night (*ratri*) (*tatō rātryajāyata* -R.V 10.190.1). The mother of light still below it is the ocean of the concrete expression of existence (*tataḥ samudrō arṇavaḥ* – R.V 10.190.1). The procession of intelligence is said to be the real march of divine conscious power contained in the waters to be liberated at different stations, and the whole march of the cloud, the giver of water (*nīrada*) of life is compared to the free and happy sojourn of the sage *Nārada*, the dispensing cloud as a vehicle as a chariot of power specially made for us, conveying the divine knowledge accompanying the music of *Prāṇās* (*pra śukraitu*

*dēvī manīṣā asmatsutaṣṭō rathō na vājī –R.V 7.34.1).*  
 One may here the divine song of the descending waters which know the birth of earth and heaven  
*(viduḥ pṛthivyā divō janitram śarṇvantyāpō adha kṣarantīḥ – R.V 7.34.2)*

Three varieties of the warmth of heat are assisting the birth of *Uṣas* and all of them are known to the *Vaśiṣṭhas*

*trayō gharmāsa uṣasaṃ sacantē sarvām ittām anu vidurvasiṣṭhāḥ*  
 –R.V 7.33.7

The *Vaśiṣṭhas* have conquered knowledge (*dhiyaṃjinvāsa –R.V 7.33.1*). *Indra* selected the wise *Vaśiṣṭhas* who are great scientists in preserving knowledge. The creative process formulated in terms of the grouping of the particles of water vapour into a cloud through the stages of *Drapsa*, oozing (*çyuta*), gliding (*skanna*) showering (*vṛṣṭi*) etc. is systematized and symbolized in the *Taittirīya Saṃhita* into the formula of creation with seventeen letters and is known as *Prajāpati* of *Saptadaśākṣara*

(*yōvai saptaudaśākṣaram yajñamanvāyattam bṛṃsati*). The four letters *Ā Śrā va ya* with the other four letters *astu srauṣṭ* the two subsequent letters *yaja* with a further five of *yēyajāmahē* and of the final two letters *vashaṭ* form the creative formula of the seventeen letters of the creative *prajāpati*. They indicate the natural order of his creative process (*ēṣa vai saptadaśa prajāpatir yajñamanvāyattaḥ*). The formula is the symbol of origin, basis and emergence of *yajña*. When the *devas* met in a sacrifice, the several directions in space became dimmed and were not clearly visible to them. They searched first for traces of moisture. With the formula of *Āsrāvaya*, they initiated the process of the blowing of the first wind (*purōvāta*) and filled the sky with the aid of the method of the formula of *astu* and *srauṣṭ*. With *yaja*, they produced the lightning, formed the showers and thunders with *yēyajāmahē* and the *vaṣaṭ*. With these, they fully filled all the directions. He, who securely held the *agni* in his *Ātman* and develop it, generates the *agni* out of that (*ātmannagniṃ grṇītē cēṣyāvannātmanā va ētamadhijanayati*). He is the container of the potential splendour and becomes the showerer with the repetition of generations and in Him is the

*Ātman*, the center of all existence – mobile and static

*sa rētōdhā vṛṣabhaḥ śaśvatīnām tasminnātmā jagatastasthuṣaśca*

– R.V 7.101.6

The fundamental waters in which all the created world exists, along with the three firmaments, move in three ways

*yasminviśvāni bhuvanāni tasthustisrō dyāvastrēdhā sasrurāpaḥ*

– R.V 7.101.4

There are the storages and three cups that pour out and the sweet waters ooze with special purity from before

*trayaḥ kōśāsa upasēcanāsō madhvaḥ ścōtantyabhitō virapśam*

– R.V 7.101.4

The accounts of the formation of the particles of water vapour, whether from the gaseous life-impulse into the vaporous states or from the vapour into droppings or drizzling will resemble the cloud-

chamber experiments of our present atomic physics in many respects and the symbolism of the showers refers equally to showers of gases as well as to the showers of impulses or of sparks of fire and flashes of light and of sound in all the multiple variations of spectroscopic tints in a thousand and one way. The showers of speech are referred to in a thousand ways. The waters daily go up and down equally well

*samānamētadudakamuççaityava çāhabhiḥ*

– R.V 1.164.51

The showers of *Parjanya* conquer the earth and those of *Agni* conquer the heaven

*bhūmiṃ parjanyaṃ jinvanti divaṃ jinvantyagnayaḥ*

– R.V 1.164.51

The firmament is the creative father, the centre is our own place here in the middle, and the vast space of the creative earth is the mother, the inner centre of the erect water-vase is the receptacle and here the father has sown the conception for the milking or receptive daughter

*dyaurmē pitā janitā nābhiratra bandhurmē mātā  
pṛthivī mahīyam /*

*uttānayoścamvōṣryōnirantaratrā pitā  
duhiturgarbhamādhāt //*

– R.V 1.164.33

The waters of wisdom that are the background of all the regions of existence supplying the intelligence, the power and forces, forms, materials and methods of creation are themselves from the spring to the sweet nectarine waters of the heart of the all-pervading *Viṣṇu* i.e., the central *Agni*. The powerful waters are said to be the chaste dames, the matrons, but they are also known to contain the masculine power. The apparent anomaly of it can be resolved and understood only by the seer, the seeing scientist, and also the wise son who understands what birth is. The father and mother are the parents, the twin-powers for creation, and they are contained inherent in the powers of waters. But the waters themselves are brought out in the wilful jet of a spring that is in the centre and which surrounds the universe in three and a half concentric circles by *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* who are proclaimed as *apāṃ nētāraḥ*. The powers that lead

the waters are also said to be the parent powers that condense the knowledge into the *Brahmāṇḍa*, whose intelligence is known as *Dakṣa* and the condensation of the waters of intelligence as *Aditi*, the individual mind the *Dēvamātā*. *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* are termed as the patron powers of the waters as well as those of *Dakṣa*. *Agni* is the one genius of creation and the twin-powers out of him to further the work of creation, are *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, who supervise the functions of *Prāṇa* as *Asvins*, of lighting as the alternating light and darkness, of thunder as sound and stillness; in the three firmaments two of which are of the creative *Savitṛ* and the third is of *Yama*. The central powers that precipitate the work of creation at all levels are called the parents. Strictly speaking, they can well be understood to be the two components of the whole of reality, and named as the anode and the cathode, the positive and negative poles of the basic flood of power, conscious beyond human grasp. The watery clouds, the sowers of fire, light and sound at the three levels of the three firmaments are symbolic of the transforming processes and transmitting stages. The cathode and the anode of the electric power cells resolve

and compose energy, necessary for any kind of working operations. The column of waters between the earth and the sky in the intervening *Antarikṣa* is the column of dense vapours and gases and is filled with darkness which may be said to be densest light, darkening and blinding the ordinary eyes with its glare and intensity, for in the zones of its lesser density are interspread the regions of the varying lights of the various planets and stars. The column of *Varuṇa's* gaseous water in the *Rōdasi* is similar to the discharge tube which would exhibit varying rings of light when the vapours occupying the tube have the least pressure and density. The varying shades of light emanating from the hidden fire of the darkness are distinctly said to be twenty-one, and vaguely twenty-two. Thus *Agni* shines from the heart of the darkness in all his twenty-one colours and their multiples. When they are full, they are the sixty-three of *Marut's* powers of the circle of *Indra's* weapon, the *Vajra*, supplied by *Tvaṣṭa* for the many powerful battles of *Indra* and this *Vajra* is the composite weapon of all the powers of waters themselves. The *Maruts* are the powers inherent in the waters of consciousness and emerge in various combinations to work out the objects and purposes

of any power or *Deva* of *Rudra*, *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Viṣṇu* etc., in their several spheres and states. In the human constitutions, this basic consciousness of universal intelligence works in the several regions of the sensory and physical organs through the cognizance and functioning of the several kinds of essential fluids and other secretions such as saliva in the mouth or tears in the eyes etc., to attend to the needs, ordinary and emergent of the several organs, inner as well as the outer portions of the parts of the living constitution of the full awareness of the human being. It is from the flow of the ocean of universal consciousness that our human hearts too receive the flood of individual consciousness (*ēkaḥ samudrō dharuṇō rayīṇāmasmaddhṛdō bhūrijanmā vi ṇaṣṭē* –R.V 10.5.1). The waters are therefore said to contain the powers of immortality and rectitude and the *Devas* alone are capable of declaring the powers of the waters (*apsvantaramṛtamapsu bhēṣajamapāmuta praśastayē dēvā bhavata vājinaḥ* – R.V 1.23.19).