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## Water and its ayurvedic utilities

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### Abstract

Water is the part of our life. it is the most common liquid on earth. It is a liquid that descends from the cloud as rain, from streams, lakes and seas and it is a major constituent of all living organisms. It is an odourless, tasteless, very slightly compressible liquid oxide of hydrogen H<sub>2</sub>O which appears bluish in thick layers. This liquid is a compound of Hydrogen and Oxygen. It contains 11.188% of hydrogen and 88.812% of oxygen by weight. Water is the elixir of life, has taken today the centre stage all over the world. It covers 73.4% of the earth's surface. Water is one of the key reasons of human civilization and human survival. Human body is made of approximately 71% of water. It helps to carry out many important jobs in human body such as removes bacteria from bladder, helps in digestion, carries nutrients and oxygen to the cells and maintenance the sodium balance balance in the body. The health benefits being by the water.

This water plays an important role as a medicinal plant. Around 60% of our body is made up of water. It is an essential element for the human being to live well. Since ancient times, water is considered as the highest among all types of medicines. Satapatha Brahmana says Apah is the main juice of plants (medicinal) 'आपो हि ओषधीनां रसः' (शत. ब्रा. 3.6.1.7). Water therapy is used for curing all types of diseases.

There are several ayurvedic texts, which has discussed the value of water as a medicinal product. In the paper, there will be discussion on it.

**Keywords:** Medicines, diseases, dehydration, thirst, unctuous, fatigue, aggravation

### Introduction

Water is the part of our life. It is the most common liquid on earth. It is a liquid that descends from the cloud as rain, from streams, lakes and seas and it is a major constituent of all living organisms. It is an odourless, tasteless, very slightly compressible liquid oxide of hydrogen H<sub>2</sub>O which appears bluish in thick layers. This liquid is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. It contains 11.188% of Hydrogen and 88.812% of Oxygen by weight. Water is the elixir of life, has taken today the centre stage all over the world. It covers 73.4% of the earth. Water is one of the key reasons for human civilization and human survival. Human body is made of approximately 71 percent of water. It helps to carry out many important jobs in human body such as removes bacteria from bladder, helps in digestion carries nutrients and oxygen to the cells and maintenance the sodium balance in the body. Water can provide inspiration for clarity, clarity of mind, clarity of thoughts, clarity of purpose and clarity of intentions and motivation. The health benefits being by the water. It is today not only practical but desirable.

There are interesting psychological benefits. According to scientific studies, sea water has a positive impact on mental health. Minerals in sea air reduces stress and improves alertness and mental energy. The sound of water also has positive effects on our mental health. Water sounds used in meditation to create a gentle atmosphere for our minds.

According to ancient Hindu beliefs, this universe is made of five basic elements:

1. पृथिवी (earth)
2. आपः (water)
3. तेजः (fire)
4. वायुः (wind)
5. आकाशम् (sky)

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According to *R̥gveda*, each life on this planet came into existence from water <sup>[1]</sup>. It is usually the basic need of all living creatures. *Yajurveda* speaks.

“तमिद्गर्भं प्रथमं दध्न आपो यत्र देवाः समगच्छन्त विश्वे अजस्य नाभावध्येकमर्पितं यस्मिन्विश्वानि भुवनानि तस्थुः” । (शुक्लयजुः सं. 17.30)

This suggests the importance of water, anything we try to identify requires water and depends parasitically on water, this establishes water as indispensable part of our life. *Ubbatāchārya* in his *bhāṣya* explains this very aptly as-

“तमित् प्रतिपक्ष तमिद्गर्भम् तमाश्चर्यभूतं प्रथमं गर्भं दध्ने आपः। यत्र देवाः समगच्छन्त संगताः विश्वे सर्वे एकमविभक्तमनन्यभूतम् अर्पितं समर्पितम्। यस्मिन्नजे ब्रह्मणि विश्वानि भुवनानि सर्वाणि भूतजातानि तस्थुः स्थितवन्ति ब्रह्माण्डाश्रितानि नतु तस्यापन्य आधार इति स्वप्रतिष्ठं हि परब्रह्म” । (उ. भा. 17.30)

Water first gives birth. Between the water all Gods were met. The whole world is situated in the water. It makes us pure, fresh, clean and reliefs from all sins- “अद्भिश्शुद्ध्यन्ति गात्राणि” । (बौ. ध. 1.5.8.2) It is the supreme shelter.

### Water: As Explained in Vedic Texts

There are many synonyms of water reflected in Vedic and classical Sanskrit literature. *Āpaḥ* - is the common Sanskrit word which denotes the meaning of water. To explain water, the best statements available in *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* are- *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says-

“अद्भिर्वा इदं सर्वमाप्तम्” । (श. ब्रा. 1.1.1.14)

Means, these everything is covered by *Āpaḥ* (Water). Another important quotation also suggests- A sacrificer being forward to water, because all this universe is pervaded by water and by this first act the sacrificer also pervades all this universe <sup>[2]</sup>. In *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* it is told that-

“आपो भूत्वा सर्वमाप्नोत्” । (जै. ब्रा. 1.314)

This covered everything, so it is called *Āpaḥ*. Again, in *Kāthaka Sankalanam* the notable statement available is-

“आपो वा इदं सर्वमाप्नुवंस्तदेनमाह सर्वमाप्नुहीति” । (काठक. संक. 49.6.7)

*Āpaḥ* covered everything, so he asked again to covered everything.

This water is the first most important element in this universe. When in the beginning there was nothing and darkness

covered by darkness, the empty world was covered by undistinguishable water. An important quote from *R̥gveda* in accordance with this-

“तम आसीत्तमसा गूळहमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम्” । (ऋ. सं. 10.129.3)

It is concluded that water is the beginning of all things and it is the first element over the rest. In *Manusāmhītā* it has been established as-

“सोऽभिध्याय शरीरात् स्वात् सिसृक्षुर्विधिः प्रजाः।

अप एव ससर्जादौ तासु वीजमवासृजत्” । (मनु. स. 1.8)

### Utility of Water in Ayurveda

Around 60% of our body is made up of water. It is an essential element for the human being to live well. Since ancient times, water is considered as the highest among all types of medicines. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says, *Āpaḥ* is the main juice of plants (medicinal)- ‘आपो वा ओषधीनां रसः’ । (शत. ब्रा. 3.6.1.7) Again, ‘ओषधयो वा अपामोद्या यत्र ह्याप उन्दन्त्यस्तिष्ठन्ति तदोषधयो जायते’ । (शत. ब्रा. 7.5.2.47) Means, this water is the medicine of all medicines. If a man understands its importance, he will easily cure from all diseases.

This water is very much discussed in Ayurvedic texts also. “आयुस्मिन् विद्यते, अनेन वाऽयुर्विन्दतीत्यायुर्वेद” (सु. सं. 1.14). The text which discusses the knowledge of life or science of life, is called Ayurveda. It is an ancient medical tradition of India and considered as a supplement to the Vedas. According to *Carana-vyūha*, this is an *Upaveda* of *R̥gveda*. But *Acārya Caraka* and *Suśruta* considered this text as an *Upaveda* of *Atharvaveda*. This term is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘*Ayuh*’ means ‘life’ and ‘*Veda*’ meaning ‘knowledge’ or ‘science’. Ayurveda is not only the Science of Life but the Life of Science as well. The longevity and the healthy life of man is the most essential and prerequisite of all progress, and it is the Medical Science that accomplishes the preservation of man in a perfect state. *Ayus* (life) is the combination of the human body, organs, mind and soul. Therefore, the ancient seers called the Medical Science as Ayurveda. The traditional Ayurvedic texts are full of references to all natural kinds of water. It is our most important element.

The main advantages of water from the Ayurvedic point of view are-

- 1) It counteracts fatigue
- 2) Water enhances the radiance of skin
- 3) It prevents digestive problems.
- 4) It calms the mind and provides satisfaction.
- 5) Water refreshes and is easily absorbed by the body. So, the water is the source of medicines and it prevents us from affliction.

(<https://www.ayurveda-products.eu>)

In *Atharvaveda* it has also been discussed in many *sūktas*, the seer prays for remedy to the god of water who rules over all creatures-

Of the waters, having mastery of desirable things, ruling over human beings (*carṣanī*), I ask a remedy <sup>[3]</sup>. (tr. By William Dwight Whitney)

<sup>3</sup> ईशाना वार्याणां क्षयन्तीश्चर्षणीनाम् । आपो याचामि भेषजम् । (अथ. स. 1.5.4)

<sup>1</sup> तस्याः समुद्रा अधि वि क्षरन्ति तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश्चतस्रः।

ततः क्षरत्यक्षरं तद्विश्वमुप जीवति। (ऋ. सं. 1.164.42)

Note. From her the clouds shed abundant rain, and thence the four quarters live, thence the moisture spreads, and the universe exists. (tr. By H.H. Wilson)

<sup>2</sup> यद्वेवापः प्रणयति। अद्भिर्वा इदं सर्वमाप्तन्तत्प्रथमो नैवैतत्कर्मणा सर्वमाप्नोति । (श. ब्रा. 1.1.1.14)

Same thing explains Vedic seer *Trīśirā* in *Rgveda*, when he says- O water! Give us our saviour medicines, so that we can see the sun ever after-

“आपः पृणीत भेषजं वरुथं तन्मे ममा ज्योक च सूर्यं दृशे” ॥ (ऋ. स. 10.9.7)

So, water is regarded as *Viśva-Bheṣajī*-

“अप्सु मे सोमो अन्नवीदतर्विश्वानि भेषजा ।  
अग्निं च विश्वशंभुवमापश्च विश्वभेषजीः” ॥ (ऋ. सं. 1.23.20) [4]

Among the ancient Ayurvedic texts *Caraka Samhitā* of *Caraka*, *Suśruta Samhitā* by *Suśruta* and *Aṣṭāṅghrdayam* by *Vāgbhatta* are recognised as the *Bṛhatrayi* or the great triad. This Ayurveda has eight specialised branches. All these eight branches deal with the prevention and cure of diseases in their respective fields. This traditional Ayurvedic texts in their branches explain the bold statements about the importance of water as a medicinal product.

The main advantage of water is that it is the ruinous of thirst. When Vāyu and Pitta excessively aggravated in the human body because of irritation, fear, grief, anger, fasting and hot rays of sun it causes dehydration of the tissue elements of the body which are liquid in nature. And as a result of it, morbid thirst is manifested in the body. *Caraka* says about this in his text-

“क्षोभाद्भयाच्छ्रमादपि शोकात् क्रोधाद्विलङ्घनात्मघात्  
क्षाराम्ललवणकटुकोष्णरुक्षशुष्कान्मसेवाभिः॥  
धातुक्षयगदकर्षणवमनाद्यतियोगसूर्यसन्तापैः।  
पित्तानिलौ प्रवृद्धौ सौम्यान् धातूश्च शोषयतः॥  
रसवाहिनीश्च नालीर्जिह्वामूलगलतालुककल्मोन्मः।  
संशोष्य नृणां देहे कुरुतस्तृष्णामतिवलां महाबलावेतौ” ॥ (च. चिकित्सास्थान. 4-6)

*Caraka Samhitā* describes in one place of *Cikitsā Sthāna*, the utility of different types of water in the prevention of thirst. First, he describes the utility of cold water-

“शीतमुष्णञ्च जलं कुत्र देयं वज्ज्यं वा कुत्रेथ्याहा  
तृट्दाहमूर्च्छाभ्रमक्लममदात्ययास्त्रविषपित्ते  
शस्तं स्वभावशीतं, शृतशीतं सन्निपातेऽम्भः” ॥ (च. चिकित्सास्थान. 57)

Means morbid thirst, burning, syndrome, fainting, giddiness, mental fatigue, alcoholism, bleeding, poisoning and ailments all of these become access by aggravated Pitta. The natural cold water is useful in removal of these. Same thing also explained by *Suśruta*. He says in swooning, anaemia, warmth, poisoning giddiness, lethargy, vomiting, diseases related to bile and in haemorrhages from upper part, cooler water is beneficial-

“मूर्च्छापित्तोष्णदाहेषु विषे रक्ते मदात्यये। भ्रमक्लमषरीतेषु तमके वमथौ  
तथा। ऊर्ध्वगे रक्तपित्ते च शीतमम्भः प्रशस्यते” ॥ (सु. सं. 45. 28)

<sup>4</sup> Note. All medicaments, as well as *Agni*, the benefactor of the universe, are in the waters, the waters, contain all healing herbs. (tr. By H.H. Wilson)

And, also the water cooled after boiling is very effective in *Sannipātaka* (a type of fever)- “शृतशीतं सन्निपातेऽम्भः” । this type of water is un-unctuous and light and helps in removing Vāta and kaffa. If there is abundance of nipples and bile, then also this type of water is very beneficial.

Again, *Ācārya Vāgbhatta* says in *Aṣṭāṅghrdayam*. According to that, cold water helps in removing of alcoholism, weariness, fainting, vomiting, exertion, thirst, burning, aggravation of Pitta and Blood [5].

On the other hand, hot water is usefull in removal of hiccup, asthma, first stage of fever, pinasa, in the diseases of the side of the chest and throat and in the diseases caused by Vāyu and thick kapha and after the administration of elimination therapies-

“हिककाश्वासनवज्वरपीनसघृतपीतपार्श्वगलरोगे।  
कफवातकृते स्त्याने सद्यः शुद्धे च हितमुष्णम्” ॥ (च. चिकित्सास्थान. 58)

*Ācārya Suśruta* explains the same topic in this way-

“पार्श्वशूले प्रतिशयाये वातरोगे गलग्रहे  
आध्माने स्तिमिते कोष्ठे सद्यः शुद्धे नवज्वरो हिककायां स्नेहपीते च  
शीताम्बु परिवर्जयेत्” ॥ (सु. सं. 45. 29-30)

*Ācārya Vāgbhatta* also describes the utility of hot water in the same way [6]. Not only this, hot water is also useful in some other conditions. In this regard *Suśruta* says-

“कफमेदोऽनिलामघ्नं दीपनं बस्तिशोधनम्।  
श्वासकासज्वरहरं पथ्यमुष्णोदकं सदा। क्वाथ्यमानं निर्वेगं निष्केनं निर्मलं  
लघु।  
चतुर्भागावशेषं तु ततोयं गुणवत् स्मृतम्” ॥ (सु. सं. 45. 39-40)

That hot water processes urinary antiseptic properties. Hot water is always salutary in breath, kaffa and fever. And the water, which is forth less, clear and light during boiling and after boiling which becomes one fourth of the total is called the best quality water. Ayurveda thus indicates many utilizations of water to relief from several diseases.

According to *Rgveda- Āpah* is the best medicine for all diseases "आपः सर्वस्य भेषजः" (ऋ.सं. 10.137.6) [7] Whatever therapy we use for curing the symptoms present in the patient, water is definitely a part of the treatment process. Not only that, water is utilized while preparing a medicine and also while consuming the medicines. Our ancient Ayurvedic *ācāryas* have describe in their respective texts about the preparation of various types of medicines for various diseases, where we can see, water (*Āpah*) is one of the essential components in most cases.

In *Vedic Samhitā* texts, we can see the seers treated this water as a god and solicits to it to prevent diseases. In *Atharva Samhitā*, there is one hymn where seer wish to take the water

<sup>5</sup> शीतं मदात्ययगलनिमूर्च्छाच्छर्दिश्रमभ्रमान्।  
तृष्णोष्णदाहपित्तास्त्रविषाण्यम्बु नियच्छति ॥ (अ. ह. सू. 5. 15)

<sup>6</sup> दीपनं पाचनं कण्ट्यं लघूष्णं बस्तिशोधनम्।  
हिध्माध्मानानिलश्लेष्मसद्यः शुद्धिनवज्वरो  
कासामपीनसश्वासपार्श्वरुक्षु च शस्यते ॥ (अ. ह. सू. 5.16-17)

<sup>7</sup> आपः विश्वस्य भेषजः। (अ. सं. 3.7.5)

with him which is disease-free and destroyer of tuberculosis [8].

Again, an another hymn from *Atharva Samhitā*, where seer *Śantāti* says, *Indra* puts the nectar provider medicines in the water and prays to the god of water to provide the medicines to us [9]. *Yajurveda* has also discussed in some places the medicinal importance of water. *Amṛtam* is considered to be in water, in its healing medicines-

“अप्स्वन्तरमृतमप्सु भेषजमपामुत प्रशस्तिष्वश्वा भवतः वाजिन”।  
(शुक्लयजुः सं. 9.6) [10]

Another important quotation, where seer prays to the god of water to become refreshing, become auspicious within our belly and make us free from all sins maladies and sickness and also wish to be pleasant to taste-

“श्वात्राः पीता भवत यूयमापो अस्माकमन्तरुदरे सुशेवाः।  
ता अस्मभ्यमयक्ष्मा अनमीवा अनागसः स्वदन्तु देवीरमृता क्रतावृधः”॥  
(शुक्लयजुः सं. 4.12)

### Conclusion

Hindu literature as well as social culture has given utmost importance to the purification of body, mind and all over the subjects associated to its day to day life. Purification of body and all other subjects shall be gain through water. Water considered as only element by which one can wash away the impurities, which is external in nature. Similarly, water also washes out the internal body through the Yogic practices. In Yogic practice, we can observe extensive use of water to get control over different diseases of human body. The therapeutic use of water may not have long history but use of water for purification of external as well as internal body cannot be refutable since Vedic period. In the Ayurvedic texts we also could get several references regarding the therapeutic elements of the water.

### Methodology

This work is mainly based on secondary source of information such as published documents, books, journals etc. The proposed paper evaluates the previous works, their necessity and form of related databases. Data are collected through the overview of previous works and related texts, those are *Vedas*, *Vedāngas*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Sūtras*. In this approach, the data collection begins with specific observation of the previous literatures and subsequently analysed the data collected. For interpretation we have accepted current trend of research methodology on Indology.

### Acknowledgement

Without whose mercy, a leaf does not fall from the tree and the Sun does not rise, who is the refuge of all-knowing

<sup>8</sup> इमा आपः प्र भ्राम्ययक्ष्मा यक्ष्मनाशनीः।

गृहानुप प्र सीदाम्यमृतेन सहाग्निना ॥ (अ. सं. 9.3.23)

Note. I bring forward these waters, free from *yaksma*, dispeller of *yaksma*. I set forth unto the houses, together with immortal fire. (tr. By Willam Dwight Whitney)

<sup>9</sup> यन्मातली रथकृतममृतं वेद भेषजम् ।

तदिन्द्रो अप्सु प्रावेशयत् तदापो दत्त भेषजम् ॥ (अथर्व सं. 11.8.23)

<sup>10</sup> Note. *Amṛtam* is in the waters, in the waters healing medicines. Yea, Horses! At our praises of the waters grow your flect and strong. (tr. By R.T.H. Griffith)

wisdom, the almighty, the most Merciful Lord, him I am proud to be revered for completing this paper. I also reverentially bow down to the professors of Sanskrit, PG department, University of Gour Banga and Visva-Bharati University for their authoritative and standard teaching and also for their always presence and solving all kinds of major and minor problems in preparation of this paper. I often thank the peoples who have been directly or indirectly assisted me in completion of this paper.

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