CHAPTER V

Medicinal Purposes of Water &
Water in Magical Rites
5.1 Water as Medicine

Both Rig Veda and AtharvaVeda quote Water as medicine in many occasions. We see a number of verses referring Water as medicine. Thus in Rig Veda——

"अपु मे सोमो अष्ट्रोदविन्यासनम भेषजा।
अन्नि च विख्वारंधापास्य विश्ववेषजी: ॥"

Rg I.23.20

Soma has declared, “All medicaments, as well as Agni, the benefactor of the Universe, are in the Waters”. The waters contain all healing herbs.

Ayurveda is the ancient Indian medical science, the origin of which can be traced back to more than 5000 years. The sources of Ayurveda are the vedas, the oldest available classics. The word Ayurveda derived from two roots (Ayur), which means life and (Ved), which means knowledge. It is fair to say that Ayurveda is the science of life.

Historically the origin of Indian medicine can be traced to the “Atharva Veda”, which mentions two systems of medicine; first, the system predominantly of charms and Magico-religious medicine; secondly, the system of drugs used on an empirical basis. The change in the outlook of medicine from the Magico-religious to the physical causation and theories could be the result of the philosophical concepts of the “Nyaya Vaisesika” and the ‘Samkhya’ on which the theoretical structure of the Ayurveda came to be based.

The ‘Atharva Veda’ consists pre-dominantly of Bhutavidya (Psychiatry) and Sarpavidya (toxicology). Besides the above two,
Rasayana (geriatrics or the science of rejuvenation) and Vajikarana (virilization therapy) are also traceable in the 'Brahmahas' and 'Upanisads'. The Ayurveda contains besides the above four divisions, another our namely 'salya' (Surgery), 'Salyaya' (ENT and Ophthalmology), 'Kaya Chilaisa' (Internal Medicine) and Kaumara Bhritiya (Paediatrics). A number of facts related to 'Ayurveda' are seen in 'Atharvaveda' and that is why Ayurveda' is considered to be the 'Upaveda' of 'Atharvaveda.

"हिताहिति सुखे दुःखमयुस्तास्य हिताहितम्।
मनव्व तत्व यथोक्तामयुवेदः स उच्चते।"

Charaka Samhita 1.81

Ayurveda is the science, which treats what is advantageous and what is harmful for the body and also the happy and unhappy state of life. It describes what is good and what is not good for life, its measurement and other related matters.

Ayurveda is a science dealing not only with treatment of some diseases but is a complete way of life. It is only a system of medicine, which incorporates suggestions and remedies of both healthy and diseased people. Centuries before the world health organization recognized that health is not merely the physical well-being and just the absence of disease, it also includes mental hygiene. In that way Ayurveda is dealing with mental, physical and social well being of an individual.
5.2 Healing Properties of Water

Water is hailed as the most basic component necessary for life. It is the “universal solvent”; capable of dissolving and washing away all kinds of wastes, the most natural purifier, and of course it is essential to good health. Thus it has been illustrated in the ‘वैदिक निषप्तु’ also.

‘अमृतलुक्कानामु’

Nirukta. I. 1.2

The water is regarded as the Chief medicine. The Atharvanic poet calls the waters as Nector and styles them as ‘शेषज (medicine). They contain sweet honey.

“अप्वतरस्मूम्रु शेषजयु”

Av. I. 4.4

With in the waters is Amrita, in the waters is remedy and it gives vigor, Sakti.

The use of water to promote healing in medicine is a common thing. Drinking eight glasses of water per day is recommended by even the most conservative Western doctors. Well water, pond water, rain water etc. there are many types of waters described in the Ayurvedic texts and each has a therapeutic value just as food does. Water represents Soma, the nourishing cooling quality that is associated with lunar energy, as it has been said in the Rg.I.23.20.

That is why even in (चाणक्यनीति) there is a reference regarding consuming water in empty stomach.

अजीयेन शेषज वारि जीयेन वारिलग्रदमे ।

*Medicinal purposes of Water*
That means some undigested food can be digested by उपाय म त.e. taking water in the morning in the empty stomach.

In this context (YajurVeda) says

शन्नो देवीरसय आपो भवतु पीतये ।
शयोरमि भवतु न: ॥

YajurVeda 36.12

आप: पृणीत भेष्जन वर्ष तन्चे मम ।

Rg I.23.21

Waters bring to perfection all disease-dispelling medicaments for the good of my body.

आप: इह उ भेष्जीरापो अमीवचातनी: ।
आप: सर्वस्य भेष्जीसत्ते कृष्णक्षु भेषजमु ॥

Rg. 10.137.6

"Waters verily are medicinal, waters are the dissipaters of disease, waters are the medicines for every thing, and may they act as medicine to you".

The same idea is expressed in Atharvaveda III. 7.5.

आप: इह उ भेष्जीरापो अमीवचातनी: ।
आपो विन्दस्य भेष्जीसत्ता मुखवच्चु भेषियात्र ॥

The waters are remedial, the waters disease expelling, the waters are remedial for everything; let them release from all diseases.
The waters verify are remedial the waters are disease expelling, the waters are remedial of every thing; let them make remedy for thee.

5.3 Medicinal Qualities Of Water

Water helps with digestion, cools and balances pitta dosha, supports kapha and counteracts the dryness of vata. It nurtures, lubricates and also detoxifies when it flows out of the body as urine. Water when properly absorbed by the body, has several healing qualities. Like ---

- Helps to remove Fatigue
- Enhances glow of skin
- Prevents constipation
- Increases stamina
- Provides satisfaction
- Helps the heart
- Helps in digestion
- Cools our body
- Easy to assimilate
- Life giver
- Antioxidant

The healing effects of water can be enhanced using Ayurvedic methods. Sometimes people have dry skin and unquenchable thirst even though they drink lots of water. This is because when the person’s Agni is low and mucus blocks the micro channels, which
carry water to the cells. In order to clean the absorption, Ayurvedic
texts recommend boiling the water for various lengths of time,
creating therapeutic water called *Ushnodaka*. Another method is to
add spices or herbs to the water after boiling.

*Atharvaveda* says that the waters make the horses and cows strong.

अापो देवीसूप हृद्वये तथा गावः पिन्ननि नः।
सिन्दुर्य: कल्यावे हकः ॥

AV. I. 4.3

Also they rule over human beings.

अापो वाचानी भेषजम् ॥

AV.I.5.4

The water contains protective powers, medicine and nector, to
prolong ones life in this world. The doctors realized that waters rule over
human beings. The waters coming down from Himavat Mountains, from
the fountains, from the desert tract, from marshy lands and from canals or
wells and lakes are more healing than the healers i.e. the physicians.
These waters, thus, by themselves have curative effects on the bodies of
the sick persons, AV 19.2 they remove all diseases (19.2.5).

आापो विस्वत्य भेषजीस्ताले कृत्यन्तु भेषजम् ॥

Rg.1.23.10

The waters are cure for all, may they cure you.

अापो वाचानी भेषजम् ॥

Rg .X.9.5

“Waters, I solicit of you medicine for mine infirmities”. Bleshajam
here explains “happiness driving away sin”.

*Medicinal purposes of Water*
5.4 Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is the use of water in the treatment of disease. Hydrothermal therapy additionally uses its temperature effects, as in hot baths, saunas, wraps etc.

Hydrotherapy and hydrothermal therapy are traditional methods of treatment that have been used for the treatment of disease and in injury by many cultures including those of ancient Rome, China and Japan. Water therapy has been around for centuries. In this regard we have a reference in Atharvaveda also.

\[जालामुणि विज्ञान जालामुणि सिद्धायत \]
\[जालामुणि भेष्यं तेन नौ गुढ़ जीवसे \]

AV. VI. 57.2

Hydrotherapy and Hydrothermal therapy are chiefly used to tone up the body, to stimulate digestion, the circulation, and the immune system, and to bring relief from pain. The healing properties of hydrotherapy are based on the thermal effects. It exploits the body’s reaction to hot and cold stimuli, to the protracted application of heat, to pressure exerted by the water and to the sensation it gives. The nerves carry imposes felt at the skin deeper in to the body, where they are instrumental in stimulating the immune system, influencing the production of stress hormones, invigorating the circulation and digestion, encouraging blood flow, and lessening pain sensitivity.
The अन्नित्त्व in water is explained in Rg Veda I. 23.23

आपं अधान्याचारियं रसेन समासमिहि ।
पवृत्तवनन्त्र आ गग्हि तं मा स सूज वर्चसा ॥

I have this day entered into the waters; we have mingled with their essence. Agni, abiding in the waters, approach, and fill me, (thus bathed) with vigour.

Generally, heat quiets and soothes the body, slowing down the activity of internal organs. Cold in contrast stimulates and invigorates, increasing internal activity. If you are feeling tired and stressed out, you might want to try taking a warm shower or bath followed by a short, invigorating cold shower to help stimulate your body and mind.

Thus the Atharvaveda ------

हिरण्यवर्णः शुचयं पावका यातु जातं सविता यात्रविनि: ।
या अविनि गर्भ दविरे सुरवङ्स्ता न आपः शं स्त्रोनां भवन्तु ॥

Av. I. 33.1

Let the water become remedy for all our diseases and give us pleasure, which has been boiled by the heat produced by the Sunrays.

Also in AV I. 33.3

या अविनि गर्भ दविरे सुरवङ्स्ता न आपः शं स्त्रोनां भवन्तु ॥

The waters, which took Agni as a germ, bring facility to us. These two hymns suggest that the water from clouds, i.e. rainwater supposed to be very pure in nature. If that water carries the warmth of the Sunrays and lightning effects of the clouds, it can cure us from illness.
5.5 The Ability Of Hot Water

When the water is boiled, it gets charged with heat and becomes sharper in quality. This sharpness allows it to cleanse the channels and penetrate deeper levels of physiology. If some medicinal herbs are added to that it creates different effects on the body through aroma and taste.

Ancient texts talk about the difference in the rate of absorption of regular water and boiled water*.

1. Regular water - Takes about six hours for absorption if every channel is clear.
2. Boiled and cooled water – Takes about three hours to be absorbed, and helps open the channels.
3. Hot herbalised water – Takes about one and half hours, due to sharpness of Agni, herbs and spices.

An Ayurvedic expert can design a therapeutic water recipe to give a specific benefit basing on the Vata, Pitta or Kapha type of body.

मध्ये पृथ्वी नये: पर्वला गियो मधु।

Av VI.12.3

Rivers, mountains and streams all are sweet like honey and they are capable of removing poison.

आयुष्यं नः प्रातेतरं: सर्वं नः सुरचिरसः।

AV. XI.4. 6

“The herbs being rained on may extend our life time”.

इमा आप...प्र चरमयु...………… अपस्मा यक्षमनाशी।

AV. 3.12.9

Medicinal purposes of Water
These waters are free from infections and also it destroys pathogens.

यदा प्राणो अप्रवर्तक्विवर्जन पुष्पिकी महुमः ।
ओषधयः प्र जायतेयो वा: काश्च वीरुः ॥

AV 11.4.17

The medicinal herbs are generated by the rainwater.

In the Atharva Veda certain Mantras show how water releases stress from eyes.

शिवेन मा चसुद्धा पवयतापः शिवेवा तत्त्वोप स्नृशत त्वं च मे ।
पृष्ठशुरुः शुचयो याः पावकासता व आप: शं स्पोना भवन्तुः ॥

AV. I. 33.4.

May these waters bring auspicious to my eye and skin, may they the bright and pure water bring felicity and bless us. Also AV. VI. 24.2 says -

यमे अस्योरविद्योत पावण्योः प्रस्वेयं यत् ।
आपस्तात्स्वी निक्षर्मिनिर्यां नुभिष्कर्तम:॥

AV. VI 24.2

Whatever pain or burning in the eyes or heels or toes; may the waters remove all that; they are the most excellent physicians.

Atharva Veda also mentions about curing heart ailment with the help of water. Thus AV. VI 24.1

हिमवतः प्र भ्रविन्ति सिद्धी समह संगम: ।
आपो व महुयं तद्वद्विवद्विद्योत भेष्जमु ॥

Medicinal purposes of Water
The waters flow from the showy mountains to the sea, may these heavenly waters give remedy for the heart burns.

The waters flowing down the Himavat mountain and joining the sindhu river, which is their queen, form a remedy against the heartache, the burning feeling in the heart (hridaya) and the pain in the eyes, heels and fore feet (Av.VI.24.1-3). Whitney considers that the hymn (6.24) is a charm addressed to the waters for blessing. But the hymn directly mentions the diseases against which the particular waters are prescribed as medicine. Bloom field thinks that the diseases cured by the waters are dropsy, heart diseases and kindred melodies. But the hymn does not mention dropsy at all. Kausikasutra 30.13 and sayana think that heart disease dropsy and jaundice are mentioned here. They prescribe the waters from a flowing river as the remedy against these. Grass from the hut is burnt in the water and is mixed with it. This mixture is given to the patient for sipping and has it has to be sprinkled on him.

The Vedas speak about different types of water. Well water, rain water river water, pond water. There are many types of water described in the Ayurvedic texts and each has a medicinal value,

The water which is not polluted and which does not produce disease, can only give good health to the human beings. Thus "Yajurveda" says

अयाक्षा अनमीवा अनागसः ।

Yajur Veda 4.12

The different waters of Veda

शिवा: न: सन्तु वार्षिकीः ।

AV I. 6.4

Medicinal purposes of Water
“Bless us the waters of the Rains”

शं ते सनिष्यवा आपः शमु ते सन्तु वर्षः।

Weal to thee is those of the rain.

आपो दिव्या अचरिषं रसेन समयूक्तंहि।

AV VII.89.1

दिव्या: आपः ... 

The waters which is obtained from अन्तरिखा i.e. Rain water.

The AV I 6.4 mentions different types of waters thus

शं न आपो धत्ज्या शमु सन्तत्वाया।
शमृ खरित्रिमा आपः शमु या: कुम्भ आपूर्ता:॥

Here धत्ज्या: - Means – waters of plains ie. वर्षस्तंत्र or deserts.
अन्तरिखा: - Means waters of marshy lands.
खरित्रिमा: - The water which is obtained by digging the earth.
कुम्भां आपूर्ता: - Waters brought in vessels.

आपो दिव्या अचरिषं रसेन समयूक्तंहि॥

AV. VII. 89.1

Here दिव्या: आपः means दिवि भवा:

The water from sky i.e. rainwater has been praised to give splendor.

सिन्धु पल्लीं: सिन्धु राश्वी: सवं या नद्य स्थन॥
दत्तं सत्तस्म भेषजं तेनं वो भुजंजामहे॥

AV. VI.24.3
The medicinal value of river water has been mentioned here. Taking bath in river water removes all our diseases. The streams from big showy mountains join rivers. These streams contain medicinal values. Hence the river, which in turn formed by these streams, will be able to cure our diseases.

शुचय: पानकास्ता आपि: देवीरिड्न मामवन्तु।

Rg VII 49.2

"Only pure water can save us from diseases."

वृद्धि नो अर्थ वव्यं जिगलुमिलावती शंगथीं जीरवान्तु।

Rg. IX.97.17

Send us rain from heaven, quick falling, food giving and giving health to our home. Here the credit of rainwater has been cited.

Apart from these खनित्रिमा:, पावका:, हिमवत:, अनूपा:, शन्त्यः ...... Vedas mention about BrihatiAapah and Apaamnapath; which are different from the ordinary waters.

Thus the Vedic sages say that--

आप हंगा उ भेषजीरापो अमीवचालनी।
आपो विश्वस्य भेषजीस्तास्ते कृपावलु भेषजम्।

Av. VI. 91.3

The waters verily are remedial, the waters are disease expelling; the waters are remedial for every thing; let them make remedy for thee.
5.6 Water in magical rites

The _Atharva Veda_ prominently deals with *witchcraft*, which can be used for good or bad purposes. Similarly sacrifice can be employed for good as well as bad purposes. Thus *witchcraft* and sacrifice are two main weapons of the _Atharvanic_ priest. The _Atharva Veda_ aims at making the human life more happy, comfortable and lasting for the full duration of hundred years. The _Atharvanic priests_ employing these two means further the general aim on the AV. In the ordinary course of the things, there would not be any sin or ill will in the world, if there were no conflict of human interests. But because there is conflict of human interests, the life is not smooth. Jealousy, ill will, hatred and craze for dominating others are found among the common masses for all times. Any one coming in the fulfillment of ones desires becomes his enemy. Any one, who cannot bear the good of others, hates them. Thus each one creates a number of enemies round about him. Both the parties resort to witchcraft or magical sacrifice with a view to destroying the other.

Thus the _Atharvanic priest_ or even any other individual, taking interest in any party, resorts to witchcraft or sacrifice. His professed aim in all these practices is to defend him or his side against the malicious attacks of his opponent, who also resorts to them for his own defense. Thus the primary intention of the witchcraft practices of this nature is self-defense. Here comes then the struggle for superiority based on the superiority of the _brahman_ (magical potency) of the priest. Whosoever has more potential _Brahman_ wins. So, thus there are a number of charms employed against enemies. Akin to the human enemies are the demons or demonic creatures. To defend the helpless people against the assault of such demons, the _Atharvanic priest_ comes forth with his *witchcraft*
practices. Hence, self-defense and aspiration for securing supremacy are the basis of such practices. *Atharva Veda* deals with such practices and the *kausika sutra* provides the theory and practice of such *witchcraft*.

### 5.7 Water as a Weapon

To kill enemy, the water, which is magically charged, is employed [AV.X.5]. It is called, water - thunder bolt [*udavajra*], which is thrown in the direction of the enemy. According to “Whitney” page no. 579 Translation of “*Atharvavedasamhita*”, water thunder bolt is a big name well befitting the black magic of the hymn for throwing handfuls of water with much hocus – pocus.

The waters are firstly enjoyed with the strength, force, power, heroism, manliness, power of conquering and *Brahman*. Also the power of *Ksatra, Indra*, Soma and waters are associated with them. All creatures stand by the priest in this act. Thus with Av. Rcs X.5. 1-6, a jar of brass is washed and taken near the water. Then according to *Kausika Sutra* with these Rcs he puts the jar in the water. Fills it with it and goes off. He then keeps the jar in a hall. This is the water for the *witchcraft*.

These waters contain the sperm of waters, portion of *Agni, Indra, soma, Varuya, Nitra, Yama, Pitri and Savitri* [AV.X.5.7-14]. While reciting this portion of the hymn he divides the water in the jar. Half of it is placed in its receptacle, which is heated on fire. Handfuls of water in the jar are thrown in the direction of the enemy. He releases there by that portion of the water, which is of the nature of *Yajur* formulas, with which the gods are offered sacrifice. They are released against him who hates him and whom he hates, so that they should not hate him back.

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*Medicinal purposes of Water*
By means of this Brahman, which is the missile, the enemy is laid low and killed. [AV X.5.15,21]

"यो व आपेक्षां भागोत्व न्यायिजुष्यो देवयजनः।
इदं समिति सुस्थिति तं मार्यविज्ञिषि।"

AV X.5.15

The waters thus become a secret missile, charged with the magical potency of the priest. The Rg Vedic description of the three strides of Vishnu is attributed to the waters, magically charged. The priest says, “You are the strides of Vishnu, killing rivals. Let enemy not live. Let his life breaths leave him” AV. X.5.25.

The waters are sharpened with the power of the earth heaven, sky, quarters, rcs, sacrifice, herbs, waters and agriculture.[AV X.5.25-35].

The water in the receptacle is thrown in the ground. The waters thrown in the direction of the enemy have laid low the enemy.

The waters are the missiles, which close upon the enemy. They are divine fuel. In this sacrifice the enemy is offered an oblation. The thunder - bolt of waters (Apmavajra,Av. X.5.50) having four points, thus against the enemy, to split his head and to crush all his limbs. The waters charged with the magical qualities and produced on account of the Brahman, penance, exertion and rage of mind are a thunder - bolt. Therefore they must kill his enemies. The steps taken in the direction of enemy are the strides of Vishnu. Thus the waters represent the magical power (Brahman) of the priest.

Medicinal purposes of Water
5.8 The spell and water reviving a person's health:

The water is also used in sprinkling on a person, who is to be examined from disease and death with the recitation of the hymn AV.V.30.

The hymn refers to the efficiency the priest in reviving a person, who is deal or is on the point of death. The speech of the priest is the main power behind this magical rite.

उन्मोचन प्रमोचने उ मे बाचा चबामि ते ॥

AV. V.30. 2,3,4.

The person is subject to witchcraft by his own men or by stranger or by the sin of his father or mother. The priest says (5.30. 8,9) by his speech the fever or other ailment is forced to go away. Agni gives him breath, eyesight and strength. Thus, due to the sin of his parents or relatives or due to his own actions, his enemy works witchcraft on him.

It makes him afflicted with diseases, fever and phthisis. He is on the point of death. But the Atharvanic priest, sprinkling water over him (Kausika – 58.3.4), while reciting this hymn brings him to his life and endows him with his former strength.

The craving for good healthy longer life in this world is reflected the Atharvanic teaching. The priest says, “This world is dearest to the Gods. A man is destined to die by a certain course of death. Till then we invite you here to live up to old age”.

Medicinal purposes of Water
अर्य लोकः प्रियतमो देवानाम पराजितः ।
यस्ये लमिह मृत्युवे विषयः पुरुषः जशिषये ।
स च त्वानुि इवामसि ना पुरा जरसो मृषा: ॥

AV. 5.30.17

Thus the water charged with magical spells was used in protecting the human kind in the *Atharva Veda*.  

*Medicinal purposes of Water*