Report

Water - its significance in science, in nature and culture, in world religions and in the universe

Author(s):
Brüesch, Peter

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9. Water in World Religions, in Psychology and in Philosophy
9.1 Water in World – Religions: General

Water in World Religions: Examples

In all world religions, water is of central importance:
• In all world religions, water is ambivalent, i.e. it is a symbol for both birth and death.
• Water is associated with purification and spiritual force.
• Living water is often associated with running water
  • John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the Jordan
• Holy water is a sign of blessing and is associated with life and purification
• The Flood is the punishment of God for the sins of men
• Hinduism: Purification by a bath in the holy water of the Ganges
Water in the five world religions:
Judaism, Christianism, Islam;
Buddhism and Hinduism

In all five world religions, water is of central importance.

The main reasons are:

• Without water there is no life

• Water possesses a purifying force

• In every religion, water is a sign for both, birth and death.

Significance of Water in World Religions

Because of its natural qualities, water is of high significance in all world religions: it is often associated as being the residence of gods, ghosts and other powers; it is often even admired as a holy force.

In many religious and mythological narrations about the genesis of world, water symbolizes the state of creation or even the basic source for all beings.

The world's origin is the Sea, which creates the other cosmological elements. As a source of all life, water is considered to constitute a life-generating principle of order.

On the other hand, water is considered to be a power of destructive chaos, which destroys the world catastrophically as the flood, and threatens life. Seas and oceans are viewed as menacing homesteads of the evil.
9.2 Water in Judaism

Ritual purification with vivid water, i.e. with flowing water

Michelangelo: The Creation of the Sun and the Moon
GENESIS

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

GENESIS

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: And God saw that it was good.
Moses in the basket at the shore of the Nile

Michelangelo’s Moses
During the escape of the Israeli from the Egyptians

Moses divides the Red Sea

The Flood

“The Flood“ from Buanarrotti Michelangelo (1475 - 1564)
In the background is Noah’s ark, the only ship that would survive the Flood
“The Flood” : Section from the painting of Michelangelo

The Flood
Leonardo Da Vinci
Noah’s Flood and Reality

Did a great flood once surge into the Black Sea, forming the basis of a Biblical tale?

Mark Siddall (University of Bern, Switzerland) investigates a computer model that has added weight to the idea.


„Oceanographers must have a natural interest in extreme events“
If we can’t resolve the occurrence of such a huge flood, then what can we resolve?

Mark Siddhal

See also: W. Ryan and W. Pitman:
„Noah’s Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event that Changed History“

(Simon and Schuster, New York 2000)
During the immersion bath a spiritual force is exchanged
9.3 Water in Christianity

Significance of Water - 1

In Jewish and Christian religion water is a symbol of the origin of creation. Water is a hierophany (i.e. a physical manifestation of the holy or sacred). It can represent a creative force of life or a destructive force of death.

- The fountains in the desert are similar to the sources in the mountains: a reason of pleasure of the nomads.
- The narration of the "Flood" (1. Mose 6 ff.) will remain a symbol of destruction as well as of salvation.

Pontius Pilatu's manual ablutions during the trial against Jesus (Math. 27, 24) is of Jewish origin. With his ceremonial protest of hand washing, Pilatus rejects any responsibility for the consequences.
Jesus Christ considered Water as the Symbol for eternal life.

Jesus proceeds to say:

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

John 3:1-13

At the Jacob’s well, Jesus answered to the Samaritan woman:

“Whosoever drinking of this water (from Jacob’s well) shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

(John 4, 13, 14)

John the Baptist

When he was 30 years old, he went into the desert, to Jerusalem, and to the Jordan and declared the arrival of the Messiah.

Many people admired him, and many let have been baptized from him; Jesus also was baptized from him.

John the Baptist says:

“Behold the Lamb of God (Jesus), which takes away the sin of the world.”
John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the water of the Jordan. Two angels are carrying the robe of the Messiah.

The Baptism of Jesus
Fresco de Giotto di Bondono
(1267 - 1337)

Jesus walking on the Sea and the rescuer in storm at high Sea

The physical laws are abolished and replaced by the divine laws!

Jesus, the rescuer in storm at high Sea!

9 – 12
After the baptism of a baby: his head is still held over the holy water font while his hands are directed against the future life.

The Grotto of Massabielle is a place of pilgrimage in Lourdes (France). For Bernadette Soubirous it was the place of apparition of the Blessed Virgin. With her help Bernadette discovered a water source. Today, the water of this source is believed to possess a strong healing force.
And he (one of the seven angels) shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear and as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of Lamb.

In his midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
„Be praised, my Lord,
through Sister Water;
She is very useful,
and precious, and pure."

From: "The Canticle of the Sun",
Francis of Assisi
9.4 Water in Islam

Significance of Water

Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?

“The Holy Qur’An”
Surah 21: Al–Ambija 30 (The Profets)

In Islam, water is most important for purification. Moslem should be ritually pure, before they are approaching God in prayer.
In Islam, washing one's hands frees oneself from the sins which have been committed by hands.

The ritual washing must be performed in running and pure water.

Running water signifies vivid water. The pure river carries the sins and dirt away.
9.5 Water in Buddhism

Water is a symbol for Life

In Buddhism, water symbolizes life, the purest form of food, and water is the particular element which in nature carries everything together.

Water symbolizes purity, clarity and calmness, and reminds us to cleanse our minds and attain the state of purity.

Water is used to clean away dirt. When everyone sees you (the water), they are happy and joyful. This is because they are reminded that they can wash away the filth of their minds. They should wash away selfish and unkind thoughts and be clean and pure like you.

“It is as with Ice and Water:
Without Water there is no Ice…”
(Hakuin's song of meditation)

Water is also most important for funerals (see Reference R.9.5.2)
To a weak or indispositioned sick person, water is poored over his head.

The water then causes an energetical purification which improves the illness rapidly.

A Shingon Buddhist practitioner mediates under frigid waterfalls at the Oiwasan Nissekiji Temple in Toyama, Japan. In Shingon, a school of Japanese esoteric Buddhism, waterfall mediation, or "takigyo", is used to focus the mind and increase self-awareness.
Water sustains and makes possible new life.

Since water is given to us and is of such prime importance, it must also be returned.

For this reason it is sacrificed the Gods in beautifully shaped bowls as a sign of admiration, of deep respect and of gratitude.
9.6 Water in Hinduism

Water as an original force

Water is considered to be an original force; it is the only element which is not assigned to a divinity.

The water of the Ganges is holy because its origin is the Himalaya, the highest known source of all, and falls to the valley.
Purification in the Ganges - 1

The purification in the Ganges is a meditation which helps to understand the greatness of god.

A bath in the Ganges can be considered as a search to himself.

Purification in the Ganges - 2

Hindu are purifying themselves in the holy river Ganges in order to gain freedom from their sins.
Purification in the Ganges - 3

Water is offered God as a gift before washing themselves. By this symbol of sacrifice, the gift of God is returned to the creator.

Water symbolizes the circle of life: everything has its origin from water and is created from water. After death, the ash is returned into the holy river.
9.7 Water in Psychology and in Philosophy

Water in Psychology

- Water is an archetype i.e. a basic image of the soul or of the unconscious layers of personality, which are inhabited by mysterious beings (see Carl Gustav Jung, p. 441)

- Water is the basic symbol of all unconscious energy. In dreams:
  - positive: for standing and flowing waters: ponts, lakes, Seas, strands, streams and rivers
  - negative: riptides, torrents, flood

- On the one hand, water is the most well-known life symbol, and on the other hand, water is also a symbol for death. Hence, the symbol water is ambivalent.
Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961)

**Water is an Archetype:**

Water is a symbol of life, cleansing, and rebirth. It is a strong life force, and is often depicted as a living, reasoning force.

Thales of Miletus, 600 BC.

“**The principle of all things is water.**”

“Everything is made of water, and everything returns to water.”

Thales of Miletus thought that water is the principle basic substance of all existing things and that everything is imbued by the spirit of the Gods, and therefore, to everything is given a soul to.

“**Spirit and matter are same.**"
The washing of the feet of Jesus by Maria Magdalena

Johann Christof Haas (1753 – 1829)
References: Chapter 9

9. Water in World Religions, in Psychology and in Philosophy

9.1 Water in World Religions

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Frederick Denny
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R.9.1.2 Hammond Atlas of World Religions
by Hammond (Author, Editor) and Stuart Murray (Author)

R.9.1.3 Atlas of World Religions
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Published Hall, 2006

R.9.1.4 Water in World Religion: An Introduction
Terje Oestigaard
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R.9.1.5 Water in World Religions
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Kantonsschule, CH-Wettingen
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R.9.1.6 World Water Day: Facts and Figures about Water Religions and Beliefs
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R.9.1.7 Facts and Figures - Water and Religions
http://fami.oszhuenniz.de/wasser_in_religionen/index.html

R.9.1.8 LE GRAND LIVRE DE L’EAU
| R.9.2.1 | p. 402 | Michelangelo – The Creation: [http://ais.badische-zeitung.de/piece/01/42/1a/51/21109329.jpg](http://ais.badische-zeitung.de/piece/01/42/1a/51/21109329.jpg) |
| R.9.2.2 | p. 403 | Water in Genesis_1_ The Bible, Genesis and Geology: [www.kjvbible.org](http://www.kjvbible.org); |
| R.9.2.3 | p. 404 | Water in Genesis_2_ Holy Bybile: King James Version |
| R.9.2.3a | The Bible – GENESIS: The Creation and the Flood (DVD) |
| R.9.2.4 | p. 405 | Moses_in_the_Basket: A Princess finds a Basket [www.childrenschapel.org/biblestonries/babymoses.html](http://www.childrenschapel.org/biblestonries/babymoses.html) |
| R.9.2.4a | According to the Bible: EXODUS: Chapter 2: |
| R.9.2.5 | p. 406 | Michelangelo's Moses in Church San Pietro in Rom |
| R.9.2.6 | p. 407 | Crossing the Red Sea of the Israelites is the Biblical account of the crossing the Red Sea by Moses and the Israelites in their flight from the pursuing Egyptian army and is part of the Exodus narrative on the journey out of Egypt, found in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 13:17 to 15:21. According to the Book of Exodus, God parts the Red Sea for the safe passage of the Israelites, after which the pursuing Egyptians army is drowned when the waters return. At the end of these events, the Israelites sing the song of the Sea to celebrate their deliverance. |
| R.9.2.7 | p. 408 | „The Flood” (Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475 – 1564), painted at 1512). The actual details of the Flood are given in Chapters 7 and 8 of Genesis: „The Flood continued forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased, and bore up the ark (of Noah), and it rose high above the earth. …And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the Earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits (about 22 feet) deep.” „And all flesh died that moved upon the Earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creature that swarm upon the Earth, and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. … Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And waters prevailed upon the Earth a hundred and fifty days.” |
| R.9.2.8 | p. 409 | „The Flood”: Detail of the left hand side of p. 408 |
| R.9.2.9 | p. 410 | „The Flood” of Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 – 1519) In 1513 Leonardo Da Vinci was seriously thick- and threatened by mortal agony - created „The Flood” and over visions of the end of the world. |
| R.9.2.10 | p. 411 | The flood and reality; see also: Mark Siddhal: Nature 430, 12 August 2004, p. 718 - 719 |
| R.9.2.12 | p. 413 | Spiritual immersion bath in the river see in Reference R.9.1.5, p. 33 |
### 9.3 Water in Christianity

<table>
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<td>R.9.3.3a</td>
<td>p. 415 / 416: Rudolf Koch: Christian Symbols. <a href="http://www.catholic-resources.org/Art/Koch-christiansymbols.htm">www.catholic-resources.org/Art/Koch-christiansymbols.htm</a></td>
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9.4 Water in Islam

R.9.4.1 In Islam water is important for cleansing and purifying. Muslims must be ritually pure before approaching God in prayer. Some mosques (Moscheen) have a courtyard (enclosed area, often a space enclosed by a building that is open to sky) with a pool of clear water in the center, but in most mosques the ablutions (Waschungen) are found outside the walls. Fountains symbolising purity are also sometimes found in mosques. In Islam purity (called tahara) is required before carrying out religious duties, especially salat (worship: the adoring acknowledgment of all that lies beyond us - the glory that fills heaven and earth).

There are three kinds of ablutions: the most important is ghul (an Arabic term referring to the major ablation (ritual washing) requested in Islam for various rituals and prayers), is the washing of the whole body in pure water, after declaring the intention to do so. Muslims are obliged to perform ghul after sex which incurs a state of major ritual impurity. Ghul is also recommended before the Friday prayer, the two main feasts, and before touching the Koran. Ghul must be done for the dead before they are buried.

R.9.4.2 p. 427: Ritual washing of one's hands: Ref: R.9.1.5: p. 44

9.5 Water in Buddhism

R.9.5.1 To „Water in Buddhism“ see:
Zen – Mind – Beginner's Mind
Shunryu Suzuki
in: Nirvana; The Water fall (Der Wasserfall)

R.9.5.2 p. 429: For Buddhists, symbolism and ritual are less important because they seek spiritual enlightenment that comes from seeing the reality of unreality. Bodhidharma, thought to be the first Zen Buddhism said this in the 5th Century CE.

R-9-6

9.6 Water in Hinduism

R.9.6.1 p. 434: Water is imbued with powers of spiritual purification for Hindus, for whom morning cleansing is an everyday obligation. All temples are located near a water source, and followers must bathe before entering the temple. Many pilgrimage sites are found on river banks; sites where two, or even three, rivers converge are considered particularly sacred.

There are seven sacred rivers: The Ganges, and the Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, Sarasvati, Sindhu and Yamuna Rivers. According to Hindu beliefs, those who bath in the Ganges or who leave part of themselves (hair, bones of the dead) on the left bank of the river will reach Svarga, the paradise of Indra, storm god.

Funeral rites are always held near rivers; the son of the deceased pours water on the burning funeral pyre so that the soul cannot escape and return to Earth as a ghost. The ashes are collected three days after cremation, and several days later, are thrown into a holy river.

R-9-7

9 – 30
9.7 Water in Psychology and in Philosophy

Photo of C.G. Jung from Internet under „Carl Gustav Jung“: „Pictures“

R.9.7.2 According to C.G. Jung, Water is the most well-known symbol for the collective unconscious. The descent into the depth seems always to precede the ascent. Psychologically, water is therefore a symbol for spirit which became unconscious.

R.9.7.3 p. 442: Thales of Miletus
http://did.mat.uni-bayreuth.de/~wn/thalesmensch.html
It is said that Thales of Miletos, one of the seven wise men, was the first to undertake the study of physical philosophy. He said that the beginning (the first principle) and the end of all things is water.

R.9.7.4 H₂O - THE MYSTEREY, ART, AND SCIENCE OF WATER
Chris Witcombe and Sang Hwang
Sweet Briar College
http://witcombe.sbc.edu/water/