

## **A Torrent of Signification in Water Stories – Factual and Mystical**

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### **Origin of Water: Scientific Explanation**

Water is the signature of our earth, the blue planet of life. Latest discoveries in astrophysics indicate that water has been imported from the edges of our solar system. Carl Sagan poetically wrote ‘we are made of star-stuff’ referring to the formation of the earth from the left-over detritus of exploded stars. The hydration of Earth came from comets and some hydrous asteroids.

Ice within the comet traps noble gases as well as a cocktail of other chemicals such as silicates, carbons and interplanetary dust. One of the most intriguing molecules bound into comets are amino acids. These are the building blocks for biogenetic activity. Racing towards our planet at 120,000 kilometres per hour these projectiles of chemical gifts represent the birth of oceans and our own genesis. Within the first billion years most of the water had arrived and the first signs of life are believed to have commenced replication. Seventy per cent of the Earth’s surface is covered in water. Eighty per cent of fruit and vegetables are made of water. Our bodies are 50 - 70% water and we lose three bucket loads every week or about 2.5 litres on an average escapes our body every day.

Water has its own unique properties. It is one of the world’s great solvents. It can change its shape to be solid, liquid or gaseous. It dissolves minerals and ores, so that seawater even has the ability to dissolve gold.

### **Water in the Judeo-Christian tradition and its significance**

#### **On the second day God parts the waters to create the firmament**

*God said, “Let there be a dome between the waters and let it separate them.” So God made the dome and separated the waters below it from the waters above it “. And so it was, God called the dome ‘Sky’. There was evening and there was morning the second day.*

*God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And so it was.  
(Genesis 1:6-9)*

The Bible begins with the magnificent poem of Creation as a seven-day wonder. The story of creation was written much later than other parts of the book and borrows the style and imagery of a Babylonian creation story – ‘Enuma Elish’. The priestly author however gives the story a new purpose and meaning and teaches a different theology of creation than what the Babylonian myth did. He however, makes use of mythological motifs and imagery that were familiar to his audience and part of their culture. To understand this imagery and grasp its meaning we have to enter into that culture and understand its expressions. But it is important to note that the biblical author is not writing *history* as we understand it today, but he is writing a *faith-story*.

However the full meaning of creation was revealed only in the coming of Jesus Christ, through whom and for whom the world was made. (cf. Jn. 1:1-4 and Eph. 1:3-14)

In the beginning God created, the heavens and the earth: creation is proclaimed as a decision of god as told in Isa 40:26. Mention of a state of existence as a chaotic void and darkness before this decision, must be understood against the background of the Babylonian myth. But God is here shown as being in solemn, undisputed command.

Even in the Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.2.1;1.4 ff., Aitareya Upanishad 1.1. ff , Tattiyā Upanishad 2.7, some creation accounts open with the word *agre* (that is, at the beginning). But in the Bible creation is never understood as an emanation from the Divine Reality as in Indian Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

### **Joseph interprets the Pharaoh’s dream as a vision of coming drought**

*“There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of that famine which will follow, for it will be very grievous”.* (Genesis 41:29-31)

Pharaoh was deeply disturbed by his dreams and none of the wise men of Egypt could offer him a satisfactory interpretation of his dreams. When Joseph, is summoned from the dungeon to the palace he interprets the dreams to mean that seven years of plenty, symbolized by the fat cows and fat grain, will be followed by seven years of hunger, reflected by the lean cows and the shrivelled ears.

When Joseph proceeded to interpret the dream for Pharaoh he was not offering him advice on how to run his country, rather the recommendation was part of the

dream interpretation. Joseph believed that the coexistence of the two sets of cows contained the solution to the approaching famine: During the years of plenty Egypt must prepare for the years of famine and every day store away food for it. The seven lean cows ought to be part of the people's consciousness during the era of the seven fat cows.

The wisdom of Joseph's presentation to Pharaoh becomes strikingly clear when we reflect upon the spiritual message behind the story. These stories describe not only physical events that took place at a certain point in history, but also detail metaphysical and timeless tales occurring continuously within the human heart.

All of us experience cycles of plenty and cycles of famine in our lives. There are times when things are going very well: We are healthy, successful and comfortable. Often during such times we fail to invest time and energy to cultivate genuine emotional intimacy with our family, to develop real relationships with friends and to create a sincere bond with God. We feel self-sufficient and do not need anybody in our lives. Yet when a time of famine arrives, when a serious crisis erupts in our lives, we suddenly feel the need to reach out beyond ourselves and connect with our loved ones and with God. When the years of famine confront us, we lack the tools we so desperately need to survive the crisis.

This is the essence of Joseph's wisdom. We must never separate the years of plenty from the years of famine. When we experience plenty, we must try not let it blind our vision and desensitize us from what is truly important in life. The life we choose to live during our "good times" should be of the kind that will sustain you during your "bad times" as well.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Moses in a basket of bulrushes floats to his destiny on the river**

*"And when she could hide him no longer she took for him a basket made of bulrushes, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river's brink." (Exodus 2:3)*

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Moses bring out once more how the intentions of Yahweh outwit the decrees of Pharaoh. Yahweh's instruments are once again women, one of them ironically from Pharaoh's royal household. Moses is adopted into the royal household and received an upbringing that prepared him for his future leadership role. "God works in subtle ways and human history is dotted with examples of this."<sup>iii</sup>

### **Moses turns water to blood**

*“And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’” Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded; in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, he lifted up the rod and struck the water that was in the Nile, and all the water that was in the Nile turned to blood”. (Exodus 7:19-of 20)*

Modern readers often ask if these things happened. The narrative of the plagues is not a scientific report of what actually happened. Rather, the events which led to the dramatic liberation of the Israelites from the power of the stubborn Pharaoh, were told and retold for centuries in the changing circumstances and vicissitudes of Israelites life. In this process the stories were crafted anew, and were finally given a stylistic expression for liturgical recital. Hence, they have a similarity of structure.

Some writers have pointed out a connection between the plagues and natural catastrophes that occur in Egypt- Locusts, frogs and the red Nile. It must be kept in mind that many ancient people did not make a distinction between natural and supernatural phenomena as we do. For them, the universe was interwoven with natural and divine forces, and they read God’s writing in all the events around them.

The purpose of plague narratives is not to be interpreted as a punishment from God. They do not want to depict a God of vengeance and destruction. Rather they focus on Yahweh as a God of liberation, concerned about the oppression of the repeatedly calls on Pharaoh to change his mind and cooperate with the divine plan – as the recurring formula, “ Then he will realized that I am the Lord ,” suggests.

But, Pharaoh persists in his stubbornness and arrogance. He is a warning to all national leaders: If they would only open their eyes to the evils that afflict their country, they would realise that injustices will have to be paid for dearly and that they themselves will, one day, meet their doom. Perhaps, one may compare the narrative with the Mahabharata Epic: the Kauravas under the leadership of Duryodhana symbolise the forces of evil and stubbornness of the evil-doer, leading to total defeat.<sup>44</sup> Augustine Kanachikuzhy, 101.

### **Moses parts the Red Sea**

*“Then Moses stretched out actually his hand over the sea; and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided”.*(Exodus 14:21)

The narrative of the crossing of the Sea was not a factual historical account. It was written much later, as the Israelites in faith, recalled these saving events. This account was used for liturgical purposes and hence the language is magnificently celebrative of God’s mighty deeds. Even in our days God joins the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, and with them he remakes the world.

*Crossing of the Sea.* The Israelites crossed to the other shore, and this was for them a beginning of a new life, a new existence as God’s free people. St. Paul writes later, “Our ancestors underwent baptism of the cloud and of the sea to be the people of Moses” (1 Cor. 10:1-2). All Christians baptised in Christ are called to cross over to a new existence in Jesus.

The idea of crossing has deep echoes in the Indian spiritual tradition. Salvation is described as the crossing (*tarati*) of the sea of falsehood or *maya* “to cross over from the false world) and carry the world across” (*cf. Narada Bhakta Sutra, 50*). During one’s earthly existence, one is plunged into the ocean of re-birth and delusion (*samsara-sagaram, moharnavam*) which has to be crossed to reach the after shore of salvation. The great Indian thinker Shankara in his *Atmabodha* (v.50) speaks of the crossing of the ocean of delusion (*teertva moharnavam*). The Sanskrit word for the incarnation of the gods, *ava-tara*, comes from the same root and denotes the crossing of the incarnated God down into our world for the purpose of salvation. *Mukti* or *moksha* which is the final emancipation or liberation is a state of supreme bliss and freedom from bondage. It is the highest goal of human life.<sup>v</sup>

### **Joshua crosses the Jordan**

*“When all the kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites that were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their heart melted, and there was no longer any spirit in them, because of the people of Israel”.* (Joshua 5:1)

The story of the exodus to Canaan, the Promised Land, ends only if one includes the Book of Joshua. Tragically, the generation of Israelites that departed Egypt with Moses angered the Lord so often by their disbelief and disobedience that he

consigned almost all, except for a handful, to roam the wilderness for 40 years until they died. They never reached the Promised Land. This certainly was not Moses' fault, he provided them unique and superb leadership. Thereafter, Moses appointed Joshua as leader, (Numbers 18:16 -27); and after his death at Mount Nebo, Joshua guides the new generation of Israelites into Canaan, where Israel is today.

The Jordan event signifies that the men were newly *reborn* spiritually upon crossing the river because the spirit of God descended upon them and fused with their spirit as they crossed its waters. The twelve rough stones inserted into the Jordan signify *death to sin* (i.e. death to the old sinful self), but the twelve smooth ones taken out, *life to holiness* (a new, spiritual beginning). The Promised Land, Canaan symbolises the New Eden.<sup>vi</sup>

### **The vision of the holy waters appears to Ezekiel**

*“The man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple and I saw a spring of water coming out from under the threshold of the Temple and flowing eastwards.(Ezekiel 47: 1-12)*

The Holy Spirit is here imaged in the stream of living water makes all the hidden seeds of life to blossom again in the world. It is also an emblem of the power of God's grace under the Gospel, capable of healing all but the incorrigibly impenitent, represented by the marshy ground that cannot be healed, There is also a description of the several divisions of the Holy Land indiscriminately shared between Jews and proselytes; to denote that in after times the privileges now enjoyed by the Jews should be also extended to the Gentiles, (Eze 47:13-23)<sup>vii</sup>

### **Jonah is swallowed by the whale**

*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.  
(Jonah 1:17)*

The story of Jonah and the Whale, one of the oddest accounts in the Bible, opens with God speaking to Jonah son of Amittai, commanding him to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh. Jonah found this order unbearable. Not only was Nineveh known for its wickedness, but it was also the capital of the Assyrian empire, one of Israel's fiercest enemies. Jonah, a stubborn young man, did just the opposite of what he was told. He went down to the seaport of Joppa and booked passage on a ship to Tarshish, heading directly away from Nineveh. The Bible tells us Jonah “ran away from the Lord.”

In response, God sent a violent storm, which threatened to break the ship to pieces. The terrified crew cast lots determining that Jonah was responsible for the storm. Jonah told them to throw him overboard. First they tried rowing to shore, but the waves got even higher. Afraid of God, the sailors finally tossed Jonah into the sea, and the water immediately grew calm. The crew made a sacrifice to God, swearing vows to him.

Instead of drowning, Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, which God provided. In the belly of the whale, Jonah repented and cried out to God in prayer. He praised God, ending with the eerily prophetic statement, “Salvation comes from the Lord.”

Jonah was in the giant fish three days. God commanded the whale, and it vomited the reluctant prophet onto dry land. This time Jonah obeyed God. He walked through Nineveh proclaiming that in forty days the city would be destroyed. Surprisingly, the Ninevites believed Jonah’s message and repented, wearing sackcloth and covering themselves in ashes. God had compassion on them and did not destroy them.

Again Jonah questioned God, because Jonah was angry that Israel’s enemies had been spared. When Jonah stopped outside the city to rest, God provided a vine to shelter him from the hot sun. Jonah was happy with the vine, but the next day God provided a worm that ate the vine, making it wither. Growing faint in the sun, Jonah complained again.

God scolded Jonah for being concerned about a vine, but not about Nineveh, which had 120,000 lost people. The story ends with God expressing concern even about the wicked. It is interesting to note that God commands everything in his Creation, from the weather to a whale, to carry out his plan. God is in control. It is not important whether it was a great fish or a whale that swallowed Jonah. The point of the story is that God can provide a supernatural means of rescue when his people are in trouble.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Jesus is baptized in the Jordan**

*“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan”.*(Mark 1:9)

Jesus humbly presents himself before John to be baptized, along with the others. He thus identifies himself with the people of Israel and their calling. It is at this moment of total submission to the will of the Father that Jesus has deep experience of the Father. The Jewish people of that time mourned the absence of prophets

and the silence of God. But now, with the coming of Jesus, the heavens were again opened and God's Spirit came down once more.<sup>ix</sup>

### **Peter walks on water**

*Jesus said to him, "Come". And Peter got out of the boat and began walking on the water to go to Jesus. But, becoming aware of the strong wind, he was afraid and began to sink. So he cried out, "Lord save me!" Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and took hold of him saying, "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mat.14:28-31)*

The incident of Peter walking on the waters is found only in Matthew, where Peter plays a special role as the spokesman and leader of the other disciples. Matthew's portrayal of this representative disciple shows of typical combination of positive and negative traits. Peter is shown as impetuous and inconstant, moving from foolhardy courage to fear. But he is also full of enthusiasm for and faith in Jesus. His conduct is an expression of the 'little faith' which is Matthew's characteristic description for the disciples of Jesus, as representing the member of his own Christian community.<sup>x</sup>

### **Paul is shipwrecked at sea**

*"Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea". (2 Corinthians 11:25)*

The first part of this boasting recounts the labours and perils he has undergone for the sake of the gospel, which is an authentic sign for a true minister of Christ, in contrast false preachers. In this he is surely in the footsteps of the humble and crucified Christ, and shares in the folly of the cross which is the wisdom of God.

And so Paul goes on to boast about his weakness. The false preachers tried his weakness. The false preachers tried to find favour with the Corinthians by parading special spiritual qualities they possessed. Paul says he has also had visions and revelations. But he does not count these as his personal achievement but as the Lord's doing. What he will boast of is rather what has been his everyday experience of weakness, 'a thorn in the flesh' from which he suffered. There is no further indication what his weakness or suffering was, but through it Paul came to realize the power of Christ in him. In this lies his strength.<sup>xi</sup>

### **St. John's vision of the beast coming out of the sea**



*“And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads”.* (Revelations 13:1)

The dragon’s authority comes to rest in two beasts, both of them symbols of the Roman Emperor. The beast from the sea described here is a composite made up of the four beasts in Dan 7:2-28- symbolic of four empires. The Roman Emperors- and Nero is probably specially referred to here – claimed for themselves the trappings of divinity and introduced emperor-worship in various parts of the empire, especially in the province of Asia Minor where the Book of Revelation is being written.

The author phrases his description of the worship of the beast to sound like a parody of the worship of God and the slain-risen lamb, Jesus. However, the worship of the beast gets a great following among the peoples of the earth. But those who are true followers of the lamb will not succumb to these political pressures; they are prepared for captivity and even death.

The true followers of Christ in any period of history will be subject to tribulations, for these disciples will not go along with every dictate of political powers, and political powers have a tendency to adopt god-like posture when they think themselves the superpowers of this world.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Flood stories from around the world**

Native global flood stories are documented as history or legend in almost every region on earth. Old world missionaries reported their amazement at finding remote tribes already possessing legends with tremendous similarities to the Bible’s accounts of the worldwide flood we witness with Noah and the ark. H.S. Bellamy in *Moons, Myths and Men* estimates that altogether there are over 500 Flood legends worldwide. Ancient civilizations such as China, Babylonia, Wales, Russia, India, America, Hawaii, Scandinavia, Sumatra, Peru, and Polynesia, all have their own versions of a giant flood.

These flood tales are frequently linked by common elements that parallel the Biblical account including the warning of the coming flood, the construction of a boat in advance, the storage of animals, the inclusion of family, and the release of birds to determine if the water level had subsided. The overwhelming consistency among flood legends found in distant parts of the globe indicates they were derived from the same origin, in all probability the Bible’s record, but oral transcription has changed the details through time.

## Carl Jung's Interpretation of the Flood

Many theories exist that try to explain the similarities of these ideas. Carl Jung's theory of archetypal myths can clarify the mystery of why they are the same. Jung discovered that certain emotions, situations, and actions are universal in all peoples subconscious. Cultural diffusion is another possible cause of these resemblances. This occurs when people of different cultures travel to different areas and incorporate their beliefs into existing ones, thus altering them. Whatever the case may be flood stories have a deeper message that underlies the literal meanings of the stories. Flood Myths symbolically tell a tale of life, death, and the rebirth of the earth and humanity. The oldest surviving written story in world literature is *The Bible*.

In Jung's theories he believes fear of death is an archetype that all people can intimately relate to. The flood is representative of the transformation of humans by washing away their foibles to develop into more civilized and moral people. Examples of the themes of life, death, and rebirth can be seen in these stories. Human life is threatened by God's attempt to exterminate it. The great flood brings about the death of most living things, but survivors enable life on earth to be reborn.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Water in Greek stories

*King Tantalus* cut up his son Pelops, boiled him, and served him as food when he invited the gods to dine with him. He also stole *ambrosia* from the Gods and told his people its secrets. Tantalus's punishment for his actions was to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches. Whenever he reached for the fruit, the branches raised his intended meal from his grasp. Whenever he bent down to get a drink, the water receded before he could get any. Over his head towered a threatening stone like that of Sisyphus. The word *tantalize* has come into the English language meaning *to tease*.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Narcissus

In this tale, told by Ovid and remembered for his verses on love, a young girl named Echo falls in love with a vain youth named Narcissus. He was the son of a woman that the river god had encircled with the windings of his streams, thus trapping and seducing her. Worried for her son's welfare, she consulted a prophet regarding his future. The prophet reports: Narcissus "will live to a ripe old age, as long as he never knows himself."

One day when Narcissus was out hunting, Echo follows the handsome youth through the woods, longing to address him but unable to speak first. When

Narcissus finally heard her footsteps he shouted “Who goes there?” Echo answered “...goes there? ...goes there?” And so it went, until finally Echo showed herself and rushed to embrace Narcissus. He pulled away and vainly told her to leave him alone. Narcissus left Echo heartbroken and she spent the rest of her life lonely and pining away for the love she never knew. Only her voice remained.

Eventually Narcissus became thirsty and went to drink from a stream. As he saw his reflection, he fell in love with it, not knowing that it was him. As he bent down to kiss it, it seemed to “run away” and he was heartbroken. He grew thirstier but he wouldn’t touch the water for fear of damaging his reflection, so he eventually died of thirst and staring at his own reflection. The narcissus flower is closely identified with the boy and was said to spring from the ground around the pool where Narcissus died. In the roman version it is suggested that Narcissus is transformed into the flower.

The deeper meaning to this mythical tale is about Narcissus as a product of a seduction and a woman engulfed by her emotions. He is trapped from the beginning. His life is tolerable but, only until he learns the truth of his history. This is his curse.

In this context, the only love he will ever know is the echo of his own voice. Because of vanity and false pride, even this will fade. Ultimately, having a desire (thirst) to understand the emotions that surrounds him, he will attempt to connect with the source. It is then that he sees his reflection and falls in love. However, he thinks this reflection is ‘the other’ or God. Little does he know that it is him! (Narcissus is the son of a God in the Myth)

A single attempt to accept (kiss) what he sees...makes it disappear. Each attempt to touch this illusive image of the self...disappears in the touching. Narcissus is heartbroken and alone...not realizing that it is his own divinity and self-acceptance that he longs for.

As life would have it, the desire for connection, understanding, and proximity to the other becomes so great...that the longing kills Narcissus. In the end, Narcissus takes on his true form (and potential) – a flower. His true beauty occurs with the flowering (understanding) of his feelings.<sup>xv</sup>

### **Achilles**

The legend of Achilles has it that he was dipped into the river Styx by his mother Thetis in order to make him invulnerable. His heel was not covered by the water and he was later killed by an arrow wound to his heel. Although the legend is

ancient, the phrase was not picked up in English until the 19th century. It is used as a metaphor for vulnerability.

### **Sirens**

In Greek mythology, the Sirens are creatures with the head of a female and the body of a bird. They lived on an island (Sirenum scopuli; three small rocky islands) and with the irresistible charm of their song they lured mariners to their destruction on the rocks surrounding their island (Virgil V, 846; Ovid XIV, 88).

The Argonauts escaped them because when he heard their song, Orpheus immediately realized the peril they were in. He took out his lyre and sang a song so clear and ringing that it drowned the sound of those lovely fatal voices. When on another journey the Odysseus' ship passed the Sirens, had the sailors stuff their ears with wax. He had himself tied to the mast for he wanted to hear their beautiful voices. The Sirens sang when they approached, their words even more enticing than the melody. They would give knowledge to every man who came to them, they said, ripe wisdom and a quickening of the spirit. Odysseus' heart ran with longing but the ropes held him and the ship quickly sailed to safer waters (*Odyssey XII, 39*).

According to Ovid, they were nymphs and the play-mates of Persephone. They were present when she was abducted and, because they did not interfere, Demeter changed them into birds with female faces (Ovid V, 551).<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Scylla**

In Greek mythology was a twelve footed six headed monster. She lived on a rock in the strait of Messina, attacking ships and very nearly doing Odysseus in when he sailed past. She was once a beautiful maiden but the enchantress Circe was jealous because the handsome sea-God Glaucus loved Scylla instead of her. So she put a magic potion into the pool where the innocent Scylla bathed, changing her into that horrible monster.<sup>17</sup>

### **Water in the English Legend**

**Water deities** were extremely popular with Celtic Society for they controlled the essential essence of life itself. The spontaneous movement of springs, rivers and lakes clearly showed the supernatural powers of the goddesses who lived within; and offerings at such aquatic features were commonplace, especially of weapons and other valuables. The practice continues today at wishing wells across the country, and the Lady of the Lake is remembered as "Lady Luck"!

The Name “Excalibur” was first used for King Arthur’s sword by the French Romancers. It was not the famous “Sword in the Stone” (which broke in battle), but a second sword acquired by the King through the intercession of his druidic advisor, Merlin. Worried that Arthur would fall in battle, Merlin took the King to a magical lake where a mysterious hand thrust itself up from the water, holding aloft a magnificent sword. It was the *Lady of the Lake* offering Arthur a magic unbreakable blade, fashioned by an Avalonian elf smith, along with a scabbard which would protect him as long as he wore it.

Towards the end of his reign, during the troubled times of Medrod’s rebellion, Excalibur was stolen by Arthur’s wicked half-sister, *Morgan le Fay*. Though it was recovered, the scabbard was lost forever. Thus Arthur was mortally wounded at the Battle of Camlann. The King then instructed Bedwyr (or Girflet) to return Excalibur to the lake from whence it came. However, when questioned about the circumstances of its return, Bedwyr claimed to have seen nothing unusual. Arthur therefore knew that Bedwyr had kept Excalibur for himself and sent him back to the Lake once more. Hurling the sword into the misty waters this time, Bedwyr saw the mystic hand appear to catch Excalibur and draw it beneath the rippling waters for the last time.

Avalon was the enchanted island where Arthur’s sword was forged and where he was brought after his last battle. Arthur was placed on a golden bed and carried into Avalon by it’s divine priestess. He could only be healed by entrusting his care to her completely forever. It is said that Arthur waits there with her until the time of his return.<sup>18</sup>

### Interesting Facts about Water

Many American states have names that refer to water

State	Origin	Meaning
*Minnesota	Sioux	Sky coloured water
Connecticut	Agon quin	Besides the long river
Mississippi	Chippewa	Great river
Arizona	Spanish/Pima	Place of little springs
Michigan	Chippewa	Greater water

Missouri	After Missouri River	Muddy water
Nebraska	Omaha	Wide river
Nevada	Spanish	Snow-clad
Ohio	Iroquois	Lovely River
Oregon	Indian	Beautiful water <sup>19</sup>

\*Minnesota has over 10,000 lakes

### **Musical composers drew inspiration from water for their musical compositions as is evident from the following**

Beethoven	<i>The Brook</i>
Rachmaninoff	<i>Flood of Spring</i>
Brahms	<i>Rain Sonata</i>
Grofé	<i>Hudson River Suite</i>
Sibelius	<i>The Oceanides</i>
Stravinsky	<i>Noah and the Flood</i>
Ravel	<i>Jeux d'eau</i>
Respighi	<i>The Fountains of Rome</i>
Handel	<i>Water Music</i>
Schubert,	<i>Trout Quintet</i>
Liszt	<i>Beside a Spring</i>
Saint-Saens	<i>Le Deluge</i>
Dvorak	<i>The Water Nymph</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Swan Lake</i>
Strauss	<i>Blue Danube</i>
Mendel ssohn	<i>Calm Sea</i> <sup>20</sup>

### **Archimedes Principle**

There is a famous story about how this principle was discovered; In 212 B.C., a Greek king in the time of Archimedes had a new crown made for himself, but he was not sure that the goldsmiths had been honest with him. He suspected that the crown was not gold all the way through; the craftsmen had kept some of it for themselves, and used a less precious metal for parts of the crown that were not seen. But the king could not tell how to prove anything, without taking the crown apart.

Archimedes realized that if the crown were placed in water, the volume of water it displaced would be the same as the crown's volume. Knowing the crown's volume, he would be able to work out its density (since he already knew its weight), and so tell if it was the right density to be gold. If it was more or less dense than pure gold, they would know that the craftsmen had cheated them. The story goes that Archimedes realized he could use the displacement of water to solve the problem, while he was taking a bath in the public baths. He was so pleased by his discovery that he leaped out of the bath and ran home through the streets, shouting 'Eureka' - 'it is found'.

When an object is immersed in water, it feels lighter. In a cylinder filled with water, the action of inserting a mass in the liquid causes it to displace upward. In 212 B.C., the Greek scientist Archimedes discovered the following principle: an object is immersed in a fluid is buoyed up by a force equal to the weight of the fluid displaced by the object. This became known as Archimedes' principle.<sup>xxi</sup>

## Wonders of the World

Four of the Seven *Wonders of the World* was water related. *The Pyramids* were internationally constructed on the west bank of the holy Nile; the *Hanging Gardens* of Babylon had exquisite pools and fountains and depended on a sophisticated irrigation and pumping system; the *Colossus of Rhodes* was built at the entrance to the harbour at Rhodes; and the *Pharos of Alexandria* was the worlds' first lighthouse.<sup>xxii</sup>

## Conclusion

From all this we can conclude that 'water' plays a very significant role in our lives. It has shaped our destiny and regulated and transformed our lives. While water has always been associated with cleansing and purifying, we must not forget it has power to destroy with its raging torrents. Civilizations grew and flourished near rivers and lakes and streams. The Biblical stories have relevance for our times and the Greek myths often help us to understand ourselves better. These stories have a transcendent quality and readers down the ages will continue to be fascinated by them and write fresh stories to deal with aspects of our being that remain dark and mysterious, beneath the oceans of our unconscious mind.

## End Notes

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