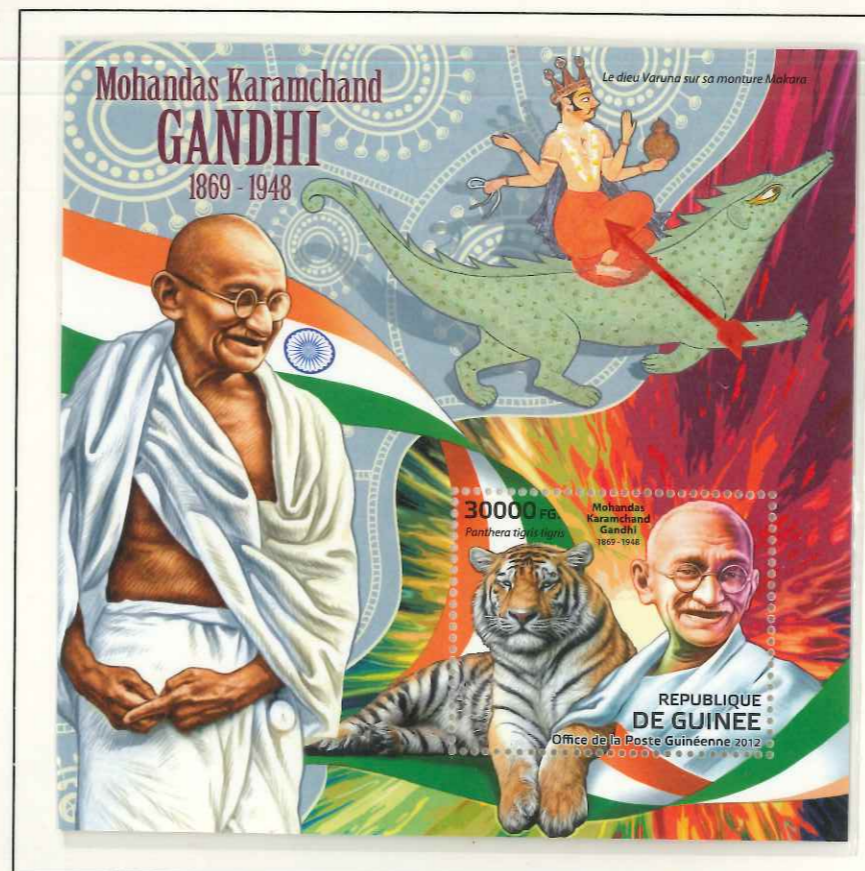
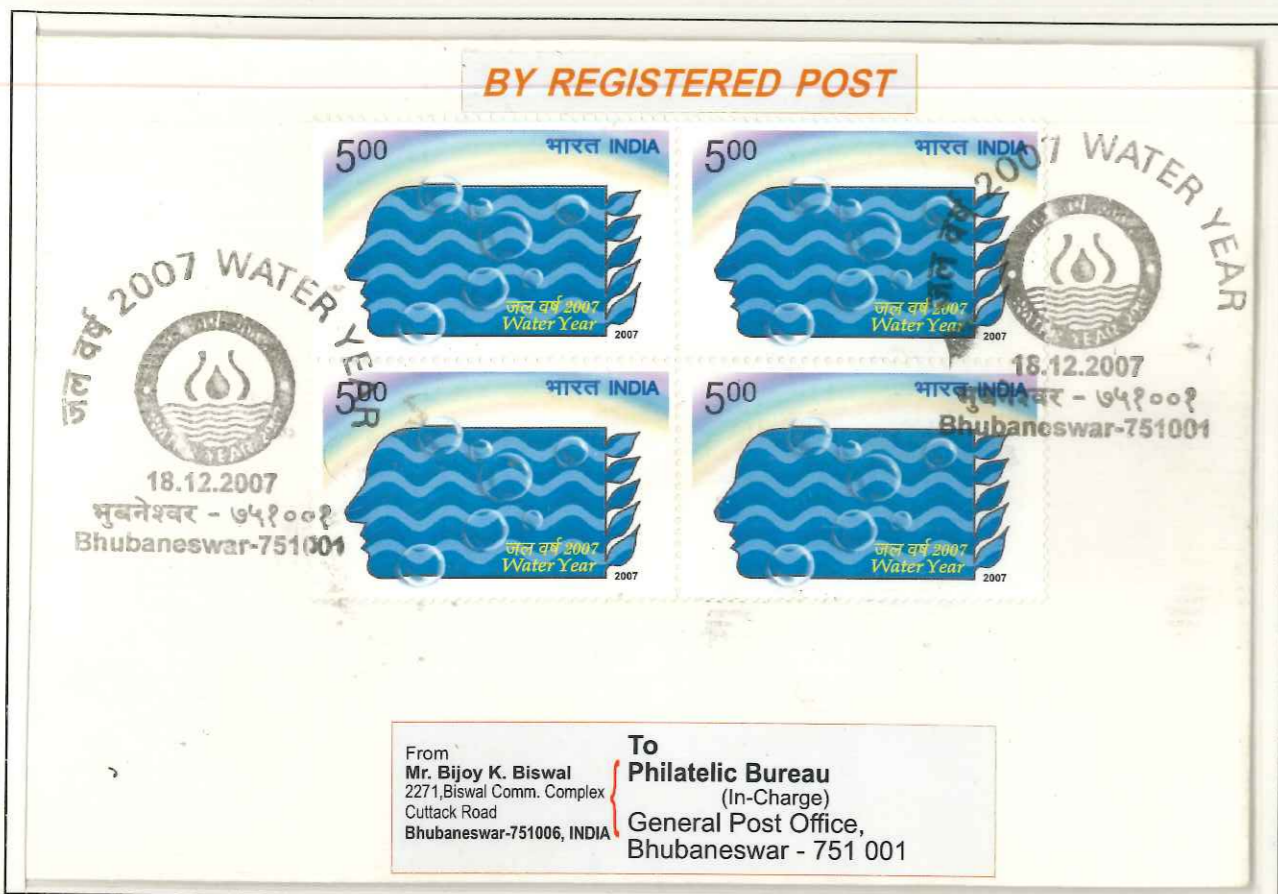


## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER IN THE RELIGION

### 2.1 Buddhism

Water has a central place in the practices and beliefs of many religions. Water washes away impurities and pollutants and also can make a person clean, externally or spiritually. The water is the very breaths of people (*apo vai pranah*). They are the sources of plenitude (*te sindhavo varivo dhatana* Rigveda 7-47-4). They are prayed to give people nourishment and delight (Rigveda 10-9-1).



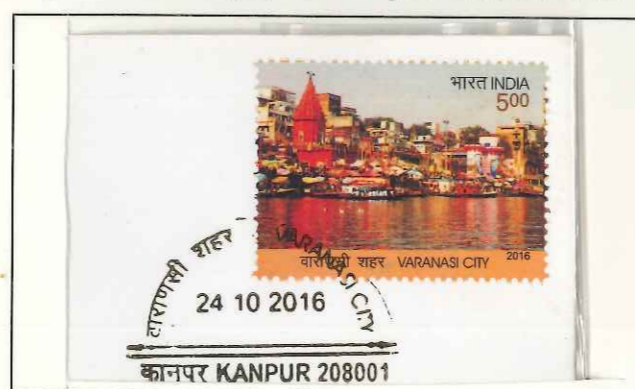
Varuna is the God of Rain in Hinduism. He also uses Crocodile as his vehicle.



The Ganges is the longest river in India and flows through the middle land, that part of India where the Buddha lived. When he wanted to give the idea of an incalculable amount of something, Buddha would say that it was as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges (S.IV,376). When he wanted to emphasize the effectiveness of his teachings for attaining nirvana he used the inevitable, unstoppable eastward flow of the Ganges to illustrate this idea. 'Just as the Ganges flows, slides, tends towards the east, so too, one who cultivates and makes much of the Noble Eightfold Path flows, slides tends towards nirvana'(S.V,40).



The significance of water manifests itself differently in different religions. Water does feature in **Buddhist** funerals where water is poured into a bowl placed before the monks and the dead body. As it fills and pours over the edge, the monks recite "As the rains fill the rivers and overflow into the ocean, so likewise may what is given here reach the departed."



A character in the Jataka says: 'I revere the Ganges whose waters flow and spread'(J.V,93). The **Tripitaka** says that Ganges starts somewhere in the Himalayas. The Jatakas often mentions that when the Bodhisattva was an ascetic in his former lives, he went into the Himalayas and 'made a hermitage near a bend in the Ganges'(e.g. Ja.II,145; II,258).

