

Some similarities of Vayu in the ancient Indian and Iranian religion books: A focus on Vedas and Avesta

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Abstract

The name of God Vāyu has been mentioned in the Vedas as well as Avesta Book. Vāyu in the Rig Veda is very often associated with Indra and is regarded equally with him, as representing or ruling over the atmosphere. He won the race for the first draught of Soma Juice and at Indra's request allowed him to have a quarter of it. The two worlds are said to have generated him for wealth. He is once spoken of as the son in law of Tavshtri, though his wife's name is not mentioned. In the Purusa hymn he is said to have sprung from the breath of world giant. Vāyu is rarely connected with the Maruts. He is however, once said to have generated them from the wombs of heaven and to be accompanied by them as well as by puṣan and Vishvedevas. His personal attributes are rather indefinite. He is beautiful and with Indra is spoken of as touching sky, swift as thought, and thousand-eyed. He is once said to have roaring velocity. Vāyu has a shining car drawn by a team by a pair of red (rohita) or raddy (aruna) steeds. Vāyu in the Avesta Book is Vayu (with the short vowel a) and it is the god of wind. This name has been also applied as Veyu, Vāyu, Vay and Andarvāy in the pahlavi Book. Vaya in Avesta is the name of wind element as well as god of wind. In fact Vayu is beside of water, fire and earth to complete the four elements. One Yasht of Avesta Book namely Rām Yasht is in praise of Vayu. According to details of this Yashts, Vayu is the space which is connected to the paradise world from above and to the dark world from dawn, viz Vayu is the space which separates the creation of

holy wisdom (Ahuramazda) from bad and dirty creation. Therefore, in Avesta Book, there are two fold Vayu, first, a god, who protects the pure and useful air and The Second, the demon who is the source of impure and prejudicial air. In Avesta Book, on the top of worshippers first Ahuramazda and then many great persons among them kings, heroes, invoked the god Vayu, and offer up him a sacrifice and bagged some boons. He granted their boons. Sometimes some of the Ahriman creation also offer up a sacrifice for Vayu and bagged some boons but they are not granted by him.

There are some similarity and difference between Vāyu in Vedas and Vayu in the Avesta book.

Keywords: Vāyu, Vāta, Vedas, Avesta, God, Wind

Introduction

In the Vedas besides the Maruts, there are two wind-gods, Vāyu and Vāta. Vāta is simply the name of the Physical Phenomenon of wind and Vāyu is a god proper being a divine personification of wind. (Deshmuchi, 1933, p.187)

Vāyu is very often associated with Indra and is regarded equally with him, as representing or ruling over the atmosphere. He won the race for the first draught of Soma Juice and at Indra's request allowed him to have a quarter of it. (Wilkins, 1973, p.64,65)

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His team consists of 99, 100 or even 1000 horses yoked by his will. Vayu's car, in which Indra is his companion has a golden seat and touches the sky like the other god, Vāyu is fond of soma, to which he is often invited to come with his teams and the first draught of which he obtain as his share (also in company with Indra for he is the swiftest of the gods (MacDonnell, 2004, p.119).

The Aittariya Brahmana makes him come first, the Indra second; like the other gods he is asked to grant fame, children and riches and to protect the weak, but those are quite secondary traits (Keith, 1925, p.139).

Vāyu is not tied to a place and proceeds on his course Yathāvasam. He never comes to rest. He follows all season. His form is not visible. Vāyu is the breath of the gods. He is the "Spirit".

In the Taittiriya Aranyaka, it has eleven male forms and eleven female forms. Atmosphere is his kingdom and hence trees belong to him. He has purifying power. Neutrally he is the cause of rain, the cause of fire and on the other hand he subdues the heat of the sun (Hillebrandt, 1981, p.187)

Sri Aurbindo says:

In Vedic system Vāyu is the master of life. Inspirer of the breath or dynamic energy, called prana, which is presented in man by vital force and her activities. Vāyu is always associated with the prana or life—Energy which contributes to the system the ensemble of nervous activities that in man are the support of mental energies- governed by Indra. (Shri Aurobindo, 1962, p.82)

Vāta in Vedas is merely the wind in its power, sweeping along great clouds of dust, shattering and thundering. His form cannot be seen by the mortal eye, though his roaring is heard nor is the place of his birth is known. He is the breath of the gods and the recipient of oblation. Stress is laid on his white-

ness and as the wind heralds lighting and the appearance of the sun. Vāta is said to produce ruddy lights and to make the dawns to shine. His roaring is often alluded to and he is credited with healing power, doubtless from the purifying effect of his blasts (Keith, 1925, p.140)

The difference of Vāyu and Vāta in the Vedas

There is not much difference between Vāyu and Vāta in Vedas. Each of the two names of wind Vāyu and Vāta is used to express both the physical phenomenon and its divine personification. But Vāyu is chiefly the god and Vāta the element. The difference between the two is illustrated by the fact that Vāyu alone is as a god associated with Indra, the two deities being then often invoked as Indra Vāyu. This couple was regarded as so closely connected by the ancient native interpreters that either of them might represent the deities of the atmospheric region in the Vedic tried. Vāta on the other hand, being less fully personified is only associated with Parjanya, whose connection with the thunder storm is much more vivid than that of Indra. Different set of epithets are applied to the two wind-gods those belonging to Vāta being chiefly expressive of the physical attributes of swiftness and violence (MacDonnell, 2004, pp.118-119)

H. Oldenberg in his book says:

Both Vāyu and Vāta means "wind". The first word is remarkably rare in the Vedas in its appellative meaning, whereas the second is common in daily usage. Correspondingly Vāta is a god of wind, not very different from Indra, god of Thunder storm. The reference to the natural phenomenon has faded out in the same stereotyped expressions. He is invited to come with the long rows of his companions to enjoy the Soma-drink. Its first share is given, according to the old order of sacrifice to the fastest of the gods. It is different with Vāta: The rite does not give him a special place of honour. Instead the idea of the wind in motion with its bustling freshness clings to him unmistakably (Oldenberg, 2004, p.115)

In the ritual, the offerings especially of animal victims are made mainly to Vāyu. Vāta has a few offering only make to him. The latter literature adds nothing of importance to the characterization of either god. Stress I laid on the power of the god. Vāyu to diminish the heat of sun and in the Tait-

tiryā Aranyaka “male” “female” power are given to him as attendance. (A.B. Keith, 1925, p.140)

Both Vāyu and Vāta have praised in the Vedas. Vāyu has one whole hymn addressed to him and share half a dozen with Indra, while Vāta has only two short hymns in the tenth Mandala of RigVeda. (Vedic Hymns, 1994. X.168 & 186)

Vāyu in the Rig Veda is praised as follows:

- Come hither, O Vāyu, though beautiful one!

These somas are ready, drink

Of them, honour our call!

- O Vāyu, the prayers celebrate thee with hymns, they who know the

Feast-days, and have prepared the Soma.

- O Vāyu, they satisfying stream goes to the worshipper, wide-reaching, to the Soma – draught.

- O Indra and Vāyu these (libations of Soma) are poured out, come hither for the sake of our offering, for the drops (of Soma) long for you.

- O Indra and Vāyu, Vāyu perceive the libations. You, who are rich in booty, come them quickly hither.

- O Vāyu and Indra come near to the work of the sacrificer, quick, thus is my prayer, O ye men! (Vedic Hymns.1994. I.2)

And in another hymn at Rig Veda:

- O Vāyu, may the quick races bring thee towards the offering, to the early drink here, to the early drink of Soma! May “Sūnritā” (the Dawn) stand erect, approving thy mind! Come near on thy harnessed chariot to share. O Vāyu to share in the sacrifice!

(Vedic Hymns.1994.I.134. 2-6)

Vāta describes in Mandala, X, Hymn 168. As follows:

- Now for the greatness of the chariot of Vāta its roar goes crashing and thundering. It moves touching the sky and creating red sheen, or it goes scattering the dust at the earth.

- Afterwards there rise the guest of Vāta, they go toward him, like women to a feast. The god goes with them on the same chariot, he the king of the whole this world.

- When he moves on his paths along the sky, he rests not even a single day, the friend of the waters, the first born, and the holy, where was he born, did he spring?

- The breath of the gods, the germ of world, that god moves wherever he listen; his roars indeed are heard, not his form – let us offer sacrifice to that Vāta! (Vedic Hymns.1994.X.168, 1-4)

And in Mandala X, Hymn 186, he also invoked

as follows:

- May Vāta waft medicine, healthful, delightful to our heart, May he prolong our lives!

- You, O Vāta are our father and our mother and our brother and our friend, do you grant us to live!

- O Vāta, from that treasure of the immortal which is placed in your house yonder, give us to live! (Vedic Hymns.1994.X.186.1-3)

Vāyu in the Avesta

Vāyu in the Avesta Book is Vayu (with the short vowel a) and it is the god of wind. This name has been also applied as Vēyu, Vāyu, Vāy and Andarvāy in the pahlavi Books. (R.Afifi.1995.p.444) Vaya in the Avesta is the name wind element as well as god of wind. In fact Vayu is beside of water, fire and earth to complete the four elements.

One Yasht of the Avesta Book namely, Ram Yasht is in praise of Vayu. According to details of this Yasht, Vayu is the space which is connected to the paradise world from above and to the dark world from dawn, viz Vayu is the space which separates the creation of holy wisdom (Ahuramazda) from bad and dirty creation. According to explanation of Bondahesh:

Above of this space; there is the eternal brightness and it is the place of Ahuramazda and below the space which has been surrounded by eternal darkness and it is the center of Ahriman. Vayu is placed between, those two areas namely, brightness and darkness”, which is the battle of goodness and badness. Paradise has been placed in the brightness area and hell in the darkness. Therefore the air which is beside of paradise world belonged to the area of Ahuramazda is pure and holy and there is a guardian to protect it, who is deserve of praise. But the air which beside of darkness world where the centre of Ahriman (demon) is impure and there is a demon for that; who is deserve of curse.

Because of this reason, it is always repeated Ram Yasht:

O, Vāyu, to this part of you, do we sacrifice; that belong to Spenta Mainyu (Ahuramazda).

We sacrifice to the holy Vayu, we sacrifice to Vayu who works highly. (The Zend Avesta, 2000, Part-II, p.250)

Therefore, in the Avesta Book, there are two Vayu, first, a god, who protect the pure and useful air and Second, the demon who is the source of impure and prejudicial air.

According to the Learned Opinion, in fact Vayu was the name of a nature deity who was belongs to

Indo-Aryan trips, which later Iranian made two aspects. For that First goodness and second badness. (The Yashts, 1928, p.137)

Vayu in the Iran has a great as well as enigmatic personification, who, Ahuramazda as well as Ahriman creations sacrifice for him.

Ahuramazda offers a sacrifice for him that he able to destroy of the Ahriman creations and protect the good Creations:

“To him did the maker Ahuramazda. Offer up a sacrifice in the Airyana Vaegeh², on a golden throne, under golden beams and golden canopy, with bundles of baresma and offerings of full boiling [milk]”.(The Zend Avesta, 2000, Part II, p.250)

He begged of him a boon, saying:

“Grant me this, O Vayu who do work highly, that I may smite the creation of Angra mainyu, and that nobody may smite this creation of, the God Spirit!”

“Vayu who works highly, granted him that boon, as the Maker Ahuramazda, did pursue it”.

“We sacrifice to the holy Vayu; we sacrifice to the Vayu who works highly”.(The Zend Avesta.2000.Part II, p.250)

And Azi-Dahaka (one of the Ahrimans creations) also offer a sacrifice which he destroy all the men, but Vayu did not grant him”

“The three mouthed Azi-Dahaka offer up a sacrifice and he begged of him a boon, saying:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may make all the seven country of the earth empty on men”.

“In vain did he sacrifice, in vain did he beg, in vain did he invoke, in vain he gives gifts, and in vain he brings libations. Vayu did not grant him that boon”(The Zend Avesta, 2000, Part II p.254)

In Avesta Book, many great persons among them kings, heroes, invoked Vayu, and offer up a sacrifice and begged the boons; Vayu granted their boons as follows:

Hoshangha, one of the ancient Iranian kings, offer up a sacrifice, on the top of the Hara mountains, and he begged a boon saying:

“Grant me O Vayu! Who do work highly that I may smite two-thirds of the demons of Mâzana³ and of the fiends (demons) of Varana.⁴

And Vayu who works highly, granted him that boon.(The Zend Avesta.2000. part II; p.251).

Takhma Urupa⁵(brother of Yima), the well-armed offer up a sacrifice and begged him a boon saying:

“Grant me this O Vayu! who work highly, that I

may conquer all demon, men, magicians and fairies and that I may ride Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), turned into shape of horse; all around the earth from one end to other, for thirty years”.

Vayu who works highly, granted him that boon. (The Zend Avesta. 2000, part II; p.252).

The bright Yima⁶, the good shepherd, sacrifice for him from the height Hukairya Mountain; and he begged of him a boon saying:

“Grant me this O Vayu! Who work highly, that I may become the most glorious of the man born to be hold the sun, that I may make in my region both animals and man undying , water and plants undying , and the food for eating creatures never- failing ”Vayu who works highly, granted him that boon.(The Zend Avesta.2000. Vol.II; p. 253)

The Theâtaona⁷, the heir valiant Athwya clan, offers up a sacrifice and he begged at him a boon saying:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may overcome Azi-Dahaka, the three-mouthed, the six-eyed who has thousand senses, the most powerful. Fiendish drug (untruth), that demon baleful, the strongest Drug (untruth) that Angra Mainya created against the material world, to destroy the world of good principle...

Vayu, how works highly, granted him that boon.(The Zend Avesta.2000.Part II, pp.254-255)

The manly-hearted Kersâspa⁸, offer up a sacrifice and begged of him a boon saying:

“Grant me this, O Vaya! Who do work, highly, that I may succeed in avenging my brother Urvâkshaya⁹, that I may smite Hitâspa and yoke him to my chariot.”

Vayu, granted him that boon.(The Zend Avesta.2000.part II; pp.150,151)

Hutaosa¹⁰ (wife of Kai Goshtasp), she of the many brother, of the Naotara¹¹ house, offer up sacrifice and she begged of him a boon saying:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may be dour and loved and well-received in the house of king Vishtâspa”.¹²

Vayu, who works highly, granted her that boon. (The Zend Avesta.2000. Part II, p.257)

In the Avesta (Ram Yasht) beside the Kings, heroes and great persons; some time ordinarily persons also offer a sacrifice for Vaya and ask him some desires; for example the maids, desire him to find the good husband:

To him, did maids, whom no man had known, offer up a sacrifice ... they begged of him a boon saying:

“Grant us this. O Vayu who do work highly, that we may find a husband, young and beautiful of body, who will treat us well, all life long, and give us offspring, a wise, learned, ready-tongued husband”.

Vayu, who works highly, granted them that boon. (The Zend Avesta.2000.part II p.258)

According to Ram Yasht, Vayu is belonged to the Good spirit and his qualities are bright and glorious:

“To this Vayu do we sacrifice, this Vayu do we invoke ... we sacrifice to that Vayu that belong to the good spirit, the bright and glorious Vayu”(The Zend Avesta.2000. Part II, p.258)

Such Vayu invoke generally as follows:

“To this Vayu do we sacrifice, to this Vayu do we invoke, for this house, for the master of the house, and for the man here who is offering libations and giving gifts. To this excellent God do we sacrifice that he may accept our meat and our prayers, and grant us in return crush our enemies at one stroke”

Vâta in the Avesta

Vâta which is the other name of wind; God has been mentioned three times in the Avesta.

- First in the Rashn Yasht, verse No.9
- Second in the Farvardin Yasht, Verse No.47
- Third in the Mihir Yash, Verse No.9

In the Rashn Yasht, Ahuramazda along with fiend smiting wind (Vbta) come to help of worshipper:

“Then I, Ahuramazda, shall come for help unto you, toward Var¹³ prepared, towards the fire and the baresame¹⁴, toward the full boiling (milk), towards the Var of oil and the sap of the plants. Along with the fiend-smiting wind (Vâta), along with cursing the thought of the wise, along with the kingly glory. (The Zend Avesta.2000.Part II p.170)

In Farvardin Yasht the victorious Vbta has been mentioned along with Mitra¹⁵ and Rashnu¹⁶ :

“whichever side they have been first worshipped in the fullness of faith of a devoted heart, to that side turn the awful fravash’s¹⁷ of faith fall along with Mitra and Rashnu and awful cursing thought of wise and the victorious wind (Vâta) (The Zend Avesta. Part II p.191)

In the Mihir (Mitra) Yasht the fiend smiting Vâta has been mentioned with Mithra:

“On whichever side he has been worshipped first in the fullness of faith of a devoted heart, to that side turns Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, with the fiend-smiting wind, with the cursing thought of wise.(The Zend Avesta.2000.Part II, p.121).

Conclusion

There are some Similarities and dis-similarities between Vâyû in Vedas and Vâyû in the Avesta; and also between Vbta in this two sources; therefore it is concluded which:

1. The name of Vâya has been mentioned in Vedas with the long vowel (B) while in Avesta it is with the short vowel (a) namely (Vayu). However, this name has been mentioned in the pahalvi texts, as Vayu, Véyu, Vây and Andarvây.

2. Both Vâyû and Vâta are important in the Vedas and Avesta but Vayu in Avesta is more prominent than the Vbyu in the Vedas Vedas, because in the Avesta (Ram Yasht) the Maker Ahuramazda, Azi-Dahaka and many Kings, heroes, great persons offer up a sacrifice to him and he granted all except Azi-Dahaka because he was a demon.

3. In the Vedas there is only one kind of Vaya but in the Avesta there are two kinds of Vayu, the good Vayu which is the space which is connected to paradise world (Ahura Mazda world) and the bad Vbyu, the space which is connected to darkness world(Ahirman world).

4. In the Veda, Vâyû has been mentioned along with Indra while in the Avesta Vayu or Vâta are along with Mithra and Rashnu.

5. According to the learned opinion, Vbta in the Vedas is the name of the element of wind and Vâyû is the name of God wind. But in Avesta both Vayu and Vbta are considered as the name of God Wind and Vbta always is mentioned as “Fiend-smiting’ wind” and “Victorious wind” and it is along with Mithra and Rashnu.

Notes

1. Bondaresh is one of the Pahalavi texts.
2. Airyane Vaegh is the land of Aryans
3. Mazana, is the name of one area in north of Iran: now it is called Mazandaran.
4. Name of the place in ancient Iran period.
5. Takhma Urupa, was the brother of Yima, He reigned for thirty years and rode Ahriman, turned in the horse. But at least his wife deceived by Ahriman, revealed to him the secret of her husband’s power, and Takhma Urupa was swallowed up by his horse (Ahriman). But Yima managed to take back his brother’s body from the body of Ahriman.
6. Yima is one of ancient Iranian Kings. He is called, Jamshid in the modern Persian literature.

7. Theâtaona is one of ancient Iranian heroes and kings who Kills Azi Dahaka (a demon), He is called Fridun.

8. Kersâspa is a warrior in the ancient Iranian literature. He had a brother namely Urvâkhshaya ereydun in modern Persian.

9. A judge and law giver. Urvâkhshaya was killed by Hitâspa, the golden-crowned and avenged by Keresbspa.

10. Hutaosa is the name wife of Vishtâspa (Kai Goshtâsp) who was one of the ancient Iranian King in the time of Zaroaster.

11. Naotara, is the name of a hero in the ancient Iran.

12. Vishtâspa, the name of a Iranian King.

13. Var, this seems to be the Var-nirang, or ordeal which is alluded to in several passage of Avesta. According to learned opinion Var means Exam, test, and, to prove the truth. According to the Dinkart (one of the pahlavi texts) there were thirty there kind of var ordeals, the most common was the pour melted copper upon the breast of the man whose truth was to the tested, if he went off uninjured, he was considered to have spoken the truth.

14. Baresame (Now called barsom) is a bundle of sacred twinges which the priest holds in his hand while receiving the prayers. They were formerly twinges of the pomegranate, date, or tamarind tree, or of any tree that had no thorns, and were plucked with particular ceremonies, which alone made them fit to be used for liturgics purposes.

15. Mitra, the God of heavenly light, the lord of Vast luminous space, he became later the god of the Sun.

16. Rashnu "the true one" the god of truth.

17. The Fravashi was independent of the circum-

stance of life or death, an immortal part of the individual which existed before man and outlived him.

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