Chapter IV

The Elements are very important in the ancient Indian and Iranian literature, however the numbers of these elements are different, because according to the Indian literature there are five Elements namely; Sky, Earth, Fire, Wind and Waters but according to the Iranian literature except the Sky, the remaining namely Earth, Fire Wind and Waters are considered as Four Elements. So the first sub-topic discusses about the Sky and Earth which are called Dyaus and Prithivī in the Vedas; and Asmana (Āsmān) and Zamiyād or Zama Yazata (Genius of the Earth) in the Avesta. Second sub-topic is about Fire namely; Agni in the Vedas and Āzar in the Avesta. Third one belongs to the Vāyu and Vayu (Wind) and fourth sub-topic belongs to the Waters. In this part Sarasvatī and Anāhita (the goddess of water in the Avesta) have been compared together. The last sub-topic explains about Apām Napāt who is the son or the grand son of waters in the Vedas and Avesta.

1. Sky and Earth

A. Sky in the Vedas

Sky is called as Dyaus in the Vedas. This word is derived from the root *div* “to shine one” and being allied to *deva*, “god”. By far the most frequent use of the word Dyaus is as a designation of the concrete “Sky”. It also means “day”, when personified as good heaven; Dyaus is generally coupled with Earth in the dual compound *dyāvāprthivī*, the universal parents. No single hymn of the Rigveda is addressed to Dyaus alone. When he is mentioned separately the personification is limited almost entirely to the idea of paternity.
Some times it is connected with the name of some other deity who is called the son or daughter of Dyaus. In about three-fourth the Aśvins are his offspring (napātā) and Agni is his son (Sūnu) or child (śiśu), Parjanya, Sūrya, the Ādityas, the Maruts, and the Angirases are his sons (putra). Sometimes it appears alone but generally it is associated with Prīthivī and mentioned with various deities mostly including Prīthivī. In some passages he is styled a father or the father of Indra, and once he is spoken of as rich in seed and as having generated Agni. He is bull or red bull that bellows downwards and is said to have approved when Vṛtra was slain. He is mentioned quite alone, once being called “the great father” once “lofty” and once the “lofty abode”. Thus it appears the Dyaus is seldom mentioned independently and in only one-sixth of over ninety passages is his paternity not expressly stated or implied by association with Prīthivī. The only essential feature of the person fiction in the Rgveda is in fact his paternity. In a few passages, Dyaus is called a bull that bellows. ¹

Dyaus is once compared with a black steed decked with pearls, an obvious allusion to the nocturnal Sky. The statement that Dyaus is furnished with a bolt looks like a touch of anthropomorphism. He is also spoken of as smiling through the clouds the allusion being doubtless to lighting Sky. Dyaus as father is most usually thought of in combination with Earth as a mother. This is indicated by the fact that his name forms a dual compound with that of Prīthivī oftener than it is used along in the singular, that in a large proportion

¹ Mac Donnell. A, History of Vedic Mythology, p.32
of its occurrences in the singular it is accompanied by the name of Prithivī, and that when regarded separately he is not sufficiently individualized to have a hymn dedicated to his praise, through in conjunction with Prithivī he is celebrated in Six. Like nearly all the greater gods, Dyaus is some times called Asura and he is once invoked in the vocative as “father Heaven” (Dyaus pitṛ) along with Mother Earth (Prithivīmātā). Dyaus as the universal father who with mother Earth embraced all other deified objectives and phenomena he would have been the greatest among the deities of a chaotic polytheism. But to speak of him as the supreme god of the Indo-European age is misleading, because this suggests ruler of the type of Zeus and incipient monotheism for an extremely remote period, though neither of these conceptions had been arrived at in the earlier Rgvedic times.²

Dyaus has the honor of being the only Indo-European god who is certainly to be recognized as having existed in the earliest period, and he has claimed for that time as a real sovereign of the gods as much as Zeus among the Greeks.³ In fact, the god Dyaus goes back to Indo-European period. There is no reason to assume that the personification in that period was of a more advanced type and that the Rgveda has in this case replaced to a more primitive stage. On the contrary there is every for supposing the reverse to be the case, what ever higher gods may have existed in that remote age must have

² Ibid,p33.
³ Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of Veda and Upanishads, p.95.
been of considerably more rudimentary type and can hardly in instance have
been conceived a part from deified natural objects.  

**B. Sky in the Avesta**

The name of Sky has been mentioned as Asmana in the Avesta. It is
said Āsmān in Pahlavi and Modern Persian. In fact, he was as a god in ancient
Iran who is later personified as the genius of the Sky and invoked in the
Avesta. He is shining, exalted and powerful. And the twenty-seventh day of the
Zoroastrian month is called after the name of Āsmān.  

According to Iranian Mythology, the Āsmān has been created by Ahura
Mazda at the first stage of creation. The god Āsmān guards the Sky which
Ahriman doesn’t run away because the hard duty of the Sky is to imprison the
Ahriman and demons.

The god Āsmān along with Mihir (Mithra) are the companions of
Khshathra-Vairya (one of the Amesha -Spentas) and it is also mentioned
several times along with Zamiyād (god of Earth). According to the Bundahish
(one of the Pahlavi text) the colour of the Sky is white and its shape is like egg.
And according to the old beliefs of Iranians, the Sky has four stories namely

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6 Afifi, R., Mythology and Culture of Iran in the Pahlavi text, p.420.
7 In Persia the seven gods are known as Amesha-Spentas “the undying and well-doing ones” they by
and by, according to the new spirit that breathed in the religion, received the names of the defined
abstractions, Vohu-manó (good thought), Asha-Vahishta (excellent holiness) Khshathra-Vairya (perfect
sovereignty), Spenta Armaiti (divine piety) Haurvatát Ameretát (health and immortality). The First of
them all was remained Ahura Mazda; but whereas formerly he had been only the first of them, he was
now their father. (The Zend Avesta, Part I, P IX).
the place of stars, the place of moon, the place of sun and finally the place of unlimited brightness (Paradise). 

In the Farvardin Yasht (name of a Yasht from Avesta book) Ahura Mazda says, to Zarathustra, through the brightness and glory of Fravashis I maintain the Sky, and described as follows:

“Through their brightness and glory O, Zarathustra! I maintain that Sky, there above shining and seen afar, and encompassing this Earth all around it looks like a palace, that built of heavenly substance, firmly established, with ends that lie a far. Shining in its body, at ruby over the three-third (of the Earth) it is like a garment inlaid with stars, made of a heavenly substance, that Mazda puts on along with Mithra and Rashnu, and Spenta-Ārmaiti, and on no side can the eye perceive the end of it.

In the Vendidād (a part of the Avesta Book), Fargard (Chapter) XIX, Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda; “How shall I make the world free from that Drug (untruth)”.

Ahura Mazda answered:

“Invoke, Zarathustra! The sovereign Haven, the boundless time, and Vayu, whose action is most high.”

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8 Hinnells, John R. Persian Mythology, translated into Persian by Farrokhi, B, pp.147-148.
9 The Fravashi was independent of the circumstance of life or death, an immortal part of the individual which existed before man and outlived him.
10 The Zend Avesta Part II, p.181.
11 The Zend Avesta part I, p.206.
C. The Earth in the Vedas

The meaning of Pṛithivī is “the broad one” and the poet of Ṛgveda alludes to the etymology when he says that Indra upheld the Earth (Pṛithivī) and spread it out. In the Taittirīya Samhitā and Taittirīya Brahāmanas, the name of the Pṛithivī is from the root prath “to extend” because she is extended.\(^{12}\) The Earth or wide world in the Vedas is personified as the mother of all beings, and is invoked together with the Sky. According to the Vedas there are three Earths corresponding to the three heavens, and our Earth is called Bhūmi. Another name of the Earth is Urvī “wide”.\(^{13}\)

The Earth Pṛithivī as has been shown generally celebrated conjointly with Dyaus is lauded alone in only one short hymn of three stanzas in Ṛgveda and in a long and beautiful hymn in the Atharvaveda. According to the Ṛgveda, she abounds in heights, bears the burden of the mountains and supports the trees of the forest in the ground (ks̄mā). She quickens the soil, for she scatters rain, and the showers of heaven are shed from the lighting of cloud. She is great (mahī) firm (dr̥l̥hā) and shrinking (arjunī).\(^{14}\)

Pṛithivī has been invoked in the Ṛgveda as follows:

- Thou, of the truth, a Pṛithivī, bearest the tool that rends the hills. Thou rich in torrents, who with might quickest Earth, O mighty one\(^{15}\). (ṚV. IV.84.1)

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\(^{12}\) MacDonnell, M, History of Vedic Mythology, p.128.
\(^{13}\) Rengarajan T, Dictionary of Vedas, p.162.
\(^{14}\) MacDonnell, History of Vedic Mythology, p.128.
\(^{15}\) Hymn of the Ṛgveda, by T.H. Griffith, p.281.
To thee, O wanderer at will, ring out the lauds with beams of day, who drivest, like neighing steed, the swelling cloud, O bright of hue\textsuperscript{16}. (R\textsuperscript{V} V. IV.84.2)

Who graspest with the might on Earth. E’en the strong Sovrans of wood when from the lightning of they could the rains-floods of heaven descend.\textsuperscript{17} (R\textsuperscript{V} V. IV.84.3)

**D. The Earth in the Atharvaveda**

In the Atharvaveda one of the longest and beautiful hymns (AV. XII, I) belongs to the goddess Earth. According to this hymn, the goddess Earth is supported by greatness universal order (\textit{r\textipa{ita}}) strength, consecration, creative favor (\textit{tapas}) spiritual exaltation (Brahma) and the sacrifice\textsuperscript{18} (AV. XII. I. 1). The Earth that has heights and slopes and great plains, supports the plants of manifold virtue, free from the pressure that comes from the midst of men; she shall spread out for worshipper and fit herself for him\textsuperscript{19} (AV. XII. I. 2). She is described as one who bears the sea, the rivers, the waters, the food are upon her and the tribes of men have arisen and the breathing, moving life exists upon her, invoked to offer precedence in drinking\textsuperscript{20} (AV. XII. I. 3).

The Earth whose are four regions of space and who supports the manifold breathing, moving thing, she shall offer the cattle and other

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Hymn of Atharvaveda, Edited by Max Muller, p199.
\textsuperscript{19} Hymn of Atharvaveda, Edited by Max Muller, p199.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
possessions for worshipper\textsuperscript{21} (AV. XII. I. 4). The Earth upon which the first men unfolded themselves; the gods over come the Asuras, shall procure for desirous all kind of cattle, horses and fowls, good fortune and glory\textsuperscript{22} (AV. XII. I. 5).

The Earth that supports all furnishes wealth, the foundation, the golden-breasted resting-place of all living creatures, and she who supports Agni Vaiśvānara (the fire), and mates with Indra, the bull, shall furnish the worshippers, with property\textsuperscript{23} (AV. XII.I. 6).

The broad Earth which is guarded by the sleepless gods attentively for ever, shall milk for desirer precious honey and moreover be sprinkle to him with glory\textsuperscript{24} (AV. XII.I. 7).

The Earth which formerly was water upon the ocean (of space), which the wise (seers) found out by their skill full devices, whose heart is in the highest heaven, immortal, surrounded by truth shall bestow the brilliancy and strength in supreme sovereignty to worshippers\textsuperscript{25} (AV. XII.I. 8).

The Earth upon which the attendant waters jointly flow by day and night unceasingly, shall pour out milk for the desirous in rich streams and moreover besprinkle him with glory\textsuperscript{26} (AV. XII.I. 9), and the Earth which the Aśvins have measured and Vishnu has stopped out, and Indra, the lord

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p 200.
\textsuperscript{25} Hymn of Atharvaveda, Edited by Max Muller, p200.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
of might has made it friendly to himself. She as mother shall pour forth milk for worshipper as son\(^{27}\) (AV. XII.I. 10).

Generally, the Earth is described as supporter of both bipeds and quadrupeds, (AV. XII.I. 15). All the begetting mother at plants that are supported by (divine) law are upon it\(\text{(AV. XII.I. 17)}\), a great gathering-place, the great commotion and agitation are upon it, great Indra protects unceasingly\(^{28}\)\(\text{(AV. XII.I. 18)}\).

The Earth clouted in Agni with darkness (AV. XII. I. 21), upon the Earth men give to the gods the sacrifice and the prepared oblation; upon the Earth mortal men live pleasantly by food \(^{29}\)\(\text{(AV. XII. I.22 )}\), the fragrance has arisen upon the Earth and the Earth and the plants and the waters hold by her \(\text{(AV. XII.I. 23)}\), the fragrance of her has entered into the lotus\(\text{(AV. XII.I. 24)}\), the fragrance of her is in men and the loveliness and charm that is in male and female\(^{30}\)\(\text{(AV. XII.I. 25)}\). The food, rice and barley are upon her and the five races of men are also upon her, the Earth upon whose ground the citadels constructed by the gods unfold themselves, the Earth that hold treasures manifold in secret place wealth, jewels and gold \(\text{(AV. XII.I. 44)}\), the Earth that holds people of manifold varied, speech of different customs according to their habitation \(\text{(AV. XII.I. 45)}\); the serpent

\(^{27}\) Ibid.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, p 201.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Hymn of Atharvaveda , Edited by Max Muller, p 202.
the scorpion with thirsty fangs that hibernating, torpidly lies upon her

(\text{AV. XII.I. 46}).

There are upon her many paths which people go and tracks for chariots
and wagons to advance, which both good and evil men proceed this road
free from enemies and free from thieves(\text{AV. XII.I. 47}); the Earth holds the
fool and wise persons, endures that good and bad dwell (upon her), she
keeps company with the board and wild hog\textsuperscript{32}(\text{AV. XII.I. 48}); she is the
lovely one, the leader, the guardian of world, then holds the trees and
plants(\text{AV. XII.I. 57}), she is gentle fragrant, kindly with the sweet drink in
her udder rich in milk(\text{AV. XII.I. 59}); she is scattered of men, the broadly
expanding Aditi that yields milk according to wish(\text{AV. XII.I. 61}), and her
laps are free from aliment disease\textsuperscript{33}(\text{AV. XII.I. 62}). The Earth upon when
the forest-sprang trees ever stand firm, the all-nourishing, compact Earth
(\text{AV. XII.I. 27}). The pure Earth, the ground and soil have grown through
the Brahma (spiritual exaltation). She is the holiest nourishment, prosperity
that the food and ghee are upon her and desirous want to settle down on
such Earth\textsuperscript{34}(\text{AV. XII. I. 29}).

Generally, she is called as mother and the parjanya as father; and
worshippers as sons of Earth invoked them to save themselves. Some times
worshipper asks the Earth that she do subject to him, his enemy namely; the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p 204.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p 205.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid , p 206.
\textsuperscript{34} Hymn of Atharvaveda, Edited by Max Muller, p 202.
person who hates, battles against him and the hostile towards him with his mind and weapons.

According to Atharvaveda the Earth also invoked by worshipper for the things as follows:

- “Prepare for us broad domain (AV.XII.I.1) and prosper us anticipating our wishes (AV. XII.I. 13).
- Give us the honey of speech (AV. XII.I. 16) and make us brilliant and alert (AV. XII.I. 21).
- May this Earth give us breath and life and cause me to reach old age (AV. XII.I. 22).
- Your easterly regions and northern and southerly regions and western, shall be kind to me as I walk upon you (AV. XII.I. 31).
- Don’t drive us from the west nor from the east, nor from the north and not from the south! (AV. XII.I. 32)
- O’ Earth be a security for us, that the waylayers shall not find us and hold for away their murderous weapon (AV. XII.I. 32).
- She shall drive forth our enemies and make us free from rivals (AV. XII.I. 41).
- She the kindly goddess bestows wealth liberally to us (AV. XII.I. 44).
- O’ Earth drive away from us the man-eating lions, tigers, the wolf, mishap, injury and demons (AV. XII.I. 49).
- You may kindly place us into every pleasant abode (AV. XII.I. 52) and may she give us the courage (AV. XII.I. 59).

- O’ mother Earth, kindly set me down upon a well-founded place! With father cooperating (AV. XII.I. 63).

- O’ you, wise one, place me into happiness and prosperity (AV. XII.I. 63).

- The snowy mountain heights and forest of the Earth shall be kind to men”35 (AV. XII.I. 11).

Sometimes the Earth has been mentioned with other gods as follows:

- “May this Earth point out to us the wealth that we crave, my Bhaga (future) add this help; My Indra come here as our champion (AV. XII.I. 40 ).

- Heaven and Earth and air have here given me expanse, Agni, Sūrya and Waters and all the gods together have given me wisdom”36 (AV. XII.I. 53).

**E. The Earth in the Avesta**

The Earth is one of the four elements beside Water, Wind, and Fire which were respected by ancient Iranian. This useful element was very holy for ancient Iranians and it was worshipped by them.

The name of genus of the Earth is Zamiyād or Zama-Yazata. This name occurs in the Avesta book as Zama, in the Pahlavi text as Zamik and in the modern Persian as Zamin.

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35 Hymn of Atharvaveda, Edited by Max Muller, p202.
36 Ibid, p.205.
According to Persian Mythology the creation of the Earth was in the third stage of creation after the water. In the Avestan text the surface of the Earth has seven parts and their name has also been mentioned. In the Yasna No II and Farvardin Yasht, the depth of the Earth is three stratums.\(^{37}\) One Yasht of Avesta book called “Zamiyād Yasht” but it’s containing is about the Kiyān Dynasty\(^{38}\) and due to this reason it is also called “Kiyān Yasht”

According to ancient Iranian calendar, the twenty eighth day of every month is after the name of the Earth.

In the martial world among the Amesha- Spentas, Spenta-Ārmaiti\(^{39}\) (divine piety) is the guardian of the Earth hence it is considered as female god and is called the daughter of Ahura-Mazda. The duty of Spenta-Ārmaiti is to keep the Earth clean and green. All the gladness and tranquility are in her hand and she is patient and forbearing like the Earth.\(^{40}\) Zamiyād has been mentioned in various part of Avesta book. In Yasna, (Chapter 16), the Zamiyād (genius of the Earth) invoked like Sky and other gods.

Some times in the Avesta book, the Earth has been mentioned beside the Sky as in the Tir Yasht,( passage No.8), Mihir Yasht; (Passage No.95) and Farvardin Yasht (passage No.13) and also twenty seventh and twenty eighth day of every month are after the name of the Sky and the Earth.\(^{41}\)


\(^{38}\) One of the Iranian King Dynasty in Ancient time.

\(^{39}\) In Persia the seven gods are known as Amesha- Spenta “the undying and well-doing ones” they by and by, according to the new spirit that breathed in the religion, received the names of the defied abstractions, Vohu-manō (good thought) Asha Vahishta (excellent holiness) Khshathra-Vairya (perfect sovereignty), Spenta-Ārmaiti (divine piety) Haurvatāt and Ameretāt (health and immortality).

\(^{40}\) The Yasht book, by Pour Davoud, Vol I, p.94.

In the Farvardin Yasht, (Passage No.9), Ahura-Mazda says to Zarathustra that I through the brightness and glory of the Fravashis; maintain the wide Earth made by Ahura as follows:

“Through their brightness and glory, Zarathustra! I maintain the wide Earth made by Ahura, the large and broad Earth that bears so much that is fine, that bears all the bodily world, the live and the dead, and the high mountains, rich in pastures and waters”\(^{42}\).

And in the Passage No.10 Ahura Mazda also continues as follows:

“Upon which run the many streams and rivers, upon which the many kinds of plants grow up from the ground, to nourish animals and men, to nourish the Aryan nations, to nourish the five kinds of animals, and to help the faithful”\(^{43}\).

According to Vendidād (a part of Avesta) Zarathustra asked the Maker Ahura Mazda, where are the places that the Earth feels most happy and where are the places that the Earth feels sorest grief?

Ahura Mazda mentioned five places where the Earth fell most happy as follows\(^{44}\):

“First the place where on one of the faithful person steps forward! With the holy wood in his hand, the Baresma in his hand.

Second the place where one of the faithful erect a house with a priest within, with cattle, with wife, with children and good herds within, and wherein afterwards the cattle go on thriving, holiness is thriving, fodder is thriving, the

\(^{42}\) The Zend Avesta, Edited by F. Max Muller, Part II, p.182.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) The Zend Avesta, Edited by F. Max Muller, Part I, pp.23-25.
dog is thriving, the wife is thriving, the child is thriving, the fire is thriving and every blessing of life is thriving.

Third, the place where one of faithful cultivates most corn, grass, and fruit and where he waters ground that is dry, or drives ground that is too wet.

Fourth, the place where there is most increase of flocks and herds.

Fifth, the place where flocks and herds yield most dung.”

And there are five places where the Earth feels sorest grief\(^{45}\):

“First, the neck of Arezura\(^{46}\), where on the hosts of Fiends rush forth from the burrow of Drug (the demon of untruth).

Second is the place where in most corpses of dogs and of men lie buried.

Third, is the place where on stand most of those Dakhmas\(^{47}\) on which corpses of men are deposited.

Fourth, is the place where in are most burrows of the creatures of Angara Mainyu.

Fifth is the place where on the wife and children of one of the faithful are driven along the way of captivity, the dry, the dusty way, and life up a voice of wailing.”

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As we study previously the Sky is called Dyaus in the Vedas and it is called as Asmana in the Avesta. And also the god of Earth in Vedas is called ‘Pr ithivî’

\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{46}\) The neck of Arezura is a mount at the gate of hell, whence the demons rush forth
\(^{47}\) Dakhma is the circular building where the Zoroastrians lay the bodies of their dead.
and in the Avesta “Zama” (Zamiyād). But there are some important notes which can be mentioned as follows:

1. In both sources namely Vedas and Avesta, generally, the names of Sky and the Earth have been mentioned together.

2. In the Avesta the Sky (Āsmān) and Mihir (Mithra) are considered as companions of Khshathra-Vairya (one of Amesha-Spentas) and Ahura-Mazda maintains the Earth through the brightness and glory of Fravashis and it is inlaid with stars by Ahura Mazda along with Mithra, Rashnu and Spenta-Ārmaiti.

3. In the Vedas the Sky is called as the “lofty” and “lofty abode; and in the Avesta he is shining, exalted and powerful.

4. According to the Vedas the demon Vṛtra dwells in the Sky which Indra fights against him for rain while in the Avesta the heavy duty of the Sky is to imprison the Ahriman and demons. The god Asman (Sky) guards the Sky which the Ahriman doesn’t run away.

5. The Earth is important in both sources namely in the Avesta as well as Vedas. But it seems that this deity is more important in the Vedas because beside the Rigvedahymns; one of the best and longest hymn of Atharvaveda is in description and invocation of the Earth. While in the Avesta there is one Yasht namely; “Zamiyād Yasht” after the name of the Earth but its content is about Kiyān Dynasty and there is no separate hymn for the Earth in Avesta as it is in Vedas. However, she is
described in some verses of other Yashts and the twenty eighth day of every month is sacred to Zamiyād.

6. Some time the Earth is described by the same feature and qualities both in the Avesta and Vedas, like “the wide Earth” “the large and the broad Earth”, “bears five all bodily worlds, the high mountains”, “rich in pasture and water”, “upon which run the many streams and rivers”, “many kinds of plant grow up to nourish animals and men and Āryan nations”. She is “extended”, mother of beings; bear the burden, supports the forest and trees, mighty one; but her description in Vedas especially in Atharva Veda is much more than the Avesta and she is also invoked for many desires by worshipper.