4. The Moon in the Vedas and Avesta

A. Moon in the Vedas

In the Vedic literature the Chandra was the god of moon and origin of fertility. Later time due to change of the condition and appearance the Soma, it is placed instead of Chandra, however the Chandra at the beginning was an independent god but later it is named Soma. In the moon myth this god arises from the milk ocean every night and his form takes a new shape every night.

Apart from his connection with the Soma, the moon is not prominent in the Vedic literature. He appears in conjunction with Sūrya in the compounds Sūryamasa and Sūrya Chadramasa. But little is said of the pair beyond nothing their alternate appearance which is once attributed to Brhaspati, their creation by the creator and the fact that they are two bright eyes of Varuna. The birth of the moon from the sun is recognized as well as its regular death. The connection of the moon with the mind is early recorded and may stand in relation to its connection with the fathers. In addition the influence of the moon on vegetation, its connection with tides is recognized. The moon phases also receive some degree of worship and the darkness in the face of the moon is accounted for various ways.

Much stress has at late been laid on the moon as the source of many myths which appear in our texts in connection with the sun, thus the virtual use of swinging has plausibly been regarded as unnatural as sun rite, but easily explicable.

---

1 See, Soma in the Vedas in the same chapter (Soma as moon.)
2 Veronica I., Indian Mythology, by, p.28
3 Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of Vedas and Upanishad, p.122
as one derived from the moon. The conception of the sun as a boat or a vessel stands in the similar relation, while in German Mythology such Indian beliefs as the hare in the Moon and the ceremonial striking of calves with a fresh twig to produce milk in connection with the need new and full moon offering appear transferred to the sun.\(^4\)

The importance of the Moon in early times as giving the means of measuring time is insisted upon, and even the connection of the fish and the sickle of the Moon. These conjectures, fortunately, need not be seriously considered in regard to Vedic mythology. If they have any validity they refer to a period distinctly earlier than the religion of the Veda.\(^5\)

**B. Moon in the Avesta**

Maongha is the name of Yazata (Genius) of Moon in the Avesta. This name has been mentioned as “Maongha” in the Avesta book and it is said as “Māh” in both Pahlavi and Persian languages. One Yasht of the Avesta book namely; “Māh Yasht” and one of the most important prayers namely “Māh Nyāyish” which is chanted three times in a month (beginning, middle and end of every month) are dedicated to the Moon. According to the ancient Iranian calendar a period of thirty days is said to be one month and one year consists of twelve months. The twelfth

\(^4\) Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of Vedas and Upanishad, P.123
\(^5\) Ibid p.123
day of every month called “Māh-Ruz” (The day of the moon) is dedicated to this divine personage.\(^6\)

Herodotus, the Greek Historian, writes that: “the Moon is the tutelary divinity of Persia. The case of this nature divinity is analogous to that of the Sun.\(^7\)

According to Avesta the sole created Bull, the progenitor of animal world is invoked with the Moon. The Moon waxes and wanes through Ahura-Mazda. The Amesha-Spentas gather the glory of the Moon and distribute it upon the earth. When the Moon warms up with its light, the golden colored plants grow up from the earth during the spring. The moon is constantly spoken of as the possessor of the seed of the Bull. The Moon furthermore is described as the bestower, radiant, glorious, possessed of water, possessed of warmth, possessed of knowledge wealth, riches, discernment, good and healing one.\(^8\)

In the Avesta book (Māh Yasht), the worshipper invokes the Moon as follows:

“Unto Moon that keeps in it the seed Bull, unto the only-created Bull and unto the Bull of many species; Be propitiation with sacrifice, prayer and glorification.”\(^9\)

---

\(^6\) Afifi, R, The Mythology and Culture of Iran in the Pahlavi texts, p.620.
\(^7\) Dhalla, M .N, History of Zoroastrianism, p.213.
\(^8\) Ibid, pp.213-214.
\(^9\) Darmesteter, The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.89.
And worshippers call the Moon and hail him accompany with the Maker Ahura-Mazda and Amesha-Spentas as follows:

“I Hail to Ahura-Mazda! Hail to the Amesha-Spentas! Hail to that Moon that keeps in it seed of the Bull. Hail to thee when thou look at us!”\textsuperscript{10}

Then Zoroaster asks Ahura Mazda about wax and wane of the Moon in the following lines:\textsuperscript{11}

“How does the Moon Wax?
How does the Moon Wane?”

Ahura Mazda answers as follows:

“For fifteen days the moon waxes, for fifteen days the Moon wanes. As long as its waxing, so long is the warning, as long as its waning so long is waxing.”

In Avesta (Māh Yasht) the Moon is called as who keeps the seed of Bull repeatedly as follows:

“We sacrifice unto the Moon that keeps in it the seed of the Bull, the holy and master of holiness.”\textsuperscript{12}

Then the worshipper looks and perceives the Moon and the light of the Moon, who Amesha-Spentas stands up, holds its glory and pour it upon the earth as follows:

“Here I look at the moons here I perceive the Moon. Here I look at the light of the Moon; here I perceive the light of the Moon. The Amesha-Spentas

\textsuperscript{10}The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.89.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid, p.89.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid, 90.
stand up, holding its glory, the Amesha-Spentas stand up, pouring its glory upon the earth made by Mazda”.

As in the Vedas that the Moon is the origin of fertility, similarly in Avesta when the light of the Moon waxes the plants grow on from the earth in spring season as follows:

“And when the light of the Moon waxes warmer, golden-hued, plants grow on from the earth during the spring”

Worshippers sacrifice unto the Moon in the three times during a month:

“We sacrifice unto the new Moon, the full Moon and Vishaptathas, the holy and master of holiness, we sacrifice unto the Vishaptatha, the holy and Master of holiness.”

According to this passage worshipper sacrifices unto the Moon and enumerates the attributes of the Moon as follows:

“I will sacrifice unto Moon that keeps in it the seed of the Bull, the liberal, bright water giving, warmth-giving, wisdom-giving, wealth-giving, thought fullness-giving, freshness-giving prosperity-giving, the liberal, the healing”

And he continues worshiping of the Moon as follows:

- “For its brightness and glory I will offer unto it a sacrifice worth being heard, namely, unto the Moon that keeps in it the seed of bull.

---

13 Ibid, p.90.
14 Ibid, p.90.
15 There no fixed meaning for Vishaptathas, According to the scholar opinion, it may be when the moon is going to warning condition (Pour Davoud, Yashts, Vol. I, p.323.)
16 The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.90.
17 Ibid, p.91.
• unto the Moon that keeps in it the seed of the bull we offer up the libations, the Haoma and Meat, the Baresma, the wisdom of the tongue, the holy spells, the speech, the deeds, the libations and rightly spoken words.

• I bless the sacrifice and prayer, and strength and vigor of the Moon that keeps in it the seed of the Bull, and the only-created and the Bull of many species.”

*****

Here we want to discusses whether the moon in the Vedas is the same one which is mentioned in the Avesta or are there some similarity and dissimilarity between them? So as these points can be considered as follows:

1. Moon in Vedas is called Chandra while in the Avesta it is called “Maongha” and in Pahlavi and Persian languages it is said “Māh”

2. In the Vedas the moon is an origin of fertility and influences on the Vegetation similarly in the Avesta, when it warms-up with its golden light, the plants grow up from the earth.

3. Though the moon, a part from its connection with Soma, has not prominent role in the Vedic literature; but in the Avesta it is very important. Because of reasons stated in the following lines:

18 The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.91.
A: A separate Yasht of Avesta namely “Māh Yasht” and one of the most important prayers namely “Māh Nyāyish” is belonging to the Moon.

B: It is always mentioned as one who keeps the seed of Bull.

C: It waxes and wanes through the maker, Ahura-Mazda; and the Amesha-Spentas gather its glory and distribute on the earth

D: Worshippers hail to the Moon, accompany with Ahura-Mazda and Amesha-Spentas.

E: Moon is holy and master of holiness, liberal (bestower) bright, water-giving, warmth-giving, wisdom-giving, and wealth-giving, through fullness-giving, freshness-giving, prosperity-giving and healing and strong.

F: However, the Moon in post Vedic literature is placed instead of Soma which is offered to the gods, but in the Avesta the Haoma (The Avestan form of Soma) itself is offered unto the Moon by sacrificer.

Therefore, according to evidences which have appeared in the Veda and Avesta, it seems the Moon itself in Avesta (a part from its connection with Soma in Vedic period) has more prominent role than in Vedas.