2. Vāyu and Vāta

A. Vāyu and Vāta in the Vedas

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.¹

1. Vāyu in the Vedas

The two worlds are said to have generated him for wealth. He is once spoken of as the son-in-law of Tavster though his wife’s name is not mentioned². In the Purusā hymn he is said to have sprung from the breath of world giant (Rg V.10.90.13). Vāyu is the beautiful one (Rg V. I. 2.1). He has white complexion who is intelligent, glorious with Niyut (a million) steeds, favours those men who are well fed and abounding in riches³ (Rg V. 7. 91.3). The vice of impetuous Vāyu spread thundering around, he moves along sweeping the sky and tinting purple (the quarter of horizon). He advances, raising the dust of the Earth⁴ (Rg V. 10. 168. 1). Vāyu traverses the firmament and does not rest a single day. He is the friend of waters, the first born and the utterer of truth (Rg V. 10. 168. 3). The solid masses advance to meet the wind, the mars also come to him as to battle; and associated with them the divinity, the sovereign of this world proceeds in the same car⁵ (Rg V. 10. 168 . 2)⁶.

² MacDonnell, History of Vedic Mythology, p.119.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Max Muller related the verses No 1- 4 from hymn 168 manuṣa ala 10 to Vāta (Vedic hymn , part I, p 449) but Wilson related them to the Vāyu (RgvedaSamhitā, Vol 4, p 562).
He has swift courses and he is the first of gods to drink of the Soma libations\(^7\) (Ṛg V. I. 134 .1). Vāyu comes to the imperishable sacrifice, and is exhilarated at this ceremony\(^8\) (Ṛg V. 7. 92. 5).

His approving speech comes to the giver of the libation and many others who invite him to drink the Soma juice\(^9\) (Ṛg V. I. 2.3). The Soma prepared by worshippers to drink him\(^10\) (Ṛg V. I. 2.1). The sweet and pure Soma juices are offered to the hero Vāyu by priests\(^11\) (Ṛg V. 7. 90.1). The Prayer of Vāyu praise him with holy praises having pour out the Soma juice\(^12\) (Ṛg V. I. 2.2).

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 person and Viśvedevas. 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 ruddy (aruna) steeds (Ṛg V. I. 134 .3). His team consists of ninety nine; hundred or even thousand horses yoked by his will (Ṛg V.1.135.1& 3). Vāyu’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 obtains as his share (also in company with Indra) for he is the swiftest of the gods.\(^13\)

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\(^7\) Wilson H.H, RgvedaSamhitā, Vol 1, p 347.
\(^8\) Ibid, Vol 3 p 321.
\(^9\) Ibid, Vol 1, p 5
\(^10\) Max Muller, The Vedic hymn part 1, p 404
\(^12\) Ibid, Vol., p 5.
\(^13\) MacDonnell; History of Vedic Mythology, p.119.
The Aitareya Brāhmana 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.\(^{14}\)

Vāyu is not tied to a place and proceeds on his course yathāvaśam. He never comes to rest. He follows all seasons. His form is not visible. Vāyu is the breath of the gods. He is the “Spirit”. In Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, 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.\(^{15}\) Sri Aurbindo says as follows:

In Vedic system Vāyu is the master of life. Inspirer of the breath or dynamic energy, call \(prāṇa\), which is presented in man by vital and her activities. Vāyu is always associated with the \(prāṇa\) 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.\(^{16}\)

2. Vāyu and Indra

Vāyu is very often associated with Indra and is regarded equally with him, as representing or ruling over the atmosphere. Indra and Vāyu, who are swift as thought, have thousand eyes, and are the protectors of pious acts

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\(^{14}\) Keith. A.B ; The Religion and Philosophy of Veda and Upanishads, p.139

\(^{15}\) Hillebrandt, Alfred; Vedic Mythology, p.187

\(^{16}\) Hillebrandt, Alfred; Vedic Mythology, p.187
Indra and Vāyu abide in the sacrificial rite. They are aware of the libations (R\textsuperscript{17} V. I. 2.4).

Worshippers invoke both divinities abiding in heaven namely Indra and Vāyu to drink of this Soma juice (R\textsuperscript{17} V. I. 23.2). It is said Vāyu won the race for the first draught of Soma Juice and at Indra’s request allowed him to have a quarter of it.\textsuperscript{20}

The prompt effuser of the libation offers the Soma to Indra and Vāyu to drink at the sacrifice (R\textsuperscript{21} V. 7. 92. 2). Indra and Vāyu perceive the libations and they are rich in booty (R\textsuperscript{22} V. I. 2.5).

3. Vāta in the Vedas

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. Stress is laid on his whiteness 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.\textsuperscript{23}

According to R\textsuperscript{23} gveda Vāta is the soul (or breathe) of the gods, and the germ of the world. This divinity moves according to his pleasure, his voices are

\textsuperscript{17} Wilson .H.H, R\textsuperscript{23} gvedaSam\textsuperscript{2} hitā, Vol 1 , p 51.
\textsuperscript{18} Wilson .H.H, R\textsuperscript{23} gvedaSam\textsuperscript{2} hitā, Vol 1, p 5.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Wilkins, W.J. Hindu Mythology, p.64,65
\textsuperscript{21} Wilson .H.H, R\textsuperscript{23} gvedaSam\textsuperscript{2} hitā , Vol 3. p 321.
\textsuperscript{22} Max Muller, The Vedic Hymn part 1, p 404.
\textsuperscript{23} Keith, A. B. The Religion and Philosophy of Veda and Upanishads, p.140

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heard but his form is not seen\textsuperscript{24} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textdegree}} V. 10. 168. 4). Vāta Wafts the healthful and delightful medicine to the heart of worshippers and prolongs his lives\textsuperscript{25} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textdegree}} V. 10. 186.1).

Vāta is the father, brother and friend of his devoted\textsuperscript{26} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textdegree}} V. 10. 186. 2).
The treasure of Ambrosia is placed in his house. The worshippers pray him to give them the Ambrosia to prolong their life\textsuperscript{27} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textdegree}} V. 10. 186. 3).

4. The difference of Vāyu and Vāta

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.\textsuperscript{28}

H. Oldenberg says: “Both Vāyu and Vāta means “wind”. The first word is remarkably rare in the Vedas in its appellative meaning, where as the second is

\textsuperscript{25} Max Muller , The Vedic Hymn part 1, p 451.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} MacDonell, A. History of Vedic Mythology, pp.118-119
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 is 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 from Vāta. He is not given him a special place of honour in the rite. In stead the idea of the wind in motion with its bustling freshness clings to him unmistakably”\(^{29}\).

In the ritual, the offerings especially of animal victims are made mainly to Vāyu. Vāta has a few offerings only make to him. The latter literature adds importance to the characterization of either god. Stress is laid on the power of the god. Vāyu to diminish the heat of sun and in the Taittirīya Āranyaka “male” and “female” powers are given to him as attendance.\(^{30}\)

**B. Vāyu in the Avestan Literature**

Vāyu in the Avesta Book is mentioned as Vayu (with the short a) and it is the Yazata of Wind. This name has been also applied as Veyu, Vāyu, Vāy and Andarvāy in the Pahlavi texts\(^{31}\).

Vayu 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 “Rām Yasht” is dedicated to Vayu; according to details of this Yasht, Vayu is the space which is connected

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\(^{29}\) Oldenberg ,H, The Religion of the Veda, p.115

\(^{30}\) Keith, A.B. The Religion and Philosophy of Veda and Upanishads, p.140

\(^{31}\) Afifi, R. Methodology and culture of Iran in the Pahlavi texts, p.444
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 (Ahura Mazda) from
bad and dirty creation.

Bundahish\textsuperscript{32} explains it in the following way:

Above of this space; there is the eternal brightness and it is the place of
Ahura Mazda 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 are 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 holy
area of Ahura Mazda is pure and holy; and there is a guardian to protect it, who
is deserve of praise. But the air which is beside of darkness world where the
centre of Ahriman (demon) is impure and there is a demon for that; who
deserves for curse. Because of this reason, it is always repeated Rām Yasht:

"O, Vayu, to this part of you, do we sacrifice; that belongs to Spenta-
Mainyu\textsuperscript{(Ahura Mazda)}.

We sacrifice to the holy Vayu; we sacrifice to Vayu who works
highly."\textsuperscript{33}

Therefore, in the Avesta Book, there are two 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.

\textsuperscript{32} Bundahish is one of the Pahlavi texts.
\textsuperscript{33} The Zend Avesta, Ed. By F. Max Muller Trans. By J. Darmesteter, Part-II, p.250.
\textcolor{gray}{And also;}
\textcolor{gray}{The Yashts, by E. Pour Davoud; Vol. II, p.146.
According to the Learned Opinion, in fact Vayu was the name of a nature deity who belongs to Indo-Aryan trips, of which later Iranian made two aspects, first goodness and second badness.\(^3^4\)

Vayu in the Iranian literature has a great as well as enigmatic personification, for whom Ahura Mazda as well as Ahriman creations perform a sacrifice.

Ahura Mazda offers a sacrifice for him that he makes able to destroy the Ahriman creations and protect the good Creations as follows:

“To him did the Maker Ahura Mazda. Offers up a sacrifice in the Airyana Vaêgah,\(^3^5\) on a golden throne, under golden beams and golden canopy, with bundles of Baresma and offerings of full boiling [milk]”

And he begs him a boon as follows\(^3^6\):

“Grant me this, O Vayu who do work highly, that I may smite the creation of Angara Mainyu, and that nobody may smite this creation of the god Spirit!”

So Vayu grants his boon as follows:

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

“We sacrifice to the holy Vayu; we sacrifice to the Vayu who works highly”.

\(^3^4\) Pour Davoud. E, The Yashts, Vol .2; p.137.

\(^3^5\) Airyana Vaêgah, The origin land of Iranian. and the first land which has been created by Ahura Mazda

\(^3^6\) The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.250
And three mouthed Azi-Dahāka (one of the Ahriman’s creations) also offers a sacrifice which he destroys all the men as follows:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may make all the seven countries of the earth empty on men” 37.

But Vayu did not grant him as follows:

“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” 38.

The Avesta Book mentions that many great persons among them kings, heroes, invoked Vayu, and offer up a sacrifice and bag the boons; Vayu grants their boons as follows:

Haoshyangha (Hushang), one of the ancient Iranian kings, offer up a sacrifice, on the top of the Hara mountains, and he bagged a boon saying:

“Grant me O Vayu! Who do work highly that I may smite two-thirds of the demons of Māzana 39 and of the fiends of Varana. 40

And Vayu, who works highly, granted him that boon 41.

Takhma-Urupa 42 (brother of Yima), the well-armed offers up a sacrifice and bags him a boon as follows:

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37 The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.250
38 Ibid.
39 Māzana is the name of one era in north of Iran: now it is called Māzandaran.
40 Name of the place in ancient Iran period.
41 The Zend Avesta part II; p.251.
42 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.
“Grant me this O Vayu! who work highly, that I may conquer all
demon, men, magicians and fairies and that I may ride Angara-Mainyu
(Ahriman), turned into shape of horse; all around the earth from one end to
other, for thirty years.” 43

Vayu, who works highly, granted him that boon.

The bright Yima 44, the good shepherd, sacrifice for him from the height
Hukairya Mountain; and he begs him a boon as follows:

“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 ”45

Vayu, who works highly, granted him that boon.

The Thraêtaona 46, the heir valiant Āthwya clan, offers up a sacrifice and
he begged at him a boon as follows:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may overcome
Azi-Dahāka, the three-mouthed, the six-eyed one who has thousand senses, the
most powerful, Fiendish drug (untruth), that demon baleful, the strongest Drug
(untruth), that Angra-Mianyu created against the material world, to destroy the
world of good principle…” 47

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43 The Zend Avesta; part II; p.252.
And also,
44 Yima is one of ancient Iranian Kings. He is called, Jamshid in the modern Persian literature.
46 Thraêtaona is one of ancient Iranian heroes and kings who Kills Azi-Dahāka (a demon). He is called Feridun in modern Persian.
47 The Zend Avesta, Part II, pp.254-255.
Vayu, how works highly, granted him that boon

The manly-hearted Keresāspa⁴⁸, offer up a sacrifice and begs him a boon as follows:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! One who do work, highly, that I may succeed in avenging my brother Urvākhshaya⁴⁹, that I may smite Hitāspa⁵⁰ and yoke him to my chariot.”

Vayu granted him that boon.⁵¹

Hutaosa⁵² (wife of Kai Goshtāsp), who has many brothers and from Naotara⁵³ family, offers up sacrifice and beg him a boon as follows:

“Grant me this, O Vayu! Who do work highly, that I may be dear and loved and well-received in the house of king Vishtāsp.”⁵⁴

Vayu, who works highly, granted her that boon.⁵⁵

In the Avesta (Rām Yasht) beside the Kings, heroes and great persons; some time ordinary persons also offer a sacrifice for Vayu and ask him some desires. For example the maids who have no husband offer up a sacrifice and desire him to find a good husband:

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⁴⁸ Keresāspa is a warrior in the ancient Iranian literature. He had a brother namely Urvākhshaya, a judge and law giver. Urvākhshaya was killed by Hitāspa, the golden-crowned and avenged by Keresāspa.
⁴⁹ See Note No.33.
⁵⁰ See Note No.33.
⁵¹ The Zend Avesta, part II; pp.255,256
⁵² Hutaosa is the name wife of Vishtāsp (Kai Goshtāsp) who was one of the ancient Iranian King in the time of Zoroaster.
⁵³ Naotara, is the name of a hero in the ancient Iran.
⁵⁴ Vishtāsp, the name of an Iranian King.
⁵⁵ The Zend Avesta, Part II, p.257.
“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.  

According to Rām Yasht, Vayu belongs to the Good spirit and his qualities are bright and glorious as follows:

“To this Vayu do we sacrifice, this Vayu do we invoke ... we sacrifice to that Vayu that belongs to the good spirit, the bright and glorious Vayu”

Such Vayu is invoked 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”

**C. Vāta in the Avesta**

Vāta which is another name of Wind God has been mentioned for three times in the Avesta as in the following:

- Rashn Yasht, verse No.9
- Farvardin Yasht, Verse No.47
- Mihir Yasht, Verse No.9

The Rashn Yasht tells us that Ahura Mazda along with fiend-smiting wind (Vāta) comes to help of worshipper as follows:

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56 The Zend Avesta, part II p.258.
57 Ibid P. 258
58 The Zend Avesta, part II p.250
“Then I, Ahura Mazda, shall come for help unto you, toward Var⁵⁹ prepared, towards the fire and the Baresma⁶⁰, toward the full boiling (milk), towards the Var of oil and the sap of the plants. Along with the fiend-smiting wind (Vāta), along with cursing the thought of the wise, along with the kingly glory”⁶¹.

In the Farvardin Yasht the victorious Vāta has been mentioned along with Mithra⁶² and Rashnu⁶³ as follows:

“Which ever sides they have been first worshipped in the fullness of faith of a devoted heart, to that side turn the awful Fravashis⁶⁴ of faith fall along with Mitra and Rashnu and awful cursing thought of wise and the victorious wind (Vāta)⁶⁵.

In the Mihir (Mithra) Yasht the fiend-smiting Vāta has been mentioned with Mithra as follows:

“On which ever 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.”⁶⁶

⁵⁹ 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.

⁶⁰ Baresma (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.

⁶¹ The Zend Avesta, Part II p.170.

⁶² Mithra, the God of heavenly light, the lord of Vast luminous space, he became later the god of the Sun.

⁶³ Rashnu “the true one”, the god of truth.

⁶⁴ The Fravashi was independent of the circumstance of life or death, an immortal part of the individual which existed before man and outlived him.

⁶⁵ The Zend Avesta ,Part II, p.191

⁶⁶ The Zend Avesta ,Part II, p.121.
Now we want to know are there some Similarities and differences between Vāyu in Vedas and Vayu in the Avesta; and also between Vāta in these two sources? So these notes can be considered as follows:

1. The name of Vāyu has been mentioned in Vedas with long /ā/ while in Avesta it is with short (a) namely; /Vayu/. However, this name has been mentioned in the Pahlavi texts, as Vayu, Veyu, Vāy and Andarvāy.

2. Both Vāyu and Vāta are important gods in the Vedas and Avesta as well but Vayu in Avesta is more prominent than Vedas, because in the Avesta (Rām Yasht) the Maker Ahura Mazda, Azi-Dahaka and many Kings, heroes, great persons offer up a sacrifice to him and he granted all of them except Azi-Dahāka (because he was a demon).

3. In the Vedas there is only one kind of Vāyu while 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 Vayu, the space which is connected to darkness world (Ahriman world).

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

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