5. Apām Napāt

The name of “Apām Napāt” is very famous god name for Āryan people and it goes back to the Indo-Iranian period, and this god has been praised by Aryan trips from that time. This name has appeared in Vedas as well as Avesta book.

A. Apām Napāt in R̄gveda

Apām Napāt is described in R̄gveda as brilliant and youthful and the “Son of waters” (or grandson of waters)1, he is said to shine without fuel in the waters, which surround and nourish him.2

The lord, the grandson of waters (Apām napāt) has generated all beings by greatness of his might3 (R̄ V. 2.35.2). The sounding and swift- moving grandson of the waters (Apām napāt) bestows abundant food to his worshippers. He makes him goodly appearance and he is propitiated by praise4 (R̄ V. 2. 35.1). One who augments the nectar of the skies, and thence the sacrificial food. He gathers strength in the midst of the waters and shines or for the sake of conferring wealth upon his worshipper5 (R̄ V. 2. 35.7). The son of the waters is the auspicious, the resplendent, the accessible and the sinless one. The worshippers as his mortal friends recourse him for their protection6 (R̄ V. 3. 9.1).

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1 Some scholars consider him as grandson of waters like H.H. Wilson, in the translation of the ‘R̄gvedaSamhitā’.
2 T. Rengarajan, Dictionary of Vedas, under the word Apām-Napāt.
3 Wilson, H.H, R̄gvedaSamhitā, Vol. 2 p 87
5 Ibid, Vol. 2 p 89.
He is truthful, eternal, and vast and shines amidst the waters with pure and
divine radiance (Rgveda 2.35.8). His form and his name are beautiful (Rgveda 2.35.11). The grandson of the waters has golden form, golden aspect, golden hue, shiny and sit on the seat of gold (Rgveda 2.35.10).

He is worshipped with sacrifices, oblation and prostration. The worshippers nourish him with fuel, sustain him with sacrificial viands and glory him with hymns (Rgveda 2.35.12). In him is the birth of the horse; of him is the origin of the world. The grandson of the waters protects the pious worshippers from the malevolence of the oppressor (Rgveda 2.35.6).

The vigorous son of the waters generated himself as an embryo in waters, he is their infant, he sucks them and they bedew him with moisture. Three divine females present food to this uninjureable divinity (Apām napāt) (Rgveda 2.35.5). The grandson of the waters has descended to this earth in the form of a different fire (Rgveda 2.35.13). The abundant waters bearing sustenance to their grandson and flow round him with spontaneous movements. (Rgveda 2.35.14). The pure waters gather round the pure and brilliant grandson of waters (Rgveda 2.35.3).

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
The young and modest waters wait upon him and are assiduous in bathing him. He unfed with fuel, yet cleansed with clarified butter. He shines with bright rays amidst the waters\(^\text{15}\) (R\(\square\) V. 2. 35.4).

He, the bull, engendered the embryo in them, he the child, sucks and they kiss him. He shines. He clothed in lightning the son of waters, has mounted upright the lap of slanting (waters) carrying him the swift (waters) golden in color go around him. The son of waters is golden womb he sits down and gives food to his worshippers. Standing in the highest place, he always shines with undimmed (splendor) the swift waters carrying ghee as food to their son. Fly around with their garments. The face of the Son of waters whom the maidens kindle, whose colour is golden and whose food is ghee, increases in secret. He has a cow which his own house gives good milk. Steeds swift as thought carry the son of waters. The son of waters is connected with rivers\(^\text{16}\). The son of waters has engendered all beings, which are merely branches at him(R\(\square\) V.2.35.8).

Some times he is also worshipped beside other great gods as follows:

“May the adorable, universal deities, and both heaven and earth, and the grandson of the waters, hear my praise …”\(^\text{17}\) (R\(\square\) V. 6. 52.14).

\(^\text{15}\) Wilson. H.H, R\(\square\) gvedaSam\(\square\) hitā , Vol 2 p 88.
\(^\text{16}\) MacDonell, A. History of Vedic Mythology, p 101.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid, Vol 3, p 122.
1. Apām napāt as Agni

Some times in the R̄gveda, the deity Apām-Napāt is invoked as Agni and must be identified with him. Conversely Agni is in some hymn addressed to him, Spoken of as Apām-Napāt. Agni is the son of waters and the son of the strength\(^{18}\). (R̄ V. 1. 143.1). He is the son of water who sat down on earth as a dear priest. But they are also distinguished. Agni accordant with the son of waters confers victory over Vṝtra.\(^{19}\) The grandson of the waters (Agni) is conveyed by the clouds swift as thought rays\(^{20}\) (R̄ V. 1. 186.5).

The epithet āśuhemen “swifty speeding” applied three times to Apām-Napāt is in its only other occurrence used of Agni who is golden, is clothed in lightening, and dwells in the highest place. He grows in concealment, shines forth and is the offspring of waters, come down to the earth and is identified with Agni, appears to represent the lightning form of Agni which is concealed in the cloud. For Agni, besides being directly called Apām-Napāt, is also termed the embryo (garbha) of the waters. As such he has deposited in human dwelling, his abode is in the waters and the two Five-sticks engender Agni who is embryo both the plants and of waters.\(^{21}\) Beside the Agni, he has connected to sun also as follows:

He abides in his supreme sphere and shines daily with imperishable rays\(^{22}\) (R̄ V. 2. 35.14).

\(^{19}\) MacDonell, A. History of Vedic Mythology, p 102
\(^{21}\) MacDonell, A. History of Vedic Mythology, p 102.
B. Apām Napāt in the Avesta

Apām-Napāt in Avesta book is one of the guardian gods of waters and he spreads the waters to countries. This god is said as Borz (Borj) Izad in the Pahlavi texts\(^{23}\). This deity in the Avesta is a spirit at waters. Who lives in the depths, is surrounded by females and is often invoked with them, drives swift steeds, and is said to have seized the brightness in the depth of the ocean.\(^{24}\)

The name of Apām-Napāt has been mentioned in various sections of Avesta.

In Yasna (No.1, passage No.5) he is praised as lofty Ahura as follows:

“I announce and complete (my praise) to that lofty Ahura Apām-Napāt and to that lofty Ahura Apām-Napāt and to the waters which Ahura Mazda made.”\(^{25}\)

In Yasna (No. II, Passage No.5), it is said that the worshipper approached him with Zaothra\(^{26}\) and Baresma and he is described as kingly, brilliant, the fleet horses Mazda made and holy as follows:

“And in this Zaothra with this Baresma, I desire to approach, the kingly and brilliant Apām-Napāt, of the fleet horses and likewise the Mazda-made and holy”.\(^{27}\)

In Yasna (No.71, passage 23), worshipper sacrifices to the fire along with Apām-Napāt:

\(^{23}\) Afifi, R., Mythology and Culture of Iran in the Pahlavi texts, p.403.
\(^{24}\) MacDonell, A. History of Vedic Mythology, p.102.
\(^{25}\) The Zend Avesta, part III, p.197.
\(^{26}\) Zaothra; the holy water. It is prepared with certain rites and prayers.
\(^{27}\) The Zend Avesta III p.204.
“And we sacrifice to the fire, Ahura Mazda’s son, the holy ritual chief; and we sacrifice to this Baresma having Zaothra with it, and it girdle (Kosti)\(^{28}\) with it, and spreads with sanctity, the holy ritual chief, and we sacrifice to Apām-Napāt\(^{29}\),”

In Tīr Yasht, (passage No.34), Apām-Napāt is mentioned as one who divided the water amongst the countries accompanied by mighty wind and the Glory\(^{30}\) as follows:

“Apām-Napāt, O’Spitama Zarathustra, divided the waters amongst the countries in the material world in company with the mighty wind and the glory”\(^{31}\)

In Farvardin Yasht, (passage No.95), the powerful Apām-Napāt is mentioned accompanied by Mithra and he is described as one who increases all the excellences of our countries and allays their troubles as follows:

“There will Mitra, the lord of wide pastures, allay their troubles, the will the powerful Apām-Napāt, increase all the excellences of our countries and allay their troubles.”\(^{32}\)

In the Zamiyād Yasht, (passage No.51), the Apām-Napāt is described as swift-horsed, the Son of waters and one who seizes the Glory at once:

“That glory swells up and goes to the sea Vouru-Kasha. The swift-horsed son of water (Apām-Napāt) seizes it at once. This is the wish of son of

\(^{28}\) Kosti, the girdle, the sacred girdle which the Parsi must never part with.

\(^{29}\) The Zend Avesta III p.331.

\(^{30}\) The Avestan word of Glory is “Huareno”. This call is Persian as Khurrah and Farr. It is properly the light of sovereignty, the glory which makes the king an earthly god. He who possesses it reigns, he who loses it, it fall down.

\(^{31}\) The Zend Avesta II p.102.

the water, the swift-horsed.” In this same Yasht (Zamiyād Yasht, passage No.52), worshipper sacrifices for him and calls him with all his qualities as follows:

“We sacrifice unto the son of waters, the swift-horsed, the tall and shining, lord, the lord of females, and the male god who helps one at his appeal, who made man, who shaped man, a god who lives beneath waters, and whose ear is the quickest to hear when he is worshipped.

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In fact Apām-Napāt is very old deity who is originally belonging to the Indo-Iranian period and he was praising by Aryan people. As we know the name of Apām-Napāt has been mentioned in the Rōgveda and Avesta as well. So at a glance on the descriptions and qualities of Apām-Napāt in Rōgveda and Avesta one can understand that there are some similarities for this deity in Rōgveda and Avesta as follows:

A: In both sources he is son of waters but in Avesta he also is the guardian of Waters who divided waters in to the countries.

B: In the Rōgveda three divine females have surrounded him and nourish him while in Avesta he is the lord of females and invoked by them.

C: In Rig-Veda steed swift as thought, carry him. Similarly in Avesta he is swift-horsed who seizes the glory at once.

\[33\text{ The Zend Avesta, II, p.298.}
\[34\text{ The Zend Avesta II, P.299} \]
D: In both these books, he is described in the best manner and some time by the common qualities.

E: In both sources he is accompanied by fire but in Avesta Apām Napāt also is accompanied by Mithra.