Conclusion
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The concept of Asura and Rākṣasa has passed ahead through great transformation in its history. The early Vedic literature attests to the fact that in the beginning stage Asuras were viewed as persons eligible for reverence. It also testifies that Rākṣasas were a separate sect of people who follow a distinct path of life. While coming to the Purāṇa literature both categories are portrayed as the enemies of Devas as well as mankind. This scenario of transformation of the very concept regarding Asura and Rākṣasa emerged due to many developments in multiple levels in the society. The ancient human geography, formation of new clans etc. have contributed much to the changes taken place in the concept of both Asuras and Rākṣasas. Hence for the effective study of this issue the tools provided by Anthropology have been made use of in this analysis.

The introductory portion in this study analyzes the scope of Anthropology in the field of Vedic and Puranic studies. In this context taking a position regarding the date of Vedas and the Aryan issue is essential. By analyzing the discussion by eminent scholars and also analyzing Linguistic as well as Archaeological data regarding the
above noted issues the date of Veda has been accepted in the mid second millennium BCE. The term Aryan is accepted here as bearing connotation of a culture, and not a race. Historical as well as Linguistic evidences approve the fact that some large scale migrations have taken place in ancient India by the people who were having different language, culture, religious beliefs and practices etc. from various places at different times. Eventually, there happened some conflicts and interactions as well which naturally lead to the rise of a new dominant culture in ancient Indian society. The people who followed that culture are called Aryan and those did not follow the tract of Aryans came to be identified as Non-Aryan (Anāya). References to these conflicts, interactions, rivalry between different cultured people are interspersed in the hymns of Rgveda. The study of the available information in Rgveda leads to the assertion that the categories of people such as Asura, Rākṣasa, Dāsa, Dasyu and Pani are some sects whose culture were subdued by the dominant culture.

Being the first literary source that incessantly speak about Asura and Rākṣasa, their origin and development are to be sought on the basis of the data provided by Rgveda. A close examination of the data gathered from Rgveda indicates that Asuras and Rākṣasas are
different group of human beings. The semantic study of the terms which reveals the transformation of the concepts also supports this assumption. The term Asura was derived from the ambivalent root 'as' which upbears the meanings 'life force', as well as 'to throw'. These meanings can be traced out in the Vedic hymns while examining the development of the concept of Asura. The positive sense of the usage of Asura is found not only in Vedas but is seen also in Iranian as well as Assyrian religious traditions. The concept of Ahura and Assur/Ashir/Ashur in Iranian and Assyrian civilizations can be taken as the equivalent concept of Vedic Asura. Ahura and Assur/Ashir/Ashur denote the powerful deities of those civilizations. These concepts have striking resemblance with the early Rgvedic concept of Asura who is a powerful being there. The similarities among these concepts evidently show the common origin of civilizations in ancient days. The Rgvedic term Rakṣas is derived from the ambivalent root 'rakṣa' which bears the meanings such as 'to protect', 'to injure' etc. In Rgveda, Rakṣas is described in both senses. The ambivalent root meanings seem to have helped the formation of the positive as well as negative concepts regarding both Asura and Rākṣasa.
The concepts of Asura and Rāksasa can clearly be understood only when an effective inquiry into the mythical concepts related with Asura and Rāksasa in *Ṛgveda* are made. In the secondary stage of development of the concept, Asuras are described as the enemies of Vedic deities. Dāsas, Dasyus, Panis etc. are also described as the hostile groups of Vedic beliefs and practices in Vedic hymns. This idea has close similitude with the description of Asuras and Rāksasas as the enemies of Vedic faith. The details available in connection with the fortresses of Dāsas and Dasyus are a clear indication of the state of their civilization. Dāsas, Dasyus and Panis are abused in *Ṛgveda* as avrata, akratū, adevyu, mṛdhravač, akarman etc. These abusive expressions are of assistance to form an idea about the mode of worship and the belief and practice of the people who inherited a different life style than that of the Vedic people. The terms Dāsas, Dasyus and Panis became obsolete in the time of later Vedic literature. Asura and Rāksasa concept became almost identical and popular and they represented the enemies of Devas. This may be presumed as the reason for the disappearance of Dāsas, Dasyus and Panis in the later literature.
In the early Vedic period Asura was an epithet for the deities in the sense of powerful, invigorator, life force etc. In Rgveda the deities Agni, Varuna, Savitṛ etc are praised as Asuras in a positive sense. There is also mention about Human Asuras both friends as well as the enemies of Vedic poets. Another remarkable point is the reference to the association of Asura with māyā. Māyā probably means magic or the power of Asuras in Rgveda. The usage of māyā along with Asura can be viewed as the primary stage of development of Asura as mythological hostile beings. Atharvaveda gives valuable information regarding the development of Asura concept in Vedic times. Interestingly there occur Āsuri the feminine form of Asura. The term Āsuri is variously interpreted by different scholars. At one place Āsuri is a powerful medicine used against leprosy. The same term is used to mean an elephant. Āsuri is said to be a charm used by a woman to win the love of a man in another context. Scholars like Hale consider Āsuri as a female member of the Asura clan. Yajurveda and Sāmaveda adduce some more evidence in conceiving the later concept of Asura as mythical beings. The Brāhmaṇa texts also append some point in support of the transformation of the concept.
It has discussed earlier that Rakṣas concept in Vedas is distinct from the Asura concept. It is in the time of Purāṇas Rakṣas became identical with Asura. In the primary stage of development Rakṣas is found as the enemies of Vedas and also of the beliefs and practices of Vedic people. In Rgveda and Atharvaveda Rakṣas appears as certain power-substances used against the enemies by the sorcerers. This is the secondary stage of the development of the Rakṣas concept in Vedic literature. Brāhmaṇas supply proof to think that Rakṣasases also had taken part in the sacrifices also. This evidently points to the amalgamation process happened among different cultures in that period.

The final stage of the development of Asuras and Rākṣasas is seen in the time of Purāṇa literature. There, Asuras and Rākṣasas are described as anti-social group of people that are in permanent antagonism with Devas. Purāṇas give valuable information to the racial identity of Asuras and Rākṣasas in detail. The stories of the famous Rākṣasas Rāvaṇa, Śūrpāṇakhā, Tāṭakā etc. and their engagements dealt with in Rāmāyana inform that they are some ethnic groups, not evil forces. In Mahābhārata Rākṣasas, Yakṣas, Kinnaras, Vānarās and Manusyas are described to be descended from
sage Pulastya. In Purāṇas sage Kaśyapa and his wives are described as the parents of all creatures of the world. Their progeny includes various kinds of species like divine, semi-divine, human, subhuman, birds, animals, serpents, trees and creepers etc. These fanciful accounts primarily are added in Puri, as to heighten the glory of sages or priests by ascribing the origin of the whole world from them. Besides, these references hint at the equal status that Devas and Asuras etc. had in a remote age.

Asuras and Rākṣasas although are portrayed as anti-social groups in the time of Purāṇa, their legacy has been accepted by various sects of people in different parts of India in later period. The famous Rākṣasī character Hidimbā, the wife of Pāṇḍava Bhīma and mother of his son Chatotkaca, is worshipped as a Himalayan deity by the people of Himachal Pradesh. Similarly, many characters of Asura and Rākṣasa class are being worshipped across India. A number of temples and festivals are existent amongst different sects of people in all over the country. This all is solid proof of the fact that the Asuras and Rākṣasas were neither subhuman or antisocial beings nor mere mythical characters, but, they were distinct sect of people having
their own way of life which was not acceptable for the Brahmanic society.

The important issues discussed in the thesis and the observations developed through it are highlighted here:

The main observations of this study are:

- Vedic and Puranic literature provide ample evidence in support of the fact that there were very many sects of people in ancient India who were having different perspective of life from that of the mainstream Vedic and Brahmanic culture.

- Asuras and Rākṣasas are two distinct sects of indigenous folks who were having different language, culture, religious beliefs and cultural practices.

- Asura is found as a powerful deity in the ancient Iranian and Assyrian sources also. This indicates the common origin of civilization in ancient days.

- The ambivalent root meaning of Asura and Rākṣasa helped in the formation of the negative concept of both terms in later period.

- The concept of Asura and Rākṣasa has undergone great shift in the course of its transformation to Puranic period from the Vedic age.
The concept of Asura and Rāksasa was evolved mainly due to the cultural, religious and linguistic differences and was not on the basis of qualitative nature or character.

Asuras and Rāksasas although had a developed state of civilization they were gradually subdued by the mainstream Vedic culture.

The concept of Asura and Rāksasa has gained deep impact in the psyche of Indian society in general and that of many aboriginal sects in particular. Traces of this fact are visible even today.

The present study is an attempt to trace out the ancient Indian social history of the subdued Asura and Rāksasa people with the help of Vedic and Puranic materials. The examination of the materials carried out in the thesis is expected to make the understanding of India's ancient history more vivid. However, more Anthropological studies of Vedic and Puranic literature are necessary to decipher India's cultural past.