CHAPTER XI

ADITYAS AND ÁŚVINS

Adityas

In the Rgveda Ādityas are the gods of somewhat indefinite group. In the RV. they are celebrated in six whole hymns and portions of two others. Their original number is slightly uncertain in the RV., it is given as seven and once eight also. In Brāmanas, they are said to be eleven. Several epithets are given to Ādityas. Aditi and Madhukāśa are said to be their mothers.

However, in the MBh. Ādityas are twelve in number. They are the subject of about 18 legends. They are the sons of Aditi and Kaśyapa. Their origin is also said to be from the coal of sacrifice, performed by Śiva in the form of Varuṇa. They are celebrated in the form of a group (Ādityas).

In the RV. they fetter their enemies. They are the protectors of their worshippers. They bestow the boons of different kinds.

In the MBh. the position of the Ādityas has devalued. Only in the form of group (Ādityas) they are mentioned. They worship the other gods such as Mahādeva.
on Meru and Varūṇa in his palace. They are defeated by Garūda in the episode of "Battle between Garūda and the gods". They ran away from the fear of Garūda towards the western region. They are also defeated by Bali.

In the Mbh. it is made easy to attain the region of Ādityas by just having fast for a short time.

In the RV. the names and the number of Ādityas are indefinite. Maximum six at a time are enumerated once. These are Mitra, Āryaman, Bhaga, Varūṇa, Dakṣa, Āṃśa. In the RV. seven or eight number is mentioned. Aditi first presented seven number later she included Mārtanda as the eighth. In the AV. eight sons of Aditi are Mitra, Varūṇa, Āryaman, Āṃśa, Bhaga, Dhā́tṛ, Indra and Vivasvat. In the Brāhmaṇas, they are said to be twelve in number and are identified with twelve months. The real characteristic of the group is that they are said to be the light gods of the heaven. In the AV. the sun is called the son of Aditi.

Several epithets are given to Ādityas. They are called śuci, hiranyaka, bhūryakṣa, anīmiṣa, asvapnaj, dīrghadhī, Kṣatriya, uru, gabhīra, arīṣṭa, dhrtravrata, anavadya, āvrjīna, dharapūta and rtāvan.
However, in the Mbh. Ādityas are said to be twelve in number. They are Dhātr, Mitra, Aryaman, Indra, Varuṇa, Amśa, Bhaga, Vivasvat, Pūsan, Savitṛ, Tvastr and Viṣṇu the youngest, however, is superior to them all in merit. In the Mbh. at some places the order of the Ādityas's name differs as Dhātr, Aryaman, Mitra, Varuṇa, Amśa, Bhaga, Indra, Vivasvat, Pūsan, Tvastr, Savitṛ and Parjanya or Viṣṇu.

But in the Anuśasana Parva the order of their names is Amśa, Bhaga, Mitra, Varuṇa, Dhātr, Aryaman, Jayanta, Bhāskara, Tvastr, Pūsan, Indra and Viṣṇu. Ādityas are said to be among thirty-three gods (the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, Prajāpati and Vasatākara). In the Mbh. Garuḍa, the son of Vinatā and the mighty Aruṇa and also Brhaspati are reckoned among the Ādityas. Sūrya is also called Āditya.

In the RV. Aditi is said to be the mother of Ādityas. Once Madmakaśa, the daughter of the Vasus, is also said to be the mother of Ādityas.

In the Mbh. Ādityas are the sons of Aditi and Kaśyapa. From Aditi have sprung the twelve Ādityas.
It is also said that Ādityas came into existence from the coals at the sacrifice of Śiva in the form of Varuna. In most cases they are named together with the other devaganas etc.¹⁴

In the RV, it is mentioned that Ādityas are bright, golden, sinless, pure and holy. They see good and evil in men's heart and hate falsehood and punish sin. They are invoked to forgive sin. They protect their worshippers with armour, ward off sickness and grant various boons such as long life and offsprings. They fetter their enemies.

Whereas in the Mbh., it is mentioned that Ādityas are the lord of the universe¹⁵. Among all the sons of Aditi or Ādityas, Visnu alone is eternal. He alone is unconquerable and indestructible, existing for ever, the lord of all and the possessor of divine attributes.¹⁶

Ādityas grant success to their worshippers.¹⁷

It is mentioned in the episode, Kṛṣṇā (Draupadī) wishes success to Arjuna from Ādityas.¹⁶ Draupadī said, "I bow to the Vasus, the Rudras and the Ādityas, the Māruts, the Viśvedevas and the Sādhyas for procuring the welfare of Arjuna."¹⁹
In the Mbh., the living palaces of Adityas are mentioned. Adityas with Indra wait upon Brahman in his palace. They also remain present on Meru. It is further mentioned regarding their living place that Adityas have their own regions. Those regions are extensive and of great happiness.

In the Mbh., it is said that Adityas use their weapons in the battle. Once there was a battle between Garuda and other deities. It is mentioned there that the weapons of the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Sadhyas, the Maruts and other gods began to spend their force against one another from the fear of Garuda.

In the Mbh., the position of Adityas has deteriorated. They have been enumerated as a group (Adityas), but not as chief deities or in numbers as in the Veda, where it is said that not more than six are enumerated anywhere. In the Mbh., it is mentioned that Adityas have become perfect by penance.

In the legend of "Importance of Penance," it is said that the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, Agni, the Asvins, Vāyu, the Viśvedevas, Sadhyas, the Pitr, the Maruts, the Yaksas, the Rākṣasas, the Gandharvas, the Siddhas, all have become perfect by Tappas. Thus it is depicted in the Mbh. that Adityas became perfect by penance.
In the *Mbh.* Ādityas are defeated by Garuḍa and they ran away towards the western region. In the legend of "Battle between Garuḍa and the Gods," the gods, beholding Garuḍa of excessive strength, were afflicted by him, thereupon they started running towards different directions such as the Sādhyas with Gandharvas fled eastward, the Vāsus with the Rudras towards the south, the Ādityas towards the west and the twin Āsvins towards the north.

Ādityas were also vanquished by Bali. In the *Mbh.* Ādityas worship other deities. They wait upon and worship Varuṇa, the lord of water in Varuṇa's palace. They worship Mahādeva on Meru along with other gods.

In the *Mbh.* it has become easy to attain the region of Ādityas. In the *Mbh.* it is mentioned that a man can obtain the region of the Ādityas by just having fast. It is said that for a full year a man who has a fast for nineteen days eats only one meal on every twentieth day, truthfulness of speech and leading the life of a Brahma-cārin and devotes to the good of all creatures attains to the extensive region of great happiness belonging to the Ādityas. Further, it is said that having fast for three and twenty days eats a little ghee on the twenty-fourth day, bearing this way for a full year and pouring libations on sacred fire, a man thus resides for countless years with great happiness in the region of Ādityas and he is decked with celestial robes and garlands and celestial perfumes.
In the Ṛājasya the Ādityas are celebrated in group as twelve whereas in the Vedas not more than six are enumerated anywhere. In the Ṛājasya the position of the Ādityas has declined, only Viṣṇu the youngest has been given supreme position.

The Ādityas are defeated by Garuda and ran away towards the western region (Battle between Garuda and the gods episode). They are vanquished by Bali. In the Ṛājasya the Ādityas worship the other deities such as Varuṇa and Mahādeva. They become perfect by penance (in the episode of Importance of Penance). The Ādityas gradually become less powerful in the Ṛājasya.

The mode of worship has become simple. Stress has been laid down on fasts for full one year by having fast for nineteen days eats only one meal on every twentieth day and similarly having fast for three and twenty day eats a little ghee on the twenty-fourth day, attains the region of Ādityas.
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5. AV. 13, 29,37
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The Aśvins

In the RV. the Aśvins are celebrated in more than fifty hymns and are mentioned over 400 times.

In the Mbh. the Aśvins are the subject of about 26 legends.

In the RV., the Aśvins are given epithets such as Nāsatya, Dasa, Hiranyavartani and Vṛtra-slayers.

In the Mbh. the Aśvins are called Nāstya, Nāstya and Dasa.

In the RV. the parents of the Aśvins are Dyaus, Ocean, Vivasvat and Saranyū.

However, in the Mbh. they are born of mundane egg, Sūrya, Mārtanda and are created by the Supreme God. According to philosophical view they are procreated from Kṛṣṇa.

In the RV. Sūrya's daughter is the wife of the Aśvins who is named Aśvinī.

In the Mbh. incarnation of the Aśvins is mentioned. Nakula and Sahadeva are the indirect sons of the Aśvins. The resplendent plants are said to be their weapons.

In the RV. as well as in the Mbh. the Aśvins have somewhat similar nature and functions. They are celestial
physicians. However, in the Mbh. in Cyavana episode, Indra described them as more near to mortals. Their weak character is also mentioned in this legend. They are made the Soma drinker by the human being (Cyavana). Thus the position of the Aśvins has somewhat humiliated.

In the RV. the Aśvins are ascribed with several epithets. They are called the Nāsatyas and in another passage they are alone mentioned the encompassing "Nāsatya", not untrue. They are called "Dasra", wondrous; "Hiranyavartani", golden-pathed. As they are once associated with Indra in Vṛtra-slaying so they are given epithet Vṛtra-slayers.

In the Mbh. the Aśvins are given epithets "Nāsatya", nose-born. They are also called Nāstya and Dasra.

In the RV. they are sometimes called as born separately. One is said to be a victorious prince and the other is the son of heaven. They are the children of Dyaus and Ocean is said to be their mother. Vivasvat and Saranyu, daughter of Tvāstr are their parent.

However, in the Mbh. different accounts are given regarding the birth of the Aśvins.
The Āśvins are sprung from the mundane egg. In the "Description of Anukramnikā Parva", it is mentioned that in the beginning of the Yuga, there is a mighty egg, inexhaustible seed of all created beings. In the egg there is true light Brahman. From this egg came out lord Pitāmaha, the one only Prajāpati e.g., Manu, Vasistha and Paramesthin, ten Pracetas, Dakṣa. Then appeared Viśvedevas, the Ādityas, the Vasus and the twin Āśvins.

The Āśvins are said to be the sons of Sūrya and the daughter of Tvāstrī. In the "Description of Mahārṣis and Kaśyapa's wives Race", Tāstri, in form of Vadavā (a mare) became the wife of Savitr. She gave birth to twin Āśvins in the skies.

The Āśvins are said to be nose-born (Nāsatya).

The Āśvins are created by the Supreme god Viṣṇu. In the legend of "Importance of Rājadharman", it is said in the Mbh. that the Āśvins are created by the Supreme god Viṣṇu, in days of old, with the Sādhyas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Viśvedevas and the ganas of the Maruts and the Siddhas. They are all foremost observant of Kṣatriya duties.

Nāsatya and Dasra the two Āśvins are also said to be the sons of Mārtanda. They are born of Mārtanda spouse Sañjñā from whose nostrils they came out.
According to philosophical view, it is said in the Mbh. that the Aśvins are procreated from Kṛṣṇa. The Rudras, the Śādhyas, the Viśvedevas, the diverse Maruts, Prajāpati himself, the mother of the deities, viz. Aditi and the seven Rṣis, have all sprung from Kṛṣṇa.

In the RV. they are said to be young. They are beautiful, bright, of golden brilliancy, honey-hued. They are red-white in colour and wear lotus-garlands.

However, in the Mbh. the Aśvins are said to be endowed with uncommon beauty and grace.

In the RV. the abode of the Aśvins is heaven, earth, air, ocean, plants, houses and the mountain, from where they come.

In the Mbh. the twins Aśvins live in heaven.

In the RV. Sūrya, the daughter of Sūrya is their wife. She bears the name Aśvinī. They are said to be the parents of Pūsan.

Whereas in the Mbh. incarnation or offspring of the Aśvins is mentioned. The Aśvins begot upon Mādṛī Nakula and Sahadeva.

In the Mbh. weapons of the Aśvins are mentioned. The resplendent plants are said to be the weapons of the Aśvins.
It is mentioned, in the legend of "Khāndava - vana - Dahana"\textsuperscript{24}, the Āśvins along with other gods, fight with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in order to defend the Khāndava wood from being burnt\textsuperscript{25}. It is said in the legend that all celestials took up their respective weapons. The Āśvins stood there with resplendent plants in their hands.\textsuperscript{26}

In the Vedas, the Āśvins dispel darkness. They are the most steadfastly helpful. They are the physicians of the gods. They are the guardians of immortality and granter of immortality who ward off death from the worshippers\textsuperscript{27}. They reward the worshippers with riches and children\textsuperscript{28}. They bestowed fertility on the bride\textsuperscript{29}. They give eye to the blind. The old are made young by them.

In the Mbh. it is by virtue of their (Āśvins) wealth of Yoga, that the Āśvins along with other deities rule the creatures\textsuperscript{30}. The Āśvins are the celestial physicians\textsuperscript{31}. They make a person young and graceful\textsuperscript{32}. They are of mighty enterprise, possessed of mighty souls\textsuperscript{33}. The Āśvins also rank as gods\textsuperscript{34}. These two practise the healing art. By reciting the praises of the Āśvins, one becomes free from diseases\textsuperscript{35}.\textsuperscript{30}
In the RV. the Aśvins have relationship with other deities as physicians.

In the MBH. the Aśvins are identified with other deities.

Agni is identified with the Aśvins.36 In the legend of "Adoration of Agni by Mandapāla"37, when Mandapāla saw Agni coming towards Khāndava forest to burn it down, he began to gratify Agni to save himself and his children. He identified Agni with Brhaspati, the twin Aśvins, Sūrya, Soma and Vāyu.38

In the MBH. it is said that the illustrious Śiva assumes the forms of Brahman, Viṣṇu, Indra, Rudra, Aditya, the Aśvins and all the deities.39

The position of the Aśvins have somewhat deteriorated in the MBH. They have shown their weak character in the MBH. They are made partakers of Soma by human beings. In the legend of "Cyavāna's wife and the Aśvins"40, once upon a time, the Aśvins saw Sukanyā, the wife of Cyavāna, when she had bathed and her person was bare. They fell in love with her and asked her to choose one of them because Cyavāna her husband is an old one. Sukanyā answered that she was devoted to her husband. The Aśvins promised to make her husband
young, if she chose one of them. Cyavana along with the Aśvins entered the water together. They came out in the most beautiful form, with the same appearance. But she chose only her husband. In consequence of this (getting beautiful form from the Aśvins) Cyavana became well-pleased and he promised to make Aśvins the Soma drinkers. Thus the Aśvins were made the Soma drinker in the sacrifice of king Śaryāti.⁴¹

In the Ṛgveda the Aśvins worship other deities. The Aśvins attend on Indra. The Aśvins with the Maruts and Sādhyas surround Indra, when he is uttering his daily prayer at the upper Gaṅga.⁴²

The Aśvins worship Mahādeva on Mūñjavat with the Rudras, the Śādhyas, the Viṣvedevas, the Vasus, Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera, the Ādityas and the Maruts.⁴³

In the Ṛgveda as well as in the Vedas the Aśvins are said to be the physicians. In the Ṛgveda the nature and functions of the Aśvins have not changed much. They have a minor position in the Ṛgveda. They are said to be more near to the mortals. They are made Soma drinkers by human beings. Their weak character is also mentioned and they are fully anthropomorphised in the Ṛgveda. (Cyavāna episode). The Aśvins worship other deities such as Indra and Mahādeva.
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