CHAPTER VIII

RELATION OF THE DEITIES
Inter-Relation of the Deities

We have thoroughly dealt with the characteristics and the concepts of the various female deities in the Samhitās, while dealing with them separately; their relation to other male and female deities has also been mentioned. A more intensive study of the inter-relation of the deities is taken up in the present chapter.

The male and female deities are connected with one another in various ways. Sometimes they have family relations as Sūrya and Sūrya, Ādityas and Aditi. Some of them are inter-related to the same aspect as Sūrya, Usas and Rātri. These three and some others come under the category of the solar deities. In the yajurveda we find most of the deities connected through sacrifice, as many deities male and female are related with the same sacrifice, e.g. Āśvamedha, Rajasuya etc. Their relations are very much intermingled as studied below.

Common Epithets of the Deities

The epithets used for the male deities are also used for the female ones. It appears that there is no restriction to use the particular epithets for the male and female deities. Sometimes the sense of the epithet may differ according to its connection with the deity. For instance, we
take the case of vājinī or Vājinīvatī. The latter is the feminine form of the former. Indra has been addressed as Vājin, in the sense of 'strong one'. But the same epithet in the feminine form as vājinī or vājinīvatī is used for Sarasvatī and usās. In this case mostly it means one possessed of food. Another example may be given of the epithet Maghavan. Indra has been called Maghavan, the intelligent one. Its feminine form Maghoni in the same sense is used for usas. The Heaven and Earth are often given one epithet, signifying the fact that both of them have the same qualities e.g. Mahinī (Av.I.160.2), Ajare (Rv.VI.70.1), Rtvrdhā etc. There are many other instances available in the vedic Samhitās where this similarity of the epithets brings the different deities closer.

Multiple role of the deities

The relations of the different deities are intermingled. The one deity would be described at one place related to the other in a particular manner, but at another place the relation of these two would be quite different. Not only this but the relation of one deity to other deities is also the same. Let us take the instance of Heaven and

2. Kathas, IV.16.
Earth. Mostly, Heaven and Earth are described as co-mates but one place in the Rgveda Samhita, Earth has been called the sister of Heaven. Thus we come across the diversity of the relation between these two deities. At one place she is the wife and at another she is the sister. The relation of Indra and usas can also be taken as an instance. In Rgveda Samhita, Indra is said to have simiten down usas which obviously means their antirelatedness, while in the same veda usas brings oblations for Indra in the sacrifice. In the Rgveda Samhita, Heaven and earth are said to be the parents of Indra but in many other places Indra is described as supporter and expander of both. Not only Indra but Soma, Viṣṇu and Agni are also the supporters of Earth. At other place it is Prajapati who made them steady. The earth is usually said to be mother of Indra but in Rgveda VIII.77.1-2 the mother of Indra is Savasā. Moreover, one deity is desired by many

5. Ibid
6. Ibid, I.57.3
7. Ibid,II.15.2 स बराकरुपिन्यिं पत्रवृंजं सोमवेण बुध हन्तेऽचक्रार।
8. तैनयायां प्रापुष्पिकैं च दृष्टचेष्वम स्व: सर्भिर्ये वैन नावे।
10. य उत्तिकां पुष्पिकौ मूलांनीको द्राघारु मुलनानि विश्व।
Ibid, I.154.4.
e.g. usas, Sūrya longs for her and follows her as a man follows his beloved. Soma is also mentioned as longing for Usas. A peculiar instance of confused relation is found in Rgveda X. 72.4, where Aditi is said to have given birth to Dakṣa and Dakṣa to Aditi. (Aditer dakṣo Ajāyata dakṣandaditiḥ pari) The same is the case with viṇāj and puruṣa also (Rv.X.90.5) Agni is the controller of the Earth (Av.VI.86.2) but Earth is the mother of Agni. (Av. IV.39.2).

These contradictory ideas are based on Kathonotheism, as a result of which a particular deity is raised to the highest position.

Invocation of various Deities at a Time

In several places in the Samhitas many male and female deities are invoked at the same time to grant a particular request. In the Rgveda, Prthivi, Dyus, Aditi, varuṇa and Mitra are invoked together for protection. Further in the Rgveda I.106-1, Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, Aditi are collectively invoked. It is obvious that the male and female deities of

11. सूर्याः उसाः दक्षवरुण अदितिः न यो वातामयिति पुरुषा दक्षः

Ibid, I.115.2.

12. Ibid, IX.5.6

13. इन्द्रितः वरुणाः आदितिः अग्निः अदितिः दक्षः

contradictory character are mentioned together. This shows the absence of any special outlook to separate these deities. Nîtra, varuṇa and Aditi are usually invoked together. As for example in Rgveda II.29.3

This practice is not only limited to prayers and invocations but is also in vogue in the soma drinking feasts and sacrifices. The female deities are also invited in the company of male ones on the occasion of soma drinking. It can be judged from the verse VIII.35.1 in the Rgveda Samhita. In the next verse Prthivī is also invited to drink soma. The triad of the female deities of Ida, Bhārati and Sarasvatī has also been invited to the Soma yajna in the Rgveda.  

In Taittirīya Samhitā Sarasvatī and Prthivī are invited in the company of other gods. In the same Samhita when the offerings are made to Agni and viṣṇu, the special oblations of the clarified butter are also offered to Sarasvatī. In the Rgveda, by constant repetition of "sajoṣaṇa uṣaṇa sūryena, it has been stressed that uṣas, Surya and Āśvins are closely connected. Uṣas has been invoked to drink Soma in their company (VIII.35.1-3), to

15. Ibid. IX.5.8
17. Taittirīya Samhitā, II.2.9
18. Ibid., II.2.9,
bestow food on the worshippers (4-6), to follow the three fold path (7-9), to give strength (10-12) and to move in the company of the Ādityas (13-15). The wives of Agni have been hailed to drink Soma in the company of Agni and Tvāṣṭr. On various sacrificial occasions, the blessings and favour of the male and female deities are sought. It is ascertained in the vajapeya sacrifice dealt with in Taittirīya Śāmhitā. It is noteworthy in this context that Sarasvatī and vāk in the company of Aryaman, Brhaspati and Indra are requested to induce the sacrificer to give more gifts for the Adhyaryus.

Pairs of Deities

Examples of the compounded forms of pairs may be cited here as Dīva Prthivī, Ahorātri etc. The other form of the pairs of Deities is also seen in the vedas, e.g. Sarasvān and Sarasvatī, Indra and Indrāni etc. In some of them the female deities are given prominence as in the case of Sarasvan and Sarasvati, the latter is found prominently in the Vedas. In the case of others, the male deities are given prominence as Indra and Indrāṇī Agni and Agnāyi, Varuṇa and Varuṇānī. Here the former ones are given great importance in the vedic Śāmhitās.

20. Taittirīya Śāmhitā, I.4.27.
The Deities as Helpers

There are many instances in the Samhitás where one deity is approached by the seers for the fulfilment of their desired objects from the other deity. For instance, Aditi is requested that other gods should protect the seer. The Maruts have been requested that Niṛṛti may not kill the worshippers, and that Niṛṛti herself may be destroyed. A request is made to Dvārādevī to open the gates wide that the gods might come to the house. Indra is also invoked and requested to destroy Niṛṛti in the Av. Rātri as īrmyā has been invoked to take the prayers of the seers to Naruts Uśas is requested to awaken the Āśvins. The dawns are said to place Āgni and cover the Rta. Uśas also helps the Āśvins. The goddess Trip. gives strength to Indra to destroy the enemies as Sūrya gives to Uśas. Sarasvatī attends upon Indra. Not only

21. RV. Samhita, IV. 55.7
22. Ibid, X. 110.5.
23. AV. Samhita, V. 61.17.
26. Ibid, I. 56.1
27. Ibid X. 131.5
this but these deities are creators of one another. Pr̥thivī is said to have created Indra. It is said that formerly there was no might, but gods created her. The Heaven and Earth created Brhaspati and also brought him up. The gods are also creators of vak. The female deities are also mentioned as squeezing soma for various gods. The goddess Dhiṣaṇā has been described as squeezing soma for Indra and Agni. Sarasvatī in the form of a cow milked honey for Indra. Sarasvatī, Bhāratī and Iḍā squeezed Soma for Indra. The deities also propitiate and worship others. Sarasvatī in the company of Aśvins prohibited Indra with oblations, and also worshipped him. Aditi adores Savitṛ. While extolling the cow it is said that Indra made her to drink a thousand vassels of soma. The deities are mutually co-operating. While the Aśvins are being addressed the dawns are removing the darkness; so the sun arises. They share the guilt of each other. An incident occurs in T.S., where the earth shares the guilt of Indra for slaying

29. Ibid, VIII. 100.11
31. Śukla yajurveda, XX.65.
32. Ibid, XX.63
33. Ibid, XX.63
34. Áv.Samhita, X.10.9
35. Ibid, VII.72.4.
visvarupa. Nirṛti is requested to work in concord with yama in Av.VI.63.3. Agni shines more brilliantly at the sight of uṣas. It means that the sacrificial fire is kindled at the appearance of uṣas. The seer requests the god Sumati to acquire intellect, presided over by the deity in Av. V.41.8. Āṣṭakā gives birth to Indra in the Av.III.10.12. Soma is also the son of Āṣṭakā. The goddess Silācī is connected with various gods and goddesses. Her mother is Rātri, father is sky, her grand father is Aryaman and brothers are gods. In the Rgveda Samhita, Indra is often connected with Heaven and Earth but in yajurveda Samhita, Agni is often connected with Prthvī because Agni is placed on earth. The greatness of one deity is the greatness of others. For instance in Rgveda, on account of the greatness of Rodası Maruts regard themselves as great. Through rains she helps people. Rodası and Maruts are the deities of the middle regions. Subsequently, Maruts consider her greatness as their own. In some places, their relations are clearly mentioned in the form of family relations viz. Rv.I.191.6, where while seeking protection from the senses, it is said "Heaven is your father; Prthvī

37. Ibid, V.5.1.
mother, Soma brother and Aditi sister. This relation points out that the position of Aditi is lower than that of Heaven and Earth. He who reads the verses related to Pavamana is blessed by Sarasvati with milk, honey, butter etc. (Rv. Samhita, IX.67.32).

Relation through comparisons

Sometimes the deities are compared to one another. This comparison is sometimes between male and female deities. For instance, in Rgveda Samhita the Maruts are compared with Dawn and it is said that as Dawn removes the darkness of Night, in the same way they destroy Vṛtra etc. and illumine the whole universe. Agni is said to be like Aditi. As Aditi, being the mother of all the gods, is their supporter, in the same way Agni is their supporter because of bringing the oblation for them. Agni takes the oblations to the gods; thus he is their supporter like Aditi. The lustres of the Matuts are like Surya. Sometimes

Dyaurvaḥ piti prthivi mata some uhrataditih Svāsā.

40. Rv.Samhita, II.34.12.
41. Ibid. IV.1.20
42. Ibid. I.64.2.
the deities are superimposed upon others. For instance, in I.89.10 Av. Aditi has been called Heaven, Earth etc. which shows the greatness of Aditi. Sometimes the deities are addressed by the names of other deities to show their greatness. Agni is addressed by the name of Aditi which reveals the fact that the very purpose of addressing Agni is to raise the former equal to later's greatness. Here from the context it is known that Aditi comes for Agni, Somakrayani (the deity in the form of a cow) is worshipped in the form of Rudra, Vasu, Aditya and Candra. Likewise uṣas illuminates the whole world with her light, in the same way Indra fills Heaven and Earth with light.

Thus the vedic deities, male and female, are variously related. This strengthens our viewpoint that the vedic female deities are of no meagre importance, but they were regarded on the equal level of the male deities and the study of Vedic Mythology would be incomplete without giving due importance to the female deities.

43. Rv.I.94.15.
"Yasmai Tyin sudraviva dadūsoangīvasadite Sarasvati"
44. Suklayajurveda IV.21.