Chapter VIII

Conclusion
The term Asura has its various meanings in the Vedic Literature, but mostly it denotes the sense of living or powerful that suits most of the Vedic passages referred to the gods and the demons. In the Vedas both the terms 'deva' and asura' occur for the bright and benevolent forces of nature and thus, both these terms are used altogether frequently in the Rigveda, with one and the same person. But while the deva, due to its origin, was restricted to the bright and benevolent powers of nature, asura was under no such restriction and could be applied not only to the beneficent but to the malignant and hostile forces of nature too. In due course, having being associated with 'Nāyā', the occult power, the term 'asura' firmly fixed only to represent the malignant forces of nature. This hostile power of nature is called by various names such as Daśa, Dasyu, Pāṇiś, Rakṣasa, Pīvana, etc. and sometimes, called by individual names such as Viṣṇu, Vāla, Śāṃbara, Nāncś, Viśvarūpa, Śūbu, etc. All these Asuras are considered as the originators of all that is bad, of every impurity, of sin and death, and are constantly thinking of causing the destruction of the crops of the religious men. Such a hostile power must be opposed by the power, good to the humanity. Therefore, there is a daily, may everlasting, struggle between these two opposite forces of nature. Sometimes, the malignant power overpowers the beneficent one and at other, the latter is overpowered by the former. But in the end the hostile power is to be overpowered by the beneficent one. This only the Devāsura-saṁgrāma which the Brāhmaṇas never tire of recounting. Thus, the description of the Devas and the Asuras and description of their fights are merely allegorical.
It is generally the habit of people to see and depict each and everything in accordance with their own shape and appearances. The Vedic Aryans definitely worshipped the Devas and accepted their human-like forms. The Asuras who were in opposite side of the Devas, were naturally to be imagined as possessing human-like appearances. Therefore, they are also imagined as having human or animal-like appearances. Thus, they are assumed as having their cloud-castles, abode on the cloud-mountains, family members and army of the masses of clouds, weapons to fight against Devas and wealth in cows, stolen from the Devas. They are imagined as having their creation, different food, customs and other activities. They are also depicted as performing the sacrifices and using anya and other worst devices to have a sovereignty over the Devas.

In post Vedic Literature, the Asuras, instead of fighting with the Devas, are depicted as fighting against the Suras, that is to say, by a mere mistake the 'a' of Asura has been taken as a negative; 'a' whereas it is the radical 'a' of asu, breath and a new name has been formed Sura, which seemed to be connected with Svar, the sky, and was used as a name of the gods, opposed to the Asuras, the Non-gods. The fights of the Suras and Asuras, narrated in the Purāṇas, are really based on a misunderstanding of the old name of the living God, namely, 'Asu-ra' not 'A-Sura'. Here in the Purāṇas, 'Asura' is a combined name used for the Daitya and Dānava. 1 But one thing is significant that the question of the origin of the Daitya, Dānava, Gandharva, Rākṣasa arises but no

1 —बबते स्वामिन: प्रवृत्तं देवं गद्वधर्म: तः। — V.Pu.LXVIII.14.
question of the creation of the Asuras arises, it shows that here too, 'Asura' is not a racial name and sometimes, the Āhyātmika and Āchidāvatika elements are also represented by the terms 'Deva' and 'Asura'.

In brief, it may be said that the nature of the evil spirits which surround the everyday life of man is to cause injury and their various species cause a particular kind of injury as is usually indicated by their name. Thus, it seems that even in India, like the other castes and countries the Asuras, Rākṣasas and Piśācas are believed in right from the very old age and the religious seers composed many hymns in praise of gods and goddesses to get the desired thing, to guard themselves against these evil spirits and to drive away the evil demons.

2. Vide V. Pu.LXVII.46; VI. Pu.I.16.85; Li. Pu.I.63.1, M. Pu.V.1, Br.Pu.III.1; II.6.1.

3. प्राचीन एवं स्त्रयु विनिर्माणः संकेतां बद्युरच्चकोः । V. Pu.I.10; ग्रापणे ये पुराणः।
   प्रथित्ति दर्शरी मयास्वितः । VIII. Pu.II.22.82.