

told the King the request of the Aśvinīdevas and Śaryāti also promised his help on this matter.

On their return to their palace Śaryāti decided to perform a big yāga to which all the devas were also invited. Cyavana officiated as priest. The Aśvinīdevas were also present quite to the dislike of Indra. The time came for distributing soma, and when Cyavana called the Aśvinīkumāras to take their share Indra objected saying that since they were physicians of the devas they could not be given that drink. Cyavana argued against that and after a great verbal combat Cyavana succeeded in making the Aśvinīkumāras take the drink. For more details look under 'Cyavana'. (Seventh Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

5) *Other information regarding Aśvinīkumāras.*

(1) How they tested Upamanyu. This story is given under the word Āpodadhaumya.

(2) Birth of Nakula and Sahadeva. Kuntī, wife of Pāṇḍu, had obtained from Sage Durvāsas five sacred mantras, the chanting of each of which would give her a child. Even before her marriage Kuntī tested the power of the mantras by chanting one of them. Sūrya appeared and she had to take a son from him who became the famous Karṇa later. By chanting the second, third and fourth meditating on Yama, Vāyu and Indra, Kuntī got respectively the sons Dharmaputra, Bhīma and Arjuna. The fifth mantra she gave to Mādri and she meditated on the Aśvinīdevas and got Nakula and Sahadeva.

(3) The Aśvinīdevas were present for the marriage of Pāñcālī. (Śloka 6, Chapter 186, Ādi Parva, M.B.). During the burning of the forest Khāṇḍava the Aśvinīdevas stood on the side of Arjuna.

(4) King Yuvanāśva became pregnant and bore a child. It was the Aśvinīdevas who took the child out by surgery. The boy became known as Māndhātā later. (Śloka 3, Chapter 62, Droṇa Parva, M.B.).

(5) During the Mahābhārata battle the Aśvinīdevas handed over some Pārśadas to the god, Skanda. (Śloka 38, Chapter 43, Śalya Parva, M.B.).

(6) The Aśvinīdevas like very much oblations of Ghee. The others who like it are Bṛhaspati, Pūṣan, Bhaga and Pāvaka. (Śloka 7, Chapter 65, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

(7) The month of Āśvina (October-November) is the month of Aśvinīkumāras and if a man gives ghee to the Brahmīns freely in that month he will acquire more physical beauty. (Śloka 10, Chapter 65, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

(8) One who offers Ghee as oblation to the fire for twelve months in succession will reach the country of the Aśvinīkumāras. (Śloka 95, Chapter 107, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

(9) The great poet of Kerala, Vallathol, in his commentary on the 93rd Sūkta of the Ṛgveda states that there is a belief that the Aśvīns and Candrasūryas (the Sun and Moon) are one and the same.

(10) Dīrghaśravas son of Dīrghatamas once prayed to the Aśvinīdevas to get rains and it is said that they gave a downpour of sweet water. (Ṛgveda, Sūkta 112, Ṛk 11).

(11) Once a sage named Gotama was lost in a desert and craved bitterly for drinking water. He prayed to the Aśvinīdevas for water and they dug a well itself in the desert and quenched the thirst of the sage. (Ṛk 9, Sūkta 16, Ṛgveda).

(12) The sage Dadhyañc taught the Aśvinīdevas the technique, Madhuvidyā. There is an interesting story

about it. It was Indra who taught this to Dadhyañc and while teaching him he had threatened that if he gave away that secret to anybody else his head would be cut off. Aśvinīdevas found a way to tide over this difficulty. They at first cut off his head and fixed the head of a horse on him. It was with the head of a horse that Dadhyañc taught them Madhuvidyā and as soon as the teaching was over his horse-head was cut off and the real head placed in its place. (Ṛk 22, Sūkta 116, Ṛgveda).

(13) The vehicle of the Aśvinīdevas is a donkey. Once this donkey in the disguise of a wolf went and stayed with Rjṛāśva, son of the Rājāṅsi Vṛṣāgīr. Rjṛāśva gave the wolf to eat hundred goats belonging to the people of the place. Vṛṣāgīr got angry at this act of his son and cursed him. The son became blind and he got back his eyesight by pleasing the Aśvinīdevas by prayer and offerings. (Ṛk 16, Sūkta 115, Ṛgveda).

(14) Once Sūryā decided to give his daughter in marriage to the owner of the horse which would win a horse-race which Sūryā would conduct. In the race the horse of the Aśvinīdevas won and they thus married Sūryā's daughter. (Ṛk 17, Sūkta 117, Ṛgveda).

(15) The Aśvinīkumāras killed an asura of name Viṣvak and destroyed his dynasty also. (Ṛk 16, Sūkta 117, Ṛgveda).

**AŚVINĪKUMĀRATĪRTHA.** It is believed that the physical beauty of a man would be increased if he bathes in this lake. (Śloka 17, Chapter 83, Vana Parva, M.B.).

**AŚVINĪSUTA.** A son born to Sūrya of the wife of Sutapas. There is this story about it in Brahmavai-varta Purāṇa. Once when the wife of Sutapas was on a pilgrimage Sūrya happened to see her. The beautiful and venerable lady refused to accede to the desire of Sūrya and so the latter used force and took her. They had a son who was named Aśvinīsuta. On her return after the pilgrimage with her son she explained all that happened and the sage sent both of them out. Sūrya taught his son Aśvinīsuta astrology and made him a master in that science. Knowing that, Sutapas cursed him and said he would turn to be one very diseased. Later the sage amended his curse and added that he would be free from disease if he worshipped the sun.

**ASVINĪTĪRTHA.** Promises bodily splendour if one takes a bath in this lake. (Śloka 21, Chapter 25, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

**ATALA.** This is one of the seven sections of Pātāla. The seven sections are : Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talātala, Mahātala, Rasātala, Pātāla. Of them Atala has been described as follows : Atala is the first world of Pātāla. There reigns Bala, the son of Maya who is the famous but haughty magician. He has created 96 Mayas who are capable of granting all kinds of desires. Even now certain persons who are interested in the practice of Black magic, learn some of these 96 arts and practise them. When this mighty fellow opens his mouth for yawning, three groups of women known as Puniścalīs, Svairiṇīs and Kāminīs emerge from his mouth. He has with him a rasāyana called hāṭaka with which he can easily entice and seduce all who enter Atala and to strengthen them for satisfying his lust. After enticing them with it, he enjoys uncontrolled pleasure with them, showering on them his amorous glances, bewitch-