The twin Aśvins are mainly the succouring deities. They are the most reliable helpers in need. All sorts of men, women, birds and rivers etc. have appealed to them for help and have not been disappointed. The various types of help they render are mostly of peaceful nature. They are characteristically divine physicians. They heal diseases with their remedies, restore sight, cure the blind, sick and mutilated. They are the speediest deliverers from distress. Many legends and names are referred to in

1 uta tyā daivyā bhīṣaja ... RV.VIII.18.8.
2 ... taśmā akṣī nāsatya vicakṣa ādhattam āsvrī ... RV.I.116.16.
3 andhasya cinnāsatya kṛṣasya ciddyuvamidāhur bhīṣaja rutasya cit. RV.I.39.3.
4 pravadyamanā suvṛtā rathena ... RV.I.118.3.
See also: RV.I.112.2.
the Rgveda about these whom Asvins restored to youth, cured of various physical defects or befriended them in other ways. Some of these legends are narrated in the Bṛhaddevata also.

Asvins are very strong, but they are of very calm and peaceful nature as well. Certainly they show their valour in killing the demons, as they are called ‘Vṛtra-slayers’ also. The devotees invoke Asvins to kill the demons and ask them for their favour by which the demons may be killed. They are requested to smite down the enemies. Their help is implored in the battles. They help him who is fighting for the cows. Their enemies are specially demons, mentioned as raksasas, as panis, and as vṛtras. They cleave and

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1 ... vṛtrahantā ... RV.VIII.8.9.22.
2 kṣatram jinvatamuta jinvatam nṛṇ hatam rakṣamī sedhatamamīvah. RV.VIII.35.17.
3 prayustāriṣṭam ni rasāmsi mṛkṣatam, sedhatam dveṣo bhavatam sacābhya. RV.I.157.4.
See also: RV.I.116.21; 182.4; VI.62.10; VIII.35.12.
4 asmākam brhma prtanāsu vayam dhana śurasatā. RV.I.157.2.
5 yabhīrnamar gosuyudham nṛṣahye ... RV.I.112.22.
6 ... rakṣamī purudāmsasā syuḥ. RV.VI.63.10.
and also at: RV.VIII.35.16.
7 ... paṇīrhatamurmyā madantu. RV.I.184.2.
8 ... yena vṛtram ciketathāh. RV.VIII.9.4.
9 vibhindunā nāsatyaḥ rathena vi parvataḥ ajaryā ayatam. RV.I.116.20.
cross the celestial mountains as victors. They also bring to their worshippers the good things and beverages taken away from the demons.

But such references are relatively few in the legend of Aśvins. The principal details of the legend are summed up, on the other hand, in the passages like these, "You come to the help of him who is atrophied"; and "You make the blind man to see and the lame one to walk" etc. Thus Aśvins may be called the physicians of all kinds of fractures.

Now we shall take up these proteges one by one alphabetically. These proteges are very often mentioned by name, so that the story of each one of them forms a special myth amongst the myths of Aśvins as a whole.

Animals: Once Aśvins protected a quail from the jaws of a wolf. The quail, according to Wilson, is a bird like sparrow. Yaska opines that this quail signifies the Dawn

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1 vi jayuṣa yayathuh sānvadrerjātam ... RV.I.117.16.
   See also: RV.VI.62.7; X.39.13.
2 a vahethe parākāt pūrvirasnantaśvāvīna. iṣo dāśīramartya.
   RV.VIII.5.31.
4 ... yābhīrvarṭikāṃ grāsamamaṇuṇcatam ... RV.I.112.8.
   See also: RV.I.116.14; 117.16; 118.8; VIII.68.8; X.39.13.
seized and swallowed by the bright sun. Benfy takes it to mean the sun after setting. But in view of Griffith this quail is probably the Dawn delivered from the wolf Night by the twin light-gods.

Aśvins recovered ruddy-kine or cows. Nothing is said about these cows. Perhaps they are the red rain-clouds.

Aśvins once listened to the prayers of a she-wolf and restored the eye-sight of her benefactor Rjrāśva. This wolf has been helped by Agni also.

The cow of a sage named Śayu had become barren. Being obliged by the prayer of the sage, Aśvins made the cow to swell with milk.

Aśvins also helped the female honey bees by giving them sweet madhu.

1 Wilson, Ṛgveda, Vol. I.146.
2 ... yabhıraruniraśikṣatam. RV.I.112.19.
3 śunamandhaya bharamavhyat sā vrkirasvina. RV.I.117.18.
4 vayo vrkayaraye jasuraye. RV.VI.13.5.
5 dasasyantā sayave pipyathurgamiti ...
RV.VI.62.7.
See also: RV.I.116.22. etc.
6 madhu priyam bharatho yat sarābbhya - stābiru śu utībhirasvina. RV.I.112.21.
Gods: We see that the gods were very co-operative and helped each other in need. Once Aśvins, intoxicated by drinking Sūra (wine), helped Indra, the great, at the time of the killing the demon Namuci. This help of Aśvins to Indra was just like that of a father to his son. In this act of killing we see that Sarasvatī, the goddess of Speech (Vāk) and Aśvins both helped Indra. Moreover, along with Indra Aśvins destroyed the enemies of Prthuṣravas.

Aśvins also set the god Agni in movement. This god is probably the representative of lightning or the sacrificial fire.

Kings: In the Rgveda we come across with the names of some kings also whom these divine physicians Aśvins favoured in different ways. But in most of these cases we know hardly

1 yuvam suramamaśvinā namucāvāsure saca
  vipipanā śubhaspatī indram karmasvāvatam. RV.X.131.4.
2 putramiva pitarāvasvinobhe indravathuḥ
RV.X.131.5.
3 ... sarasvatī tvā maghavannabhisak. Ibid.
4 nirahatam duccunā indravantā prthuṣravaso vṛṣanā-
  varatiḥ. RV.I.116.21.
5 yuvamagnim ca vṛṣanāvapaśca vanaspatīrasvināvaira-
  yethām. RV.I.157.5.
anything more than their names.

First comes the name of Adhrigu\(^1\) who received the favour of Aśvins but the way of the help is not known to us.

One story which is quite often referred to in the Rgveda is that of Bhujyu, a prince and the son of Tugra. He had embarked on a maritime expedition against the enemies of his father but had to face a storm in the Ocean. In that storm his ship was getting immersed. His enemies threw him in the midst of the Ocean\(^2\). Thus tossed about in the darkness of the deep ocean like a dying man leaving behind his wealth\(^3\), Bhujya invoked the aid of the merciful Aśvins. Aśvins, hearing his prayer, immediately rushed to his help and brought him out in their nicely yoked chariot having the speed of mind\(^4\), and took him to the safe land or to the dustless regions\(^5\) with the help of their unfailing, untiring and

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1 yābhiḥ pakthamavatho yābhiradhrigum ... RV.VIII.22.10.  
See also: RV.VIII.22.11.

2 uta tyam bhujyumaśvinā sakhyo 
madhye jahurdurevāsah samudre. RV.VII.68.7.

3 tugro ha bhujyumaśvinodameghe 
rayim na kaścinmamrvan avahā. RV.I.116.3.

4 ajohavīdaśvinā taugryo vām profah samudramavyathirja-ganvān. 
niṣṭamuhathuḥ suyujā rathena manojavasaḥ vrṣaṇā svasti. RV.I.117.15.

5 ... tugrasya sūnumuhathu rajobhiḥ 
areṇubhirvyojanebhirbhujaṇta ... RV.VI.62.6.
undepressed winged horses. In this episode we also see the mention of boats. When Asvins heard the call of Bhujyu, they used their animated and water-tight boats which traversed in the air, and which had hundred oars. Moreover, it is also said that Asvins travelled for three nights and three days in their three chariots which possessed of hundred wheels and which were yoked by six horses. In one passage Bhujyu is said as clinging to a log or tree which

1. patatribhirātramairavyathibhirdaṃsanābhiraśvinā parayanta. RV.VII.69.7.
2. tamuhathurnaubhirātmanvatibhirantarkasprudbhira- rapodakābhīh. RV.I.116.3.
3. yadasāvinā uḥathurbhujyumastam śatāritrām navamātasthivāmsam. RV.I.116.5.
4. tisrah ksapastrirahātivrajadbhir nāsatya bhujyumuhathuh - patamgaih samudrasya dhanvannārdrasya pāre tribhī rathaih satapadbhih śadasvaih. RV.I.116.4.
5. kah svid vṛkṣe niṣṭhito madhye arṇasā yam taugryo nādhitah paryasvasvajat. RV.I.182.7.
6. A.C. Das believes that this tree is no other than the famous mythical tree known as Varuṇa's tree which had its base upward, and branches downwards, from which the seeds of all plants and vegetation were said to be washed down and brought to the earth by rain water. 'yasmin vṛkṣe madhvadāḥ supārṇā niviṣante suvate cādihi visve.' RV.I.164.22.

Rgvedic India, p.516.
was there in the midst of the ocean. May be Aśvins fixed that tree in the waters so that taking its help Bhujyu was able to come out. One strange thing in this story we find that the ocean in which Bhujyu had been thrown was supportless. From this we can make out how brave the twin Aśvins were. In this way the episode of Bhujyu is very interesting and it has to be mentioned in the sacrifices.

After Bhujyu comes Divodāsa Atithigva who received Aśvins' favour in a battle which he had with the demon Śambāra. Hearing the invocation of Divodāsa, Aśvins reached there in their wonderful chariot to which were yoked a bull and a crocodile.

King Jahuṣa also invoked Aśvins for his help when he was surrounded by his enemies. Aśvins came and bore him in their chariot to the inaccessible mountains.

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1 anārambhane tadavīrayethāmanāsthāne a ... samudre. RV.I.116.5.
2 niṣṭau gryāmāhathuradbhyaspari viśvet tā vām savaneṣu pravācyā. RV.X.39.4.
3 yābhirmahāmatiithigvam kāsojuvam divodāsam śambarahatyā āvatam. RV.I.112.14.
4 yadayatam divodāsaya ... revāduvaḥa sacano ratho vām vrṣabhāṣca śīṃsumāraśca yuktā. RV.I.116.18.
5 pariviṣṭam jahuṣam viśvataḥ sīm ... vibhindunā nāsatyā rethevi parvataṁ ajarayū āyatam. RV.I.116.20.

See also: RV.I.117.16; VII.71.5; X.39.13.
Along with Indra, Aśvins destroyed the malignant enemies of Prthuśravas.¹

Aśvins also helped king Sudāsa, the son of Pijavana, by conferring upon him great wealth.²

Lastly among kings comes Trasadasyu whose fort was invaded by the enemies. He invoked Aśvins and was protected by them.³ He is shown favour by the other gods also.⁴

As these persons were rendered help in the battle, it appears that they were kings but we cannot say so definitely because we do not have any direct proof of their being kings in reality.

River: Aśvins caused the sweet stream to flow and filled

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1 nirahatam ducchunā indravatā
   prthuśravasavṛṣaṇavaratīḥ. RV.I.116.21.

2 sudāse dasrā vasuvibhratā rathe
   prkṣo vahatamaśvinā. RV.I.47.6.

3 yabhīḥ pūrdbhīrdye trasadasyumavatam ...
   RV.I.112.14.

4 RV.IV.42.9; VII.19.3; VIII.19.36; 36.7.

5 yabhīḥ sindhum madhumantamasacatam.
   RV.I.112.9.
the river Basā with water. As the earliest bringers of light, Aśvins may be said to quicken and animate, by their coming, the streams of the ocean (of heaven). And most probably because of this quality they are also called the rain-gods.

One very interesting feature amongst the helps, towards the non-human beings is that Aśvins seem to be more benevolent towards the female species than the male ones.

**Women:** Aśvins have rendered help to women also. One of them is Ghosa, the daughter of Kakṣīvant. She was a lepor and therefore, she was unfit to be married. Thus she was growing old in her father's house. But when she invoked Aśvins, they healed her leprocy, restored her to youth and beauty so that she could obtain a husband. Ghosa is also

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1. याब्हिः रसाम क्षोदासोनाह पिपिनवतम्. RV.I.112.12.
2. ग्होशायायि cित पित्राशाद दुरोऽन् पतिम जुर्यान्तया aśvināvadattam. RV.I.117.7.
   Also at: RV.X.40.5.9.
3. yuvam ha ghoṣā paryaśvinā yati rājñā uce duhitā pṛcche vām narā bhūtam me anha uta bhūtamaktave aśvavate rathine saktamarvate. RV.X.40.5.
   Also at: RV.X.40.9.
the ṛṣi of RV.X.39. In the Brhaddevatā, it is narrated that Ghosa, the daughter of Kaksivant, was disfigured by some disease and so she could not get married. She, thus grown old, remembered that her father had also obtained youth, long life, health, power and even poison for slaying enemies from Aśvins; so she also, thinking to appease Aśvins, offered her prayers to them. They appeared before her, entered into her private portions and not only cured her of all afflictions but also made her both ageless and beautiful and rendered a husband too.

2 ṇaśītkaṅśīvatī ghoṣa pāparogena durbhaga
uvāsa ṣaṭsim varṣaṇi pitureva grhe pura
ataste mahatīm cintām na putro na patirmama
jaram praptā mudhā tasmāt prapadye aham - śubhāspatī
yathaitau mamakstāta, āradhyavapa yauvanam
ayurārogamaiśvaryam sarvabhuṭahane viṣam
rupavattam ca saubhāgyam aham tasya sutā yadi.
mamāpi mantrāḥ prāduḥ syur yai stosyete mayaśvinau
cintayantīti sukte dve yo vam pari dadarā sa.
stutau tavaśvinau devau prītau tasyā bhagantaram
praviśya vijarārogam subhāgam o克拉tusca tau
bhartaram dadatustasyai suhastyam ca sutam munim.

Brh.D.VII.42-47.
Another woman Puramdhi by name was blessed with a son by these twin gods of fertility. She invoked Asvins¹ and they rushed to her help with their protection² and thus made her delivery of the son safe³.

We also come across with the story of Vadhrimati who was also given a son like Puramdhi by Asvins. Her name suggests that she was the wife of an impotent person. Being desirous of a son, she propitiated Asvins by her prayers⁴ and thus obtained a son named Hiranyakahasta⁵. Afterwards, Asvins again favoured her by giving protection to this son⁶.

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1 ajohavinásatyakara vam, mahe yamanpurubhūja puramdhiḥ. RV.I.116.13.
2 ... puramdhiragacchatam sīm vṛṣanāvavobhiḥ RV.I.117.19.
3 ... yuvam suṣutim cakrathuh puramdhaye. RV.X.39.7.
4 yuvam havam vadhrimatyā agacchatam ... RV.X.39.7.

and also: RV.VI.62.7.

5 śrutam tacchāsuriva vadhrimatyā hiranyahastamasvīnāvadattam. RV.I.116.13.

and also: RV.I.117.24; VI.62.7; X.39.7; 65.12.

6 ... aśvinā sāyāvam putram vadhrimatyā ajinvatam. RV.X.65.12.
Well-known is the story of Viśpala in the Rgveda who was protected by Āśvins in the battle-field. In that battle her leg was cut off by the enemies, at night like the wing of a bird. Āśvins immediately used their surgical skill and replaced that lost leg with an iron one. But Viśpala is a

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1 \[\text{yabhīrviśpālāṁ dhanasamatharvyam} \]
\[\text{sahasramīlahā ājāvajinvatam} \]
RV.I.112.10.
See also: RV.I.118.8.

2 Caritram hi verivacchedi parṇamājā khelasya
\[\text{paritakmyayam} \]
RV.I.116.15.

3 \[\text{sadyo jaṁghāmāyasyāṁ viśpālāyai dhane hite sartave.} \]
Ibid.
See also: RV.I.112.10; 117.11; 182.1; X.39.8.

4 As per the latest publication in the newspaper, Indian Express, dated 9th August 1976, Mr S.B.Roy, Director of the Institute of Chronology, says that the Mahābhārata war belongs to the last phase of the Vedic Age, and therefore the words therein should receive their vedic meaning and not classical. So he says that the word 'āyasa' means 'copper' belonging to Copper Age and not 'iron'. (This word comes with Bhīma who is called Āyasa Bhīma). If we take the same meaning in the case of Viśpala, it would mean 'copper-leg' and not 'iron-leg', as commonly believed. But this view is again refuted by a research student on the Rāmāyana who says that in the Rāmāyana the word for copper is 'thamram' not 'āyasa' and thus rejects both the meanings 'iron' and 'copper'. 'Tharam' was a kind of metal, and ornaments made of it were very popular at that time.
very controversial name. According to Sayana, Vispala was the wife of Khela, the son of Agastya (ṛṣi of the RV.I.118.8). But Pischel for the first time suggested that Vispala was a racing mare and not the wife of Khela. Bergaigne takes her to mean a female warrior; and as this accident had taken place during the night, that is, before the sun-rise, he identifies Vispala with Śūrya.

Sages: The greatest number of help has been given to the sages.

Atri Saptavadhri was thrown by his enemies into a pit. From the various hymns of the Rgveda it appears that this pit was a tree in which Atri had got fastened and the enemies set fire to it. Thus Atri lay helplessly in that burning pit. He prayed to the tree to which he was tightened to open and let him free and also invoked Aśvins, to come to his rescue. Aśvins heard his prayer and rushed to his help with the speed of falcons. They extinguished the fire with cold water.

1 Telang and Chaubey, The New Vedic Selection, p.140.
3 bhitaya nādhamānaya ṛṣaye saptavadhreye
   mayabhiraāśvīṇā yuvam vṛkṣam sam ca vi cācathañ.
   RV.V.78.6.
4 vijihīṣva vanaspate yonih sūṣyantyā iva
   śrutam me aśvīṇa havam saptavadhrim ca muñcatam. RV.V.78.5.
   See also: RV.VIII.42.5.
5 atriryad vamavardharybīsamajohavinnadhāmanaeva yosā
   syenasya cijjavasa nūtanenagacchatamaśvīṇā sāṁtamena.
   RV.V.78.4.
protected him from the flames and finally released him to youthful strength. At this time Asvins brought three things for him: (1) a shower of snow to quench the fire; (2) a portion of hot milk i.e. gharma, their own favourite drink as a stimulant and refresher; and (3) their own protection (oman or omya) against the repetition of the mischief by the enemy thereafter. Thus Asvins rescued Atri along with his followers from the great darkness which had engulfed them. This rescue was just like freeing someone from

1 yuvamatraye avanítaya tapamúrjhamómanam aśvinávadhhattam. RV.I.118.7.

See also: RV.I.119.6; VIII.73.3.9.

2 himena gharmam paritaptamatraye. RV.I.119.6.

3 yuvam ha gharmam madhumantamatraye. RV.I.18.4.

4 īśim narāvamhasah pānçajanyampīsādaîrim muñcatho gareṇa RV.I.117.3.

and also:

ṛbise atrimaśvināvanitamunninyathuḥ sarvagañamsvasti RV.I.116.8.

5 atrim na mahastastamo amumuktam turvatam narađuritāda-bhike. RV.VI.50.10.

and also: RV.VII.71.5.
tightened knot. And giving the stimulating gharma to the sage made him strong like a horse, and a comfortable house. Thus being once protected, Atri always enjoyed their protection and nourishment as well.

The story of Cyavana rsi is also very famous who was rejuvenated by the divine physicians Aśvins. Because of old age Cyavana had become very weak and disabled. For this reason he was abandoned by his sons. On hearing his prayer,

1 drāhām granthim na viṣyatamatriṃ yaviṣṭhamā rajāḥ. RV.X.143.2.
2 tyam cidatrimṛtajuramarthamaśvam na yātave. RV.X.143.1.
3 avantamatraye gṛham krṇutam yuvamaśvīṇā. RV.VIII.73.7.
And also: RV.I.112.7.
4 citram ha yaṉām bhojanam navasti
nyatraṁ mahiśvantam
yo vāmōṁanam dadhate priyah san. RV.VII.68.5.
5 pratiratam jahitasāyurdārā ... RV.I.116.10.
See also: RV.I.117.13; 118.6; V.75.5; VII.68.6; 71.5; X.39.4.
Asvins were pleased and with the help of their sacis i.e. the wondrous powers they freed him from his decrepitude by removing his old skin like a coat of mail from his body. Thus making him handsome again rendered him desirable to his wife and also made him the husband of many young wives. This story, however, is related in an interesting manner in many Purāṇas, following probably the Mahābhārata (vanaparva). There Cyavana is said to be the son of Bhṛgu. He was engaged in penance near the Narmadā river until the white ants constructed their nests round his body and left only his eyes visible. King Śaryati's daughter Sukāṇa, having come to the place and seeing two bright-spots in an ant-hill

1 yuvam Cyavanamaśvinā jarantam
   punaryuvanam cakrathuḥ sacibhiḥ.
   RV.I.117.13.
2 yuvam Cyavanam jarasaḥ amumuktam ...
   RV.VII.71.5.
3 jujuruśo nāsatyota vavrim
   prāmuṇcatam drāpiniva cyavanat.
   RV.I.116.10.
4 yuva yadi kṛthaḥ punaraḥ kāmamrṇe vadhvaḥ
   RV.V.74.5.
5 ... patimakṛnutam kaninam.
   RV.I.116.10.
(as it seemed so), pierced them with a stick. The sage visited the offence upon Śaryati and was appeased only by the promise of the king to give Sukanyā in marriage. Asvins having come to his hermitage, took compassion on Sukanyā's union with so old and ugly a husband as Cyavana, and having put to trial her fidelity, bestowed on the sage the similar youthfulness and beauty as their own. (We shall see another version of this story in the chapter XI.)

Asvins also helped Dabhīti ṛṣi. Elsewhere, in the Ṛgveda, he is said to be the worshipper of Indra who helps him by slaying the demons Dhuni and Cumuri.

The episode of the sage Dadhyāni is very mysterious and interesting too. Dadhyāni had obtained from Indra a spell which could reveal the abode of madhu. Indra forbade the sage to proclaim the mead and threatened him that he would cut off his head if the mead was proclaimed to anybody. But

1 yabhiḥ ... dabhitimāvatam. RV.I.112.23.
2 RV.IV.20.13.
3 svapnenabhupya cumurim dhunim ca jaghantha dasyum pra dabhitimāvatam.
RV.II.15.9.
when the honey bee invoked Asvins, the lovers of mead, for attaining madhu, they approached Dadhyān and forced him to teach the prohibited knowledge i.e. madhuvidyā. To evade Indra's fury, Asvins cut off his real head and replaced a horse's head. Thus provided with a horse's head Dadhyān imparted the knowledge of mead. When Indra came to know this, out of wrath he struck off his head with his thunderbolt, but Asvins restored to him real head. Once we see that instead of the name of Dadhyān, Dadhīca is written which is very common in the later literature.

Probably, this legend was afterwards modified by the Purāṇas. In the Mahābhārata (vanaparva), it is related that the gods, being oppressed by the Kalakeya Asuras, solicited from the sage Dadhīca his bones, which he gave them, and from which Tvāṣṭā fabricated the thunderbolt with which Indra slew Vṛtra and destroyed the Asuras.

Asvins protected Dirghaśravas by pouring treasure of madhu. Though he was a sage but during famine he had to

1 dadhīyaḥ ha yanmadhvāṭharvaṇo -
   vamaśvasya śīrṣā pra yadīmuvaḥ. RV.I.116.12.
   and also:
   atharvaṇayāśvinā dadhīce asvam śīrṣaḥ pratyairatam.
   sa vam madhu pra vocadṛtāyaḥ ... RV.I.117.22.
   See also: RV.I.119.9.
2 RV.I.117.22.
3 diṛghaśravase madhu koṣo akṣarat. RV.I.112.11.
take to trade for obtaining a livelihood; hence he is called a vanik, the son of Usíj.

Dirghatamas, the father of Dirghaśravas was also blessed by Asvins to live a long life of hundred years.

Gotama is yet another worshipper of Asvins. To quench his thirst Asvins lifted up a well and tilted it for coming out of the water easily.

Kakṣīvant ṛṣi also invoked Asvins. They came to his succour and poured hundred pitchers with madhu from the hoof of a horse. He is said to receive his lost youth from Asvins

1 Yabhiḥ sudānu ausijāya vanije. RV.I.112.11.
2 ... ṛṣiryadvam dirghatāma juhāva. RV.VIII.9.10.
3 dirghatāmā mamateyo jujurvandaśame yuge. RV.I.158.6.
4 paravatam nāsatyanudetha - muccabudhnam cakrathurjimhbarām. KSARANapo pāyanāya rāye sahasrāya trasyate gotamasya. RV.I.116.9.
5 kakṣīvantam stotāram yābhiraśvam. RV.I.112.11.
See also: RV.X.143.1.
6 safadaśvasya vājino janāya sātam kumbhān asiṃcatam madhūnām RV.I.117.6.
And also: RV.I.116.7.
who made him young and handsome just like the rennovation of an old chariot.\\(^1\)

Similarly, the sage Kali was also rejuvenated by these physicians. Kali had grown old\(^2\) and on being invoked, Āśvins gave him a wife and protection also\(^3\).

Āśvins helped Kaṇva by restoring his lost eyesight\(^4\). Having become blind, he felt very sad and invoked Āśvins who, then, being pleased, restored his lost sight\(^5\).

Āśvins enabled the royal sage Mandhatṛ to discharge his royal functions.\(^6\) Griffith takes Mandhatṛ as a royal sage but

1. kaksīvantam yādi purā ratham na kṛṇutho navam
   RV.X.143.1.
2. yuvam viprasya jaraṇamupeyusah
   punah kalerakṛṇutam yuvadvayaḥ
   RV.X.39.8.
3. ... kalim yābirvittajānim duvasyathāḥ
   RV.I.112.15.
4. ābhīḥ kaṇvam pra sisāsantamāvavatam.
   RV.I.112.5.
   See also: RV.I.112.16.18; 117.8.21; VIII.5.23.
5. yuvam kaṇvāpiriptaya caksuḥ
   pratyadhattam suṣṭutim jujuṣanā.
   RV.I.118.7.
6. mandhataram kṣaitrapatyēvavatam
   RV.I.112.13.
Keith and Macdonell do not agree with this and take him as a king.¹

With the help of Aśvins Manu rṣi was made aware of the grain hidden in the earth or he was taught the art of sowing the seeds of Barley and other grains for his livelihood.²

Aśvins showed their favour to another sage named Parāvrja, the son of a virgin mother named Agru. He was blind, and lame and Aśvins with the help of their śacis enabled him to see and walk.³ Elsewhere⁴ in the Rgveda this

2 daśasyantā manave pūrvyaṁ yavam vrkeṇa karaṇaḥ.
   RV.VIII.22.6.
   and also:
   yuvam vrkeṇāśvinaṁ vapaṁte - 
   sam duhantā manusaya dasrā.
   RV.I.117.21.
   See also: RV.I.112.16.18.
3 yabhiḥ sacibhirvṛṣaṇā parāvrjam prāṇham śronam caksasa etave krthaḥ.
   RV.I.112.8.
4 uta tyam putramagruvaḥ parāvrkham sātakratuḥ.
   RV.IV.30.16.
The deed is said to be performed by Indra. Probably the word Parāvrja means the setting sun (sideways departing) and called blind because his light has nearly gone.

The sage Pedu was given by Aśvins a very swift, strong, white, dragon slaying horse impelled by Indra which was also the winner of thousands of treasures. This firmly built horse which remained unharmed by arrows and which always brought success to Pedu was praiseworthy like Indra. It seems that Aśvins gave Pedu a mythical horse in order to replace his
bad steed. So, it is called Paidva which probably represents the horse of the Sun.\(^1\)

Another devotee of Aśvins was Rebha ṛṣi. He was cast into waters, stabbed and bound by his enemies. He was overwhelmed there for ten nights and nine days.\(^2\) Aśvins took pity on him and brought him out like soma, raised in a ladle.\(^3\) At that time Rebha had become so weak that he appeared almost dead\(^4\) but Aśvins made him strong and healthy like a horse.\(^5\) According to Nitimanjari,\(^6\) Rebha brought this upon

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2. daśa ratriśivenā nava dyū - navanaddham ṣnathitamāpsventaḥ.
3. viprutam rebhamudani pravrktā - munninyathuḥ somamiva śruveṇa.
   Ibid.
4. yuvam ha rebham vrśaṇā guhā hita - mudairayatam mamvāmsamaśvina.
   RV.X.39.9.
5. aśvam na gulahamaśvina durevai - rṛṣim nara vrśaṇā rebhamaspsu
   sam tam ṛṣītho viprutam damsobhi - rna vam jūryanti pūrvya kṛtāni.
   RV.I.117.4
   See also: RV.I.118.6; 119.9.
6. na dadyaddoṣasilanaśrayam krūrakarmanam
daityā dattāśrayaḥ kūpe prāśipan rebhavandanau.
   v.39.
himself by maintaining a friendly intercourse with the Asuras.

Aśvins enabled the sage Rjraśva to see. Once Rjraśva killed one hundred sheep and offered them to the she-wolf to devour. On this his father had become very angry and deprived him of his eyesight. Once it is said that Rjraśva offered hundred and one sheep and not hundred. Having compassion on him, the she-wolf prayed to Aśvins that he offered her the sheep like a young paramour and so had to face the calamity. On her prayer Aśvins restored his eyesight.

Aśvins quenched the thirst of Śara rṣi, the son of

1 satam mešan vrkye caकšadānamṛjra ṣvam tam pitaṅdhama-cakara
RV.I.116.16.
See also: RV.I.117.17.
2 ... rjraśvah sатamekam ca mešan.
RV.I.117.18.
3 सुनामांध्याया bharamavhyat sa vṛkiraśvinā nareti jāraḥ kaṇīna iva caकšadāna rjraśvah sатamekam ca mešan.
Ibid.
4 āksī rjraśve aśvināvadhattam jyotirandḥāya cakrathur vicakṣe.
RV.I.117.17.
Rcitka, by lifting up a well and turning it upside down so that water could come out easily. This deed of Āśvins is very much similar to that of Gotama rṣi.\(^1\)

Āśvins are also the protectors of Śayu.\(^2\) They helped him by removing the barrenness of his cow. Being barren, she was unable to yield milk.\(^3\) The sage invoked Āśvins and they enabled the cow to swell with milk.\(^4\)

The sage, syāva was cut into three pieces by the enemies and Āśvins reunited those pieces into one and gave a lovely wife to him.\(^6\)

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1. śārasya cidārcatkasyāvatarā
dicāduccā cakrathuḥ pātave vaḥ.
   RV.I.116.22.

2. ... śayutrā.
   RV.I.117.12.

3. adhenum dasrā staryam viṣaktāmapinvatam ...
   RV.I.117.20.

4. śayave cinnasatyā śaćibhi -
rjasuraye staryam pipyathurgam.
   RV.I.116.22.

5. tridhā ha śyavamaśvinā vikastamujjīvasa erayatam sudānu. 
   RV.I.117.24.

6. yuvam śyāvaya ruṣatīmadattam ...
   RV.I.117.8.

See also: RV.I.116.24; 117.4; 118.6; 119.6; VI.62.7; VII.68.8; X.39.13.
Another protege of Aśvins was Vandana. With the help of their powers Aśvins brought him out from the dark pit where he had been thrown by his enemies. He lay there like the sun engulfed in darkness. Aśvins having compassion on his sad plight brought him out like treasure or gold dug from the depths of the earth. Thus, they enabled him to behold the sky again and they also made him young and blessed him with long life.

1 ud vandanamairatam daṁsanābhi ...
   RV.I.118.6.
2 ... sūryam na dasrā tamasi kṣiyantam.
   RV.I.117.5.
3 ... vidvamsā nidhimivāpagulaha -
   mud darsatādūpathurvandanāya.
   RV.I.116.11.
4 subhe na rukmam na darsata -
   mudūpathuraśvinā vandanāya.
   RV.I.117.5.
5 ... vandanamairayatam svardrśe.
   RV.I.112.5.
6 yuvam vandanam nirṛtam jaranyaya.
   RV.I.119.7.
and also:
... pra āṅgheṇa vandanastāryāyusā.
   RV.I.119.6.
The sage Vimada was desirous of having the daughter of Purumitra as his wife. Having won her as a bride, he was stopped on his way home by his enemies. He invoked Asvins who came to his succour, placed the bride on their chariot and carried her to the residence of Vimada.

Viśvaka, the son of Kṛṣṇiya, had lost his son Viṣṇāpu like the head of a lost cattle. When Asvins were invoked by him, they reunited him with his lost son and also gave prosperity to his son. Seeing this benevolent act of Asvins,

1. yāvarbhagāya vimadāya jāyam
   senājuva nyuhathuḥ rathena.
   RV.I.116.1.

2. yuvam śacibhirvimadāya jāyam
   nyuhathuḥ purumitrasya yoṣam.
   RV.I.117.20.

and also:

3. avasyate stuvate kṛṣṇiyāya ...
   paśum na naṣṭamiva darsanāya viṣṇāpvaṃ ... 
   RV.I.116.23.

4. yuvam naraḥ stuvate kṛṣṇiyāya
   viṣṇāpvaṃ dadathurviśvakaya.
   RV.I.117.7.

also at: RV.VIII.86.1.2; X.65.12.

5. yuvam hi śmaḥ purubhujemamedhatum
   viṣṇāpve dadathurvasya iṣṭaye.
   RV.VIII.86.3.
Visvaka also requested them to remain his friends and protect the body from all types of miseries.\(^1\)

These above mentioned persons were the sages whom Asvins rendered great help. But some of the protegés of Asvins are demons also as we see that once the two demons Karkandhu and Vayya\(^2\) were extricated from misfortune by these physicians.

There are many other worshippers of Asvins who received their (Asvins') favour but as we have said above we do not know anything about them, except their being mere proteges. Thus Asvins are said to have protected Babhru,\(^3\) Dabhiti, Dhvasanti, Kutsa, the son of Arjuna, Purusanti and Turviti,\(^4\)

1 ta vam visvako havate tanukrthe -
   ma no vi yauṣṭam sakhyā mumocatam.
   RV.VIII.86.1.2.3.

2 yābhiḥ karkandhum vayyam ca jinvathah
   RV.I.112.6.

3 ... yābhirbhrum vijoṣasām.
   RV.VIII.22.10.

4 yābhiḥ kutsamārjuneyam śatakratu
   pra turvītim pra ca dabhītimāvataṁ
   yābhirdhvasantim puruṣantimāvataṁ ...
   RV.I.112.23.
Narya and Śrutaryya, Vyasva, Vena and Prthi; Prsnigu and Purukutsa. Some sages who were rendered help from these divine physicians are Agastya, Amsu, Antaka, Arya, Meghatithi, Vaśa, Daśavrajya and Gosaryya; Krivi, and Kṛśānu. Asvins also

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<td>yabhīḥ ... śrutaryam naryamāvatam ...</td>
<td>RV.I.112.9.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>... yad vyaśva ... prthī yad vam vainyaḥ sadanesvevedato ...</td>
<td>RV.VIII.9.10.</td>
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<td>See also: RV.I.112.15; VIII.26.9.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>yabhīḥ prsnigum purukutsamāvatam.</td>
<td>RV.I.112.7.</td>
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<td>agastye brahmaṇa ...</td>
<td>RV.I.117.11.</td>
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<td>See also: RV.VIII.5.26.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>yathota kṛtve dhane amsum ...</td>
<td>RV.VIII.5.26.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>yabhiranta tākam jasmanamarane ...</td>
<td>RV.I.112.6.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>... jyotisacakrathurāryya ...</td>
<td>RV.I.117.21.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>yabhīḥ ... medhātithim yabhirvāsam daśavrajam yabhirgosāryamāvatam ...</td>
<td>RV.VIII.8.20.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>yabhī kritivim ...</td>
<td>RV.VIII.22.12.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>yabhīḥ kṛśānumasane ...</td>
<td>RV.I.112.21.</td>
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helped Paṭharva, Śīnāra, Sāryata, Śucanti, Syūmaraśmi, Trisoka, Upastuta and Vamra etc.

Thus there are innumerable male as well as female proteges of Aśvins. This shows clearly that Aśvins are the gods of perfection. They not only give back lasting youth by removing decay created by old age but also bestow on them eternal marital bliss and love and also instil a new vigour.

1. yabhiḥ paṭharva jaṭharasya majmanā ...
   RV.I.112.17.
2. ... yuvam śīnāramuśanāmupārathuḥ.
   RV.X.40.7;
   Also at: RV.VIII.5.25.
3. yabhiḥ sāryatamavatho mahādhane ...
   RV.I.112.17.
4. yabhiḥ śucantim dhanasam suṣamsadam ...
   RV.I.112.7.
5. yabhiḥ śarīraḥjatam syūmaraśmaya ...
   RV.I.112.16.
6. yabhiṣṭrīśoka udajata ...
   RV.I.112.12.
7. yabhirvamram vipipānamupastutam ...
   RV.I.112.15.
With the help of their 'śacis' they even remove the barrenness in both human and non-human beings. They are the kind gods who remove all miseries, pains and diseases of their worshippers and so are called daivā bhiṣaja i.e. the divine physicians. They also prolong the lives and remove all faults of their devotees, and give happiness or bliss. They are also invoked to make the mortal body of the worshipper immortal.

We see that Āśvins use two types of implements to help their worshippers - 1. The Bakura and 2. The Vṛka. They use the Bakura for killing the enemies while with the Vṛka they help their devotees in agriculture. As this second implement

1 prayuṣṭāriṣṭam ni rapāmsi mrkṣatam 
edhatam dvėṣo bhavatam sacabhuvā.
RV. I. 157. 4.

2 satyamid va āśvina yuvamahurmayobhuva 
ta yaman yamahūtama yamannā mr̥layattama
RV. V. 73. 9.

3 sr̥nyeva jarbhārī turpharītu ...
udayaśeva jemanā maderu 
tā me jārayyavajaram marāyu.
RV. X. 106. 6.

4 yuvam vr̥kenaśvīna vapante -
ṣam duhanta manuṣaya dasre 
abhi dasyum bakureṇa ghamanto -
ru . . . . . . . . . . .
RV. I. 117. 21.
These various legends illustrate clearly the succouring power of Aśvins. If we observe these legends minutely, we can notice they are of two types - either they illustrate Aśvins' role as physicians for diseases such as blindness or lameness etc. or their role as physicians who restore youthful vigour, help the maids in production and other works that are connected with procreative potency. Thus the story of Kanva, Parāvrja, Rjraśva, Vandana and Viśvaka is the illustrative of the first aspect whereas the story of Atri, Cyavana and Kali who were made young, Ghoṣa who was given a husband, illustrates the other aspect. Many other similar legends are found in the Rgveda and only with a few exceptions they are connected with the restoration of the eye-sight, renewal of youth and arrangement of marriage. These two types of works are quite natural for a solar deity. Having these qualities of the sun, it may be suggested that the various miracles attributed to Aśvins are the anthropomorphised form of the sun's activity in its dual aspects of light-producing and fertility giving.

Now the question arises that whether these various persons existed in reality or not. In all of these myths or legends Professor Max Müller and some other scholars have
seen the decaying power of the sun in winter and his growing power in spring or summer. Therefore according to Professor MaxMüller, "Chyavana is nothing but the falling sun (clyu, to fall), of which it might well be said that he had sunk in the fiery or dark abyss. ... The Vedic Rishis are again said to have betrayed the secret of the myth of Vandana by comparing the treasure dug for him by the Ashvins to the sun 'dwelling in darkness'. Kali is similarly taken to represent the waning moon and Vishpala's iron leg ... is the first quarter or pada of the new moon, called 'iron' on account his darkness as compared with the golden colour of the full moon. The blindness of Ṛjras̄va is explained on this as meaning the blindness of night or winter; and the blind and the lame Parāvrij is taken to be the sun after sun-set or near the winter solstice. The setting sun thrown out of a boat into waters is similarly understood to be the basis of the legend of Bhujyu or Rebha. Vadhramati, the wife of the eunuch, to whom Hiranśa-hasta or the Gold-hand is said to be restored is ... nothing but the dawn under a different name. She is called the wife of the eunuch because she was separated from the sun during the night. The cow of Shayu, (derived from shi to lie down) is again said to be the light of the morning sun, who may well be described as sleeping in the darkness from which he was brought forth by the Ashvins
for the sake of Vandana. In short, each and every legend is ... a story of the sun or the moon in distress. The Ashvins were the saviours of the morning light or of the annual sun in his exile and distress at the time of winter-solstice; and when the sun becomes bright and brisk in the morning every day, or vigorous and triumphant in the spring, the miracle ... was naturally attributed to the physicians of the gods.¹

But Tilak, not agreeing with this view of Max Müller, thinks that all the facts and incidents in these legends cannot be explained by the Vernal theory. Therefore, he says, "We cannot explain why the protégés of the Ashvins are described as being delivered from darkness on the theory that every affliction or distress mentioned in the legend refers to mere decrease of the power of the 'sun dwelling in darkness (I.117.5) or when Bhujyu is said to have been plunged in waters and sunk in bottomless darkness (anārambhāṇe tamasi), or when Atri is said to have been delivered from darkness (tamas) in VI.50.10. The powers of the sun are no doubt decayed in winter, and one can easily understand why the sun in winter should be called lame, old

¹ As B.G.Tilak quotes in his book "The Arctic Home In The Vedas, pp.281-82."
or distressed. But blindness naturally means darkness or
tamas (I.117.7); and when express references to darkness
tamas are found in several passages, we cannot legitimately
hold that the story of curing the blind refers to the
restoration of the decayed powers of the winter sun. The
darkness referred to is obviously the real darkness of the
night; and on the theory of the daily struggle between light
and darkness we shall have to suppose that the wonders were
achieved every day. But as a matter of fact they are not
said to be performed everyday, and Vedic scholars have,
therefore, tried to explain the legends on the theory of
yearly exile of the sun in winter. But ... in the latter
case references to blindness or darkness remain unintelligible;
and as the darkness is often said to be of several days'
duration, we are obliged to infer that the legends refer to the
long yearly darkness, or, in other words, they have for their
physical basis the disappearance of the sun below horizon
during the long night of the Arctic region.¹

Secondly, Tilak opines that the Vernal theory does not
explain the different periods of time during which the
distress experienced by the protegés of Aśvins, is said to have
lasted. "Thus", he says "Rebha, who was overwhelmed in

¹ The Arctic Home In The Vedas, pp.282-83.
waters, is said to have remained there for ten nights and nine days (I.116.24), while Bhujyu another worshipper of theirs, is described as having been saved from being drowned in the bottomless sea or darkness, where he lay for three days and nights (I.116.4).\(^1\) According to Professor Max Müller this period represents "the time when the sun at the winter solstice seems bound and to stand still."\(^2\) But Tilak denies this as he thinks that the period of ten days is too long for the sun to stand still at the winter solstice.

And lastly, Tilak thinks that the third point which is not explained by the Vernal theory is the place of distress or suffering from which the protégés are said to have been rescued by these divine physicians. Thus he says, "Bhujyu was saved not on land, but in the watery region (apsu) without support (aṇārambhāṇe) and unillumind (tamasī) by the rays of the sun (I.182.6)."\(^3\)

According to Tilak, all these points are properly explained on the basis of the Arctic theory. Taking the legends of Bhujyu and Gotama, he tries to explain that the phrases like 'The dark sea without support', 'The well with

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1 The Arctic Home In The Vedas, p.283.
2 B.G.Tilak, The Arctic Home In The Vedas, p.284.
3 Ibid.
its bottom up and opening in the side (jimhabàram) or downwards' and 'The well lying obliquely' etc "are not explained properly by the commentators, most of whom make them as referring to the clouds."¹ In view of Tilak these phrases seem to describe more appropriately the antepodal region, where everything is believed to be upside down in relation to the things of this world. However, Tilak agrees that, "The Vernal and Arctic theories are both solar in character,"² but giving prominence to his own pet theory he says that "The Arctic theory goes a step further because it infers that the legends refer to the long yearly darkness of the circum-polar region."³

But Abinas Chandra Das neither agrees with Max Müller nor with Tilak and tries to establish his own idea. Thus he says that "The blindness or darkness can be mere easily and rationally explained by taking into account the conditions of the rainy season, when the solar eye is blinded by clouds or watery vapours for days, nay, months together."⁴ Therefore,

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¹ B.G.Tilak, The Arctic Home In The Vedas, p.285.
³ Ibid.
⁴ A.C.Das, Rgvedic India, p.515.
taking the myth of Bhujyu who was saved from drowning in the bottomless sea or darkness, where he lay for three days and three nights (RV.I.116.4), A.C. Das says that, "This legend ... means that the Sun remained invisible in consequence of the fall of incessant rains for three days and nights, during which period the Aśvins also remained in the paravat or distant region, as they were not at all visible on account of the presence of dripping clouds in the sky. The Aśvins rescued Bhujyu from his perilous position and brought him home in a hundred oared ship; the hundred oars probably representing the hundred days or three months during which the rain lasted. The same sentiment is probably also more elaborately expressed in the verses which say that the Aśvins rescued Bhujyu 'with animated water-tight ships, which traversed the air (antarikṣa); with four ships, with an animated winged boat; with three flying cars having a hundred feet and six horses.' ... these ships or flying cars, either three or four months, the hundred feet represented the hundred days, and the six horses probably the six fortnights during which the rainy season lasted."¹

Next, about the legend of Vadhrimati, A.C. Das thinks

¹ Rgvedic India, p.516.
the she is the Uṣas or the Dawn. She was unable to come into contact with her husband, the Sun, who was powerless like a vadhri or eunuch at night, or in the rainy season, "when the solar rays became weak in consequence of their having been covered up by clouds."¹ Asvins then helped Uṣas by giving her a son called Hirapyahasta which is another name the Sun; and A.C. Das explains this legend on the basis that the golden Sun, with its refulgant rays, at the end of the rainy season or of the night, came out of the clouds or darkness. In the same way, with the help of such other legends, A.C. Das has tried to explain them all according to his pet theory of the Rainy season.

Thus, in all these legends Max Müller has tried to show the decaying power of the sun in winter and his growing power in summer; or the sun setting in the evening and rising in the morning. A.C. Das differs with Max Müller in the first case as the former sees in these legends the sun's decaying power in the rainy season and not in winter. However, he agrees with the second view of Max Müller, i.e. the sun powerless at night and refulgant in day-time. Whereas Tilak establishes his own theory of long yearly darkness. In all these interpretations, if we see from the mathematical point of view, then, the theory of A.C. Das

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¹ Rgvedic India, p. 510
appears to be the most appropriate. The numbers as 'four' ships, 'three' chariots, 'hundred' wheels and 'six' horses etc. correspond well with the description of the rainy season, because these numbers approximately represent the three or four months, hundred days and six fortights respectively during which generally the rainy season lasts. Secondly, we see that most of Aśvins' helps are given amidst the sea or water which, probably, also represents the water of the rainy season.

However, in the interpretations of these three scholars we find one thing in common. All of them consider that all of the protégés of Aśvins represent the natural phenomenon. Definitely they are not real human beings as Macdonell believes otherwise we would have some historical proof before us to believe them as existing in reality. They may be called mythical beings.

These various legends, though they are quite amusing and hyperbolic, reveal the richness of the imagination of the poets and thinkers of the country in which they had their origin. The Vedic Ṛṣis lived in the forest hermitages in close contact with nature and were keenly cognizant of the natural beauties. With their sharp imagery poetic power they gave a human form to these beauties, as Yāska also
states that, "A rsi, who has realized the Truth, finds pleasure in expressing his experience in the form of a legend."\(^1\)

Thus, in the conclusion of this Chapter, we may say that these legends of improbable character, most probably, try to present Aśvins as the gods of morality. These legends may not be substantially true, yet they were invented by the poet-seers to explain phenomenon, belief or custom, to illustrate the nature, character and powers of gods, sages and kings, and would enable us to keep relation with them on the right basis. They, therefore, should be at least recognised and categorized.

\(^1\) \textit{ṛṣer drṣṭarthasya pritin - bhavatyakhyan samyukta.}

\textit{Nir.X.10.}