Chapter VI

THE TWO AŚVINS, THEIR ABODE, TIME AND TREASURE

At the very first sight, as the name itself suggests, the divine pair of Aśvins, appears indissoluble, and this indissolubility has been shown in the RV. II. 39 and the RV. X. 106, where they are compared to different twin objects such as eyes, ears, lips, hands, wings or with animals and birds going in pairs, such as dogs, goats, swans or eagles. But there are few passages also in which they are said to be born separately and thus having separate origin. Yāsaka also says that 'one of the two Aśvins is the son of night and the other is the son of dawn'. However, such passages are very few which create doubt and thus do not help the critics to describe Aśvins as being born separately. May be at that time the seers themselves did not have very clear conception of the phenomenon of Aśvins.

1 vasatyo anya ucyate usah putrastvanya.

Nir. XII. 2.
The abode of Áśvins is variously described in the Rgveda. They are the lords of space i.e. the all-pervading gods for whom no place is far away. While on journey, they touch the heavens and go round the three worlds protecting them day and night. They travel across the seas and beyond the waste lands and floods. They dwell everywhere but they are the lover of lower region i.e. the earth. This shows their close relationship with the human beings. But they exist everywhere 'in the back, in the front and below and are requested to come from everywhere and protect the worshipper'. They are said to be situated in the heavens,

1 na hi vamasti dūrake yatra rathena gacchathah
   RV.I.22.4.
2 ... divisprśa ... RV.I.22.2.
3 tisrah prthivirupari pravā divo nakam rakṣethe -
   dyubhiraktubhirhitam
   RV.I.34.8.
4 ta yajñāma śucibhiścakramāṇā rathasya bhanum rurcu
   rajobhiḥ
   puru varāṣayamitā mimāṇā apo dhanvanyati yatho ajrān.
   RV.VI.62.2.
5 a paścitaṁ satyaṁ purastadaśvinā yatamadharadudaktat
   a viśvataḥ pañcajaranyaṁ rayaṁ pata svastibhiḥ
   sadāmaḥ.
   RV.VII.72.5.
in the medicines and also on the top of the mountain\(^1\). Moreover they are requested to come from the heaven, big mountain and the waters, bringing food and strength\(^2\).

Aśvins are also associated with waters. 'Sindhu' is said to be their mother\(^3\). They bring treasure from the ocean. They rescued Bhujyu when he was sinking in water\(^4\). Their chariot was besprinkled with the waters of sindhu when they went to win Śūrya as their bride\(^5\). In one yoking their chariot goes round the seven streams\(^6\). The 'kakuhas' that are yoked to their chariot are born of waters\(^7\).

\(^1\) yāni sthananyaśvinā dadhathe divo yavhiśvośadhiśu vikṣu
ni parvatasya mṛdhani sadanteṣam janaya dasuṣe vahāntā.
RV.VII.70.3.

\(^2\) ... sindhumatara ... RV.V.76.4.

\(^3\) ... sindhumatara ... RV.I.34.2.

\(^4\) yuvametam cakrathuh sindhusu plavamatmavantam ...
    taugrayaya kam.
RV.I.182.5.

\(^5\) sindhurha vam vasayā siṅcadasvān ghṛṇā vayoruṣaṣah-
    parigman
taduṣu vamajiram ceti yānām yena patī bhavathāh
    śūryayaḥ.
RV.IV.43.6.

\(^6\) ekasmin yoge bhuraṇā samāne pari vam sapta sravato
ratho gāt. RV.VII.67.8.

\(^7\) ... vam kakuha apsu jāta ...
RV.I.184.3.
Heavens, waters and worshippers' houses are the dwelling places of Aśvins. Because of their vast travels, they are called the wanderers. All these references make it clear that Aśvins are omnipresent, all-pervading gods.

However, in the Rgveda, there are some deities including Aśvins who are said to traverse the whole universe like Viṣṇu. One of these deities is Savitṛ who is described as measuring the world. Once it is said that two of Savitṛ's three abodes are in upper heaven and one in the nether world or in the kingdom of Yama. The second deity is Agni who has three abodes, one in ocean, one in heaven and one in the waters. This third abode of Savitṛ and Agni can be identified

1 *yadado divo arṇava iṣo vā madatho gṛhe ...*  
   RV.VIII.26.17.

2 *... parijmanorupacarat.*  
   RV.I.46.14.

3 *yah parthivāni vimame rajāmsi devaḥ savitā mahitvānā*  
   RV.V.81.3.

4 *tisro dyavaḥ saviturdvā upasthān eka yamasya bhuvane viraṭaḥ*  
   RV.I.35.6.

5 *trīṇi jāna pari bhūṣantyasya samudra ekam divyekampsu*  
   RV.I.95.3.
with the third step of Viṣṇu. And the third deity is Aśvins to whom the epithet 'parijman' and 'parigman' 'going round' is applied many times in the Rgveda. Aśvins have three abodes and their chariot has three wheels. And if not the third abode, the third wheel, like the third stride of Viṣṇu, is beyond the ken of mortels. On this point Tilak opines that "This co-incidence between the third station of the three different world traversing gods cannot be treated as accidental; and if so ... the third or the hidden place, dwelling or abode in each case must be sought for in the nether world, the world of Pitris, of Yama, of waters and darkness." 

But these various domains create a doubt to find out the exact dwelling place of Aśvins. Sometimes their locality is enquired about as if unknown. They are once said to have three places which are manifest while other three are hidden. These three places are mentioned probably, because Aśvins

1 RV.I.46.14; 117.6.
2 athaikam cakram yadguhā taddhataya idviduḥ. RV.X.85.16.
3 Arctic Home In The Vedas, p.310.
4 kam yāthaḥ kam ha gacchathāḥ ... RV.V.74.3.
5 See also: RV.V.74.2; VI.63.1.
6 trīṇi padānyaśvinorāvīṇ santi guhā parāḥ. RV.VIII.8.23.
are invoked thrice a day. Here again is the beginning of confusion, because once Aśvins are said to be invoked twice, morning and evening but in the RV. V. 77. 2 it is said that 'Invoke Aśvins in the morning, evening is not the time for gods - it is displeasing to them.' Again, they are invoked to come at night as well as in the day. No definite solution can be given to these confusions. Such confusing references occur mostly in the fifth and eighth mandalas which are regarded as the most ancient parts of the Rgveda. This shows that the concept of Aśvins had become very obscure in the very beginning and as all these gods were considered as all-pervading, it was difficult for the worshipper to assign one particular domain to them.

Aśvins are also lords of time along with the lords of space. They remain present all the time for the protection

---

1 prataryajadhvamaśvīnā hinota na sayamasti devaya ājuṣṭam.
2 ... aśvinā yuvam dośa asmabhyamuṣaṣaṣca pinvatam RV.I.34.3.
3 kuha sthāḥ kuha jagmathuḥ kuha śyeneva petathuḥ RV.VIII.73.4.

and:
kuha tya kuha nu śrutā divi devā nasatyā kasminnā yatatho jane ko vam nadiṇām sacā.
RV.V.74.2.

See also: RV.I.181.1.
of their worshippers, from morning till night. They are none-the-less essentially morning deities. Therefore, they are called 'usrā' and 'prātaryavāna' i.e. the wakers at dawn. Sometimes Aśvins are said to appear before Uṣas, but sometimes along with Uṣas and sometimes after also.

Aśvins appear when the sacrificial fires shine brightly, when the remnants of darkness are still to be seen and when light appears before the advent of Uṣas. They disperse the darkness at dawn and the praise sung for Aśvins arouse Uṣas.

1 aśvamaghā gomaghā vam huvema divā naktam āramasmad yuyotam. RV.VII.71.1.

and:

divā naktam mādhvī trasīthām naḥ. RV.VII.71.2.

2 nṛvad dasrā manoyuja rathena prthupājasā sacethe aśvinośasam. RV.VIII.5.2.

See also: RV.I.118.11; 180.1; 184.1; X.35.6.

3 yaduso yasi bhanunā sam sūryena rocase. RV.VIII.9.18.

See also: RV.VIII.73.16.

4 aśocyaṃ niḥ samidhāno aśme upo adṛṣṭāṃ tamaśacīdantāh aceti ketuṛuṣasaḥ purastācchriye dīvo duhitorjayaṃānaḥ. RV.VII.67.2

5 yā sadya usrā vyuṣi jmo antāṃ yuyuṣataḥ paryuruḥ varamsi. RV.VI.62.1.

6 udu stomāso aśvinorabudhramjāmi brahmanyuṣasaḥ deviḥ. RV.VII.72.3.
Furthermore, in determining the time of Asvins' arrival after mid-night and before the dawn, and thus proving Asvins essentially as the early morning deities, Aitereya Brāhmaṇa renders as great help. In this Brāhmaṇa there is one 'Gavamayana' sacrifice. Before the commencement of this sacrifice there is a long recitation of about hundred verses to be recited by the Hotr-priest. These verses are known as Āśvina-Sastra, because Asvins are said to have won a race, run by the Devas, viz., Agni, Uśas, Indra and Asvins with the object of appropriating them. The limit of these race was from Grahapati Agni, the sacred Fire presiding over the household, upto the Āditya or the Sun. As the sacred Fire was kindled at the commencement of the sacrifice in the evening, it is possible that the race was run from the evening upto the rise of the Sun. Probably this indicates the time during which those one thousand verses had to be recited. The reciter had to recite these verses till their completion, and even if, after the completion of the recitation the Sun did not recite, either an animal sacrifice

1 IV.Ch.16 & 17.
2 Though this 'Āśvin-Sastra' is named after Asvins it is addressed to Agni, Uśas or Dawn, and Indra also, because these are the deities who rule at the end of the night and the commencement of the day. But the heading gives priority to Asvins and shows clearly that they appear before all these deities.
was performed or all the Ten Manḍalas of the Ṛgveda were recited. The duration of time for the recitation of thousand verses depended entirely on the dexterity and practice of the Hotṛ. If the Hotṛ was an expert, he could finish the recitation long before sun-rise, and during that event either further verses could be recited or an animal sacrifice be performed.

Seeing this reference in the Aitereya, Brahmaṇa, we may say definitely that Āśvins appear first, (as the sāstra is named after them), then follows Uśas, and lastly Indra or the Sun. Tilak¹ says that the time for the recitation of Āśvin-sāstra is after midnight when "the darkness of the night is about to be relieved by the light of the dawn", as Yāsaka² has also said that the time of Āśvins begins soon after midnight. Tilak supports his view by giving references from the Ṛgveda, VII.67.2.3. where the same period is referred about Āśvins. But Abinas Chandra Das does not agree with this view and says that "there is no mention in the Brahmaṇa that the recitation should be commenced after midnight when 'the darkness of the night is about to be relieved by the dawn'.³

¹ B.G.Tilak, Arctic Home in the Vedas, p.82.
² tayoh kāla ūṛdhvam ardhā-rātrāt. Nir.XIII.1.
³ A.C.Das, Ṛgvedic India, p.383.
He agrees that according to Yāska the time of Āsvins begins soon after midnight, but this cannot be implied that the recitation of Āsvina-Sastra should commence from that time. However, one thing is certain and that is Āsvins appear very early in the morning before the dawn.

Āsvins, the kind-hearted deities, come to the sacrifice, not empty-handed, but with rich gifts desired by their worshippers. They grant them happiness, everlasting youth, marital bliss, progeny and wealth. They regularly bring wealth on their chariot to the donor and make their worshippers rich.

They are asked to unite all invocations with riches. They are invoked to bring wealth having a bright hue. They not only bring wealth themselves but urge their patrons also to give wealth to the worshippers. The worshipper invokes

1. tena nāsatyā gatam rathena sūryatvaca
yena saśvadūḥathurdāsūge vasu madhva somaṣya pītaye.  
RV.I.47.9.

and:
pra yad vahethe mahinā rathasya pra spandrā yātho
manuṣo na hotā.  
dhättam sūribhya uta vā svaśvyam nāsatya rayiṣācāḥ syāma.  
RV.I.180.9.

2. vacam vacam jaritū ratnimīṁ kṛtamubhā saṁsam nāsatyavatam.  
See also: RV.VII.67.10. manava. RV.I.182.4.

3. tā na a voḷahamaśvina rayim piśamgasadrśam
dhiṣṇyā varivođīdam.  
RV.II.41.9.

4. uta ṛbhava uta rāye no āśvinota tvāṣṭota vibhvānumaṁsate  
RV.V.46.4.
As'vins to come from alround and bring for him the wealth of five tribes. They are requested to bring wealth thrice a day. Once the worshipper asks for wealth in hundreds and thousands which is desired by all. They are asked to bring riches from the oceans, from the heavens and which is dear to many.

For victory in the battles, As'vins are asked for wealth accompanied with strong sons or warriors, and all auspiciousness.

1 a viśvataḥ pāṇcajanyena rāya yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sādā naḥ. RV.VII.72.5.

See also: RV.VII.73.5.

2 trirno rayim vahatamaśvinā yuvam ... RV.I.34.5.

3 asme a vahatam rayim satavantam sahasriṇam.

purukṣum viśvadhāyasam. RV.VIII.5.15.

4 rayim samudrāduta vā divasparyasme dhattam purusprham.

RV.I.47.6,

5 nū no rayim puruviram bṛhantam dasrā mimāthāmubhayēśvasme.

RV.IV.44.6.

6 samaśvinoravasā nūtanena mayobhuvā suraṇīti gamema.

ā no rayim vahatamota vīraṇā viśvanyamṛtā saubhagāni.

RV.V.42.18.

See also: RV.V.43.17.
Asvins are also the givers of cows and horses as they are possessed of wealth in the form of horses and cows. They give cows along with food. They are invoked to give new and desirable wealth. Asvins give protection in the battles for attaining cows and horses, and are asked to come with innumerable cows and horses. Once they are asked to fatten the cows of the worshipper with milk and increase their family with brave sons. Asvins gave to Pedu a white

1 aśvināsvavaśavatyeṣaḥ yatam śāvīrayā gomad dasrā hiraṇyavat RV.I.30.17.

See also: RV.VII.68.9; VII.5.10.
2 aśvamaghā gomaghā vam huvema ... RV.VII.71.1.
3 uta no gomatīriṣa uta satīrāharvīḍā ... RV.VIII.5.9.
4 tā me aśvinā sānīnām vidyātām navānām. RV.VIII.5.37.
5 yābhīrṇaram goṣuyudham nṛṣahye .. RV.I.112.22.
6 a no gavyebhiraśvaiḥ sahasra[rup]a gacchatam. RV.VIII.73.14.

See also: RV.VIII.73.15.
7 pinvatam gā jinvatamarvato no vardhayatamaśvina- vīramāme. RV.I.118.2.
horse which was possessed of ninety-nine powers and was the
winner of enemies and also the giver of happiness. Asvins
are also asked to protect the cattle of the worshippers so
that they do not go away. Thus, Asvins make their worshippers
rich with wealth, cattle and food.

Apart from this, Asvins bring gifts in the form of
nourishment, strength and intellect. They give strength-
giving food. They go to that worshipper who offers them a
new group of praise and carry for him the auspicious nourish-
ment and strength. They bring that food which is situated
at the top of the mountains. They come with the divine food
and bring rain for men. Once they besprinkled the fields

1 yuvam śvetam pedave āśvināśvam navabhīravaṇaṁ navatī
cā vajinam. carkṛtyam dadathurdrāvayatsakham bhagam na nṛbhya
mayobhuvam. RV.X.39.10.
2 mā kamai dhatamabhyaṣṭīṃ ni makutra no gṛhebhya
dhenavo guh. RV.I.120.8.
3 barhīṣmati rātirviśīrtā gīriṣa yātām nāṣatopavajaiḥ.
RV.I.117.1. See also: RV.I.117.10; 181.6; 183.2; VIII.26.3.
4 śubham prākṣamiṣamūrjam vahantā hotā yaksat pratno ...
RV.VI.62.4.
also at: RV.X.40.4; 143.6.
5 ni parvatasya mūrdhani sadanteṣam janāya dāṣūge vahantā.
RV.VII.70.3.
6 uta no divya iṣa uta sindhuraharvidā
apa dvāreva varṣathāḥ. RV.VIII.5.21.
with ghee. They are invoked to bring rain so that more food may grow. Being the lords of wealth in the form of food, Aśvins bring to the worshipper all the wealth possessed of strength which cannot be snatched even by demons. At one place they are invoked to bring food, wealth and strength along with Uṣas and Sūrya.

Being possessed of nourishment and glory, Aśvins give strength-giving food to the worshipper; they bring vigour and for the attainment of energy, they are asked to give thousand-fold food dripping with ghee.

---

1 ta sudevaya daśuṣe ... ghṛtairgavyūtimukṣatam.
RV.VIII.5.6.

2 supravargam suviryam suṣṭhu vāryamaṇādhṛṣṭam rakṣaśwīnā
RV.VIII.22.18.

3 RV.VIII.35.4-6.

4 trīvajavatīriso aśvīna yuvam ...
RV.I.34.3.

5 ... ā na ūrjama vahatamaśvīna yuvam.
RV.I.92.17.

6 ... sahasranirṇijamiṣam dhattam ghṛtaścutam.
RV.VIII.8.15.

See also: RV.VIII.8.16.
Asvins give to their worshippers long-life free from all sins and enemies. The long-life is healthy and happy and does not have any physical defect in the sense-organs or in the body. They give protection to the weak and the disabled. They safeguard their devotees night and day with auspiciousness. They save their devotees from all the sins and the wicked. They remove diseases and their medicines come from the heaven, and from the ocean and also from the earth.

1 prayustäriśtam nī rapāmsi mrkṣatam sedhatam dveṣo-

bhavatam saćabhuva.

also at: RV.I.157.4.

dirghamayurastamivejjarimaṇam jagmyam.

RV.I.116.25.

mahi vā mūtiraśvina mayobhūrta sramam ...

RV.I.117.19.

dyubhiraktubhiḥ pari pātamaśmāriśtebhiraśvina saubhagebhīh

RV.I.112.25.

tā no vasū sugopa pātam no vrkādaghūyō.

RV.I.120.7.

See also: RV.I.158.3; 182.4; 183.4.

rayim samudrāduta vā divasāryasmai dhattam ...

RV.I.47.6.

and also:

trirno aśvinā divyāni bheṣaja triḥ pārthivāni triru
dattamadbyaḥ.

RV.I.34.6.
Asvins are the harbingers of good intellect and skilful speech to their devotees. They give imperishable intellect to a liberal donor. They protect the intellect of the devotee and favour it with gifts. Asvins are requested to listen to the songs and provide protection to the devotees. Thus along with granting good intellect, Asvins also bring liberal gifts for their devotees. Their wealth consists of heroes, good kine, cattle, steeds and even gold. The worshipper who offers Nāsatyas the most ample share of the sacrificial food, secures the welfare of his son. They give

1 apnasvātīmasvīnā vacamasme kṛtam no dāsra vṛṣanā manīṣam. RV.I.112.24.
2 tā sudevaya dāśuṣe sumedhamavitārinīṃ. RV.VIII.5.6.
3 trirno rayim vahatam ... trirūtavatam dhiyāḥ. RV.I.34.5.
4 śrṇvanta vāmavase johavimi vṛdhe ca no bhavatam vajasatau RV.I.34.12.
5 a no aśvavadaśvinā ... gomad dāsra hiranyavat. RV.VIII.22.17.
6 yo bhūyiṣṭham nāsatyābhyyām vivesa caniṣṭham pitvo raraṭe vībhāge. RV.V.77.4.
all precious things to their worshipper. They bestow favour, health and strength on son and give protection. Thus the gifts of Asvins consist of all good things and their bounty is manifold.

Because of their benevolence, Asvins are given many attributes as sudanu, danunaspät, jenyavaśu, vṛṣanvāsū etc. Due to their unending nourishing gifts they are called the feeders of many 'purubhujā'. Asvins are bounteous mainly towards worldly people because they are very fond of human beings, the lover of lower regions and so they are very friendly with these human beings. This relation is not only of friends but more tender like that of parents and children.

1. ... dadhatho ratnam vidhate janāya.
   RV.IV.44.4.
2. omanam samyormamakāya sūnave
   tridhatu śarma vahatam śubhaspatī.
   RV.I.34.6.
   See also: RV.I.92.7; VIII.18.8.
3. puru hi vām purubhujā deśnam
dhenum na iṣam pinvatamasakrāṃ.
   RV.VI.63.8.
4. iyam vāmaḥe śr̥nutam me aśvīnā
   putrāyeva patarā mahyam śikṣatam.
   RV.X.39.6.

again:
... piturna āmā suhavam havāmahe. RV.X.39.1
also at: VII.67.1; X.106.4.
From all these, there seems a give and take arrangement between the devotee and the deity. The devotee offers songs of praise accompanied with oblations and in return expects health, wealth, cattle, progeny and all happiness.