Chapter X

AŚVINS IN THE POETING-SETTING

One peculiar characteristic of the Rgveda is to reveal the wonderful imagery poetic power of the seers. These seers described various natural agencies embellishing them with various 'alamkāras'. In this chapter, we shall take 'upama alamkāra' (simile\(^1\)), as applied in the Aśvin-hymns.

Men:

First of all, Aśvins are invoked like messengers\(^2\); they...
are like two laud-singing brahmānas. Just as a son invokes his parents, so the worshipper invokes Aśvins. Aśvins are like two sons as well as two fathers. They are like kings for conquest, who seek to conquer like two car-borne heroes. They come to the sacrifice like two princes. Aśvins are invoked to accept the worshippers' song as a youth accepts a maid. They are like friends, like hearers who hear the worshippers' calling. They are once compared to a decrepit

1 brahmāneva vidatha ... RV. 39.1.

2 ... suñurna pitarā vivakmi. RV.VII.67.1.
3 ... putrogreva ... RV.X.106.4.
4 ... pitareva ... Ibid.
5 ... nṛpatirīva turyai. Ibid.
6 ... rathyeva vīrā. II.39.2.
   and rathyeva śakra. II.39.3.
7 rājaputreva savanava gacchathah. RV.X.40.3.
8 stomam juṣethāṃ yuvaśevas kanyānāṃ .. RV.VIII.35.5.
9 ... mitreva ... RV.X.106.5.
10 ... śrūṣṭīvāneva havamā ... RV.X.106.4.
See also: RV.VII.73.3.
old men. However, they listen to the prayers of their worshippers and weave their songs as skilful men weave garments. Probably this shows that Aśvins fulfil their worshippers' desires.

Women:

To show their beauty, Aśvins are compared to two beautiful ladies, and also to two breasts to provide nourishment.

Animals:

Aśvins are compared to a pair of goats and a pair of horns. They are like two dogs who ward off the injury of persons. They are invoked to come to the sacrifice like two deer, the 'Gauramṛga'. They are also invoked at a pool (of madhu) like two wild bulls. Just as the wild-cattle

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1. kimidam vāṃ purāṇavajjaratoriva
2. vi tanvāthe dhiyo vastrapaseva.
3. mene iva ... RV.II.39.2.
4. stanāviva pipyatam jīvase naḥ.
5. RV.II.39.6.
6. ajeva yama varamā sacethe. RV.II.39.2.
7. RV.II.39.3.
8. RV.II.39.4.
9. RV.V.78.2.
10. RV.VIII.87.1.
is thirsty for lightning (which immediately follows rain), so also the worshippers long for Āsvins. Like two buffaloes, Āsvins seek the soma, which the worshippers have shed for them; and they come to drink soma like two travellers. They move along in traces like two plough-bulls.

*Birds:*  
Āsvins, like starlings, fly into the forest-trees. They fly to the oblation like a pair of hawks and come to the sacrifice like two swans. They are compared to the 'cakravāka' birds. They are like a pair of divine winged ones, and with their winged steeds they fly like falcons.

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1. *nara gaureva vidyutam tṛṣāṇa.* RV.VII.69.6,
2. *somam sutam mahiṣeṇāva gacchatam.* RV.VIII.35.7.8.
3. *adhvagaviva somam sutam.* RV.VIII.35.7.
4. *... mahiṣeṇavaṇaṇaṇa.* RV.X.106.2.
5. *haridrāveva patatho vanedupa.* RV.VIII.35.7.
7. *hamsaviva patatama sutam upa.* RV.V.78.1-3.
8. *See also: RV.VIII.35.8.*
10. *divya suparnā.* RV.IV.43.3.
11. *vibhiḥ śyeneva dīyatam.* RV.V.74.9.
Like toiling bees, they bring honey to the worshipper.\(^1\) They are inseparable like the wings of a bird.\(^2\)

**Nature:**

Asvins are said to be rapid as the flow of two rivers;\(^3\) they are as irresistible as the two winds;\(^4\) and are as bright as fire.\(^5\)

**Miscellaneous:**

Asvins are quite often compared to the different parts of the body. Most probably this is done to emphasize their duality. They are, therefore, like two eyes, quick of sight; like two hands, they give strength or vigour; like feet they are the subservient to the well-being of the bodies; like lips they utter sweet words and like nostrils

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1. \(\text{āraṅgareva madhverayetha.}\) RV.X.106.10.
2. \(\text{śakamuyā śakunasyeva pakṣa.}\) RV.X.106.3.
3. \(\text{... nadyeva rīṭih.} \) RV.II.39.5.
4. \(\text{vatevajurya ...} \) Ibid.
5. \(\text{agniriva devayordīdivāṃsa.} \) RV.X.106.3.
6. \(\text{akṣi iva cakṣusā yatamarvāk.} \) RV.II.39.5.
7. \(\text{hastāviva tanve śāmbhaviṣṭha.} \) Ibid.  
   **See also:** RV.II.39.7.
8. \(\text{pādeva no nayatam vasyo accha.} \) RV.II.39.5.  
   **also at:** RV.X.106.9.
9. \(\text{ōṣṭhāviva madhvasne vadanta.} \) RV.II.39.6.
they preserve people¹ and like ears they hear agreeable words of the worshipper². They are also compared to two boats who help the worshipper in crossing the ocean³. They are said to be like a couple⁴, like the heaven and earth⁵ and like parents⁶.

**Inanimate objects:**

There are various inanimate objects also with which Asvins are compared. As, their benevolence is compared to a milch-cow⁷. Just as arrows are sharpened for their purpose, so Asvins are prepared for the sacrifice by the ṛṣis' hymn⁸. They are invoked to fill the kine with ripened madhu, like glory⁹. They have been compared to the two pressing

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1. नासेवा नस्तान्वो रक्षितारः. RV.II.39.6.
2. कर्नाविवा सुखृतं भूतामस्मे. Ibid. Also at: RV.X.106.9.
3. नावेवा नाह परायंतम्. RV.II.39.4.
4. ... दामपतिवा ... RV.II.39.2.
5. ... क्षामेवा ... Ibid.
6. पितारेवा. RV.X.106.4.
7. अस्माः अच्छा सुमतिर वाम स्वभासपति। अ धेनुरिवा धावातु। RV.VIII.22.4.
8. विसुध्रुव्या याज्ञामुहाथुर्गिरः. RV.VIII.26.15.
9. यासो ना पाक्वम मधु मोक्षंतरः ... RV.X.106.11.
stones. This probably shows that both the Asvins work together.

From the above account we see that there are approximately 65 similes about Asvins. In most of these similes the word 'iva' is used and 'na' only in three or four places. The main purpose of these similes is to show the dual nature of Asvins in an effective manner. In some places these similes also show some peculiar qualities of these gods as they are benevolent and generous; they quickly listen to the invocations of their worshippers; they give the honey and help the worshippers in need. But some of the similes are very complicated, so they are difficult to be understood and translated.

1 gravaneva tadidartham jarethe.

RV.II.39.1.