Chapter XIV

VARIOUS THEORIES ABOUT ASVINS

The twin deities As'vins are most 'opaque' of all the Ṛgvedic gods and for this reason there are wide differences of opinion among scholars in determining their original physical basis. Even in the Ṛgvedic age the seers had become very puzzled at the mysterious character of these divine twins. In all the views most of the scholars have very rightly tried to identify As'vins with some natural phenomena. But some scholars have explained as mortals who were later on deified. According to some interpreters they are the Greek Dioscuri. Still some others have identified them with abstract ideas and have given symbolical interpretations. Thus, "Ludwig followed by Hillebrandt holds the view that As'vins are the sun and the moon. Geldner regards them as two royal succouring saints. Harris accepts the divine origin of As'vins without there being any myth of nature involved. According to Bergaigne, As'vins represent the fire of heaven and the fire of alter. Max Müller holds
the view that Aśvins represent the morning and evening phenomena of nature. In Vodscov's opinion Aśvins are the rain-giving and dew-giving gods. In Burnhöfer's view they are morning and evening wind. Oldenberg thinks them to be the morning and evening stars. According to Griswold Aśvins represent the twin-light before dawn, half-dark, half-light. Goldstücker, emphasising the view of Yāska, says that Aśvins represent transition from darkness to light when the intermingling of both produces that inseparable duality expressed by the twin nature of these deities."¹ Here we would deal with some of the important theories in detail, though they are still controversial, and see which one is the more appealing and convincing.

First of all we begin with the Nirukta, a work on etymology, of Yāska. Yāska has discussed in detail about Aśvins. But he himself was not very sure about their original basis and hence quoted alternative views of his predecessors. According to him some scholars have regarded them as the Heaven and the Earth; others as the Day and the Night; some others as the Sun and the Moon; while the legendary writers or the writers of history explained them (Aśvins) as two kings,

¹ Zelang and Chaubey, The New Vedic Selection, Appendix-D, p.86.
performers of pious deeds. Yāska himself placed Āśvins foremost amongst the celestial deities and giving the etymological meaning of the word 'Āśvin' (from as to pervade) he states that they are called Āśvins because they pervade the universe, one with moisture, the other with light and the two distinct characteristics of these heavenly deities can establish a separate identity of each: of one with the moon, of the other with the sun. This view was accepted by a section of etymologists as Yāska has recorded them in his Nirukta. He fixes the time of Āśvins in the very early morning and limits it up to the appearance of the sun.

He asks the sacrificers to perform sacrifice and impel Āśvins early in the morning as there is no oblation for them in the

1 dyāvaprthivyāvityeke; ahoratrāv ityeke; 
śūryacandramasāvityeke; rājanau puṇyakratā-
vityaitihāṣikāḥ. Nir.XII.1.

2 atha atah dyusthānā devatāḥ tāsāmasāvinau 
prathamagamino bhavatāḥ. Ibid.

3 āśvinau yad vyaśnuvate sarvam, rasena 
anyah jyotiṣa anyah. Ibid.

4 śūryacandramasau ityeke. Ibid.

5 tayoh kālaḥ śūryodayaparyantaḥ. 
Nir.XII.5.
evening. He further says that the earlier one sacrifices, the more he wins their favour. Once he says that one of the two Aśvins is the son of night and the other, the son of dawn. At another place he says that one of them belongs to the middle region and the other is the blessed son of heaven i.e. the sun.

Aśvins have also been described as the rain-gods also. On RV.I.116.8; Yaska comments that Aśvins "covered fire with snow, i.e. water during the day i.e. at the end of the summer season... All the herbs and living beings are but forms of Aśvins." Thus Aśvins are creators and they exist in

1 prataryajadhvamaśvinau prahinuta na sāyamasti devejyā ajuṣṭametat pūrvaḥ purvo yajamāno vanī yanvanayitṛtamaḥ.
Nir.XII.5.

2 vasātyo anya ucyate uṣah putrastvanya.
Nir.XII.2.

3 jisṛurvamanyah sumahato balasyerayita madhyamah rivo anyah subhagah putra uhyata ādityah.
Nir.XII.12.3.

4 Laxman Sarup’s translation: himenodakēna grīśmānte āgni ghrāṃsamanaharavarayethām annavatīṁ cāsmaī urjamadha-ttamagnaye yojyaṁbhise pṛthivyāmagnirantarauṣadhivi-vanaspatisvapṣu tamunninyathuḥ yadṛṣṭa oṣadhayaḥ udyanti prāṇiṣca pṛthivyām tadasvino rupam tenenaḥ stauti-stauti.
Nir.VI.36.
whatever takes birth during the rainy season.

Explaining the word Nasatya, Yaska says that they are so-called because they are born from the nose. For this, he quotes his followers Aurnavābha and Āgrayana who interpret them as - 'Ever true and never false', and 'the promoters of truth' respectively.

The Harivamśa gives a suggestive etymology of the word 'Āśvin'. It says that being born of the horse form (i.e. aśva) of Martanda (the sun) they are known as Āśvins.

The Brhaddevata is the most illuminative on this point. Like the Nirukta, it also states that Āśvins are the two foremost gods of heavenly sphere depending on the sun. The Brhaddevata also gives different interpretations of the names of Āśvins. It says that they are the sun and the moon, the

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2. satyāveva nasatyāvityaurnavabhah. Ibid.
3. satyasya pranetarāvityāgrāyana. Ibid,
4. so aśvarūpena bhagavāmstam mukhe samabhāvayat. nāsatyaś- caiva dasraśca smṛtau dvāvasvināviti. mārtandaśyatmajāvetā- vaśtamasaya praśapateḥ.

5. yah parastu ganaḥ soryo dyusthānastam nibodhata
tasya mukhyatamaṁ devav āśvinau suryamāśrito.

praṇa and the apana, the day and the night, and the heaven and the earth who pervade the universe with light and moisture and who separately travel in the southern and northern directions.¹

Thus the Nirukta as well as the Brhaddevata take Aśvins as 'the Heaven and the Earth'. Again both the Nirukta and the Brhaddevata take Aśvins as 'the Sun and the Moon'; and taking as a clue the presence of Aśvins, they describe these deities as 'the Day and the Night'. But we cannot accept the first view that Aśvins are the heaven and the earth because Aśvins are of luminous character, their path is red, they appear in the morning and they are succouring deities, but such things are not found in the heaven and the earth. Moreover we cannot accept Aśvins as the sun and the moon because the inseparable duality of Aśvins cannot be explained on this theory. Further the sun and the moon are quite separate phenomena and if the sun is united with the moon, it would be lowering the high position of the sun to that of

¹ sūryacandrāmāsau tau hi praṇapānau ca tau śṛṭau
ahorātrau ca tāveva svatām tāveva rodasi.
asnuvate hi tau lokān jyotiṣā ca rasena ca.
pṛthak pṛthak ca carato daksīṇenottareṇa ca.

the moon, which occupied but a very small place in the Indo-European as well as in the Indian mythology. And similarly, the day and the night appear alternatively and cannot be compared with these twin deities.

N.N. Ghosh supports Yāska and says that Aśvins represent light and moisture. This theory explains the all-pervasiveness of Aśvins and their connection with dawn, Śūrya, morning dew and water. Ghosh also adds that Aśvins are the germinators, the deliverers and also healers.

T.K. Krishnaswami Ayyar also follows the above view. According to him the main function of Aśvins is the bringing up of the sun from darkness and has accordingly explained the legends relating to Aśvins.

Next, we take up the commentary of Śāyana. This commentary is ritualistic. Being the only commentary we have to take its help but we cannot depend on it wholly because of its some contradictions and inaccuracies. Śāyana quotes Aitereya Brāhmaṇa and says that Aśvins are the physicians of the gods.

1 Aryan Trial In Iran And India, p.43.
2 Ibid, p.87.
3 Vede Aśvinau, pp.250-56.
4 aśvinau vai devanām bhiṣajau.

While explaining the word Nāsatya, he says that they are 'not untruthful'. The third name Dāsrā, according to him means 'the destroyer of the enemies or the remover of diseases, being divine physicians'.

According to B.G. Tilak Aśvins are the matutinal deities who bring the dawn or the light of morning along with them. Monier Williams thinks that Aśvins are none else than the two luminous points or rays imagined to precede the break of the day. According to both Aśvins are the earliest bringers of light in the morning sky, who hasten on in the clouds before Dawn and prepare the way for her. A.C. Das also considers them to be the faint glimmer of light in the eastern horizon.

Vodscov is of the opinion that these gods are the rain-gods, because they are connected with water and powers of nourishing, creating and helping. But this theory does not hold much ground as it explains only one aspect of Aśvins.

\[\text{\textit{Sayana's Commentary on RV.I.3.3.}}\]

1. \textit{nāsatya astyamanṛtabhaṣanam tadvaitau}
2. \textit{dāsrāu śatrūnamupakṣapayitarau tadvā. deva vaidvatavena rogaṇamupakṣayitarau}
3. \textit{The Arctic Home in the Vedas, p.300.}
4. \textit{Hinduism, p.17.}
5. \textit{Quoted by Muir. OST, Vol.V.p.235.}
6. \textit{Ṛgvedic India, p.528.}
But Geldner believes that Āśvins do not represent any natural phenomena. They are simply succouring saints of purely Indian origin.

Taking literally the word 'Āśva', some scholars regard Āśvins as the possessors of horses or 'the horsemen'. Yāska quotes one of his followers Auraṇavābha who says that Āśvins are so-called due to (possessing) horses.1 Rudolf Kaegi describes Āśvins as 'the horse-guiders'.2 Similarly, Whitney calls them 'the two horsemen'.3

According to Hillebrandt, Āśvins are an enigmatic pair of brothers. He believes that Yāska could have added to his four probabilities i.e. dyāvapṛthi-vyāvityeke etc. that Āśvins are also called the adhvaryus (sacrificers) of the gods, mostly their physicians. He agrees with the views of historians that Āśvins are the two meritorious kings. He believes that Āśvins do not represent any sort of visible

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1 aśvairasaśvinādityaaurṣavābah. Mir.XII.1.
2 Life in Ancient India, p.64.
3 On the Vedas, p.53.
4 We are giving here a brief account of Hillebrandt's views about Āśvins as discussed by him in detail in his "Vedishe Mythologie", pp.54–70.
phenomenon in heaven. They are the Indian curers of the distressed, and their legend is throughout similar to that of heroes. Moreover, Hillebrandt does not agree with the views of those who consider the Aśvin pair as the morning and evening stars. A fundamental opposition exists between them. Morning and evening stars are always separate, whereas the Aśvins are always conjoined. Even when the night separates the morning and evening stars, still the evening star is imperceptible during many months when Venus rises as morning star, and when it, in its Eastern movement appears in the Western sky as an evening star, then the morning star has disappeared. Lastly, Hillebrandt agrees with the view of Vodscov that Aśvins may be the rain-gods, but he does not give much importance to this aspect because the same quality is attributed to Mitra-Varuna also, and that the other characteristics as their relationship with Sūrya, their miraculous deeds etc are far more important than this.

Thus, Hillebrandt has neither fully agreed nor fully disagreed with the different views about Aśvins. He has just discussed various views in detail, inserting his remarks in between, thus protecting himself from being criticized.

Aśvins are sometimes connected with the primitive yoke of cattle, probably because the name nāsatya refers to the
Przyluski has pointed out some non-Aryan elements in the Vedic mythology. He believed that the Æryans had come into contact with Austro-Asiatic people at various points in the course of their wanderings and colonisation activities. According to him, concept of Áśvins (along with that of Varuṇa and Aditi) provided an evidence of the non-Aryan elements in the Vedic mythology. He says that the original non-Aryan character of Áśvins seems to have been indicated by their other name nasatyau. This later name was presumably an Aryanised form of some Austro-Asiatic word. 'Satya' might be connected with Austro-Asiatic 'sadam' which means 'horse', while 'na' might be regarded as just an affix. Áśvins were originally divine horses and later became divine cavaliers.

Some scholars who interpret the Veda on historical grounds identify Áśvins with mortal kings or physicians who became very popular and so were defied later, as we have said before that according to Yāsaka historians take Áśvins to be two kings of pious deeds. Charpentier also agrees with this view of the historians and tries to explain Áśvins as 'the two

1 R.N. Dandekar, Vedic Religion and Mythology, JUJPHS, 21, p. 41.
2 Ibid, pp. 41-43.
beneficent saviour princes of yore'. But we cannot accept this theory because if this were true, we could have got some positive proof for them.

Moreover, the theories which do not consider Āśvins as natural forces and take them to mean as human beings, one very genuine objection may be raised against them and that is they (the theories) are against the clear natural background of the Vedic religion. Further, Āśvins are included in the category of celestial deities and not in the list of saints and priests of the Rgveda.

Now we come to the views of those scholars who interpret Āśvins on the philosophical basis. According to Sri Aurobindo, Āśvins are the horse-riders and the 'āśva' symbolises the force, especially life, energy and nervous force, the Prāna. Thus he considers that, "The twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and enjoyment. But they are also powers of Truth, of intelligent action, of right enjoyment.......... They give that impelling energy for the great work which, having for its nature and substance the light of the Truth, carries man beyond the darkness............ Wedded to the

1 Dandekar, Vedic Religion and Mythology, JUPHS.21, p.47.
daughter of light, drinkers of honey, bringers of perfect satisfactions, healers of maim and malady, they occupy our parts of knowledge and parts of action and prepare our mental, vital and physical being for an easy and victorious ascension.

They are, therefore, effective powers of the Ananda which proceeds out of the Truth-Consciousness and which manifesting itself variously in all the three worlds maintain man in his journey. Hence their action is in all the worlds. They are especially riders or drivers of the Horse, Áśvins, as their name indicates - they use the vitality of the human being as the motive force of the journey; but also they work in thought and lead it to the Truth. They give health, beauty, wholeness to the body; they are the divine physicians.

Swami Dayānanda gives a symbolical interpretation to the names of Áśvins—'Dasrā' and 'Nāsatya'. According to him 'Dasrā' means those who destroy all maladies i.e. 'dukhah'. And 'Nāsatya' means those who do not have any falsehood in them, whereas Shri Aurobindo means by this word those who are

2 Dasrā - dukhānāmupakṣayakartārāu.
   Rgveda Bhaṣya, pt I, p. 41.
3 Nāsatya - na vidyate satyam karmagunau vā yayostau.
   Ibid.
the lords of the movement. Swami Dayananda, taking the hymn of the Rgveda argues that the word 'āsvi' stands for water and fire, because the water with its light and speed pervades this world. Similarly due to their characteristics, pairs like Heaven and Earth are also termed as 'āsvi'.

In the interpretations of these scholars we find that Āśvins are said to be the lords of the 'Truth', 'Bliss' and 'Ānanda'; their chariot is said to represent 'action' and the madhu, sweetness or bliss. Now this 'Truth' 'Bliss' or

1 aśvinā yajvarīriṇo dravatpānī subhaspatī. RV.I.3.1.

2 .... atra dyusthanoktatvatprakasasthaḥ prakasayuktah sūryagnividudādayo ṣṛṇhyante, tatra yāvaśvinau dvau dvau samprayujyete yau ca sarvesam padarthānām madhye gamanaśilau bhavataḥ tayormadhyadasmīnmantra aśvisabdenagnijale ṣṛṇhyete. kutāḥ yadyaṃajjalamāśvaiḥ svākīyavegādīgunaḥ rasen sarva jagadvayaśnute vyāptavadasti. tatāḥ nyo gniḥ svākīyaiḥ prakāśavegādibhiraśvaiḥ sarva jagadvayaśnute tasmādagnijalayarasaṃjñā jñāyate. tathaiva svākīyasyavākīyaṅguṇārdvyāvāprthivyadīnām dvandānāmapyasāvāsasānāna vijñeyam ...

Dayānanda, Rgveda Bhasyam, pt I, p.38.
'Ananda' most probably refers to the 'Supreme Being' or the 'Ultimate Truth' (i.e. Brahma) which is the sole basis of the Upaniṣads. If we accept this interpretation, it may be suggested that Aśvins in dual represent two complementary entities of this Cosmic Reality. As they are all-pervasive gods (inclusive of time and space), they might have been interpreted as the heaven and the earth to show the two phases of space, the day and the night to show the two aspects of time, and the sun and the moon and the morning and the evening stars to show the two facets of light. Thus, though Aśvins are two, they are 'One'. And probably two of the three wheels of their Chariot point towards the third one which is said to be hidden or non-existent, and thus show the duality directing towards unity. Similarly the triple parts of the chariot may mean the three aspects of time - the past, present and future, the three spheres of space - the heaven, mid-air and earth, or the three guṇas - sattva, rajas and tamas. Moreover, the knowledge of madhu probably means the supreme knowledge and thus Aśvins are the knowers of the 'Supreme Knowledge'. And finally, Aśvins are the dispellers of darkness and the harbingers of light. Here the 'darkness' and 'light' may mean the 'ignorance' and 'wisdom' or 'knowledge', respectively.

This is the philosophical interpretation. This may also
be taken as the 'lākṣanika prayoga' or indicative use (i.e. the indirect meaning). But in the interpretations of these two scholars we do not find any clear reference of the protégés of Aśvins.

After dealing with the symbolical meaning of Aśvins we come to the star theory. Various scholars have tried to explain Aśvins as representing morning and evening stars. Some scholars take Aśvins to mean the twin stars of Gemini constellation. Some, taking Aśvins as Indian Dioscuri explain them as morning and evening stars and still some others interpret them as twin stars Punarvasū or twin stars in the Aśvinī constellation.

The most peculiar characteristic of Aśvins is that they are twins. While studying the world mythology, we may find that in various religions a cult of celestial twins existed. Among them, the most well-known and most popular are the Greek Dioscuri - Castor and Pollux, and the Lettic god-sons.

The Vedic Aśvins, the Greek sons and the Lettic god-sons are all twins, and are all horsemen. They resemble so much

with each other that the scholars like Oldenberg, Macdonell, Hillebrandt and Bloomfield have found in them some connection. Each pair of these gods has a common sister or a common bride. The Dioscuri, the sons of Zeus have Helen as their sister and the Vedic Aśvins have Uṣas, the Dawn, as their sister. Aśvins have a common wife Sūryā, the daughter of the sun and the Lettic god-sons are also having the daughter of the sun as their wife. All of them are said to be the sons of Dyaus, the Heaven; and all of these pairs are known as the protectors and the rescuers from the ocean. Aśvins as well as the Dioscuri are the helpers in distress and are the protectors.¹

But Guerber gives his opinion in a different way. In his view Castor was a skilful tamer of horses, unlike his brother. He was not immortal and was killed in a quarrel. Pollux, then implored his father, Zeus, to let him give his own life. As a result, Zeus allowed the two brothers to spend alternate days in the realm of shades. But in this way none of two could enjoy each other's company. Finally, they were placed among the stars and formed the constellation Gemini, (the twin) by name. They are said to be the patron of seamen, of the laws of the hospitality and of oaths. In a battle of

¹ P.S. Deshmukh, Origin and Development of Religion, p.113.
Lake Regillus which occurred between the Republican Romans and the people of Latium, the twin brothers appear in the fierce strife, who are recognized by their white armour and their white horses.¹

If we follow this interpretation of Guerber, some dissimilarities may be clearly seen between the Greek Dioscuri and the Indian Asvins. Castor is said to be mortal while the twin Asvins are immortal. Secondly, the Dioscuri are dressed in white and Asvins in gold (as they are said to have golden path, golden chariot etc). And lastly, the Dioscuri are known mainly for their valour, bravery and skill in battle whereas Asvins, though being strong and valourous, are famous for their beauty, benevolence and surgical skill.

Similarly, there are other twins also who may be compared with Asvins. They are the Amphion and Zethus, Herakles and Iphikles and the Roman twins Romulus and Remus etc. In all the pairs some similarities and some dissimilarities may be seen. Therefore, it seems that the scholars who have tried to explain Asvins with these pairs, have not gone into detail and have explained them on the basis of their common characteristics i.e. of their going in pairs, having common

¹ H.A.Guerber, Myths of Greece and Rome, p.227.
father, common bride and their powers of healing and rescuing.

Weber, with the help of MS\textsuperscript{1} etc. where \textit{Asvins} are identified with the \textit{Asvayuja} constellation, tries to compare \textit{Asvins} as the twin stars in the Gemini constellation. Taking the word 'nasatya' he explains that they are so-called on account of their appearing 'like nose (or island) in the ocean of the morning sky'.\textsuperscript{2}

Like Weber, Ekendranath Ghosh\textsuperscript{3} propounded the theory that \textit{Asvins} represent the twin stars Alpha and Beta Arietes of the \textit{Asvini} constellation. He argues that the three sides of \textit{Asvins}' chariot (or we may take even three wheels and seats too) can be explained on this theory because the chariot represents the triangular figure formed by the three stars of \textit{Bharani} constellation, lying behind the constellation \textit{Asvini}. According to Bollenson\textsuperscript{4} and Oldenberg\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Asvins} are the morning and the evening stars. But we cannot accept this theory because the morning star and the evening star could hardly be regarded as a pair in the sense in which \textit{Asvins}

\textsuperscript{1} asvayujau nakṣatramasvīnau ... MS.II.13.20.
\textsuperscript{2} R.N.Dandekar, Vedic Religion and Mythology, JUPHS, 21, p.15.
\textsuperscript{3} V.C.Srivastava, Sun Worship in Ancient India, pp.122-40.
\textsuperscript{4} R.N.Dandekar, Vedic Religion and Mythology, JUPHS, 21, p.15.
\textsuperscript{5} Die Religion des Veda, p.43.
formed an inseparable pair.

We see that none of these theories have satisfactorily explained the nature of Āsvins. Here we shall take up the twilight (or twin-light) theory and see that how far it helps us in determining the nature of these twin gods.

This twilight theory was propounded by Yāśaka in his Nirukta. According to him the time of Āsvins begins just after mid-night and remains up to dawn. In view of Goldstücker, Āsvins represent the twilight phenomenon which represents the transition from darkness to light. Hopkins is also of the opinion that Āsvins represent the twilight before dawn, half dark and half bright. "Their duality represents" ... "one stage in day's approach, when light is dark and dark is light." Clayton, Dowson, Griswold, Jhala, Macdonell and Bagozin all agree with this view that Āsvins represent the twilight - the transition from night to morning.

1 Nir.XII.1. 
2 Sanskrit & Culture, p.31. 
3 E.W.Hopkins, The Religions of India, p.82. 
4 The Rgveda and Vedic Religion, p.71. 
5 A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology. 
6 The Religion of the Rgveda, p.257. 
8 Vedic Mythology, p.54. 
9 Vedic India, p.232.
Having dealt here with the views of various scholars about the twilight theory, we shall now see how far the Rgveda itself helps us to solve this riddle (of the twilight).

In the Rgveda, except with a very few negligible references, we find that Asvins appear especially in the early morning and before all the other deities. The time when they are observed first and invoked, has been said to be the time when 'the black cows and red cows mingle with each other'. These black cows and red cows definitely mean, 'darkness' and 'the first streaks of red light' respectively. The first faint glimmer of light which is seen in the eastern horizon is Asvins. The coalescence of Light and Darkness is called the twilight. And as this visible phenomenon is neither pure light nor pure darkness, it can not be called distinctively by either name and thus corresponds well with the twin nature of Asvins. This phenomenon i.e. Asvins is a distinct object of perception like dawn or the sun and is also the harbinger of dawn. Though there are some hymns where we see that Asvins are invoked along with Usas or sometimes even after Usas, such hymns are very, very few.

1 A.C. Das, Rgvedic India, p.510.
2 Ibid, p.511.
Being mainly invoked in the early morning, Asvins receive various epithets such as 'Usra*', the wakers in the early morning, 'prātaryavānā' and 'prātaryuja' etc. who yoke their chariot early in the morning. But there is no such epithet which shows them as appearing after their scheduled time.

Moreover, the chariot of Asvins is well-known for its 'red' or 'golden' colour. The path on which it rolls is also red or golden-coloured. Because of its red rolling path Asvins too, receive the epithets - 'rudravartani' and 'hiranyavartani'. The horses or the birds which draw this chariot are of golden colour. Thus the golden chariot yoked with the golden coloured animals, starting early in morning receives the epithet 'aham purvah', 'I am the first'. The honey-whip is nothing but the energy giving morning breeze. All these descriptions i.e. the 'golden' or 'red' colour of the chariot, path, and animals explain clearly the twilight phenomenon when the night has just finished and the dawn is about to start. This time (i.e. the twilight period) awakens

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1 

... hiranyayena rathena ... 

RV.VIII.5.35.

2 

suraścidasvan .... 

RV.IV.45.6.

and:

hamsāso ye vām .... hiranyaparna .... 

RV.IV.45.4.

3 

RV.I.181.3.
all and gives energy and enthusiasm to all human as well as non-human beings to start the day’s work.

Various protegés of Asvíns also help us in determining the nature of Asvíns. All these protegés represent (as we have already seen in Chapter V) the Sun who had to face the calamity during the fierce rainy season or night. Naturally, at that time Asvíns were not at all seen on account of the dark clouds spreading all over the sky or due to the darkness which enveloped the sky at night. As Asvíns were not visible during that time, they are said to have remained in distant region. 'paravat'.1 Certainly, for this reason only, the worshipper seems to be perplexed and asks them—'where do you stay?', 'where do you go?', 'where do you descend from?'2 etc. etc. And after the end of the terrible rainy season or at the end of the extreme night, the invigorating twilight phenomenon of Asvíns is justified. The evening twilight

1 yannásatya paravati ....
   RV.I.47.7; VIII.8.14.
   yadadya sthah paravati ....
   RV.V.73.1.
   yebhi .... paravato ....
   RV.VIII.5.8.

2 RV.V.74.3; VIII.73.4.
cannot be compared with the morning twilight because the former lacks the rejuvenating characteristics of the later. Even further, the morning twilight period is the most suitable period in the Vedic worship while the evening twilight plays a very insignificant role.¹

In this way, having discussed the various theories, we can conclude this chapter saying that it is the twilight theory which helps us to determine the twin nature of Asvins.

¹ prataryajadhvamasyavinā hinota
na sayamastī devāya ajuṣṭam.
RV. V.77.2.
CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, we have dealt with in detail about Aśvins, especially in the Rgveda. We shall now conclude our thesis by giving a brief review of the important characteristics of Aśvins as found in the Rgveda.

Aśvins, the youngest and the most handsome twin gods, inspite of being a very mysterious phenomenon, are one of the four most popular gods in the Rgveda. This is due to the fact that the numerous epithets are attributed to them and a large number of legends and myths are connected with them.

They are the twin sons of Vivasvat and Saranyū. But as their (Aśvins') phenomenon is very obscure, they are also said to be the children of heaven and sometimes even the grandchildren of heaven. Being the gods of early morning, naturally, Uṣas, the dawn is said to be their sister. Sūrya, the Sun's daughter is the common wife of the two Aśvins. She is, in all likelihood, the essence of the Sun and the power of Aśvins.
The well-known, golden-coloured, triangular chariot, with all its parts triple, is drawn by various animals but especially by the powerful red coloured horses or by golden winged swans. Here the golden or red colour clearly indicates the twilight period. The honey whip with which Aśvins besprinkle the sacrifice is certainly the morning breeze which is the giver of energy and enthusiasm.

Among various drinks offered to Aśvins, madhu is most desired by them. The worshipper probably offers this pleasure and energy giving drink to them so that, having drunk it, they may in return favour the worshipper by bestowing upon him all sorts of riches and happiness.

In the Rgveda, Aśvins mainly appear as the divine physicians, the succouring gods. They immediately hear the call of the worshipper and reach at the place to save him. In particular they rescue him from the ocean, and their help from all sorts of distress is of peaceful kind. With the help of their miraculous powers they cure the blind and lame, rejuvenate the old and even ward off death from their worshipper. There are numberless worshippers in the Rgveda whom Aśvins saved from various calamities. These various worshippers are certainly the representative of the sun, distressed during the disastrous rainy season or during
night. Being the twilight, Ásvins are, naturally, the
rescuer i.e. the harbinger of dawn and the sun.

As Ásvins are related to marriage and progeny, they are
invoked to conduct the bride home and also to bestow
fertility upon her.

The concept of Ásvins had become very mysterious even
to the seers of the Rgveda. Therefore, it may be traced to
the pre-Vedic period - to the pre-Iranian or even to the
Indo-European period, on the basis of philological,
historical and mythological grounds. Because of this
obscurity, different scholars hold different views about the
nature of Ásvins. Most of them have tried to explain the
Ásvin-concept on the basis of dual objects whatever they have
found either in nature or in scriptures, but inspite of this
they have failed to give any definite solution to this
problem. Yaśaka and others who have taken Ásvins to mean
the heaven and earth, the day and night, the sun and moon
and even two stars, must have derived these views from the
later Vedas, especially from the Yajurveda, which clearly
illustrates these aforesaid views. But, in the Rgveda, there
is not even a single reference where Ásvins are said to be
the heaven and earth etc. They are, however, said to be
omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, and apparently, this
confusion makes some scholars to think symbolically about Asvins and explain them as the Only Being, in their two existent and non-existent forms. But as there is no reference of the non-existent form of Asvins in the Rgveda, this symbolical interpretation also does not help us to understand the nature of Asvins. These two inseparable forms of Asvins, then, can be properly understood by the (morning) twilight theory where both the forms i.e. half-light and half-dark, though being seen separately, fuse together in such a way that they cannot be called by either name just like the name of Asvins.

Finally, we may also say that the twinned and especially paired gods are one of the characteristics of the Rgveda. Thus Yama and Yami are twins, and pairs of Indra-Agni, Indra-Vayu, Mitra-Varuna and Heaven-Earth are common. And above all are the twin Asvins, the divine physicians and the harbingers of light, who shine distinctly in the eastern horizon, and who, inspite of their obscurity, occupy a fourth prominent place in the Rgveda after Indra, Agni and Soma.