SYNOPSIS

My topic 'Asvins in the Rgveda' consists of fourteen short chapters. They are as follows:-

INTRODUCTION

The Rgveda, consists of 1028 hymns, which are addressed to the natural forces called-deities. These deities are classified into three groups -- celestial, terrestrial and earthly. Asvins, coming in the celestial group, occupy the fourth important position after Indra, Agni and Soma.

1. ASVINS IN THE DICTIONARIES

From the various dictionaries, English, Sanskrit and German, we come to know that Asvins are possessed of horses; they are charioteers, horse-tamer, cavalier, two divine physicians, twin stars and twin sons of the sun by a nymph in the form of a mare.
2. **BIRTH OF ĀŚVINS AND THEIR FAMILY**

In the Rgveda mandala X, we observe that Vivasvat and Saranyū are the parents of Āśvins. This story has been detailed in the Matsya Purāṇa but Saranyū gets the name of Samjū, who conceals herself in the form of a mare, and from her union with Vivasvat, the twin Āśvins are born. Sūryā is the wife of Āśvins, dawn their sister and Nakula, Sahadeva their twin sons.

3. **THE CHARIOT OF ĀŚVINS**

The chariot of Āśvins occupies a unique position in the Rgveda because of its some peculiarities. It is triangular, three-wheeled and three-seated. It is completely golden. Various animals as horses, birds, steeds, bull or ass etc are yoked to the chariot at different places. The chariot has a honey whip to control its animals. It (chariot) is the harbinger of all types of riches, benevolent to the worshipper.

4. **ĀŚVINS AND THEIR DRINK**

The favourite drink of Āśvins is Madhu. No other god is so much acquainted with madhu as Āśvins. However, Āśvins are also the drinker of Soma. Gharma, Sura are the other drinks, which are offered to them.
5. **ASVINS - THE HELPFUL GODS**

Most of the hymns, sung in praise of Asvins, reveal their succouring power. They are the speediest helpers and removers of distress. They have rendered help to kings, men, women, animals, birds and even to gods. Therefore, they are said to be divine physicians. They cure the blind, restore youth and cure various physical defects. But most of these rescues are of peaceful kind. All these help-seekers existed in reality or not is a matter of controversy. Various critics interpret them in various ways by taking them to mean sun hidden behind the clouds in rainy season or sun’s decaying power in winter and growing power in summer.

6. **THE TWO ASVINS, THEIR ABODE, TIME AND TREASURE**

The name Asvins in dual itself suggests that these divine deities are twins and inseparable. Some passages are there which are meant only for showing their dual nature. But there are few passages also which show that they are born separately. However, it is possible that they had a separate origin but they were united later on.

Asvins are mainly invoked in the morning, evening is not pleasant for them but sometimes they are invoked thrice
a day also.

Asvins are omnipresent. They abide in heaven, mid-air and on earth. These three places are possible because they are invoked thrice a day.

Asvins, being invoked, come to the sacrifice, but not empty handed. They come with all varieties of treasure which consists of health, wealth, nourishing food, strong off-springs and protection.

7. ASVINS AND THE FERTILITY

Asvins, the helpers, unite lovers and their connection with Sūryā is symbolic of their productivity. They place the productive germ in all creatives and generate fire, water and trees. They are invoked to conduct the bride home and also to bestow fertility on her.

8. EPITHETS OF ASVINS

Epithets reveal certain specific qualities of gods. Some of these epithets are common to all gods while others are peculiar to the gods alone. Same is the case with Asvins. Their well-known epithets are 'dasrā' (wonder-workers) 'nāsatya' (not untrue or born of nostrils), mādhva (madhu-drinkers) 'bhiṣaja' (physicians), rudravartani
(whose paths are red) and 'prataryuja' (morning waker) etc. These epithets reveal their various qualities as physical, mental, moral and intellectual.

9. AŚVINS AND THE OTHER GODS

Aśvins are often compared with Indra. Both of these gods are great helpers in need. But help rendered by Indra is the deliverance from foes in battle, while in case of Aśvins it is mainly a peaceful manifestation. Aśvins are also invoked with other gods but, especially for drinking soma.

10. AŚVINS IN THE POETIC-SETTING

Ṛgvedic hymns are decorated with figures of speeches so as to make the picture of gods more clear and beautiful. In case of Aśvins we find mostly similes. They are compared to men, women, animals, nature and even to various parts of body besides they also reveal other qualities as vigour, benevolence etc.

11. AŚVINS IN THE LATER VEDIC AND OTHER LITERATURE

In the later Vedic literature Aśvins were gradually losing popularity of the Ṛgveda. There, however, greater emphasis has been given to their fertility aspects. In the
Atharvaveda, they are lords of lustre, adhvaryus, and the sons of Vivasvat and Saranyu. In the brahmanas, they are the divine physicians.

12. AŚVINS IN THE NĪTIMANJARĪ

Nītmanjārī, a book in classical literature, is a collection of ethical maxims which are supported by the Rgvedic hymns. Aśvins hymns are also incorporated therein. By doing so, the author has, on one hand, given a picturesque description of his moral teachings and, on the other hand, has praised the deeds of Aśvins which also reveal the same purpose (of moral teaching) indirectly in the Rgveda.

13. THE PRE-VEDIC AŚVINS

Although Aśvins are the gods of light, their connection with any definite phenomena of light is very obscure and so their origin is to be sought in a pre-vedic period. In Boghaz-kōi tablets of 14th century B.C. the name of Nasatya comes together with Mitra, Varuṇa and Indra and in Avestā we come across with a demon Nashtaithya. This shows that Nasatyas certainly belonged to the Indo-Iranian period. They may be traced back to the Indo-European period because their is a similarity between the Indian Aśvins, Greek sons of Zeus and Lettic god-sons.
14. VARIOUS THEORIES ABOUT ĀŚVINS

According to Yāska, some scholars take Āśvins as Heaven and Earth, some as Day and Night; some as Sun and Moon and still others as two pious kings. Some scholars take them to mean 'twilight' (half-light and half darkness) and others think that Āśvins represent morning and evening stars.

CONCLUSION

Āśvins, the twin deities of light, are the sons of Vivasvat and Saranỹū. They are the youngest of all the gods. They come to the sacrifice in a chariot which is peculiar in construction, triangular and three-seated. It is the harbinger of all types of riches and also of madhu, the favourite drink of Āśvins themselves.

In the Ṛgveda, Āśvins are mainly the succouring deities. Innumerable animate and inanimate beings are there for whose help Āśvins come immediately. This help is mainly of a peaceful type, and they are said to be divine physicians.

Āśvins are related with love, marriage and offspring. They unite loving-couples and conduct the bride home.
About their physical basis, even great critics like Yaska could not give a definite solution. But in the midst of various obscure views, we can say that Asvins represent morning twilight and they are essentially morning deities.