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STUDIES IN EARLY BUDDHIST SYMBOLISM AND METAPHYSICS:

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT

INDRANI KAPUR

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Australian National University
Canberra.

June, 1979
Statement of Authorship

Except where otherwise indicated, this work is the result of my own research.

Indrani Kapur.

Indrani Kapur.
# CONTENTS

**STUDIES IN EARLY BUDDHIST SYMBOLISM AND METAPHYSICS:**  
**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I:</td>
<td>The beginning of Buddhist art and its relation to the spread of Buddhism in India.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II:</td>
<td>The significance of Light and Fire in Buddhist Iconography.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III:</td>
<td>The Seven Steps of the Buddha.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV:</td>
<td>The anattavāda in Buddhist Philosophy.</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V:</td>
<td>Part I: The Cosmic Tree in Vedic Literature.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part II: The Bodhi Tree in Buddhist Art and Literature.</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VI:</td>
<td>The Awakening at Dawn.</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII:</td>
<td>The Conquest of Māra.</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td></td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td></td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * * * *
### ABBREVIATIONS

#### Texts

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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**ABBREVIATIONS**

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**Series and Journals**

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<tr>
<td>BEFEEO</td>
<td>Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient</td>
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<td>HOS</td>
<td>Harvard Oriental Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHQ</td>
<td>Indian Historical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBORS</td>
<td>Journal of the Bihar &amp; Orissa Research Society</td>
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<td>JISOA</td>
<td>Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAS</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QJMS</td>
<td>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society</td>
</tr>
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<td>SBE</td>
<td>Sacred Books of the East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDMG</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The historical fact that half of Asia has elevated Gotama Buddha to the rank of a god is testimony to the profound impression he created on his own generation, which far from fading with time, has, on the contrary, been amplified to such an extent that the miracles and legends attributed to him make it virtually impossible for us to recapture his extraordinary career entirely in its historical perspective.

This essay is an attempt to trace the heterogeneous developments in Buddhist art and philosophy in India, during the centuries before the emergence of the Mahāyāna schools. Although passages from Mahāyāna works have been cited frequently, it is only to emphasise the change and, at the same time, the continuity in Indian religious and philosophic thought, from the age of the Rg Veda, through that of the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, to the period of the Buddhist scriptures.

Buddhist art begins about the Second Century B.C. with a well-developed set of symbols in its iconography; this art, depicting the various legends and miracles attributed to the Buddha during his last terrestrial existence, as well as scenes from his previous lives (jātakas), represents the first expression of 'popular' Buddhism. The Buddhists responsible for this form of the religion based on folk-lore, folk forms of piety, and bhakti, and illustrating the worship of the Buddha in aniconic forms such as the stūpa, vṛksa caitya, dharmacakra, etc., did not, however, belong to the Theravāda sect, but to sub-sects of that school, and to the Mahāsāṃghika. It has also to be borne in mind that this form of 'popular'
INTRODUCTION

The historical fact that half of Asia has elevated Gotama Buddha to the rank of a god is testimony to the profound impression he created on his own generation, which far from fading with time, has, on the contrary, been amplified to such an extent that the miracles and legends attributed to him make it virtually impossible for us to recapture his extraordinary career entirely in its historical perspective.

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Buddhism which spread from the original homeland of the religion in eastern India, and its expression in the art of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi, Amaravati, and other Buddhist sites, represents an integral part of the mainstream of Indian religion and art, and is a reflection of the symbolism which pervades the whole of early Vedic literature.

Although the basic humanity of the Buddha is never denied in the Pāli canon, the legends, with the sole exception of the Mahāpādāna sutta where he is elevated to the supramundane level, portray him as the perfect and ideal man, far superior to the average individual, a Mahāpurussa endowed with distinctive physiognomical marks. These legends, no doubt, presuppose a Buddha cult which may have come into existence within a few decades of the Parinibbāna, - a cult centred around a conceptual Buddha and the ideal of a boundlessly compassionate teacher (satthā), rather than a historical figure.

The cult-concept of the Buddha is not a simple or even a unitary one; its composite character may be sensed through the variety of epithets applied to the Founder of the Saṅgha, e.g. Bhagovā, Budḍha, Satthā, Tathāgata, Sugata, and Jina. As Dutt remarks: 'Tradition, devotion, and doctrine, all enter into their nuances, and the great overarching notion in them is that the Lord's life illustrates perfectibility, and his 'enlightenment' the climax and culmination of the practice of his Dhamma.'

The present study dealing with a number of legends centred around this conceptual Buddha, illustrates Lord Raglan's dictum that the 'literature of the folk is not their own production but comes down to them from above'; that the legend or folk-tale is never of popular origin but is a form of traditional narrative; 'that the traditional narrative has no basis either in history or in philosophical speculation, but is derived from myth ...'

1. S. Dutt: *The Buddha and Five After-Centuries*, p.82.
In this respect it is worthwhile recalling Coomaraswamy's remarks regarding the Jātakas, the 'folkish' character of which is undeniable: 'When we examine them, we find their content is preponderantly mythical, metaphysical, and dogmatic; and their formulation often so precise as to make it inconceivable that it should have been hit upon by any profane mentality. To take a single example, ... Jātaka No. 465 describes the Bodhisatta's incarnation as the Devarāja Yakkha of a mighty Sāl tree, that has grown for 60,000 years: the king desires to construct a palace supported by a single column, and no other tree will do; The Bodhisatta is ready to submit to his fate; but asks that his crown may be lopped (agge ca ohindava) first, lest it should crush the smaller trees, his offspring around him.' Coomaraswamy continues: 'That is much more than a pretty story; for there can be no doubt that Brahma is the Yāka in the Tree of Life and that the story goes back to Satapatha Brāhmaṇa XI, 1, 8, where 'That sacrifice of Prajāpati's (decapitated, Pañcaavīṣṇu Brāhmaṇa VI, 5, 1, and being divided, or dividing himself for his children's sake, passim) is like a tree with its top broken off' (agravprasīṇa vyekaḥ), and also to the question 'What was the wood and what the tree of which they fashioned Sky and Earth (Ṛg Veda X, 31, 7) and answer 'Brahma the wood, Brahma the tree' (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II, 8, 9, 6)...'

In this essay, various points of approach have been dealt with—a philological approach concerning the texts, their validity or transmission; a historical-critical approach which aims at reconstructing the succession or the evolution of ideas; and a philosophical approach attempting to visualize the essential teachings of the Buddha.

There is, however, in the study of every religion, a great deal that is subjective, and it must be remembered that, although intellectually a

A student of Buddhism may be capable of accomplishing useful preliminary work, in order to penetrate the inner meaning of Buddhism, not only is a proper understanding of traditional teachings necessary, but also the readiness to admit the possibility of a spiritual experience which transcends the physical senses and rational mind.

Finally, however long the search for truth continues, whether we look at the Buddha purely from the historical point of view, or at the conceptual figure that has developed in the imagination of the faithful, there has always remained a 'mysterious deposit left at the bottom of the crucible that no test has identified nor word of criticism has defined.'\(^1\)

We are confronted with an extraordinary personality who not only dominates the entire history of Buddhism, but whose spirit permeates all developments of Buddhist teachings 'giving guidance in the midst of doubt and indecision, support in moments of crisis, and a fresh impetus in times of stagnation and decay. As the eagle in ancient legend draws strength from gazing at the sun, so both the individual Buddhist and the whole vast spiritual, cultural, and social movement we call Buddhism, again and again derive inspiration from the recollection of the exemplary life of that most serene, dignified, wise and loving of the sons of men.'\(^2\)

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CHAPTER I

The beginning of Buddhist art and its relation to the spread of Buddhism in India.
A critical examination of the Pāli-canonical literature, reveals the existence of two phases of early Buddhist thought, linked with the philosophy of the Upaniṣads\(^1\) on the one side, and leading through its own development to the teachings of the Mahāyāna, on the other.\(^2\) The first of these phases, referred to as Sākya by Mrs. Rhys Davids and I.B. Horner, represents the original core of the teachings of Gotama, the starting point of the whole movement now called Buddhism, while the second is a 'phase dominated by monkdom, i.e. monastic Buddhism or Hinayāna.\(^3\)

The Buddha's final injunction to Ānanda, his favourite disciple, is said to have been: 'Let the Dhamma-Vinaya expounded and proclaimed by me be the Teacher after I am gone.'\(^4\) These words, whether they were actually uttered or not, indicate that, after the passing away of the Buddha, the authority as Head of the Sangha was to be vested in the Dhamma-Vinaya (best

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1. Of the various tendencies of thought reflected in the Upaniṣads, it was the attitude of the rationalistic group of philosophers who, realizing the futility of 'priestly wisdom', broke away from the tradition of ritualism and sacrifice, and regarded both earthly and heavenly gains with contempt, preferring renunciation in order to attain true immortality, that was adopted in Buddhism.


2. Although from the historical point of view, the Mahāyāna is regarded as being opposed to the Hinayāna, doctrinally the former may be said to include the latter. The Hinayāna (Theravāda in the modern context) generally regards the Mahāyāna as a degeneration of the original teaching of which it claims to be the sole custodian, and the distinctively Mahāyāna doctrines as corruptions of the True Dhamma. However, as Conze observes: 'To regard all later Buddhist history as a record of the 'degeneration' of an 'original' gospel, is like regarding an oak tree as a degeneration of an acorn.'

Buddhism, its Essence and Development, p.26. The most reasonable course as pointed out by Bhikshu Sangharakshita is to 'take the Mahāyāna's own view of its relation to the Enlightenment of the Buddha on the one hand, and to the Hinayāna on the other, and to regard its distinctive teachings as legitimate, helpful and indeed necessary developments.'

A Survey of Buddhism, p.265.


4. ON II, 154.
rendered in English as Norm-Discipline). The Dhamma-Vinaya however, existed only in the collective memory of the monks and lay disciples. The ancient compilers of the canon had, therefore, to piece together the teachings, giving them a fixity of purpose and form, by including not only their substance, but also a setting of time and occasion, in a dialogue or discourse. The result of this literary effort known as a *sutta* (literally, thread), is linked with the tradition of a living *Satthā* as the centre of a cult, discharging his function as the 'Enlightened Teacher'.

A problem arose, however, when differences of opinion with regard to the defining and the stabilizing of the Dhamma-Vinaya developed amongst the earliest disciples of the Buddha. An example is the story of the so-called First Council reported to have been held immediately after the Parinibbāna at Rājagaha, which is linked with an incident occurring during the funeral ceremony, and related in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta: In the midst of mourning for the Lord who had just departed, an aged disciple, Suṭṭa, light-heartedly remarks: 'Enough sirs! Weep not, and lament not! We are well rid of the great sama)Ja. We used to be annoyed at being told, "This befits you; this befits you not." But now we shall be able to do whatever we like; and what we do not like, we shall not have to do."

This incident is taken by the elder (Thera) Kassapa as the motive and occasion for summoning five hundred elders at Rājagaha, for a complete rehearsal (*sāṅghakamma*) of the Dhamma-Vinaya. According to the Cullavagga account of the First Council, the elders were anxious that other members of the Sāṅgha did not spend the rainy season at Rājagaha also. After the rehearsal of the Dhamma-Vinaya, another elder named Purāṇa came to Rājagaha and was invited to possess himself of the collection just rehearsed, but he politely declined: 'The Dhamma-Vinaya has been well-chanted by the Therās.'

1. DN 11, 162.
Nevertheless, even in such a manner as it has been heard by me, and received by me from the mouth of the Bhagavā, in that manner will I bear it in memory.¹

This account shows that the canon may have been settled, but only by the five hundred monks summoned by Kassapa, and was not accepted by other members of the Saṅgha. As Dutt observes: 'In other words, no real settlement of the canon is achieved ... the refusal to accept the Thera's Canon, however polite, goes definitely against the assumption that the Canon was really settled.'²

In the centuries following the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, the various groups or schools of reciters (bhānakas) attempted to bring the floating mass of oral tradition into a number of more or less fixed and systematic arrangements, according to which the teachings pertaining to the Dhamma were included in what became known as the Sutta pitaka (Collection of Discourses), while those relating to matters of discipline within the Saṅgha were included in the Vinaya pitaka (Collection of Disciplinary precepts). The sources from which these two collections were derived did not belong to any one school but were the common property of all the schools. The disputes which rent

¹. Cullavagga, XI, 1, 11.
². S. Dutt: The Buddha and Five After-Centuries, pp.102 and 104; the same author points out that the entire account of the council is vitiated by anachronism, as 'two impossible assumptions underlie the report of the proceedings — first, that so soon after the Lord's decease the Buddhists had reached that stage of monastic development where the idea of 'separate saṅghas', the rules of validity of saṅghakammā, their procedural forms like Natti (Resolution) and Amussāvana (Proclamation), etc., had already evolved; and secondly, that the legends had already been classified into five nikāyas of which at least the fifth nikāya, called Khuddaka nikāya, could not possibly have been made up, as some of the texts it includes set forth ideas and doctrines which belong undoubtedly to a much later and developed stratum of Buddhism.' op. cit. p.104. For the date of the Khuddaka nikāya see M. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature, II, pp. 77 and 78.
the sasana from the beginning of the second century after the Parinibbana, owed their origin 'not to multiplicity of tradition but to differences of opinion regarding the correct interpretation of, and the proper attitude to be adopted towards, the identical body of doctrinal and disciplinary teaching which all the members of the Saṅgha regarded as authentic, and to which every party appealed in support of its views.\(^1\)

According to tradition, within two or three centuries of the passing away of the Buddha, eighteen different schools appeared in the sasana.\(^2\) The schools which are of outstanding importance are the Theravāda, the Mahāsāṅghika, and the Sarvāstivāda - representing the principal trends of thought in early Buddhism, and to which one or the other of the remaining schools owed their origin.

An opinion held by several scholars and generally accepted as traditional in Buddhology is that the first great schism (mahābheda) in the Saṅgha was represented by the Mahāsāṅghikas and took place in connection with the second council held at Vaiśāli.\(^3\) This opinion is based upon the evidence of the Cullavagga and Dipavamsa according to which ten moot points, all relating to minor disciplinary precepts, raised at the council of Vaiśāli are represented as causing the schism. These scholars also rely on the Mahāyāna records which state that between the two parties there were five points of difference, all doctrinal and reflecting the dissatisfaction of the

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2. The number eighteen is traditional, but more than this number are recorded. E.J. Thomas: *The History of Buddhist Thought*, pp.228-292.
schismatics with regard to the current interpretation of the Arahant ideal, and raised on their behalf by a certain Mahādeva. ¹

According to the general consensus of opinion, the theses as recorded in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna records with regard to the schism, maintain Mahāsāṃghika laxity in disciplinary as well as in philosophical matters.

In his Étude sur la conclave de Vaiśālī published in 1946, Hofinger has ably demonstrated that the notorious schism had nothing at all to do with the council held at Vaiśālī, and that it was after that event that the schism took place. In none of the Vinaya council accounts presented so meticulously by Hofinger, is such a schism mentioned.

The most recent research on the origin of the Mahāsāṃghika school, clearly demonstrates that Mahādeva also had nothing to do with the primary schism between the Theravādins and Mahāsāṃghikas which emerged somewhat later than previously supposed, (i.e. 116 instead of 100 years after the Parinibbāna), but was responsible for a 'sectarian movement by instigating an internal schism within the already existing Mahāsāṃghika school.' Furthermore, while the cause of the initial schism certainly pertained to matters of discipline, it was not a reaction of orthodox Theravādins against

Mahāsaṃghika laxity (as maintained by both Bareau and Demiéville), but rather 'represents a reaction on the part of the future Mahāsaṃghikas to unwarranted expansion of the root Vinaya text on the part of the future Sthaviras (who in so doing, ultimately provoked the schism they were so diligently seeking to avert).'

The above conclusion is based upon the evidence of the Mahāsaṃghika Sariputraparipṛcchā-sūtra (translated into Chinese between 317 and 420 AD but probably composed around AD 300), and the Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya itself, regarded by numerous scholars as the most ancient stratum of all the Vinaya literature. According to the Sariputraparipṛcchā-sūtra, the schism resulted from the objection of the future Mahāsaṃghikas to an attempt made by the future Sthaviras, to increase the number of Vinaya rules (earlier developed and codified by Kāśyapa at the alleged first council of Rājaigrha). While the majority of the Saṅgha who preferred to maintain the old version styled themselves Mahāsaṃghika, those who chose the new version containing the additional rules took the name Sthavira.

It is significant that the older version of the Vinaya favoured by the future Mahāsaṃghikas as represented in the Sariputraparipṛcchā-sūtra,

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1. In his Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques, Bareau maintains that the laxity did not emerge until after the Vaisali council while Demiéville holds that the laxity inherent in the future Mahasamghikas was evident at the time of the council. 'A propos du concile de Vaisali', T'uong Pao, 40, 1951, pp.239-96.
and referred to above, is confirmed by the Mahāsāṃghika Prātimokṣa-sūtra which presents the shortest list of offences as compared to that of the Sthaviravādins and other early Buddhist groups.¹ Not only does this brevity probably reflect its 'high antiquity rather than simple laxity',² but the added number of disciplinary rules incorporated in the Sthavira Prātimokṣa, referred to in the Sāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra also shows the tendency of the Therās to preoccupy themselves with the formal aspects of monasticism. This attitude, coupled with a slavish dependence on the letter rather than the actual meaning of the Dhamma, is clearly evident from Dīpavamsa V, 32-28: 'The bhikkhus of the Mahāsangha schism settled a doctrine contrary to the (orthodox) sāsana.'³ Splitting up the original corpus of the canon (māla-saṅghaham), they made a different collection. They transposed the suttas which belonged to one place to another … Forsaking the original rules regarding nouns, genders, composition, and the embellishment of style, - they changed all that.'

Hsiian Tsang, who imbibed the teachings of the Mahāsāṃghika school at Dhānyakaṭaka,⁴ connects the origin of the school with the alleged first council held at Rājaγraha, and not only implies that the schism took place

3. cf. Dīpavamsa V, 52, where the Theravāda canon is said to represent the sāsana of the Jina 'without omission or addition.'
4. Dhānyakaṭaka = Dharanikota; according to the Mahānaghasūtra, a Mahāyāna text translated into Chinese between 414 and 421 AD. Dhānyakaṭaka which was in the kingdom of the Sātavāhanas was situated on the south bank of the Kṛṣṇa (Kistna). E. Lamotte: Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien, p.382. 'The discovery of a Pallava inscription at Amaravati, which calls the place Dhānyaghaṭa and of numerous Andhra coins in the ruins of Dharanikota a mile to the west of Amaravati, shows that the ancient name of the place was Dhānyakaṭaka. K.R. Subramaniam: Buddhist Remains in Andhra, pp.37; 51-52.
as a result of a dispute over doctrinal issues, but also clearly states that the Mahāsaṃghika scriptures were compiled by both monks and lay disciples: '... the common folk with the holy disciples came to the assembly; the foolish and the wise alike flocked together and collected the Sūtra-piṭaka, the Vinaya-piṭaka, the Abhidharma-piṭaka' And because in the assembly both common folk and the holy personages (Arhats) were mixed together, it was called "the assembly of the great congregation". (Mahāsaṃgha).

The Vinaya of all the schools comprises two parts - the Vibhaṅga (the commentary on the ancient confession rules of the Prātimokṣa) and the Skandhaka (the exposition of the Buddhist monastic rules). The researches of Frauwallner have shown that the Vinaya of all the schools originally contained at the beginning of the skandhaka, a portion of the biography of the Buddha from his birth to the beginning of his teaching activity, and that the concluding portion of the skandhaka was formed by an account of the death of the Buddha and the account of the two earliest councils. This means that the core of the Skandhaka, the exposition of Buddhist monastic rules, was originally enclosed by a biography of the Buddha. In the course of time the biography at the beginning of the skandhaka became independent and was further developed by the various schools, while in most cases the tale of the passing away of the Buddha was cut loose to form an independent sūtra. Since the Mahāsaṃghika school also drew its materials from the same source, the original skandhaka encased in the biography of the Buddha must belong to a period prior to the

1. S. Beal: (trans.) Buddhist Records of the Western World, II, pp.164-65. cf. Dipavamsa V, 36-37: 'Removing a portion of the sutta and the profound Vinaya, they made another Sutta-Vinaya similar to the original; rejecting so many (texts) - Parivāra exegesis, Abhidhammapakarama, Paṭisambhidā-Nidāsa and a portion of the Jātaka, they made other ones'.
first schism separating the Mahāsaṃghikas from the Theravādins. On the other hand, it must have been composed after the Council of Vaiśāli which is narrated in all the recensions.

The process of 'crumbling away' which is noticeable in the Vinaya of all the schools, and the subsequent development of independent biographies of the Buddha by the various schools based upon the biography enclosing the old skandhaka text, shows that these later biographies, e.g. Nidānakathā, Lalitavistara, and Mahāvastu, cannot under any circumstances be regarded as primary sources. Furthermore, the researches of Frauwallner have demonstrated that even the biography which formed the framework of the old skandhaka text is not authentic old tradition, but was created by the author of the skandhaka itself, about one hundred years after the Parinirvāṇa.¹ These later biographies may therefore be 'utilized only in so far as we can recognise in them borrowings from earlier tradition.'²

We have already mentioned that the Vinaya of the Mahāsaṃghika school probably represents the oldest stratum of all the Vinaya literature. However, a comparison between the Pāli Vinaya (the most complete Vinaya) and the Mahāvastu, which claims to be the Vinaya of the Lokottaravādins (a branch of the Mahāsaṃghika school) shows that while the former which begins with the Awakening and includes the First Sermon and conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, is mainly concerned with rules and regulations relating to monastic life, the latter contains only a few rules pertaining to ordination. The main content of the Mahāvastu is the biography of the Buddha, profusely adorned with miracles from the time of his birth to the first conversions and the rise of the monastic community, numerous jātakas and avadānas (edifying tales), interwoven with dogmatic sūtras.

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¹ E. Frauwallner: op.cit., p.163.
² E. Frauwallner: op.cit., p.164.
It is difficult to determine the date of the Mahāvastu from the way in which it is composed; several 'circumstances indicate great antiquity, notably the language itself, and the fact that the work belongs to the Lokottaravāda school.' However, it is clear that the inclusion of jātakas and avadānas in the Mahāvastu reflects a 'popular' element in the development of the Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya, which is conspicuously absent in the Vinaya of the Theravāda tradition. The text with its docetic glorification of the Buddha, is an expression of popular Buddhism with its emphasis on saddhā (faith) and the ceremonial worship of the Lord, rather than a manual of monastic behaviour.

Whether this Vinaya, which includes jātakas, avadānas and dogmatic sūtras, is the work of 'those bhikkhus (in collaboration with the 'common folk' of Hsuan Tsang's account) who 'not knowing what was taught in the

1. M. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature, II, p.246. The nucleus of the work is old, and probably originated as far back as the second century BC; but references to the Huns, to the Chinese language and script, and the designation of the astrologer as Hora-pāthaka, suggest that the Mahāvastu was 'enlarged in the fourth century AD and perhaps still later by additions and interpolations.' Winternitz: op.cit., p.247. As the work hardly gives any rules of the Buddhist community, Keith holds that either the Vinaya itself was still preserved by the school in some older form of speech, or that it originally followed on the Mahāvastu, as we have it, but for some reason or other has perished. '. . . it is clear that it would be absurd to suppose that the Lokottaravādins were content to regard our Mahāvastu as representing the Vinaya of their school, even if we admit that the extent of the Mahāvastu suggests that they were lacking in a sense of proportion.' Keith: 'A Note on the Mahāvastu', in R.C. Law's A Study of the Mahāvastu, p.ii. It is significant, however, that the Mahāsaṃghika tradition knows of no separate Vinaya of the various schools, but only of one 'Vinaya of the Mahāsaṃghika', a work which is preserved in Chinese translation (Mo-ho-seng-ch'i lu) - See B. Nanjio: Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka, No. 119.

2. cf. Mahāvastu II, 362, which refers to the honouring of the Buddha 'with flowers, garlands, incense, flags and banners, music and ointment', and reflects the spirit of the Mahāyāna; cf. also III, 137, ff. according to which the beams radiating from the Buddha's smile illuminate the entire Buddha-field (Buddha-kṣetra).
exposition and what was not taught', who 'set aside some portions of difficult passages', and 'settled a different meaning in connection with the discourses (bhanitam)', creating 'another sutta and another vinaya', referred to in the Dīpavamsa, is not known. But the earliest expression of Buddhism in art, occurring in the bas-reliefs of Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Amaravati, and dating from about the end of the Second Century BC, do not reflect a monk-made scripture with dogmas cast into categories and formulas, but a 'popular' form of religion based on folk forms of piety and centred around the worship of the Buddha.

The essential pagan character of this early art, to which the term 'Early Classic' is applied, appears not only in its 'fearless happiness untinged by puritan misgiving or by mystic intuition, but also in the purely representative and realistic technique' adopted by the craftsmen. Moreover, this art, reflecting an awareness of the material world, appears to have been for people whose real faith rested, in large part, on the worship of nature spirits, e.g. yakṣas and nāgas etc., and for whom the validity of the world could not be suppressed.

The puritanical and anti-hedonistic attitude of Pali Buddhism, according to which all empirical existence is characterised by the three lakkhanas - anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering), and anatta (not self), stands in marked contrast to the Buddhism reflected in early classic art,

1. cf. Dīpavamsa V, 34-36; and 49.
2. The term 'Early Classic' is applied to all the artistic production of the Sunga and Andhra dynasties i.e. of Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Amaravati, as it 'marks a gradual emergence from an archaic phase of expression towards final maturity.' This art 'retains the vigour and directness of archaic, as it prophesies the sophistication and ripeness of the final development of Indian art.' B. Rowland: The Art and Architecture of India, p.48.
characterized, as we have seen, by a kinship with nature. The references, in the Pāli canon, to the common or average man (puṭhujjana), for whom this popular form of Buddhism illustrating jātakas and scenes from the life of the Buddha, would have special appeal, also emphasise the difference between the 'brāhmaṇas and brāmanas' who, from the Buddhist point of view, are represented as genuinely pursuing a righteous life, and the general mass of mankind who are not members of the Buddhist community. The ordinary man, we are told, 'is addicted to pleasure' and is at the mercy of his senses (Majjhima Nikāya I, 239); he is 'uncontrolled in the six-fold sense sphere and takes his fill of the five sensual pleasures with ravenous delight (Saṁyutta Nikāya IV, 196); he is greedy (Suttanipāta 706) and lustful (Suttanipāta 816); he dislikes the sight of disease, old age or death (Aṅguttara Nikāya I, 147); when old age comes upon him, he mourns, and pines, and is tormented by sorrow (Aṅguttara Nikāya III, 54). All this is because he is lacking in wisdom, and in knowledge of the truth. As this was the Theravāda view of mankind in general, the conclusion of Sharma that the Buddhist Saṅgha, like the Greek oligarchies, was based on a belief in the 'unwisdom of the multitude', is probably justified. 2

We have noticed in the preceding pages, that on the death of the Buddha the Dhamma-Vinaya passed into the custody of his disciples, and

1. cf. Cullavagga VI, 3, 2, according to which the bhikkhus were forbidden to have 'imaginative' pictures (paṭibhāna cīttam) of men and women painted on the walls of the vihāras and were permitted only representations of wreaths and creepers. According to the 41st paṭīṭṭīya (offence requiring repentance) of the Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga, the bhikkhunīs were forbidden to go and see such paintings (cf. Sutta vibhaṅga II, 298 where a picture gallery (cīttāgāra) belonging to King Pajjiṇḍī of Kosala is mentioned). It is possible, however, that the expression paṭibhāna cīttam occurring in Cullavagga VI, 3, 2, means suggestive; in the introductory story to the 26th paṭīṭṭīya it certainly means indecent. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg: Vinaya Texts, III, p.172, note.

2. J.P. Sharma: Republics in Ancient India, p.242. Whether this description of the ordinary man applies to the lay disciple outside the pale of the Vinaya and professing only the Three-Refuge creed is, however, uncertain; but it is unlikely that the Dhamma with its Abhidhamma interpretation representing a kind of exegetic philosophy and reduced to aggregates and categories, would appeal to the lay disciple.
at least one school, the Theravāda, perpetuated a monkish character in its own canon.¹ The 'cloistering' of the Dhamma-Vinaya by the Theravādins is evident from the Pātimokkha (pācittiya 4) according to which, apart from general ethical principles and rules of right conduct, no detailed exposition of the doctrine could be given to an unordained person. Householders (gahapati) and devotees (upāsaka) had no right to enter the congregational Uposatha assembly which was purely a monastic institution. These injunctions and restrictions, however, appear contrary to the character of the teachings of the Buddha as described and inculcated in the Pāli scripture itself. In Dīgha Nikāya II, 100, and S芳gutta Nikāya V, 153, the Buddha declares: 'I have preached the Dhamma without making any distinction between the exoteric and esoteric; there is no closed fist of a teacher (ācariyamupphi) in the Dhamma of the Tathāgata'.² In Anguttara Nikāya I, 283, the Buddha says: 'Bhikkhus, there are three things which shine openly and not secretly³ ... the disc of the moon shines openly and not secretly ... the disc of the sun ... and the Dhamma-Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata shines openly and not secretly'.⁴

The tendencies therefore, of the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṃghika as reflected in their respective Vinaya, appear to be quite divergent — 'one monkish and conservative, adhering to the Lord as sattha, and to the

¹ Although each of the early schools was supposed to have had its own recension of the Tripițaka, only the Theravāda canon is complete, while substantial sections of the recensions of half a dozen others have been preserved. A.K. Warder: Indian Buddhism, pp.5-6.
² cf. Jātaka II, 221; 250; Mīm, 144.
³ vivatanti virocanti no paṭicchāvanā.
⁴ The evidence in the Pāli literature shows that the large bulk of the Buddha's followers were among the laity and the fact that one was still a layman does not seem to have been an obstacle to understanding the Dhamma. M. Marasinghe: Gods in Early Buddhism, p.20, note 4.
sāsana as discipline and practice; the other more liberal and popular, less strict in the practical part of the religion and favouring those forms of piety in which the popular mind could agree.  

Epigraphic evidence indicates that it was not the Theravādins themselves but adherents of other schools who were associated with the early centres of Buddhist art located at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi and Amaravati. From the fact that Fa-hsien (5th Century AD) found the Vinaya of the Mahāsaṃghika school at Pātaliputra, and I-Ts'ing's (7th Century AD) statement that in his time the Mahāsaṃghikas were found mostly in Magadha, and a few in Lāṭa and Sindhu, it would seem that there were two groups - one located at Pātaliputra with its adherents scattered over northern and north-western India, while the second was concentrated in the south, with its chief centre in the Guntur district on the banks of the Kistna. 

Although the Pali literature represents the two great kings of the Buddha's own day, Pāsenadi of Kosala and Bimbisāra of Magadha, as

2. A pillar inscription at Bharhut shows that the Sāvatīnikas (Sutāṇṭika) who formed a branch of the Sarvāstivada school, were active in that region during the Śunga period. Lüders: List of Brahmi Inscriptions, No. 797; inscriptions associate the Haimavatas, a branch of the Mahāsaṃghika school (Lüders: op. cit., Nos. 156; 157; 158; 655; 656) and Sāvatīnikas (Lüders: op. cit., Nos.635; 352; 319) with Sanchi during the Śunga period. Amaravati was a Buddhist centre during Mauryan times, as attested by a fragmentary pillar inscription, most probably of Aśoka. Ep. Ind., 35, pp. 40-43. From both literary and archaeological evidence, Amaravati seems to have been a centre of the Mahāsaṃghika school; the adherents of this school and its branches, e.g. Bahusrutiya (S. Konow: Kharoshthi Inscriptions, p. 122; Ep. Ind., 20, p.24; and 31, p162), were centred around Nāgārjunikonda; Caitika, mainly around Amaravati (Lüders: op. cit., Nos. 1223; 1248; 1263; 1250); Nasik and Junnar (Lüders: op. cit., Nos. 1130, and 1171); Pārvatāla and Aparādālā around Amaravati (Ep. Ind., 24, p.259), Nāgārjunikonda (Ep. Ind., 20, pp. 17, 19, 21), Ghantaşālā (Ep. Ind., 27, p.4) and Alluru (Ann. Rep., A.S.I., 1923-24, p.93). cf. E. Lamotte: Histoire du Bouddhisme, pp. 578-581.
sympathetically inclined towards the Buddha, his teaching, and his community of monks, a serious and systematic effort to make the life of the state conform to the principles of the Dhamma, appears to have been made only during the reign of Aśoka in the 3rd Century BC. However, that the ruler of an empire embracing the major part of India should have been entirely convinced of the merits of Buddhist social and ethical principles, so as to dedicate himself to their practical realization, presupposes the growth in influence and public esteem of the Buddhist Sāṅgha.

Archaeological and literary evidence indicates that Aśoka was responsible for propagating the Dhamma not only throughout his vast empire, but also for appointing missionaries and envoys to convey the message of the Dhamma behind the Mauryan empire. His edicts testify to his association with two centres of the Mahāsāṃghika school, at Kākanādabōta (the location of the great stūpa at Sanchi),¹ and Amaravati² on the Kistna river. The earliest stūpa at Sanchi is attributed to the time of Aśoka, while a stūpa at Bodhgaya is also supposed to have been erected by him. Hsüan Tsang's account mentions a number of monuments erected by Aśoka, indicating that at least until the 7th Century AD, Aśoka's building activities were remembered and honoured.³ According to the Divyāvadāna, Aśoka spent eleven years as his father's viceroy at Ujjain, the capital of the province of Avanti in which the important Buddhist centres of Vidiśā (Modern Bhīṣa in Madhya Pradesh) and Kākanādabōta were situated. The account in Divyavāsena XII, 35 ff., stating that the Buddhist mission to Ceylon (Tambapāṇḍ) undertaken during the time of Aśoka, started from Vidiśā, further

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1. cf. Sanchi (Minor) rock edict of Aśoka, referring to schisms in the Order.
2. A fragment of a pillar found at Amaravati contains five lines of an inscription, which has been attributed by several scholars to Aśoka. Ep. Ind., 35, pp.40 ff. cf. reference to 'Andhras' in R.E.XIII.
indicates the emperor's association with that great centre of Buddhism.

It is significant that in view of the fact, Asoka's edicts very clearly express his great respect and reverence for the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, there appears to be very little which may be described as specifically Buddhist doctrine in the emperor's exposition of the Dhamma. For example, the Dhamma, according to Asoka, is 'good behaviour towards slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, generosity towards friends and acquaintances, towards śramanas and brāhmaṇas, and abstention from killing living beings'. (Yith Rock Edict). An analysis of the exposition of the Dhamma occurring in the edicts of Asoka clearly shows that the most frequently mentioned items are obedience to parents, generosity towards śramanas and brahmaṇas, and good behaviour towards friends and relatives. This 'catalogue of social responsibilities' corresponds closely with the well-known list in the 'laymen's code of ethics', the Sigalavāda sutta (Dīgha Nikāya III, 180-193). Coupled with the 'prominence of the injunction to avoid taking life, this gives an unmistakably Buddhist flavour to the Asokan Dhamma.' The important point to bear in mind, however, is that this is laymen's Buddhism; 'it is not Dhamma as doctrine, or philosophical analysis of the human situation for that is the concern of the professionals, the bhikkhus.'

1. cf. R.E. III: 'It is good to be obedient to one's mother and father, friends and relatives, to be generous to brāhmaṇas and śramanas; it is good not to kill living beings ...'; R.E. IV, according to which the 'forms of the practice of Dhamma' are abstention from killing, non-injury to living beings, deference to relatives, brāhmaṇas and śramanas, obedience to mother and father, and obedience to elders. B.G. Gokhale: Asoka Maurya, pp.152 and 156. cf. also P.E. VII; in P.E. II Asoka identifies Dhamma with 'having few faults and many good deeds, mercy, charity, truthfulness and purity.'

2. T. Ling: The Buddha, p.162.

The Dhamma expounded by Aśoka throughout his vast empire then, represented an ethical system whose primary characteristic principles are obedience, non-violence, and generosity, which also constituted the essence of Buddhist morality for laymen.\(^1\) As a result of Aśoka's own tolerance and injunction that all sectaries learn the lore of one another, honour each other, and promote the essential doctrine of all sects,\(^2\) Buddhism came to be much more closely and intimately associated with popular religious practices than had formerly been the case. The merger of various strands of popular religion stimulated by the tolerance they enjoyed during Aśoka's reign, in Buddhism, is most evident in the art of the Śuṅga and Andhra periods, following the age of the Mauryas.\(^3\)

The popularisation of Buddhism as reflected in early classic art of the Śuṅga and Andhra periods, was based very largely on the legend of the Buddha. Warder observes that the doctrine itself could be presented symbolically through this legend, but, however far the wandering teachers of the Dharma went expounding the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, they evidently found that it was 'generally easier to make the impression on their multi-racial audiences by means of narrative rather

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1. Aśoka's awareness, however, that the essential features of Buddhist practice as portrayed in the Pāli canon included morality as well as mental discipline, is reflected in the Bhabru-Bairat edict, in which various Buddhist texts are prescribed for both members of the Sangha and lay disciples.

2. R.E. XII.

3. The public promotion of the Dhamma by Aśoka and the consequent suppression of what he believed was not in accordance with the Dhamma, must have incurred the animosity of those sections of the community whose interests were not compatible with the Dhamma. The survival of Buddhism after the decline of the Mauryan dynasty within a few decades of the death of Aśoka, was partly due to its increasingly popular basis and 'marriage' to folk religion, and also partly due to a strong economic motive on the part of the members of the Buddhist monastic community. In spite of the generous donations to the Buddhist community made by Aśoka and the Buddhist kings of Ceylon, the major economic support, on a day-to-day basis, would have had to come from the urban population. By adopting a tolerant attitude towards and absorbing popular beliefs and practices, Buddhism succeeded in averting the 'danger of the subversion of the Sangha by the all-pervasive popular cults of India, and particularly by the bhāgavata cult'. T. Ling: op.cit., p.173.
than dialogues of the *Tripitaka*.\(^1\) The greatest of these narratives was the story of the Buddha himself, and the more wonderful it could be made, the more astonishing its miracles, the more effective it seems to have been.\(^2\)

The art of the Sunga and Andhra periods illustrating *jātakas* and scenes from the Buddha's life then, is really the popular art of the time adapted to Buddhist requirements. However, it shows its special Buddhist character in one respect: the figure of the Buddha in his last incarnation at Gotama is nowhere represented. For example, at Bharhut, an inscription states that Elāpatra on his knees before a 'tree and altar', and Ajātasatru kneeling before the *paduka* or altar' are 'worshipping the Buddha' (*bhagavato vādate*). The façade of the middle lintel of the eastern gate at Sanchi illustrates the Buddha's departure on horseback from the royal palace (*Mahābhīnīsākramaṇa*); the embroidered rug which serves as the saddle for his steed, is however, empty. A medallion at Bodhgaya depicts his first meditation, but empty again is the seat before which the traditional ploughman drives his plough. Some panels at Amaravati illustrate his birth and presentation to the sage Asita; but only his footprints - 'a direct ideographic transcription of the formula which respectfully designated a person\(^3\) - mark the swaddling clothes on which in one place the gods, and in another the old ṛṣi, are said to have received him in their arms.

There is really no express tradition apparent in either the Pāli texts or in the extant recensions of the canon of other Indian Buddhist schools, prohibiting the making of anthropomorphic images of the Buddha which might account for the representation of the ṭathāgata only by aniconic symbols

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2. When Buddhism was popularised outside the circle of *brāhmans* and *brāhmaṇas* who were accustomed to philosophical criticism, the appeal to the uneducated by means of marvels and miracles was sought and adopted. Warder: *loc. cit.*
in the early art. However, the Introduction to the Kālingabodhi Jātaka enunciates what may be interpreted as a prohibition of anthropomorphic images of the Buddha and may well have been current in Buddhist circles at a much earlier date than can positively be ascribed to the Jātaka text. Here Ānanda wishes to set up in the Jetavana a substitute for the Buddha, so that people could make their offerings of wreaths and garlands as pūjaniyāṭṭhāna, not only when the Lord was in residence but also when he was preaching the Dhamma elsewhere. The Buddha asks how many sacred places (cetiya) there are. 'Three', replies Ānanda, with apparent reference to contemporary non-Buddhist usage: 'Those of the body (sārivaka), those of association (pāribhogaka), those prescribed (uddesika)'. The Buddha rejects the use of bodily relics on the ground that such relics can be venerated only after the Parinibbāna and also the 'prescribed' symbols as they are groundless and fanciful. Only a Mahābodhi-rakkha (Great Tree of Wisdom) that has been associated with a Buddha is fit to be a cetiya, whether the Buddha be still living or absolutely extinguished, i.e. dead.

Certain passages in the Pāli literature may be regarded as corroborating the injunction of the Buddha represented in the Kālingabodhi-jātaka. For example in Majjhīma Nikāya I, 140-41, the Buddha describes himself as untraceable, unknowable, past finding out (ananuvejjo), even here and now; those who see him in any form, do not see him at all. In Suttanipāta

1. The word cetiya (Sans. caitya) occurs in Buddhist literature as a general name for any sanctuary, e.g. stūpa, vihāra, tree, memorial stone, holy relic, object or place, or even an image. It may indicate a shrine of any character for the purpose of worship or honour, or esteem and regard. B.C. Law: 'Cetiya in Buddhist literature', Studia Indo-Iranica, 1931, pp.42-48. Kern, therefore, rightly observes that 'all edifices having the character of a sacred monument are caityas, but not all caityas are edifices'. Manual of Buddhism, p.91.

2. Jātaka No. 479; P.T.S. IV, 228 ff. cf. Mahābodhiyogā, p.59. The introductory portion (pañcupamavatthu), i.e. the story of the present time relating the particular occasion in the Buddha's life which led him to narrate the jātaka, probably received its present form in the 5th Cent. AD. Winternitz, however, observes that so much has remained unchanged in India throughout the centuries, that the picture of civilization in the jātakas may be regarded as very 'ancient'. History of Indian Literature, II, p.156.
455-456, the Buddha declares: 'I am neither a brahmin, nor a rājā's son, nor am I a trader, nor anybody ... I am a veritable naught (ahiśca), ... robed in the wanderer's garb I wander homeless ... it is useless to ask my family name (gotta)'. Dhammapada 179 describes him as the Buddha whose range is infinite (anantagocaraḥ) and who leaves no trace (apadohī) by which he can be followed. The futility of imagining the Buddha in any conceivable form after the Parinibbāna¹ is emphatically expressed in Dīgha Nikāya I, 46, where the Buddha declares: 'The form of the Tathāgata stands before you, but the roots of existence are cut off.² So long as this form lasts, gods and men behold him; on the dissolution of the body at the end of this life, neither gods nor men shall see him.' Finally, considering the contempt with which the Buddha regarded the physical form (e.g. Dīgha Nikāya II, 293, where he advises his disciples to reflect on the body 'from the soles of the feet upwards to the crown of the head as something enclosed in skin and full of impurities'),³ it is hardly likely that he would have approved of the worship of images and icons.

The conviction of the Buddha was that after the dissolution of the body and psychic complex, he becomes or does not become, nor can both these qualities be affirmed or denied of him;⁴ having reached the unconditioned from where there is no return, he has become 'profound,

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1. Itivuttaka 38-39 distinguishes between the two Nibbānas - present (i.e. nibbāna) with some residue of the factors of existence, and ultimate (i.e. parinibbāna) without any residue of the factors of existence.
2. Ucchinnam-bhava nettiko Tathāgatassa Kāyo titthati.
3. uddham pādatalā adho kēsasattakā taca-pariyantam pūrām nāṇappakārassā asucino. cf. Sn. 835, where the body is described as full of excrements (muttaṭāsīsa pūrām).
incomprehensible and unfathomable'.

Says the Buddha in the Pārīyānavagga of the Suttaπāta 1076: 'There is no definition (dimension) of the one who has gone home (attham gata) when all factors (dharma, i.e. of existence), are abolished, all means of definition (measure) are removed'.

The representation of the Buddha by aniconic symbols which constitute a complete artistic vocabulary in the sculptures of the Śunga and Andhra periods, is not a Buddhist invention but probably represents the survival of an older tradition, the image becoming a psychological necessity only in the bhakti-vāda. Coomaraswamy not only traces the origin of these symbols adopted by the Buddhists, from their representation in Buddhist iconography through the aniconic period of the Brahmanical Vedas to the age of the Rg Veda itself, but also claims that they represent a universal Indian symbolism and set of theological concepts.

1. SN IV, 377: Tathāgato gambhīro appameyyo dappiyagāho.
2. The Pāli expression attham gata derived from Sans. astam gata occurring in RV X, 14, 8 and CU VI, 14, meaning 'gone home', obviously refers to the attainment of Nirvāṇa. It is significant that although the sentences 'He has gone home', and 'He has attained Nirvāṇa' employ the same parts of speech in exactly the same syntactical order, metaphysically there is a world of difference between the two. The first sentence describes an activity accompanied, as far as worldly beings are concerned, by the delusion of individual existence, while the second indicates the final extinction of that delusion. If we take the words of the sentence 'He has gone home' occurring in Sn. 1076 literally, we shall be first forced 'to concede the separate real existence of the person attaining, secondly, the object obtained, and thirdly, of the act of attainment, a position in diametrical opposition to orthodox teaching'. Bhikshu Sangharakshita: A Survey of Buddhism, p.246.
3. The cult of bhakti denotes a religious mood in which the self is surrendered in abnegating adoration to one who is thought of as a saviour or lord, and implies the invocation of his grace by prayer, worship and propitiation. The earliest reference to devotion to, and worship of, a personal god may be traced to the Āstādhyāyī of Pāṇini (5th Century BC), in which the word Vāsudevaka occurs in the sense of a 'person whose object of bhakti is Vāsudeva'. It is generally agreed that bhakti here probably refers to a sense of religious adoration. H.C. Raychoudhuri: Early History of the Vaishnava Sect, pp.23-24. However, as the word also occurs in the same text in connection with cakes, the possibility of the meaning 'fondness' is not altogether precluded. D.C. Sircar: 'Vaishnavism', The Age of Imperial Unity, p.432.
The fundamental characteristics of Buddhist symbolism which predominate in the earlier iconography continue throughout the later imagery, but are subordinated to the 'human' icon. In neither case does the symbol (pratika) function biologically but serves to express an idea only, the resemblance to anything as apparent to the eye being meaningless. Whether the Buddha is symbolised in vegetative, theriomorphic or anthropomorphic form, the ontology is the same, for in terms of the Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, the One is not merely manuṣya-laukika but also sarva-laukika, not merely of human, but of Universal Form.¹

From a scrutiny of the early Buddhist sculptures and the absence of any positive definition, it may be assumed that the class of 'associated' i.e. pārībhoga symbols included aniconic representations such as the tree (vrkṣa-caitya), wheel (cakra), footprints (pāduka) and other geometric, vegetative and even theriomorphic forms actually met with in the early art. Most of the symbols, like the tree, had older application than those found in Buddhist art and came into use in connection with the establishment of local caityas as objects of reverence. These caityas were regarded as substitutes for pilgrimage to the original sites, the various symbols serving to differentiate between the several events of the Buddha's life.²

It is not certain whether the figure of an elephant carved on the Kalsi and Dhauli rocks bearing the inscriptions of Aśoka, and described respectively as the 'Best Elephant' (gajatāme) and the 'White One' (seto),

¹. I, 27: 'He who is in the sun is of corresponding form. For he corresponds to all forms; one should worship him in (all) these forms' (sarvāni rupāni tam pratirūpa ity upāditya); cf. III, 32: 'This the Satyakirtas say: 'As to the divinity whom we worship, we know one form to be in the cow, one in the beast of burden, one in the elephant, one in man, one in all creatures; such is the omni-aspectuality of the divinity'', and ŚB.X, 5, 2, 20: 'As he is approached, so he becomes' (yathopāsate tad eva bhavati).
². Coomaraswamy: op. cit., p.5.
is a symbolic representation of the Buddha. The figure of an elephant also appears to have been depicted in the Girnar rock, as the label refers to 'the all-white elephant named the bringer of happiness for the whole world'.

We have already referred to Asoka's association with Buddhism and his profound respect for the Buddha. If the figure of the elephant carved on the Kalsi and Dhauli rocks and referred to in the Girnar label inscription, however, is recognised as a representation of the Buddha, it would be difficult to explain why the emperor should have chosen the symbol of an elephant which occurs only in the scene of the dream of Maya in early classical art, rather than the popular symbol of the tree or the wheel, which are not only closely associated with Buddhist doctrine, but are also found to be objects of worship in the art of the following age.

On the other hand, the figure of the elephant may represent the vāhana (mount) of the Vedic god Indra (whose association with rain is well known) - Airāvata (a cloud) - described in the Mahābhārata as 'chief of elephants' (gajendra: IV, 3,26); 'King of elephants' (gajarāja: I, 18, 40); and 'large and white' in I, 227, 29; VII, 105, 26.

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1. It might be added that there is no direct evidence that the sculptural representation of other animals, e.g. bull and lion, all carved in-the-round, and serving as capitals of Asokan monolithic columns, were connected specifically with the Buddha or his doctrine. However, it is not impossible that the Asokan animal capitals were sculptural representations of the Buddha, as the epithet Sākyasthāna 'lion of the Sākyas' is frequently applied to the Buddha throughout the Pāli literature, while the title narāsaṁba, literally, 'man-bull', i.e. lord of men, occurs in Sn. 684 and 995.


3. N.R. Ray believes that the Dhauli elephant actually symbolises 'His Imperial Majesty King Asoka presenting himself in quiet dignity before the people of Kalinga ...' 'Mauryan Art', The Age of Imperial Unity, p.508.

4. According to Hopkins, in the epics Sveta is particularly mentioned as 'guardian of the quarters' (dikṣāla), cf. Rāmāyana V,37,65, where the guardians of the quarters are described as disāgajas, diggajas, etc. and although Sveta occurs as the name of a nâga, demon, etc., as 'an apppellative it describes the white elephant of Indra'. Epic Mythology, p.17.
The dream of Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, referred to above, is related in the Pāli Nīdānakathā, Sanskrit Lalitavistara, and hybrid Sanskrit Mahāvastu, which as we have already recognised, represent the biography of the Buddha as it was developed by the various schools, and which was based upon the old skandhaka text.

According to the Lalitavistara (55), a white elephant of the chaddanta (six-tusk) breed approached Māyā in her sleep and entered her womb from her right side.¹ In the Bharhut sculpture the mother is shown in the centre of the medallion, as sleeping on the couch, and a large elephant approaching her from above. The label 'Bhagavato ukṛanti'², i.e. Descent of the Lord, is inscribed above the medallion. It is significant however, that in the sculpture of Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati, the animal depicted in the scene of the dream of Māyā is an ordinary elephant with two tusks.

The belief in the existence of a species of elephant with four tusks is common in Epic and Jaina mythology. Mahābhārata III, 42, 39 ff. describes Airāvata who stands guard at Indra's city as 'bright (subhira) with four tusks, huge as Kailāsa, and victorious' (vijayinam). The dream of Māyā in which a white elephant approaches and enters her womb also has a parallel in the biography of Mahāvīra: the first object seen by his mother, Trisāḷā, in her dream, was an 'elephant with four tusks, looking like radiant drops of dew, or a heap of pearls, or the sea of milk ...'.³

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1. dakṣināyāh kuskōv avakramād. cf. Mahāvastu II, 8: 'Entering her body in the form of a noble elephant, light of step, flawless of limb, gleaming like snow-white silver, with six tusks ...' and Jātaka I, 50 according to which Māyā dreamed that the elephant walked three times from left to right around her and went into her womb, having hit her right side'.

2. Ukṛanti used in the Bharhut label inscription stands for Sans. avakṛanti and Pālí-Prākrit ukkanti or ukkanti. It has often been translated as 'conception or commencement of maternity', but the word actually means 'descent', i.e. descent into the womb of the mother. cf. Barua and Sinha: Bharhut Inscriptions, p.52, and Lüders: op.cit., p.89.

THE DREAM OF MAYA
a. Amaravati 1st cent. AD
b. Bharhut late 2nd cent. BC
In his *Bodhisattvavadāna Kalpalatā* (I, 665, 7), Kṣemendra mentions the dream of Māyā, but is silent about the six tusks; however, he describes Indra’s elephant Airavata as six-tusked. The *Mahābhārata* (XI, 5, 14-15) refers to a brahmin who falls into a well or pit in a forest, and sees an elephant with six mouths (or faces: *sadvakrtaṃ*). Vidura explains to Dhṛtarāṣṭra that the forest in that parable represents transmigratory existence in the world (*samsāra*), the well is the human body, the elephant the year, and the six faces are the six seasons.¹

As the six-tusked elephant is unknown in Indian fauna, Rajendralal Mitra believes that it is a ‘reminiscence of the palaeozoic Indian hippopotamus, an animal of elephant proportions with six large projecting teeth’.²

It is interesting that at Bharhut, Sanchi, and even at Borobudur, the mother of the Buddha is represented as lying on her right and exposing her left side, whereas in the art of Gandhara she is always depicted as lying on her left side. At Amaravati also, she is shown lying on her left side.³ It is worth mentioning that the author of the *Mahāvastu* (II, 6) certainly did not know of the entering of the elephant by the right side; he says expressly that the Māyā ‘laid down her most excellent, i.e. beautiful body on its right side...’.⁴

In view of the fact that one of the centres of the Mahāsaṃghika school is known to have been located at Amaravati, it is expected that the artists

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4. *Sa dāniḥ dakṣiṇeṇa pārāvane parīvāsi saṃvirvaram.*
would have adhered to the teachings of that school, and that the representa-
tion of the dream of Māyā would correspond with the description given in
the Mahāvastu. ¹ This discrepancy, however, may be explained if the
passages in the Mahāvastu dealing with the birth of the Buddha, are
ascribed to a date later than the Amaravati sculptures in which this
scene occurs.

It is possible that, as in the Theravāda view expressed in
Anguttara Nikāya II, 244, the 'luxurious posture' (Kāmabhogiseyya), i.e.
lying on the left side, was adopted by human beings addicted to sensual
pleasures, the Sautrāntika and Haimavata² artists of Bharhut and Sanchi
shared the Theravāda view, and considered such a position improper for the
mother of the Buddha. The artists at Amaravati and Gandhara, on the other
hand, who represented the mother lying on her left side in the scene of
the dream of Māyā, seem to have been either unaware of, or deliberately did
not share, the Theravāda belief that the Kāmabhogiseyya posture implied
devotion to sensual pleasures and therefore was not suited to the queen.³
That this was certainly the case with the artists of Gandhara, is indicated
by the Lalitavistara, a Sarvāstivāda work with which the adherents of

¹. According to the Sākyamunibuddhacarita, the Mahāsāṃghikas called
their biography of the Buddha 'Mahāvastu' which suggests that not
only the Lokottaravāda but also the parent Mahāsāṃghika school had
such a text, though it has not survived. A.K. Warder: Indian
Buddhism, p.334.

². Epigraphic evidence as well as the account of the Chinese pilgrims
indicate that in the centuries of the Christian era, monks of different
Hinayāna sects, and both Hinayānists and Mahāyānists lived in common
residence in the same monastic establishment. 'Sect was no longer a
separatist principle in saṅgha life ...'. S. Dutt: Buddhist Monks
and Monasteries in India, p.177. It is therefore not impossible
that in the centuries before the Christian era also, the members of
the Hinayāna and Mahāsāṃghika schools shared monastic life in the same
saṅgha.

³. Opposed to the Kāmabhogiseyya is the Sīhasēyya position, where placing
one leg upon the other, the person lies on his right side, and which
owes its name to the belief that the lion takes such a position while
sleeping. (AN II, 244-45). This is the position taken by the Buddha
when lying down.
that school\footnote{According to epigraphic evidence the centre of the early activities of the Sarvāstivādins was Mathura, from where they spread out to Gandhara and Kashmir, and ultimately to Central Asia and China. During the time of Kaniṣka, however, the Vaibhāsikas (a branch of the Sarvāstivāda school) appear to have become more popular in Kashmir and Gandhara and were predominant in that region. N. Dutt: \textit{Buddhist Sects in India}, pp. 135-136. Frauwallner, however, holds that the Buddhist communities of Kashmir and Mathura were independent from each other in their origin, since the community of Kashmir owed its origin to the missions of Aśoka (under Majjhantika) and was founded from Vidiśā. The Mathura community, he adds, which had nothing to do with these missions was an older community, much earlier than the time of Aśoka, and played an important role already at the time of the council of Vaiśālī. Later on, both communities grew into one school through their acceptance of the theories of the philosophical-dogmatic Sarvāstivāda school. \textit{The Earliest Vinaya and the beginnings of Buddhist literature}, pp. 37 and 40.} were probably familiar, which emphasises the 'miraculous' conception of the Buddha by clearly stating that 'Māyā, having obtained the sanction of the king, did not entertain carnal wishes for thirty-two months.'\footnote{R. Mitra: \textit{op.cit.}, p.46.} 

It is difficult to ascertain whether the descent of the Buddha in the form of an elephant was regarded by the early Buddhist sculptors only as a dream of the mother, or as a reality. The \textit{Acchariyabbhūtadhammasutta} does not mention it.\footnote{MN III 120: \textit{Sato sampajāno Bodhisatto Tusita kāyā cavittvā nātu kucohiḥ okkami}.} According to the \textit{Nīdana Kathā} the Bodhisattva was conceived in the womb of the Lady Mahāmāyā.\footnote{Jātaka I, 50: \textit{mahāmāyayā devi yā kucohiḥ paṭīsamādiṃ ganghā}.} Later, the entering of the elephant is narrated,\footnote{\textit{atho bodhisatto setavātwareṇo nūtvā ... dakhīṇapassāṃ tāletvā kucohiḥ paviṭṭho sadiso chodī}.} and still later, a dream is mentioned.\footnote{punadivāse pabuddhā devi tam supinām ruṇhō ārocesi.} A dream is mentioned in the \textit{Mahāvastu}, but immediately afterwards it is stated that the Bodhisattva entered Māyā's body in the form of an elephant.\footnote{Mahāvastu II, 8 and 11.} Later she
narrates this to her husband as a fact, but immediately afterwards the
king speaks to the astrologers of a dream. In the Lalitavistara, the
entering of the Bodhisattva in the form of an elephant into the womb of
Māyā is stated as a fact, but the dream is also mentioned.

The Hinayāna tradition generally represents the Buddha as a human
being who passed through the normal experiences of life and, as a result
of his own efforts, attained Enlightenment. As all the sources referred
to above admit the supernatural immaculate conception, from the Hinayāna
standpoint the entering of the Bodhisattva in the form of an elephant into
the womb of Māyā may be interpreted as a dream rather than a reality.

However, as Māyā is represented in all these accounts, including the Pāli
Nidāna Kathā, as taking a vow of chastity and abstention from sensual
pleasures, the conception of the Bodhisattva obviously could not have taken
place as a result of sexual intercourse. That his body could not have been
material but non-material is also suggested by Majjhima Nikāya I, 265-266
and Milindapañha 123, according to which conception takes place under
the following conditions:— the coming together of mother and father
(Mātāpitārā ca sānnapatīta), the right time for the mother (mātā ca na
utumī), and the presence of the gandhabba (gandhabbo ca na paccupaññhīta).

On the other hand, as the Lokottaravadins (and probably also the
Mahāsāṃghikas themselves, since they are known to have had the Mahāvastu

1. Mahāvastu II, 12: rājaviro pāndavo me gajarājā kukṣēmiḥ ikrānto.
2. supīnasmiḥ asya sarve bhanāthā bhūtaḥ phalavipakāh.
3. 55, 3: pāndavo gajapato bhutvā ...
4. Coomaraswamy observes that although the descent of the Bodhisattva
   in the form of an elephant has been rationalized as a dream, the
   concept that Māyā was fertilized by an essence that can only have
   fallen from Heaven as rain, i.e. impregnation by a cloud in the form
   of an elephant, may be traced to the RV I, 164, 51, according to which
   the rain clouds (parjanyaḥ) animate (jinvati) the Earth cf. the
   elephant Paccaya of sky-faring descent, connatural rain-giving talis-
   man of the Bodhisattva in the Vessantara Jātaka. Elements of Buddhist
   Iconography, p. 72.
5. Although no great emphasis is laid on virgin birth in Buddhist legend,
   in every other respect the conception and birth are miraculous. Regarding
   the virgin birth, la Vallée Poussin remarks: 'on n’a jamais cru
   que Cākyamuni fut né des œuvres de Čuddhodana, Le Dogme et la Philo-
   sophie du Bouddhisme', p. 57.
as their Vinaya) conceived the Buddha as a totally supramundane, transcendental being, from the Mahāsaṃghika standpoint the representation of the conception as it occurs at Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati was probably intended as a reality. While the reality of the elephant is hinted at, at Bharhut, by the gesture of one of the female attendants sitting in front of the couch - her raised hands may indicate an expression of wonder and astonishment at the miracle, it may also be argued that the artist probably did not know how to depict the descent of the Bhagavat in a way other than portraying the dream which, according to the Mahāvastu and Lalitavistara, took place at the same time as the conception.1

It is significant that if we study the miraculous life of the Buddha, we shall find that several aspects, from the free choice of time and place of birth,2 the lateral birth itself,3 to the taking of the seven steps,4 can be paralleled in the Vedic mythology of Agni and Indra. The concept that the Bodhisattva was visible while yet in his mother's womb, to which reference is made in Jātaka I, 52,5 also has a parallel in Rg Veda VI, 16, 35, where Agni is described as 'shining in the mother's eternal womb'.6

All the traditional biographies with which we are concerned represent the Bodhisattva as 'issuing forth' from the right side of his mother.7 The lateral procession, in metaphysical formulation, is an inevitable concept -

1. Lüders: op. cit., p.91.
5. antakavāṇīgataḥ ... pasatī.
6. garbhe mātūḥ ... aksare vidiyātānāḥ.
7. Mahāvastu II, 20; Lalitavistara 83, 7; Buddhacarita I, 9;
According to Mahāvastu I, 218, it was not only Gautama, but also the first of the twenty-four Buddhas who preceded him, the Buddha Dipamkara who 'issued forth' from the right side of his mother.
the branches of the tree, or arms of the cross, proceeding from the vertical laterally.¹ Indra's birth from his mother's side in Rg Veda IV, 18, 2, has a parallel in Mahāvastu II, 20, Lalitavistara 83, 21, and Buddhacarita I, 25. In Jaiminiya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa I, 29, it is the 'ray of life' (rāśmi aswāya) that is established obliquely (tiryani pratiṣṭhitah).

It is interesting that, according to Rg Veda IV, 18, 1, the gods ascend at birth;² but Indra, conscious of a mission before him,³ refuses to join the gods and goes forth from the side. It is also noteworthy that the name of the rāj to whom Rg Veda IV, 18 is attributed, is Gautama, the paternal ancestor, from whom the family of the Buddha derived its name.

The fact that Indra's mother is described as a āśati in Rg Veda IV, 18, 10, i.e. a cow that bears only once,⁴ is also significant as it has a parallel in the Buddha legend, where not only is the mother of the Bodhisattva described in the Lalitavistara⁵ as yet childless, but in all the biographies is said to have died seven days after his birth.

Coomaraswamy, following de la Vallée Poussin,⁶ does not believe Maya was a woman's name at all but is really 'the original state of Nature, the Mother of Eternity; and the formative power in the eternal wisdom ...'. He

1. A.K. Coomaraswamy: op. cit., p.73, note 49.
2. The word ud-yam is also used in respect to Agni in Rg Veda I, 74, 3, and X, 43, 9.
3. cf. the Bodhisattva's births as Mahosadha and Vessantara, where he came into the world on a mission, in the former to cure sickness and in the latter with charity as the sole purpose of his life.
4. cf. RV X, 111, 2 according to which he is called a bull of a once-bearing cow (gārṣteya); cf X, 97, 21, and X, 17, 6. In the Vedas, the mother of Indra is never identified by name, but in the post-Vedic period she is said to be Aditi. It seems likely, however, that the mother of Indra is the Earth rather than Aditi as in later times Aditi and the Earth are equated with each other. W. Norman Brown: 'The Creation Myth of the Rg Veda', JAOS, 62, p.93.
5. R. Mitra: op. cit., p.43.
6. Le Dogme et la Philosophie du Bouddhisme, p.188.
adds that just as Maia was the mother of Hermes (Hesiod, *Theogony* 938) of whom else could the Buddha have been born? He further points out that 'Māyā meaning "magic" vanishes just as Urvasī mother of Ayus by Pururavas vanished, and as Saranyu vanished from Vivasvat; also Māyā's svamārti Pajāpati taking her place (*Buddhacarita* I, 18; II, 19-20), as Saranyu's savarnā took hers.'

It is significant that in the *Acchariyabhutadhamma* sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, which describes the conception and birth of the Bodhisattva, complete with miracles and astonishing events as they appear in the Buddha legend of the later non-canonical works *Nīdānakathā* and *Lalitavistara*, but which is considered by some scholars to antedate the latter, the name of the mother of the Bodhisattva is not given, nor is the child described as being born from the right side of the mother. It is also significant that, according to these biographies, after the death of his mother, the Bodhisattva was nurtured by his maternal aunt and foster mother Pajāpati (Sanskrit Prajāpati) meaning one who nurses or fosters children.

As the name of the mother occurs only in the collection of glittering legends and miracles chronologically arranged by the adherents of the various schools so as to form 'biographies', one of which rejects the human character of the Buddha altogether, it is difficult to regard them as reliable sources of information or to accept the name Māyā without a certain amount of scepticism. The fact that Māyā is represented in a number of

1. Coomaraswamy: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 82, note 257; also 'On Translation: Māyā, Deva, Tapas', *ISIS*, 19, 1933, pp.75-80.
jātakas as the mother of the Bodhisattva\(^1\) and that she is said to have formed a resolution to be the mother of a Buddha \(^{91}\) kappas ago during the time of the Buddha Vipassin,\(^2\) makes the story even less credible. In the Lalitavistara Māyā and her husband Suddhodana, the father of Gautama, are actually represented as having been the parents of the Bodhisattva for 500 generations.

It is clear that as early as the 2nd Century B.C., it was accepted in Buddhist circles, that the Bhagavat 'descended', i.e. incarnated himself in the womb of the 'very best of women' (Mahāvastu II, 9). It is therefore 'natural' that the birth of the Lord should be attended by marvellous and astonishing events. This capacity, power, or ability to achieve or produce the marvellous which is known as Māyā from the time of the Ṛg Veda,\(^3\) may well have served as the basis for the name being applied to the mother of one who was no ordinary mortal, but a devatādeva (Cullinīdīdea, 307).

According to the canonical accounts (Acchariyabhūtadharmma Sutta and Mahāpadāna Sutta),\(^4\) it is an absolute rule (dhammatā) that the mother of a Buddha stands while giving birth.\(^5\) The later biographies which elaborate the story further, represent Māyā as standing while giving birth to the Bodhisattva, and also as grasping and supporting herself by a bough of a tree.

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2. Jātaka VI, 480 ff.
3. cf. RV V, 63, 4; V, 78, 6; IX 73, 9, PB 13, 6, 9, etc., where the word Māyā indicates the marvellous skill of the gods referred to in the passages. In RV I, 151, 9, the possession of highly appreciated faculties and qualities is attributed to the māyā of Mitra and Varuṇa. cf. J. Gonda: 'Sense and Etymology of Sans. Māyā', Four Studies in the Language of the Veda, pp. 132-134.
4. cf. Mahāvastu I, 218, for the birth of the Buddha Dipamkara.
5. cf. MN III, 123: 'while other women give birth sitting or lying, it is otherwise with the Bodhisatta's mother who gives birth standing erect', and DN II, 14: 'It is a rule that whereas other women bring forth sitting or reclining, the mother of the Bodhisatta brings forth standing'. cf. also Jātaka 1,52, Mahāvastu II, 19, Lalitavistara 83, 4.
THE NATIVITY OF THE BUDDHA

a. Sannathi
b. Amaravati
It is significant that, although the *Buddhacarita* of Áśvaghoṣa, as edited and translated by Cowell, describes Māyā as being in this position at the time of the birth, another version of the same text edited and translated by Johnston, represents an exception. Both versions describe the birth as miraculous; in Johnston's version, however, the poet (Áśvaghoṣa) expressly states that 'when the queen perceived that the time of her delivery was at hand, she proceeded to a couch overspread with an awning, amidst the welcome of the thousands of waiting women'.

It is evident that although there were two different traditions regarding the birth of the Buddha, the account in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, which was further elaborated in the later biographies, appears to have been more popular, as it was followed by the artists at all the centres of early Buddhism.

The discovery of the Buddhist remains at Sannathi (Gulbarga district, Mysore), belonging to the period of Sātavāhana rule in Andhra Pradesh, and ranging from the 1st to the 3rd Century AD, however, has revealed that the older tradition regarding the birth of the Bodhisattva as preserved in Johnston's version of Áśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, i.e. the mother giving birth while seated on a couch and not while standing erect, was also followed.

1. In the preface to his edition and translation of the *Buddhacarita*, Johnston claims that the chief authority of his text was an old manuscript in the Kathmandu Library which was sent over to England in 1924. He further adds that as his version contains passages in cantos IX and XII which are missing in Cowell's manuscript, but gives all the verses in the latter; and that as Cowell's version constantly repeats the minor errors in his (i.e. Johnston's) manuscript, the former must descend from the latter.

2. cf. Johnston I, 10 and Cowell I, 29: 'As was the birth of Aurva from the thigh, of Pythu from the hand, of Māndhātṛ, the peer of Indra, from the head, of Kāśīvat from the armpit - thus too was his birth (miraculous)'.

by the Buddhist sculptors.\(^1\) The relief depicting the birth of the Bodhisattva shows Māyā seated on a couch while a female attendant (perhaps Pajāpati), not the devas as represented in Buddhist literature\(^2\) and elsewhere in Buddhist art,\(^3\) receives the infant in her arms.

In his *La Legende de l’Empereur Aśoka*, Przyluski has demonstrated that the *Aśokavadāna* was composed by a monk of the Mathura region who belonged to the Mūla-Sarvāstivāda school, and lived more than a century before Kaniṣka. According to Przyluski, some form of the *Aśokavadāna* was known to Aśvaghoṣa, the author of the *Buddhacarita*, who, Chinese and Tibetan sources assert, was a contemporary of Kaniṣka.\(^4\) We have already noticed that the Buddhist community of Mathura was very ancient, dating from before the time of Aśoka, as it played an important role at the time of the council of Vaisāli (116 years after the Parinirvāṇa).\(^5\) Since Johnston's version of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* is recognised to be older than Cowell's, it is possible that the former account of the birth of the Bodhisattva was based on a tradition prevalent in an older Buddhist community, which was later replaced by the version (Cowell's) of Māyā standing while giving birth, and which had already been adopted by the sculptors of all the schools. That Johnston's version of the birth was not completely forgotten, however,

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is evident from the Chinese translation of the *Buddhacarita* (*Fo-Sho-Hsing-tsang-king*), by Dharmarakṣa in 420 AD, according to which Mayā 'rested calmly on a couch' (I, 1, 8),¹ as well as the Sannathi sculpture referred to above.

We have already mentioned that the detail of the Bodhisattva being born while his mother supported herself by a bough of a tree, is included only in the later biographies—*aśāla* in the case of the *Nidānakathā* and *Mahāvastu*,² and a *plakṣa* according to the *Lalitavistara*. The Tibetan version mentions an *āśoka*,³ the Burmese a *śāla*,⁴ the Chinese a *pāla*,⁵ and one Thai version refers to the tree as a *śālma*, while another speaks of a *śāla*.⁶

A study of the life of the Buddha as it appears in these later biographies, reveals that the whole career of the Buddha, from his birth to his *parinirvāṇa*, is a series of 'events' presented as the predestined mission of a Buddha; each of the 'events' bears a cultic significance—the birth and infancy a miracle; the renunciation an event of supreme and universal importance as, watched and aided by gods and supernatural beings, he deliberately relinquishes his future as a *cakravartin*, and abandons his

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¹ *SBE*, 19, p.2. From the evidence of the *Tsah-pao-tsang-king*, it appears that the emissaries who left China in AD 64 and returned in AD 67 probably 'brought back with them, some knowledge of the work of Asvaghoṣa called *Fo-pen-king*, or of the original then circulating in India, on which Asvaghoṣa founded his poem'. Beal: *trans.* *Fo-Sho-King-tsang-king*, p.xxxi.
² However, in the sequel to the present account (II, 19), and elsewhere in the same text (I, 149), it was to a branch of a *plakṣa* tree that Mayā clung.
⁴ Bigandet: *The Life or Legend of Gaudama*, pp. 35-36.
⁵ Beal: *The Romantic Legend of Sākya Buddha*, p.43.
family and home; the Perfect Awakening (Sambhūthi) that put a complete end to the cycle of birth and death; the Turning of the Wheel of the Law - the Wheel which could not be reversed by a sāmaṇa or brāhmaṇa, or a deva, or Māra, or Brahmā, or by any being in the world; and lastly, the Great Extinction which leaves no trace of the Buddha behind.

In this 'cult-history', the importance of Lumbinī, the birth-place of the Buddha, is only slight and vague; far removed from the area in which the legends developed, an area stretching approximately from Rājagṛha and Pāṭeliputra in South Bihar, Vaiśāli in North Bihar, to Śrāvasti in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Buddhist writers appear to have had only a vague idea of the location of Lumbinī - that it was within the territory of the Sākyas beside the Himalayas.¹

It was only during the reign of Asoka that the legendary fame of Lumbini, the birth-place of the Bhagavat, was established; with the erection of Asoka's Rumindei pillar (and a caitya which, according to Divyāvadāna 389-390, commemorated the spot where the Buddha was born), Lumbinī emerged from oblivion. How long, if at all, the place remained a place of pilgrimage, is impossible to establish, but in the 5th and 7th Cent. AD when Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang visited the Himalayan native land of the Buddha, the place was deserted, and Lumbinī could not be located.

Under the circumstances outlined above, it is difficult to accept any details regarding the birth of the Buddha as actual fact; as Asoka's inscription makes no reference to the tree,² it may be inferred that the detail of the tree was not included in the legend of the Buddha current in the 3rd Cent. BC, and probably was not even included in the portion of the

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¹ cf. Himavantasse passato.. Sn. 422 and 423: Sākiya nāma jātiya.
² In the Divyāvadāna 390, however, Asoka is represented as not only visiting the site but also conversing with the devatā of the tree who had been a witness to the Nativity.
biography which stood at the head of the old skandhaka text, a work of
the 4th Cent. BC.

It was pointed out long ago by Vogel that the idea of Māyā giving
birth to the Bodhisattva while seizing a branch of a sāla tree (which we
noticed occurs only in the later biographies), is closely associated with
the sālabhaṅjika or custom of the gathering of sāla flowers, popular in
ancient eastern India.¹

Now, the etymological meaning of the term sālabhaṅjika is obvious,
as the first word of the compound - sāla - indicates the Vatica Robusta,
commonly known as the sāla tree, while the second word - bhaṅjika - is
derived from the verbal root bhaṅj or bhaj, meaning 'to break'. In
Mahābhārata III, 122, 8-9, the latter is specially applied to the plucking
of the most excellent flowers from the branches of forest trees: babhaṅja
vanavyākṣāṇāṁ sākhāḥ paramaprapitāḥ.

A reference to the festival called sālabhaṅjika being celebrated
at Śrāvasti (modern Sahet-Maheth in eastern Uttar Pradesh), occurs in the
53rd story of the Avadānaśataka, according to which 'several hundred
thousand beings assembled, and having gathered sāla flowers they played,
made merry and roamed about'.² The description of the sālabhaṅjika festival
is not known to occur anywhere else in Indian literature; however, in order
to illustrate a grammatical rule given by the grammarian Pāṇini in Aṣṭādhyāyī
II, 2, 17; VI, 2, 74, the kaśikā (commentary on Pāṇini by Vāmana) refers
to a number of games played in eastern India, e.g. uḍḍalakopuspabhāṅjika,
virāṇapupπracośyika, sālabhaṅjika and tālabhaṅjika, all of which indicate the
gathering or plucking of flowers and palm leaves. From the fact that these

¹. J. Ph. Vogel: 'The Woman and Tree or sālabhaṅjika', Acta Orientalia,
7, 1929, pp.201-231.
². J.S. Speyer: (ed) 'Avadānaśataka', Bibliotheca Buddhica, III, 1902,
p.302, ff.
³. S.C. Vasu: The Ashtadhyāyi of Pāṇini, pp. 263, and 1167; cf. O.
Bohtlingk: (ed.) Pāṇini's Grammatik, pp. 53 and 320.
Cūlakokā Devatā  
Candrā Yakṣī 
Bharhut
games are said to be peculiar to eastern India, which tallies with the reference to the salabhanjika festival in the Avadānasataka, Magadha, the cradle of Buddhism, and the neighbouring countries, may be taken to have been its home.\(^1\) As the Avadānasataka cannot be ascribed to a date later than the end of the 2nd Cent. AD,\(^2\) or earlier than the second half of the 1st Cent. BC,\(^3\) it is also possible that salabhanjika was originally the name of a game played in eastern India, which later became a popular festival.

The graceful pose of a woman seizing or breaking a branch of a flowering tree is very popular in Indian literature, and is met with in plastic art for the first time on the toras\(\text{\textregistered}\) (gateways) of the stupa of Bharhut. The tora\(\text{\textregistered}\)-figures\(^4\) of the yakṣī (dryad) Candrā, and the devatā Cūḷakokā are particularly interesting, their right foot resting on an animal, and the left leg twined around the trunk of a tree, a branch of which they are shown seizing with their right hand. A third female figure depicted in the same attitude appears to be carved not on a tora\(\text{\textregistered}\) but on an ordinary ethambha or railing pillar. The tree under which these tora\(\text{\textregistered}\)-figures are standing is difficult to identify;\(^5\) but the position in which these yakṣī figures are depicted brings out a very pronounced curve of the right hip, which has been identified by Coomaraswamy as the very same

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2. The work is known to have been translated into Chinese in the first half of the 3rd Cent. AD. Winternitz: *op.cit.*, II, p.279.
3. The reference to the word dināra (Roman dinarius) in the work implies that it originated during or after the reign of Augustus (31BC-14AD), the first Roman emperor whose dinarii have been discovered in the Hazara dist. of Punjab. R.C. Majumdar: 'India and the Western World', *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p.621.
4. In Classical Sanskrit literature, the word salabhañjika came to be adopted first as a technical term designating any carving of a female seizing a branch of a tree, and later, when the etymological meaning of the word was no longer remembered, it was applied to any female image carved on a pillar. cf. synonymous terms such as sālāstrī and ethambhaputrīka, etc., Vogel, *op.cit.*, pp.206-207.
5. A sculptural fragment from Bharhut, however, showing a right hand plucking a ṛāva flower from a blossoming bough, and evidently belonging to a female figure similar to those described above, indicates that the salabhañjika in its literal sense was certainly represented. A. Cunningham: *The Stupa of Bharhut*, p.46, and Pl.29,fig.5.
hanche ('hip shot') pose in which Māyā is represented in Buddhist art, as giving birth to the Bodhisattva.¹ The addition of attendant deities, and the further complication of the scene by a representation of the seven steps, would have presented no difficulty as, so far as the principle figure was concerned, the sculptor had an iconographic model ready at hand.

In the light of what has been discussed in the preceding pages, we conclude that the salabhanjika game or festival which was popular in eastern India appears to have lent itself to a particular pose in which yakṣī figures were first depicted and was later adopted by the Buddhist sculptors as the position in which Māyā is represented as giving birth to the Bodhisattva. That the species of the tree was really of no consequence, but represents a 'detail' added later by the biographers, is evident, not only from the comparatively late inclusion of the incident and the conflicting traditions regarding the identity of the tree itself, but also the evidence of Johnston's version of the Buddhacarita and the Sannathi sculpture in which the detail of the tree is left out altogether. While most traditions appear to have literally accepted the salabhanjika pose in the story of Māyā and the miraculous birth of the Bodhisattva, i.e. grasping the bough of a śāla tree, others probably understood the term salabhanjika in its general sense, and identified the tree variously as plakṣa,śāmalī,āśoka, etc.

In the foregoing pages, we have attempted to analyse and study in historical perspective, the stories of the conception and birth of the Buddha which represent some of the events in his life that are of cultic significance. We noticed that already in the Pāli canon, the miracles

¹. A.K. Coomaraswamy: Yakṣas, pt. I, p.35. In this connection it is perhaps worth mentioning that Cunningham once erroneously identified one of the Yakṣīs portrayed on the railing pillar at Mathura, with 'Māyā standing under the śāl tree'. cf. J. Ph. Vogel: Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum, Mathura, p.6.
attending the conception and birth are declared as dhammatā, which presuppose the existence of a fully developed Buddhology, according to which he is raised far above the level of gods and men to the position of devātideva by the Theravādins, while the 'man' is altogether hidden by the aegis of divinity in the eschatology of the Mahāsāṃghikas. Although the nucleus of the later non-canonical biographies providing further elaborate details, is probably quite old, nevertheless, as they are found to have been based upon material of the 4th Cent. BC, and to have developed according to the doctrines of the various schools, their authenticity is questionable.

Under these circumstances, the details regarding the conception and birth of the Buddha discussed in the preceding pages may be disregarded as historical fact and recognised as being based almost wholly upon folklore and mythology.
CHAPTER II

The significance of Light and Fire in Buddhist Iconography.
A study of the legends relating to the life of the Buddha, both in literature and in early classical art, shows that there is a marked tendency to emphasise the fact that the gods, even Brahmā and Sakra (Indra), and tutelary deities such as yakṣas and gandharvas etc., were inferior and subservient to the great Sage of the Sākya tribe. The same applies to the nāgas, the ‘great serpents’ of Brahmanical lore, who are generally represented in Buddhist tradition as devout worshippers of the Buddha.

The Nāgas are first mentioned by name in the Āsvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra (III, 4, 1) where they are represented as being propitiated along with gods, plants, demons, etc., and blood is poured out for them. The fact that there is no reference to Nāga worship in the Ṛg Veda, does not automatically mean that it was non-Aryan, but is highly suggestive of its non-Aryan character. In lieu of the Nāgas, however, the Ṛg Veda knows of the serpent Vṛtra, otherwise known as Ahi, whose struggle with Indra we shall refer to in a later chapter.

In the later Sākhītās, the serpents (ṣapāḥ) are found as a class of semi-divine beings along with gandharvas and others. Atharva Veda VI, 56, 1-2 invokes the serpents as devajana (literally ‘god-people’), while a passage from the Maitrāyani Sākhītā (II, 7, 15) which pays homage to

1. ‘The Nāga of Indian mythology and folklore’, observes Vogel, ‘is not really the snake in general, but the cobra raised to the rank of a divine being’. Indian Serpent Lore, p.27.
2. cf. AGS IV, 8, 27.
3. The identity of Ahi and Vṛtra is clear when the terms interchange, e.g., RV I, 32, 1; 2, 7-14. The serpent, however, appears as a divine being in the form of Ahir-budhnya who appears to represent the beneficial aspect of Ahi-Vṛtra. A.A. Macdonnel: The Vedic Mythology, pp.152-53.
serpents also reveals their universal distribution in earth, air, and heaven. The Gṛhya Śūtras also contain an account of the Sarpa bali, an annual domestic ceremony which had the two-fold purpose of honouring serpents as well as averting their dangers.

A passage from Aelian's account of India, testifying to the existence of snake pājā in Punjab during the time of Alexander (4th Cent. BC), refers to a 'snake regarded as sacred, kept in a cave and worshipped with much devotion ... . It was said to be seventy cubits long, and yet the whole of it was not seen, but only its head that projected from the cave. Its eyes, moreover, are reported to have equalled the size of the large, round Macedonian shield.'

The major difference between the sarpa of the Vedas and the Nāgas of later Indian literature, is that the Vedic serpents, generally speaking, do not inhabit the subterranean world, and unlike the Nāgas, do not possess the ability to assume human shape. Although Vṛtra is portrayed as withholding the waters, he is not an underworld power, even when he is homologous with his divine and beneficient aspect Ahi budhnya, Serpent of the Deep. The Nāgas, however, are definitely located in the subterranean world, and are closely associated with aquatic regions.

1. cf. PB III, 1, 1, 7; VS 13, 6.
2. M. Winternitz: 'Der Sarpa bali, ein altindischer Schlangencult', Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft zu Wien, 18, 1888, pp. 25-52; 250-64. The sources of the Sarpa bali ceremony are: AGE II, 1, 5; PGS II, 14; SOS IV, 15, 17-18; GGS III, 7, 9; Kh. GS III, 1, 1-15; Ap. GS VII, 18, 5-19; 5, 8-12; MGS II, 7, 16; HGS II, 6, 16-17; 17.
3. J.W. McCrindle: Ancient India as described in Classical Literature, p. 145.
4. cf. RV VII, 34, 16 in which the poet invokes the 'serpent born in water (abjōm) sitting at the bottom (budhna) of the streams in the spaces'; cf. also RV X, 93, 5. That he dwelt in the 'atmospheric ocean' is also suggested by Yāska, who explains budhna as air (Nirukta X, 44).
On the basis of the level of excavation at which terracotta figurines of Naginis have been discovered at Pātaliputra, it is probable that the Nāga cult was prevalent in that area from Mauryan times,\(^1\) while excavations at Vaiśālī and Kumrahar have also disclosed a large number of Nāga figures dateable between the 2nd Cent. BC and 1st Cent. AD.\(^2\) Furthermore, the fact that a large number of terracotta serpent-figures, each with numerous heads and probably symbolical of divinity, dating from the 3rd Cent. BC, were unearthed at Maniyār Māṭh, also indicates the antiquity of Rajgir as a centre of Nāga worship.\(^3\)

The Dīgha Nīkāya (II, 258) referring to the locale of many of the Nāgas, indicates how pervasive the Nāga cult was:

'Now too, Nāgas have come from Nābhasa,
And from Vaiśāli and from Tacchaka
Kambalas, Assataras, Pāyāgas
With all their kin; Nāgas from Yamanā,
And Dhattarātha, too, with brilliant trains,
Erāvana, great among Nāga folk,
He too has come into the forest glade'.

The Cullavagga (V, 6, 1) contains a snake-charm in which four tribes of serpent-kings (ahirāja-kulāni) are mentioned: 'I love the Virūpakkhas, the Erāpāthas I love; I love Chabhyāpputtas, the Kaghagotamakas I love'. It is significant that Virūpakkha and Erāpātha mentioned here are not only the names of two Nāgarājas, but in Buddhist

\(^2\) ERB, XI, p.414.
cosmology are represented as *lokapālas* or guardians of the western and eastern regions respectively. This snake-charm was recommended to the bhikkhus by the Buddha as a safeguard and means of security and protection.¹

The great importance of the Nāgas in Brahmanical and Buddhist legends is reflected in plastic and pictorial art. In these legends the Nāga is sometimes shown as an animal, sometimes as a human being, but generally human and animal forms are strangely blended. Of these forms, three main iconographical types may be distinguished: first, the form of the serpent which is many-headed; second, the human form universally characterised by means of a polycephalous serpent-head; and third, a combination of the two, the upper part of a human body combined with the lower half of the coils of a snake. The last mentioned of these three forms is comparatively rare; while it occurs in Brahmanical sculpture, it is hardly ever employed in Buddhist art.

One of the earliest snake stories preserved in Buddhist literature relates the contest between the Buddha and a savage serpent in the fire-room of the Kāsyapa brothers at Uruvilvā. The whole night long the Buddha and the Nāga fight one another with fire - the Buddha's fire being the magic fire of *tejas* which emanates from his body. The fire of the Buddha proves stronger than that of the snake, and the latter takes refuge in the former's alms bowl. In this story the Nāga, apart from his magical property of spitting fire, is nothing but a snake; he 'possesses no human quality, and has neither a name nor the power of speech'.² In the

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1. *Cullavagga*: V, 6, 1.
numerous sculptural renderings of the scene of the conversion of the Kāśyapas, the Nāga is invariably represented as a snake - usually with many heads to indicate his demoniacal nature.

Another legend in Buddhist literature featuring a Nāga is the story of Mucalinda the Nāga-king, who sheltered the Buddha for seven days against rain and wind by spreading his snake-hood like a canopy over the Lord's head.

Several reliefs demonstrate the subordinate role in which the Nāgas were cast in Buddhist legend. In the scene of the birth of the Bodhisattva, two adoring Nāgas, Nanda and Upananda of the legends, stand 'half-bodied', producing two streams of water in which the child was bathed. Again, as the Bodhisattva approaches the Tree of Awakening from the river Nairañjara, on the night of the Enlightenment, the Nāgarāja Kālika utters a hymn of praise and foretells his Enlightenment. Although the biographies differ in detail regarding this incident, all of them agree in the importance they attach to the prophecy pronounced by the Serpent-king, which has the character of an Act of Truth. ¹ At Amaravati, the Nāgarāja with his seven-headed snake-hood is depicted, along with his three wives, over each of whose heads may be seen a single-headed snake, all in attitudes of adoration. On the Prasenjit pillar at Bharhut, the Nāgarāja Elāpatra is represented in an act of devotion (bhakti) in front of the altar-throne.

In many contexts it is difficult to establish, however, whether the term 'Nāga' was applied to the sacred animal, the mythical Nāga, or to members of certain Indian tribes. The Mahāvagga (1,63) contains a story of a Nāga

¹. Vogel: op. cit., p.98.
who assumed human shape and was ordained as a Buddhist monk, in order to
be released from his serpent birth. His true nature, however, was disclosed
during his sleep, and he was expelled from the Order by the Buddha himself.
In this legend we find the idea often expressed in Buddhist literature,
that the Nāga is an inferior and degenerate being (a-manussa), whose
serpent birth is a consequence of his evil kamma. The Buddha's admonition
to the unfortunate Nāga makes it clear that Nāgas were not capable of
leading a virtuous and holy life: 'You Nāgas are not capable of
spiritual growth in this doctrine and discipline ... Let an animal, O
Bhikkhus, that has not received the ordination, not receive it; if it
has received it, let it be expelled'. On the other hand, the Swaṅgala
Vilāsini II, 558 ff records that Saṅgharikkhita Sāmanera, the nephew
of the Nāga Thera, attained Arhatship on the day of his admission to
the Order. It may be presumed that the former incident, related in the
Mahāvagga and referring to Buddhist restriction on Nāgas, clearly applies
to the mythical Nāga, while the latter refers to a member of the Nāga tribe.

It is significant that the term 'Nāga' occurs in a totally different
context in several passages of the Pāli canon, as an epithet of the Buddha
and other arahants. According to Suttanipāta 522, 'one who commits no
offence (āgum na karoti) in the world; 1 who is completely free from all
fetters and bonds (of rebirth) - he indeed is called a nāga.' 2 The same
text (845) defines a nāga as a silent munī who 'wanders alone in the world,
born of water (eḷāmbujam) ... desireless, unstained by the pleasures of

1. cf. Panamatthajotika II, p.428: yo loke appamattakam pi pāpasangkhātam
   āgum na karoti, nāgo.
   cf. also DN II, 261: oga tavā nāgaṃ candaṃ va asatītaṃ.
2. nāgo tādi pavaccate tathātā.
the world' (agiddho kāme ca loke ca anupalitto). In Suttanipāta 1058, the Buddha, styled bhagavā, is venerated (namassati) as a nāga; again, verse 1101 of the same text extols the Buddha as a nāga 'who has cut-off, i.e. abandoned craving; who has no desires (aneja); who has crossed the flood (of saṃsāra); who has left behind time (kappām jahān); who is wise and learned.'

Sangutta Nikāya III, 83, describes the arahant as the 'well composed mahanāga, the most excellent being in the world, in whom no craving is seen'. That the appellation nāga, applied to the Buddha and the arahant, was in no way connected with the serpents referred to above, but was indicative of the highest state of perfection, is clear from Milindapañha 346, where the footprint of the elephant-king (gajarāja) is compared with the 'footprint' of a Buddhanāga - one who is intelligent (vibhāvino) and excellent (uṇāro). Anguttara Nikāya III, 346, identifies a perfect Buddha (sambuddha), 'one who treads the path of Brahman (brahmapatha); is serene and has reached perfection in all things (sabba-dhamma pāragu); whom gods and men venerate; the arahant who has come from desire (vana) to Nibbāna (i.e. Nir-vana) - as a nāga. The same text continues: 'As gold is the most excellent of all metals, and the Himalayas of all mountains, so of all those named Nāga, that nāga is indeed the most incomparable'.

A description of the physical form of that incomparable Nāga occurs in Anguttara Nikāya III, 346: 'restraint and abstention from injuring others (sacca ca avihīnas) are the (fore) feet of that Nāga; austerity and living the holy life (tapo ca brahmacariyo) the other feet; faith his

1. cf. Dh 320; Sn 166; 421; 518; SN II, 277.
2. sahbhesvā nāgonaṁ añcam, sacca ca avihīnas.
hand, i.e. trunk (saddhāhattha); the great white-tusked nāga has equanimity (upekkhāsetadantava); his neck is mindfulness (satigāvā); his head wisdom (stropajñā); his entire flesh the act of thinking Dhamma (vimāṃsā dharmacintanā); his belly the Dhamma (dhammakuchī) and ardour (samatāpo); solitude (viveka) his tail. He meditates (jhayi); his breath is zest (assasarato). Inwardly, well self-composed (ajjhata susamāhitā) ... that restrained (i.e. self controlled) nāga is most accomplished' (sampadā).

The references to the 'footprint', 'feet', and the 'hand' of the Buddhanāga occurring in the passages of the Milindapañha and Anguttara Nikāya cited above, clearly indicate that the description applies not to a serpent (Nāga), but to an elephant.

Now, the word nāga is generally supposed to be related to the English word 'snake', and, consequently Indo-Germanic in its origin. It follows that the original meaning of the term was not 'elephant' but 'serpent', and that the word later came to be applied to the elephant, an animal which, however, bears little resemblance to a snake. Perhaps the earliest instance where the word nāga requires a double meaning is the Pauqyaparvan of the Mahābhārata (Adiparvan III), which is composed in very archaic prose interspersed with a few verses, and whose style resembles that of the Brāhmaṇas. Here the expression nāgarāja occurs...
both as an epithet of Airavata, the vahana of Indra, as well as of the Serpent-king Takṣaka.

The 'confusion' regarding the meaning of the word nāga may perhaps be traced to Atharva Veda III, 26 and 27, which contain a homage to the gods, the first hymn also serving as a serpent incantation. In this hymn, each quarter of the universe is represented by a group of divine beings who are indicated as 'missiles' (heti), 'vehement ones' (avisyu), 'radiant ones' (vaivāja), 'piercers' (pracidhyant), 'smearers' (nilimpa) and 'protectors' (avasant). In hymn 27, we find a group of six divinities (Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Viṣṇu, and Brhaspati) represented as the guardians of the several quarters of the universe or Dīkpālas, each of whom is invoked side by side with another supernatural being. That these secondary guardians are divine serpents, is evident from their names, which to a certain extent agree with those of the group of serpents met with in various passages of the Atharva Veda.¹ Vogel concludes that it may be surmised that the idea of four or six serpents guarding the quarters of the universe is more primitive than that of the anthropomorphic lokapālas; and that the concept of the guardian gods (dīkpāla) as well as that of the elephants of the quarters (dīn-nāga) of later mythology, were both derived from the idea of the serpents of the various regions, which must

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¹ In TS V, 5, 10, the six regions are likewise associated with six divine regents and with an equal number of serpents, the names of which are identical with those of AV III, 27. The second half of the hymn in the TS which also agrees in substance with AV III, 27, represents the various quarters of the sky as the abode of certain classes of spirits bearing names similar to those occurring in the AV.
have been prevalent in the early period when the hymns of the Atharva Veda were being composed.  

We have hitherto established that the term nāga, probably of non-Vedic origin, is used in Indian literature to denote not only serpents, the sacred animal, the mythical Nāga, as well as members of certain tribes, but in the Pāli canon is also expressive of the highest level of spiritual attainment. We also noticed that from the references to the feet, the footprint, and the hand, the mahanāga, identified with the Buddha, and described as sabbesuṁ nāgaṁānāṁ saccanāmo anuttaro, was conceived of in terms of an elephant and not a serpent. However, it is the conception of the various members of the physical form of the mahanāga, e.g., head, trunk, neck, etc., in abstract terms such as wisdom, faith, mindfulness, etc., which constitutes the significance of the word nāga in Buddhist philosophic thought. It implies that the Budhānāga, the supreme nāga, and the centre of a cult, was conceived not as a being with a physical form, but a conglomerate of abstract and mental qualities which collectively represent a symbol of perfection.

All the later biographies represent the Bodhisattva as reflecting on the five great subjects of investigation (pañcamahāvīlokanāṇī): kāla, deśa, dīpa, kula, and mātā, before deliberately incarnating himself in the womb of Māyā. In the list of wonderful and marvellous qualities of the Bhagavat enumerated in Majjhima Nikāya III, 119-124, no mention is made of the five reflections, but the Bodhisattva is expressly stated as descending from the Tusita group, into his mother's womb 'mindful and conscious' (sato sampajāno). This quality of being mindful and conscious

is also specifically mentioned in the account of the conception both in
the Lalitatavistara and Mahāvastu.1 The Majjhima Nikāya specifies the
transparency of the mother's womb, as yet another marvellous quality of
the Bhagavat: 'within her womb the Bodhisattva's mother perceives the
Bodhisattva, complete in all his limbs and members, his sense-organs
perfect'.2 The word abhināndriya used here can only be explained as-
'with supersense organs', i.e. with organs of supernormal thought or
perception, thus approaching abhināndriya (possessing super knowledge)
in meaning.3

It is significant that in Dīgha Nikāya 1, 34, the word abhināndriya
occurs in the context of 'another self' (atīto attā) with divine form made
of mind: dibbo rūpi mano mayo sabbhaṅga-paccangī abhināndriyo.4 In
Majjhima Nikāya II, 17, the Buddha declares that he has shown his disciples
the means whereby they can 'call into being out of this body (composed of
the four elements), another body of the mind's creation (rūpiṁ manomayoṁ),
complete in all its limbs and members, and with perfect sense-organs
(abhināndriyaṁ). This psychic body is distinguished from, and may be drawn
from the gross physical body as clearly as the reed from its sheath, as a
snake can shake off its slough, or as a sword may be drawn from its scabbard
(Dīgha Nikāya I, 77-78).5

1. Lalitatavistara 55, 1: smṛtaṁ sampāджānam ... avakrami; Mahāvastu II,
9: smṛtoḥ sampāджāno ... okranto.
2. MN III, 121: Bodhisattvamātā ... passati sabbhaṅga-paccangī
abhināndriyaṁ.
3. Pali-English Dictionary, s.v.
5. This simile already occurs in SB IV, 3, 3, 16. The Buddhist concept
of inner consciousness associated with the body seems to correspond
roughly to the embodied inner self (jivātmā or antarātmā) of the
Upaniṣads.
The concept of the divine form which is made of mind and complete in all the limbs and members, with super-sense organs, may be related to the theory represented in *Mahāvastu* II, 20, that as Tathāgatas are 'born with a body made of mind (manomayena rūpena), the mother's body is not rent, nor does any pain ensue.'¹ According to *Lalitavistara* 96, 1, also, the 'mother's side was neither injured nor damaged: as it was before, so it remained afterwards.'²

We have already referred to the Buddha as the Nāga par excellence, whose form is conceived entirely in terms of mental faculties, and represents a symbol of spiritual perfection. In the previous chapter we also established that as one of the three factors necessary for conception, according to the Pāli literature itself, i.e. the coming together of mother and father, was not applicable in the case of the Bodhisattva, his body could not have been material. The cultic significance of the 'coming into existence' of the Buddha, i.e. of a satṭha, from the Hinayāna point of view, is very clearly evident from *Jātaka* I, 53, according to which he was born from the mother's womb 'like a teacher of dhamma descending from the dharmāsana, or like a man descending from a flight of stairs, erect, with his two hands and feet extended ...'. Furthermore, the analogy of the lotus remaining unsoiled by the water and mire surrounding it, frequently quoted in the Pāli canon, is applicable to the Buddha right from the time of his miraculous and immaculate conception. The *Nidānakatha* (*Jātaka* I, 53), emphasising the spotlessness and purity of the Buddha, states that he emerged from the mother's womb unsoiled by any impurities 'clean and pure, shining like a jewel on fine Benares muslin'.

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2. *matuḥ kukṣi pārēvān aksatam anupahatam bhavat; yathā pārve tathā paścāt.*
The description of the Bodhisattva as descending into the mother's womb 'mindful and conscious' in the accounts referred to above, coupled with the reference in the *Mahāvastu* to the mind-formed body of the Bodhisattva, and the statement in the *Lalitavistara* that the mother's side remained the same as it had been before the birth, may therefore have some connection with the idea of the descent of the *Bhagavat* into the womb of Maya in the form of a nāga which had no material form, and which we find rationalized as a dream featuring an elephant in the biographies. That this was probably the case, is also supported by the evidence of all the accounts according to which the mother of the Bodhisattva could clearly perceive the 'human' child within her womb, complete in all his limbs and members, as clearly as a 'jewel (maniratana) strung with orange-coloured thread.' No mention whatsoever is made of the elephant. The specific mention of the word gaja and varāga in all these accounts, rather than nāga, may have been due to the fact that the word nāga had lost its metaphysical significance when the biographies were being compiled, and that the descent of the Bodhisattva in the form of an elephant (gaja) was accepted literally in Buddhist circles in order to emphasise his supernatural conception, while the dream was added as a prophecy of his future greatness. Furthermore, the portrayal of the Bodhisattva as a nāga in the scene of the descent also conforms with the tradition prevalent in the centuries preceding the Christian era, according to which the Buddhist sculptors scrupulously refrained from representing the Buddha in human form during his last earthly existence.

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1. *Jātaka* I, 52; cf. *Lalitavistara* 75, 4: 'whenever Maya looked at herself, she beheld the Bodhisattva standing in her womb;' and *Mahāvastu* II, 16: 'Just as though a gem of beryl in a crystal casket were placed in her curving lap, so does the mother see the form of the Bodhisattva like pure gold illuminating her womb.'
The concept of the Bodhisattva being visible in his mother's womb is closely associated with the mystique of light, which represents an important aspect of Indian religion and philosophy.

Both the Lalitavistara and Mahāvastu refer to the brilliant light that emanated from the womb of the mother of the Bodhisattva. According to the Lalitavistara (66, 9-12), when the Bodhisattva entered his mother's womb 'his body assumed a form which appeared like a great mass of fire (mahan agni-skanāha) on the top of a mountain and which was visible from a distance of five yojanas'. Elsewhere (67, 4) the same text says that the beauty, radiance, and colour (āriyā tejasā varmenc) of the Bodhisattva, cast a blaze of light in all the four directions and on all sides, to the extent of one kos, i.e. about two miles. The Mahāvastu (II, 9) also refers to the radiance that was shed by the Bodhisattva while in the womb which 'illuminated a whole Buddha-field' (sarva-buddhakhetra avabhāsitam). Several other passages in the biographies refer to the golden complexion and shining beauty of the Bodhisattva.

The concept of light emanating from the womb of the mother has a parallel in the mythology of other religions: the Bhāgavata (X, 2, 20), Viṣṇu (V, 2, 4) and Brahmavaivarta (IV, 17, 29) Purāṇas refer to the brilliant light which emanated from Devakī, mother of Kṛṣṇa, while he was in the womb - a light so bright that it illuminated the whole palace and no person could bear to gaze upon her. According to the Dīnhart (VII, 2, 55), the radiant light which emanated from Zarathustra while he was in the

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1. Pāli buddhakhetta appears to be derived from the concept of cakravarti-kṣetra, i.e. the sphere of influence of an Indian imperial ruler. The Visuddhimagga (414) describes the buddhakhetta as being three-fold - jātikhetta or domain of birth, consisting of 10,000 worlds; āpākhetta or domain of authority, consisting of 100,000 worlds; and ānākhetta or domain of knowledge, consisting of worlds infinite in number.
womb was so intense during the last three days before his birth that it lit up the entire village of his father Porushaspo. It is evident that sanctity and pure spirituality are symbolised here, as in India, by the most intense radiance. The same imagery appears to have been borrowed by Christianity, for the Star and light shining above the stable where Christ was born, shows that supernatural light also plays an important role in Christian beliefs and iconography. Several other examples could be adduced from the Gospels, as well as from the Jewish Scriptures taken over by Christianity. It is interesting that the symbol of the transparency of the mother's womb showing the divine child within also occurs in Christian iconography, as certain medieval frescoes portray Christ as clearly visible in the womb of the Virgin.¹

Far from being invented in the later stages of the history of Buddhism, the association of light with the power of attaining spiritual perfection may be traced to the earliest Upaniṣads. In the first place, there is the basic idea that light is creative: 'Creation is indeed all light' says Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VIII, 7, 2, 16-17 (prajā hava viṣva ṣyotiḥ), and the 'procreative power' according to Taittirīya Śraṃhitā VIII, 1, 1, 1. Already in the Rg Veda (I, 115, 1), the sun is described as the life or essence (ātman) of all things. The expressions 'conquering (the light of) heaven' (svarjit), and 'finding (the light of) heaven' (svarvid), occurring in Atharva Veda XIII, 2, 20, and XIX, 41, 1,² respectively, as well as the

1. cf. C.G. Jung: Symbols of Transformation, Pl. III - showing 'Christ in the Virgin's womb' (Upper Rhenish Master, Germany, c.1400); and T.W. Rhys Davids: Buddhist Birth Stories, p.152, note.
2. cf. AV XI, 1, 20; devayānaḥ svargah 'leading to light, going to heaven'. Although Vedic svār (to which svarga is related) does not necessarily denote the sun as a celestial body, Sāyaṇa's commentary on AV II, 11, 5 indicates that it was a 'common name for the bright sky and sun' and this is probably correct. In the Vedas the term most frequently refers to the 'realm of celestial light'. J. Gonda: Loka - world and heaven in the Veda, pp. 74-75.
sentence in IV, 14, 3: 'I have gone to svar, to light (jyotih)', indicate that to the Vedic mind, light was associated with life, joy, and well-being. In the Brāhmaṇas, this well-being, probably material and physical rather than spiritual, is associated with everlasting life and light is declared to be 'immortal'.

Although the late hymns of the Ṛg Veda and several sections of the Atharva Veda which acknowledge the unity underlying all creation and the omnipresence and omni-aspectuality of the One (styled Brahman and Supreme Lord in the latter text) reflect the contemplative tendencies of the Vedic seers, it is only in the Upaniṣads that the identity of Brahman with the ātman within the individual, is realized.

We have already referred to the divine form (dībo rūpi) of the mind-formed body (manomaya-kāya) mentioned in Buddhist literature. This concept of the divine mind-body is already met with in the earliest Upaniṣads. According to Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I, 3, 7, heaven is the body of mind and the sun its light-form; Chandogya Upaniṣad III, 13, 7-8 affirms that

1. cf. AV IV, 14, 5 where svar is co-ordinated with svasti, i.e. well-being, fortune, prosperity, and XVIII, 2, 45, where it is associated with a 'full lifetime'. Again combined with rtvā, tejah, brahman, etc. in AV XVI, 8, 1-27, the word svar no doubt occurs as a vague reference to 'heaven' in a general religious sense. The term not only denotes the celestial light, that 'sphere of light' to which one may gain access either by a ritual or a mystic method, but also a state of bliss and well-being; a state which in other languages is called 'heaven' without being localized in a definite place. Gonda: op.cit., p. 76.

2. cf. SB VII, 4, 2, 21, and IX, 4, 2, 14.

3. The insufficiency of Vedic, and in general, of all existing knowledge, is evident from ČU VII, 1, where Nārada acknowledges to Sanatkumāra: 'I have studied ... the Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda, the Atharva Veda ... grammar, mathematics, propitiation of the Fathers, divination, chronology, dialectics, ethics and politics, theology, sacred knowledge, about elemental spirits, art of warfare, astronomy, snake-charming, and the fine arts ... but I am not a knower of the ātman. I have heard that he who knows the ātman crosses over sorrow. Help me, then, to the farther side beyond sorrow'.

4. athaitasya manaso dyāḥ sarivam jyotirūpam asāv ādityah.
the 'light which shines above this heaven ... is the same as the light which is in the heart of the person (āpy antarjyotiḥ puruṣah) ... one who knows this becomes beautiful to see (oaksuṣyaḥ āruto bhavati). The same text (VIII, 3, 4) goes on to say: 'Now that serene being, rising out of this body and reaching the highest light appears in its own form (svena rūpābhiniṣpadgate). It is the ātman; it is the immortal (āmrtam); it is fearless (abhayam); it is Brahman. Verily the name of that Brahman is Truth' (satyam).¹ That the knowledge of the immortal was associated with awakening, and consequently with light, while ignorance (of the Truth or the Real) implied darkness, is evident from both Upanisadic as well as Buddhist passages. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV, 4, 11, says that 'those worlds covered with blind darkness (andhena tamāsvāryataḥ) are called joyless; to those after death, go those people who have not knowledge; who are not awakened' (avidvāro'budho jenāḥ).

In Majjhima Nikāya I, 171, the Buddha declares:

'Conqueror of all am I, All-knowing am I (sabbavīḍa'ham asmi), ... acquiring the super knowledge (abhiniḍāya) by myself ...

Alone am I a Supreme Buddha (samāsambuddho) ... To turn the Wheel of the Dhamma, I proceed to Kāsi's capital, Beating the drum of immortality (amanadundhubhi) in the World enveloped by darkness (andhabhūtāniḥ lokāniḥ).

Of the Supreme Gnosis Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I, 3, 28 says: 'From the unreal (or non-Being, asat) lead me to the real (or Being, sat); from darkness, lead me to light (tamo añī jyotir gamaya); from death lead me to immortality (mptor māmrtam gamaya). Extolling the Buddha in

¹ cf. Mund. Up. II, 2, 10, according to which Brahman is 'pure, without stain, and the light of lights' (jyotisām jyotih).
Suttanipata 538-39, Sabhiya says he 'has crossed the flood (of saṁsāra) to the further end of Suffering (ontāgā vi pāragu dukkhasa) ... a Supreme Buddha who has vision, light, and great wisdom'.

Light then, in Indian mysticism, is identical with Reality, Being, and Immortality, and the shining of the body of the Buddha and other holy men is a symptom of the transcendence of the profane and conditioned existence, and symbolises identity with Ultimate Reality.

That this light, a fiery brightness, expressed transcendence of the human condition, is further indicated by a number of passages in Buddhist literature. In Dīgha Nikāya III, 27, the Buddha declares that after the delivery of a discourse, he entered into jhāna by the method of a flame (tejo-dhātu samāpajjito), rose into the air to the height of seven palm trees, and projected a flame the height of another seven palm trees, so that it blazed and glowed.1 Dhammapada 387, referring to the lustre of the Buddha says: 'The sun shines by day; the moon is resplendent at night ... but all day and all night, the Buddha shines in glory' (Buddho tapati tejasā). Suttanipata 687 and 1097 compares the Buddha with the radiant sun.2 In the Milindapañha (384) the monk Nāgasena, at the end of a discourse on the five qualities necessary for a bhikkhu to realise Arahatsipship, quotes the saying of the Buddha: 'As fire dispels darkness and makes light appear, even so, the yogin, the earnest student of yoga, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, must make the light of knowledge appear'. (avijjandhakārān vidhamivā nāpalokān dassayi ādānam). The same

1. satta talān vehāsām abhugantvā, dhāmā satta talān pi accīm abhinirmiṇīvā jāleti dhāpāyita.
2. cf. Sn 687: visuddham swāyaṃ tapanto sarada-r-iv'abbhamattam, and 1097: bhagavā hi kāme abhibhuyya iriyati ādīcāso va paṭṭhaṃ teji tejanā.
text (385) represents the Buddha as exhorting his own son Rāhula:

'Develop the (mind) development like fire (tejo samāh bhāvanāḥ bhāvehi); for from developing the (mind) development that is like fire, Rāhula, unskilled states of mind that have not arisen in you, will not arise ...

In *Samyutta Nikāya* I, 169, the Buddha refers to the 'kindling of the fire within him (ajjhatam eva jalāyāti joti); a constantly burning fire ...'.

The *Lalitavistara* (3, 7) records that once, about the middle watch of the night, the Buddha was absorbed in the meditation called buddhālāṅkāravyāha. While he was thus meditating, there issued forth a ray called the Pūrva-Buddhānu-emptiyā-saṅgā-jñāna-locālāṅkāra (Ornament of the Light of the Knowledge of non-attachment brought about by the recollection of previous Buddhas), from the opening in the cranial protuberance (uṇāi-vivarāntarāt) above his head (upariṣṭān mūrdhnaḥ).

Now, this is expressly the iconographic tradition underlying the representation of a flame rising from the top of the head in several later Buddha figures. The *Saddharma Pundarīka* (XXV, 7) asks the following question: 'By reason of what knowledge (jñāna) is it that the Tathāgata's cranial protuberance (mūrdhny-uṇīga) shines (vibhāti)?'. Coomaraswamy finds the answer in *Bhagavad Gītā* XIV, 11: 'When there is knowledge, light shines forth (prakāśa upajāyate jñānasya yadā) from the orifices of the body; then be it known that purity has matured' (upādāḥaḥ sattvaṁ), i.e. that man has 'become what he is'.

An episode in the life of the Buddha which is not mentioned in the traditional Pāli and Sanskrit biographies, but which occurs in the art of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi (without the figure of the Buddha), Gandhāra,

Ajanta as well as Central Asia, is the visit of the god Indra to the Bhagavat while he was meditating in a cave (Indrasālāgūha). According to the Sakkāpanhasutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, Indra (Sakka), accompanied by the gods, descended from the Tavatīṁsa heaven and appeared on the Vediya mountain in Magadha where the Buddha was meditating. Roused from his meditation by the gandharva Pañcasikha's singing, the Buddha magically widened the cave so that the gods could enter. Now, at the time of the visit, the Vediya mountain was ablaze with light so that the villagers remarked that the mountain was on fire. It is clear from the text, that the descending gods brought the radiant light with them. In the Dirghāgama sūtra, however, the light is expressly ascribed to the Buddha's having entered the 'flaming ecstasy', while in the Indra-Śakra-pariṇicchā sūtra Indra explains to Pañcasikha that the mountain has so wonderful a colour because 'the Buddha Tathāgata is within it in perfect purity'.

This mystical theme has a parallel in the legend of the Nativity of Christ in a cave, and the visit of the Magi. In both legends, a king of the gods (Indra), or 'kings, sons of kings' enter a cave to pay homage to the Saviour and in the course of their visit, the cave is miraculously lit. Although in the oldest version (Matthew), they are wise men (magi), in the apocryphal gospels they are represented as kings, a detail which remains in Christian legend. These later apocryphal accounts contain other themes suggesting contact with India.

2. Translated by Fa-hsien (5th Cent. AD); Nanjio: op.cit., No. 924; reprinted in Daizokyo, I, No. 15, pp. 246 ff.
Alexander Soper draws our attention to the contrast between the 'inconspicuous handling' of the scene of Indra's visit in early Indian art (Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi) and the art of Gandhāra during the later Kuśāṇa period, where considerable emphasis is given to the theme of Indraśālāguṇā. A medallion at Bodhgaya (c. 100 BC) depicts the scene in the briefest manner possible, i.e. Pañcasikha shown with his lyre on the right side of a low hill, and a cave marked by an arched opening which contains an empty altar-throne. The version at Sanchi (about a century later) is slightly more elaborate; here we have two rows of adoring spectators across the front of the panel, a cave with a caitya arch, and several animals on either side. At Ajanta, however, the 'visit of Indra' is depicted as a typically Indian pageant, 'a shimmer of lively sensuous beauty around the still silhouette of the Buddha'.

Although the Gandharan artists portrayed the visit from a similar point of view, with the addition of several details, it is clear that they were not motivated merely by a delight in pomp and ceremony, or else they would not have concentrated on this one scene. The scene of the Buddha's descent from the Tavatīṃsa heaven on a golden staircase escorted by Brahmā and Indra on either side, which also occurs in early classical art, would certainly have been more suitable had the motivation been merely to illustrate the glory of the Buddha, and to emphasise the triumph of Buddhism over other sectarian religions. It is also apparent that the incident has no direct connection with Gandhāra, since it is said to have taken place in Magadha. The meeting, which was obviously invented for reasons of religions propaganda, is portrayed at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, and

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Sanchi, as clearly reflecting the humility of Indra, the chief god of the Vedic period, before the founder of Buddhism.⁰

It is difficult to explain the emphasis given by the Gandharan artists to the theme of Indrāśālaguhā which developed into an iconographic type located only in the later cave shrines of Central Asia and Western China. The large number of cave shrines discovered near modern Qyzl are essentially rectangular chapels, extending into the cliffside, in which the cult object at the rear is a Buddha image with its back against the solid rock, and around which is a narrow ambulatory passage to permit pradakṣiṇā.² This formula of worshipping the Buddha in a cave sanctuary where the icon itself is 'framed by a stylized entrance to a miniature grotto in a conventional mountain', is illustrated in the Kucha style from the 5th Cent. AD, and continues until the 8th Cent. AD.³ That the setting of the image in a cave was particularly favoured in North-western India is also indicated by a stele fragment from Takht-i-Bahi of the Kusana period, depicting another visit: this time a group of gaunt ascetics crowding around a mountain cave in which the Buddha is seated. The relief has been identified with the visit of Bavārin and his sixteen brahmin pupils, at the Pāśānaka caitya in Magadhā, related in Suttanipāta 976-1031.⁴

The most remarkable feature of this northern style of depicting the 'visit' scene, is the absence of architectural details, i.e. design of an architectural facade imitated faithfully in the living rock, in all the Indian reliefs. The Central Asian chapel has 'no facade outside and no

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1. cf. DN II, 269 where Pañcasikha announces: Sakko devānom Indo samacca sararijano Bhagavato pāde virāgad vandatiti'. The 'putting down' of Indra is also reflected in the govardhanagiri dhāranāepisode of the Kṛṣṇa legend and indicates the replacement of the ancient gods by 'younger' sectarian gods.
piers inside, but takes the form of a vault excavated in the form of a tunnel. The lower curve of the vault, which is laid out as a series of formalized mountain outlines, gives the setting of half natural and half geometric effect. The crown of the vault is the heavens, simulated by the flying figures of planetary deities, Arhats, and Buddhas. 'Among all these reminders of natural elements - earth, rocks, vegetation, winds, sky, light - it seems wholly fitting that the Buddha worshipped on the floor of the chapel should be enshrined ... in the rock itself'.

The 'visit' stelae of Gandhāra which served as a model for the Kucha Style chapels, is noticed by Soper to have a close parallel in, and was most probably borrowed from, the cult monuments of Mithra in the late Roman empire. The style of certain Gandhāra reliefs of high quality may also be explained by a direct contact with Roman sculpture around the middle of the 2nd Cent. AD.

The religious environment out of which the Mithra cult evolved, however, was not peculiar to the Roman empire, nor was it excluded from Iran by being different from Zoroastrian orthodoxy. It flourished all over the ancient Orient: 'everywhere it was intricate and confused, a puzzling juxtaposition of lights and darks', its most elaborate growth noticeable in the Gnostic system. The prominence of the cave theme

2. Soper: loc. cit. In the Mithraic sanctuary, which is a natural cavern, the god occupies an irregularly outlined niche in a conventionalized mountain at the rear, indicated by rock modelling, as well as by trees, birds and animals. Although the ideology of the two sanctuaries seems irreconcilable, it is the 'essence of Mithraic mystery that apparent grossness should conceal a promise of the highest good', that is common to both. Soper: op. cit., p.261.
in Kuṣāṇa art may therefore be explained by the eastward penetration of ideas that may be termed Gnostic; beliefs which exploited the ancient Iranian concept of dualism to an extent further than that reached by the sun god Mithra.¹ In Zoroastrianism Light and Goodness were balanced on one side against Darkness and Evil on the other, but in Gnosticism the conviction was that dualism extended to an opposition of Spirit and Matter. The unconscious self of man (Spirit) is consubstantial with the Godhead, and through divine revelation alone does he become conscious of his origin, essence and transcendental destiny.² It is the intuition of the mystery of the self: the enemy was everywhere, even within the fighter himself. Gnosis had to free the light of the Spirit from the encumbrance of Evil and permit it to rejoin the source of all light.

It would be unwise to claim that the special prominence of the cave theme in Gandhāra and the neighbouring regions was due solely to extra-Indian influences. Indeed, as Soper has admitted, in a region whose culture is essentially mixed, it would be difficult and perhaps impossible to 'assign any single clearly defined source to a major religious concept, or even to separate Indian from non-Indian'.³

We have already referred to the numerous passages in Indian literature, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, where the concept of light is so closely associated with the highest knowledge, insight, and perfect self-cultivation, that it is often used metaphorically. We have also

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2. Gnostic philosophy explains the creation and present condition of the world by the descent of the divine spirit from its sphere of absolute purity, into lower regions where it interacts with opposing forces of darkness. To emphasise the involvement of God in the 'dark' world, it became necessary to represent him as being born not merely from a human mother, but as emerging from the earth itself, thus symbolising matter most effectively. *ERE*, VI, pp.234-35.
noticed that from the time of the earliest Upaniṣada, the light, i.e. the fiery brightness of the sun, is located in the heart of man. In a rather late Upaniṣad (Maitrī Upaniṣad VI, 3-4), the Supreme Principle is represented as being located in a cave or secret chamber (guha) in the Lotus of the Heart (kṛt-puṣkara). In Dhammapada 37, it is the mind (citta) that is described as 'wandering alone, bodiless, and lying in a cave' (guha sayāh).

In the visual arts, as early as the beginning of the 1st Cent. AD, a relief from Sanchi associates a miraculous flame with the meditating Buddha. At Nāgarjunikonda, the first sermon is indicated by the empty throne on which rest the Wheel of the Dhamma, and tongues of flame behind the pillar of the Wheel. 1 Several late Andhra reliefs represent the Buddha as a fiery pillar, with wheel-marked feet, supported by a lotus and a trisūla head. 2 Coomaraswamy's observation that these Buddhist fiery pillars represent the survival of a purely Vedic formula in which Agni is described as the Axis of the Universe, extending as a pillar between Heaven and Earth 3 is, as we shall see later, probably correct.

Although the light-emitting or luminous character of the Buddha implicit in Buddhist texts may have been facilitated by a pre-existing environment of Brahmanical metaphysics, specific evidence shows that no matter how widely the sun and fire symbolism was infused into Buddhist iconography, its most consistent and strongest manifestations occur in the art of the North-west, a region that was also penetrated by Iranian influences. It is on a coin of Kaṇiṣka that the standing figure of the

1. J. Rosenfield: The Dynastic Arts of the Kushana, Fig. 163.
2. Coomaraswamy: Elements of Buddhist Iconography, Figs. 4-9.
Buddha is first represented with an aureole of light surrounding his entire body like the sungod. 1 A comparison between the countless reliefs of the Kuśāna period from Gandhāra showing the solar aureole and the halo, and those from India proper where the halo does not occur as frequently, indicates that the solar attribute represented an essential iconographic feature in the art of the North-west. Certainly the representation of flames emanating from the shoulders which appears to be limited to the Buddha images of the Gandhara school, 2 is suggestive of the importance of the fiery element in Buddhist iconography of the north-west. It is significant that all the Kuśāna and Kuśāṇo-Sassanian rulers from Wima Kadphises onward are represented on their coins as displaying supernatural effulgence, either by a halo or flaming shoulders or both. Rosenfield observes that as the Buddha figures with flaming shoulders were carved at the monastery temples which served the Kuśāna nobility at Kāpiṣā, it

1. P. Gardner: Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria in the British Museum, Pl. XVI, Fig. 8.
2. cf. A gilt bronze Buddha image in the Fogg Art Museum, of the first half of the 7th Cent. AD regarded as a remarkably faithful Chinese copy of a Gandhara statue in dhyāna asana. The moustache and mantle whose fold structure appears to be an imitation of Late Antique drapery is characteristic of the Romano-Buddhist school of north-western India. B. Rowland: 'Indian Images in Chinese Sculpture', Artibus Asiae, X.

Soper, however, observes that shoulder flames are virtually unknown in Gandharan sculpture; instead, in a representation of the Great Miracle of Srāvasti, it is the round halo of the Buddha that flames, or in a conflict with the Jains, it is his whole body that seems to be on fire. In Afghanistan, shoulder flames are an attribute of Dīpaṅkara Buddha whose special characteristic is radiance; or, they may denote a special state of trance, the 'flaming ecstasy'. In the Kucha style frescoes, a series of preaching Buddhas are all given shoulder flames. Soper: op. cit., XII, p.270, note.

The motif of flames on the shoulders of the Buddha which appears first and most frequently in the art of the Kāpiṣā region appears to have been a 'specialty of the monastic workshop at Shotorak and Paitava near Kāpiṣā'. Rosenfield: op. cit., p.200.
would seem that the 'flaming shoulders of the Buddha and those of the Kushan Kings were closely related in basic significance'.

The preoccupation with fire and light symbolism in the North-west is also suggested by the fact that the Dipamkara Jataka has not been identified in pre-Kusana art but appears to have been a favourite subject with the sculptors of Gandhāra. The importance of the cult of the Buddha Dipamkara, whose name conveys the idea of light, in Afghanistan, is perhaps most evident from the oversized icon with shoulder flames, against whose colossal scale the figure of Śākyamuni is dwarfed.

To return to the theme of the cave in Buddhist iconography, it is significant that the later versions of the well-known story of the Buddha's subduing of the fiery nāga in the fire-room (agni-saraṇa) of the Kāśyapa brothers speak of the conflict as taking place in a cavern. This late version was transmitted through the North-western regions and Central Asia into China, appearing sporadically in the art of Northern Wei, whereas, within the frontiers of India the only known illustration depicting this amended iconography occurs in a Gandharan relief of late style. The importance of the cave theme in Buddhist art of the North-west is also evident from the fact that the 'Shadow Cave' at Nagarāhāra near modern Hadda (in which the Buddha is said to have left his shadow, and which is

2. cf. Vaipulya-Mahāvyūha-sūtra XII (Nanjio: op. cit., No. 159; in Daisōkyō, II, No. 187); Ekottarāgama III and XIV (Nanjio: op. cit., No. 543; in Daisōkyō II, No. 129); Sāmanvaprabhāsa-sūtra VIII (Nanjio: op. cit., No. 160; in Daisōkyō III, No. 186); Dharmagupta Vinaya XXXII (Nanjio: op. cit., No. 1117); in Daisōkyō XXII, No.1428; Mulasarvāstivādī Vinaya-Saṅghabhedakavastu VI (Nanjio: op. cit., No. 1123; in Daisōkyō XXII, No. 1450). Cf. Soper: op. cit., p. 75. Fig. 225b.
mentioned by every Chinese Buddhist from Fa-hsien to Hsuan Tsang), became a pilgrimage site known all over Asia, while in Magadha the incident on mount Vediya was forgotten. The 'visit' theme which might have been given special mystical significance by the tradition of the Upanisads, was depicted from Gandhāra to Amaravati, but was given unique emphasis only in the North-west.

It is evident then, that in India proper the episode of the Indraśālaguhā, which was only connected with Buddhist doctrine, also served to illustrate the humiliating position of the great Vedic god Indra. That the cave had no specific symbolic value in early Buddhist iconography is noticeable from one of the two reliefs at Nagarjunikonda illustrating the Indraśālaguhā in which the cave is omitted altogether.

We have already mentioned that although the concept of the radiant and dazzling appearance of those who have transcended the human condition and are at one with the Immortal, is common to both Brahmanical and Buddhist literature, its iconographic manifestation in the form of an aureole or halo is most conspicuous in the art of north-western India, a region heavily exposed to Iranian and other influences.

This dazzling appearance and golden complexion represents the eleventh (out of thirty two) major distinguishing signs of a Mahāpurusa (Superman) in the Lakkhaṇa-sutta: suvaṇṇa vaṇṇo hoti kaṇhoana-samirbhāttaco (Dīgha Nikāya III, 143). Although references to the various Mahāpurusa lakkhaṇas are scattered throughout the Pāli canon, the first detailed and complete description of the physical appearance of such a

1. See S. Beal: Buddhist Records of the Western World for the most convenient translation of the records of Fa-hsien, Sung-Yun, and Hsuan-Tsang.
2. A.H. Longhurst: The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunakonda, Pl. XLIV.
Mahāpurusa occurs in the Lakkhana-sutta, and is the iconographic prescription underlying all Indian Buddha images. The list of the thirty-two signs of a Mahāpurusa is common to all schools and appears to have been derived from a pre-Buddhist manual of astrology. The evidence of Dīgha Nikāya II, 16, according to which brahmans versed in signs (nemittā brāhmaṇā) were summoned to foretell the destiny of the Buddha Vipassin soon after he was born, shows that the evaluation of such characteristics was a practice anterior to Buddhism. In Lalitavistara 105, 6, the future of the Buddha is predicted by the ρξι Asita, who appeals to the authority of the 'Mantras, Vedas and Śāstras'.

It was pointed out long ago by Senart that the Buddhist conception of the Mahāpurusa was deeply influenced by the Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa of Brahmanical mythology and mysticism: 'Si dans l’hymne du Rig les détails de la description anthropomorphique de Purusha étaient ou très-vagues ou tout à fait fantastiques, ils se précisent et s’accentuent ici; l’énumération de toutes les parties de ce corps merveilleux se complète, et plusiers, les talons, les chevilles, la mâchoire, la langue, etc., s’acheminent déjà vers leur rôle futur dans les descriptions secondaires du Mahāpurusha. Le symbolisme de cet Étre universel est, il est vrai, parfaitement sensible encore,... Nārāyaṇa est le patronymique régulièrement donné à Purusha, et si complètement identifié avec ce titre que... entre les deux personnages de Purusha-Nārāyaṇa et de Vishnu, un point de contact créé par une certaine communauté d’origine.'

1. E. Senart: Essai sur La Legende du Buddha, pp. 125; 128; 129-130. The syncretistic tendency of Buddhism is clearly demonstrated in Lalitavistara 109, 10; 110, 7; 20; where the Buddha is described as 'possessing the power of Nārāyaṇa' (Nārāyaṇasthāmavāṇ). The same text (318, 13-14) also refers to the Buddha displaying various attributes some of which are especially associated with Viṣṇu, e.g., conch (śaṅkha) and wheel (cakra): śaṅkhadhvajamānakadāśvastikāṅkudaoakrāṅkamadhyena. In Mahābhārata XII, 340, 55, Mahāpurusa occurs as an epithet of Nārāyaṇa.
In commenting upon the universal character of Puruṣa of the Rg Veda, Norman Brown remarks: 'Puruṣa is both the essence of creatures and also the inclusive principle, the first principle, the ruler, the immortal, the eternal. He is neither Agni, Sūrya, nor Viṣṇu alone, nor is he a combination of the three. He is a combination of characteristics derived from them, fused in a rather shadowy way in a new unity, with special reference to the sun'.

The solar affiliation of the Buddhist Mahāpurusa is not only implied by the representation of the 'thousand-spoked (sahasarāni sanemikāni) wheels, with tyre and hub, complete and well-divided; on the soles of his feet, but also by the epithets adiccabandhu (kinsman of the Sun), and oakkhun loke (Eye in the World) applied to the Buddha Mahāpurusa in the Pāli-canon. The wheel in Indian symbolism primarily represents the Revolution of the Year, as Father Time (Prajāpati, Kāla), 'the flowing tide of all begotten things' (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa II, 17) dependent on the Sun (Maitri Upaniṣad VI, 14-16). The imagery of the sun as a wheel is already noticed in Rg Veda I, 164, 2; 11, 13; 14 and 48 where the one wheel of the Sun's chariot has five or twelve spokes (seasons or months), 360 spokes (days), axle (akṣa) and triple nave (nābha); it is the revolving wheel of life, undecaying (ajara), and therein are established (tasthuḥ) the several worlds (vidvā bhuvanāni). Coomaraswamy observes: 'In the sense that Time is the Sun, a circle is its centre, the Wheel represents the Sun, but more exactly the movement of the Sun in his heavenly car. with one or two correlated wheels'. It is significant that in the Rg Veda the Sun or Solar Wheel is constantly spoken of as

2. SN I, 186; 192; AN II, 54; Sn 54; 915; 1128; etc.
3. DN II, 140; 158.
'revolving' or as being revolved, with the use of the root vṛt as it occurs in Buddhist pavattana (pravartana), meaning 'to move on'.

A number of passages in the Pāli canon also refer to the qualities of a Mahāpurusa; Dhammapada 352 defines him as one 'who is without craving and grasping (vitatanţho anāđāṇo) ... who is the bearer of his final body (antina sari̹ro), and is of profound wisdom (mahāpañño). In Sānyutta Nikāya V, 158, the Buddha declares that 'one whose mind is emancipated (vimutta-cittattā) is a Mahāpurusa; without emancipation of the mind, there can be no Mahāpurusa'. Again in Anguttara Nikāya II, 37, the Buddha defines a Mahāpurusa as one possessing the four qualities: concerning himself with establishing the masses in the Aryan system, i.e. the righteous Aryan Path; having the capacity to apply himself to whatsoever train of thought he wishes, i.e. being master of his own mind; entering the four jhānas without difficulty; and, destroying the āsavas (biases) and realizing the release of the mind.

This concept of the perfect man—perfect in terms of spiritual attainment, a Mahāpurusa who is endowed with a glorious appearance distinguished by thirty-two major and eighty minor signs, which developed further in Mahayana Buddhism to form the Sambhoga Kāya or the 'Body of Bliss' of the Buddha. According to the Dasa-bhūmika-sūtra (83) the Sambhoga Kāya, described in the opening chapters of all the Mahāyāna sūtras, is the result of the merit which a Buddha has acquired by his good deeds through the aeons. Several pages of the Sattasahasrika-Prajñāpāramitā are devoted to descriptions of every part of the Buddha's

1. cf. RV I, 35, 2, where Savitr is vartamanah; cf. also I, 155, 6: cakram ... avatopt; II, 11, 20: avartayat sārya na cakram; V, 30, 1: asmānam oti evanyoḥ vartamānam; VII, 63, 2: samānam cakram pary avatptan.
glorious body, of the rays which emanate from his head, hands and feet, and even his fingers, and fill the entire cosmos. The thirty-two major characteristics and eighty secondary distinctions are represented in the Lankavatāra-sūtra (Sagāthakam, verse 774), as adorning the Sambhoga Kāya of the Buddha which does not appear on earth but is restricted to the Akaniṣṭha Heaven.¹

This spiritual glory of the Buddha, which is completely devoid of historicity and which denies his humanity, his physical body, and his death, has been described as the 'true light of the Mahāyāna'. With its emphasis upon the transcendental aspect of the nature of the Buddha, the Mahāyāna 'not only lifts Buddhism far above the plane of mere historicity, but also fully vindicates its eternal truth and significance'². In commenting upon the difference between the historical Sākyamuni and the transcendental aspect of the nature of the Buddha, Conze remarks: 'To the Christian and agnostic historian, only the human Buddha is real, and the spiritual and the magical Buddha are to him nothing but fictions. The perspective of the believer is quite different. The Buddha-nature and the Buddha's 'glorious body' stand out most clearly, and the Buddha's human body and historical existence appear like a few rags thrown over this spiritual glory'.³

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1. 'A Buddha is Completely Enlightened neither in the kamadhatu, nor in the arūpadhatu, but is (Completely) Enlightened in the Akaniṣṭha, free from passion of the rūpadhatu'.
CHAPTER III

The Seven Steps of the Buddha.
In India, as well as in other traditional cultures, the fundamental truths are proclaimed at different levels though the expression varies at each, the terms used being suited to the level of knowledge. The primordial truths expressed in the Vedas, and the principles clearly exposed and expounded in the Upanishads, as well as those of other philosophical systems, are also to be found in popular worship and religious folklore, but expressed symbolically and figuratively.

We have seen that Light symbolises union with the Ultimate Reality; it is only by acquiring Supreme Knowledge that the individual attains the plane of liberty, or Nirvāṇa, thereby becoming a 'jivan-mukta', i.e. a man 'liberated while living', and a 'kāmaçarin', i.e. a 'mover-at-will'. The Nirvāṇa-ized individual no longer lives in time, nor under the domination of time, but only in the eternal, non-temporal present, defined in Buddhist terminology as: niccato nibbūto sitikhūto sukhapañjasvāvedi brahmabhūtena attanā viharati (Anguttara Nikāya II, 206).

This liberation from Time attained by the Buddha, and the transcending of the profane condition, is symbolised in the myth of the Seven Steps which were taken by the Bodhisattva immediately after his birth, and is also illustrated by a number of parables related in Buddhist literature.

The Niññakathā (Jātaka I, 53) records that as soon as he was born, the Bodhisattva placed his feet firmly on the ground, and surveying the ten directions, faced the north and took seven strides (sattapada vithāhārenā

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1. For kāmaçarin see RV IX, 113, 9: anukāman eva vañam; cf. also JUB III, 28, 3: CV VIII, 5, 4; TU III, 5. In DN I, 72 the 'servant of desire is his own slave, not his own master, nor able to go where he will', (na yena kāmañ ca mamo, i.e. na kāmaçarin), while the man 'the doors of whose senses are guarded' (DN I, 63; SN II, 218: indriyesu gutta dvāra, i.e. AN III, 6, and Dh 379: attagutto), 'is his own master freed from slavery (dāsavya mutto) and able to go where he will.'
āgamāsi) while a white parasol\(^1\) was held above him. At the seventh step he said with the voice of a bull: 'I am the highest in the world' (aggo\(^2\) ṛom āmi lokasa).\(^2\) According to Majjhima Nikāya III. 123, with the voice of a bull he declared: 'I am the highest in the world; I am the best in the world; I am the oldest in the world; this is my last birth; henceforth there will be no more renewed existence' (punabbhavo).

The Buddhacarita (I, 14-15) makes no reference to the direction taken by the Bodhisattva but says that with the gait of a lion, he walked seven steps 'with such firmness that the feet were lifted up unwavering and straight, and the strides were long and set down firmly'. At the seventh step he said: 'I am born for Enlightenment and for the good of the world; this is my last birth in the world of phenomena'.

This mythical feature of the Buddha's Nativity is repeated with a few variations in all his biographies. The Mahāvastu (II, 24) states that the Bodhisattva 'tired of his stay in the womb, took seven mighty strides over the earth, and surveying the regions, laughed aloud, saying: 'This is my very last existence'. In the Lalitavistara (84, 12 - 85, 8), the story is developed even further; the Bodhisattva advanced seven steps in six directions - east, south, west, north, above, and below. Striding towards the east, at the seventh step he said: 'Like

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1. The emblems of royalty which represented sovereign authority were a white umbrella, fly-whisks, shoes, turban, and the throne, collectively known as the paṇcaākakudāni (literally, the 'five summits'). There was also a sword of state. The importance of the white umbrella as a symbol of royalty and universal paramountcy is noticed in Ā.p. 18, 18 which says that after performing the Vājapeya sacrifice, the king becomes 'one who is entitled to the white umbrella'. The sun should never be allowed to shine directly on the sacred person of the king, as his tejas (fiery energy or lustre) and pratāpa (brilliance, majesty, heat) would be neutralized by contact with a power possessing excessive heat. J. Gonda: Ancient Indian Kingship from a religious point of view, p.37.

2. agga: Vedic āgra, meaning first, or foremost in relation to time, and the highest or topmost in terms of space. It also occurs in the phrase agga-m-aggā meaning 'most excellent' 'most illustrious' in Vin. IV,232. cf. DH II,4; SN I,29. T.W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede: Pali-English Dictionary, s.v.
my predecessors, I shall be the foremost of all virtuous actions, the roots of the auspiciousness of dharma'; advancing towards the south, at the seventh step he declared: 'I shall be worthy of offerings (daksināya) from gods and men'. Striding towards the west, at the seventh step he said: 'I am the oldest on earth and the best in the world. This is my western (i.e. last) birth; I shall bring an end to birth, old age, death and suffering' (jātijarāmarājanadukkha). Towards the north he advanced seven steps and declared: 'I shall be incomparable amongst all created beings' (anuttaro bhaviṣyāmi sarva-sattvānām). He advanced seven steps towards the nether regions and said: 'I shall destroy Māra and his army; I shall shower on the Niraya (hell) the rain of the cloud of the mighty Dhamma (dharmaneghapagati), and extinguish the fire of the Niraya, so that it may be restored to happiness'. Taking seven strides upwards and casting his look above, he declared: 'I shall be observed by all who dwell above'.

It has been pointed out that the frequency of the first motif, i.e. the taking of the seven steps in a single direction, the North, indicates that the other versions were later, and were 'probably due to the integration of this mythical theme into a more intricate symbolism'.

The theme of the seven steps of the Bodhisattva represents a re-interpretation of the archaic symbolism of transcendence, and appears to belong to the ritual-complex common to India, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The transcendence of the world and the 'attainment of immortality' by elevation into the celestial regions, was known in India in the pre-Buddhistic period; e.g. Atharva Veda XII, 3, 38 refers to 'yonder heaven'

(svargaḥ) which is gained by ritual, while Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VII, 10, 3 says: '... by that which is not svarga one mounts to the svarga loka'. In Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VII, 5, 2, 36, the svarga loka is said to be the 'mounting', 'ascension', or 'height' (roha), while Vājasaneyī Samhitā 13, 51 refers to those 'worshipping the gods as ascending to the height'. According to Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VIII, 7, 4, 6, and Aitareya Brāhmaṇa II, 1, 1, 'Heaven is indeed the only foundation, the only goal of the sacrifice; by means of the sacrifice the gods went up to the world of heaven'. Kaṇḍitaki Brāhmaṇa XIV, 1, also affirms that the 'sacrifice is the heavenly world' (svargo vai loko yajñaḥ). Aitareya Brāhmaṇa II, 11, 5 indicates that by ritually and 'mystically' identifying himself with the sacrificial victim and Prajāpati, the sacrificer 'goes to heaven', while the author of Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa I, 3, 7, 5, describes the heavenly world (svarga loka) as immortal (amṛtam). Again, Satapatha Brāhmaṇa V, 2, 5, 10 says that 'the sacrifice as a whole is a ship which leads to heaven' (sarva eva yajña nauḥ svargya). The sacrificer who imitates Viṣṇu, i.e. who ceremoniously performs the mythical act of the god who pervades the universe, is described in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 9, 3, 9 ff. as 'mounting' first the earth, then the intermediate space, and then the celestial sphere, reaching his supreme goal. The author of Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa I, 3, 2, expressly says of the sacrificer: 'As one would climb a tree by steps (yathā viṣṇum ākraṇaṁ ākraṇaṁ ākramōvah iyād) ... he keeps ascending these worlds' (imān lokān rohann eti). Satapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 9, 3, 10 which refers to the sacrificer 'ascending (samaruṇya) these worlds and reaching that goal, this support' (etāṁ pratiśṭhām gacchati), may be compared to the ascent of the sun described in

1. cf. SB VI, 7, 2, 12 ff.
Atharva Veda XIII, 1, 44: 'I know that (nature) of thine, O Immortal, namely thy climb (ākramanam) in the sky, thy station in the highest empyrean'.

The climbing of the sacrificial post (yūpa) itself represents one of the most characteristic aspects of the Brahmanical ritual. Of the yūpa the author of Taittiriya Saṁhitā VI, 6, 4, 2 says: 'Verily the sacrificer makes it a ladder and a bridge to attain the world of heaven'.

The rites are also described in the same text (I, 7, 9): the sacrificer mounts the sacrificial post on behalf of himself and his wife, climbing by means of steps (ākramaṇa), and on reaching the top he stretches out his arms (as a bird spreads his wings) and exclaims: 'We have come to Heaven, to the devas; we have become immortal'. Similarly, Satapatha Brāhmaṇa V, 2, 1, 5 refers to the sacrificer who mounts the yūpa and 'rises by (the measure of) his head', and says: 'We have become immortal', thereby winning the 'world of the gods'. The Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa (XVIII, 7, 9, ff.) describing the race in the Vajapeya sacrifice, says: 'they run a race and make the sacrificer win; thereby they make him gain the 'world of heaven'', i.e. he mounts by means of a ladder to the top of the sacrificial post. Elsewhere the same text (IX, 1, 35) says with regard to this ritual race: 'They made the Sun their goal (kāṣṭham) and ran a race'.

A number of passages in Brahmanical literature refer to the means by which Heaven may be attained. Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa V, 3, 5 says that the sacrificer 'having become a bird, soars to the world of heaven'. According

1. ākramanam eva tat setum yajamānāh karute svargasya lokasya samāṣṭyat.
to Satapatha Brahmana XIII, 2, 6, 15, it is the sacrificial horse which in the guise of a great bird carries the sacrificer to heaven. In Rg Veda VI, 9, 5 Intellect (manas) is identified as the 'swiftest of birds' (mano javis̐ham patayatu antae), and Pañcavimśa Brahmana IV, 1, 1, 3 states that 'he who has intellect has wings'. The significance of 'wings' is clearly evident from Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brahmana III, 1, 3, 9: 'He who without wings goes up the Tree, falls down from it; but if one possessing wings sits at the top of the Tree, or on the edge of a sword, or on the edge of a razor, verily, he does not fall down from it'. The part played by Intellect, i.e. wings, in the quest for Reality or Immortality is also clearly expressed in Kauṭitaki Upaniṣad V, 2 which refers to the 'hamsa whose abode is the Light'.

The seven strides taken by the Buddha, which closely resembles the mounting of the yupa in Brahmanical sacrificial ritual, is also analogous to the ascent by the Siberian shaman to Heaven, by means of steps or tapty, the spiral groove cut in the ceremonial birch tree. This tree symbolises the World Tree which stands at the Centre of the Universe, and the seven, nine or twelve notches represent the 'heavens', the celestial spheres.

The symbolism of the 'centre' is not necessarily a cosmological idea. Eliade observes that in the beginning 'centre' or site of a possible

1. cf. TB XIV, 3, 10; SB X, 2, 2, 4 where Prajápati is described as a bird (sūparṇa), and TŚ II, 5, 11, 5: 'Intellect (manas) is indeed Prajápati'. cf. also SB X, 5, 3, 1-4 where Intellect is identified with 'That which was in the beginning neither Non-being nor Being'.

2. Several religious ideas are implied in the symbolism of the World Tree. It is found to represent, as we shall see later, the universe in continual regeneration, the inexhaustible spring of cosmic life, and the paramount reservoir of the sacred. In India the Cosmic Tree symbolising fertility and perenniality, is related not only to the idea of creation, but also to dissolution; not only to ideas of Reality, Light, and Immortality, but also to those of non-Reality, darkness and renewed existence.
breakthrough in plane, was applied to any sacred space, that is, 'any space that had been the scene of a hierophany and so manifested realities (or forces, figures, etc.) that were not of our world, that came from elsewhere and primarily from the sky'. The idea of a 'centre' followed from the experience of a sacred space impregnated by superhuman presence, i.e. at that particular point something from above (or below) had manifested itself.¹ A centre therefore, represents an ideal point which belongs not to profane geometrical space, but to sacred space - a place where communication with Heaven or Hell may be realized; in other words, the 'centre' represents the paradoxical point 'where the planes intersect, the point at which the sensuous world can be transcended'.²

A ladder (klimax) with seven gates, each made of a different metal was also mounted by the initiate in the mysteries of Mithra. The Platonist Celsus (C. AD. 178) describes the first gate of the ladder as being of lead (corresponding to the 'heaven' of the planet Saturn), the second tin (Venus), the third bronze (Jupiter), the fourth iron (Mercury), the fifth 'monetary alloy' (Mars), the sixth silver (the moon), and the seventh gold (the sun).³ The eighth gate, Celsus tells us, represents the sphere of the fixed stars. By climbing this ceremonial ladder, the initiate traversed the 'seven heavens' and reached the Empyrean.

The seven celestial regions represented by seven storeys or colours of the world also occurs in Mesopotamian cosmological schema. (e.g. at Borsippa and at Ur): he who climbed the seven storeys of the zigurrat or Cosmic Mountain, attained to the summit of the cosmos.⁴

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² M. Eliade: *Images and Symbols*, p.75.
³ Origen: *Contra Celsum* VI, 22. For the Mithraic conception of the soul's ascent through the planets, cf. F.V. Cumont: *The Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 144 ff.
The structure of all the themes described above then, is identical: one transcends the world, i.e. the profane condition by passing through the seven heavens and arrives at the summit of the cosmos.

The *sapta padāni kramati* or taking of the seven steps by the Buddha, which plays an important part in Buddhist art and literature also occurs in another Indian ritual: the Hindu marriage *saṁskāra*. The most important rite in the Hindu marriage ceremony as described in all the *Grhyasūtras,*¹ is the taking of the seven steps by the bride and bridegroom in a north-easterly direction, each step being accompanied by the following words uttered by the groom: 'May you take the first step for sap, the second step for juice (or vigour), the third step for the thriving of wealth, the fourth step for comfort, the fifth step for offspring, the sixth step for the seasons; may you be my friend with your seventh step. May you be devoted to me; let us have many sons; may they reach old age'.²

The principal difference between the seven steps of the Buddha, and the Brahmanic, Siberian, or Mithraic rituals, lies primarily in their religious orientation and their different metaphysical implications. While the myth of the Nativity symbolises the Buddha's transcendance of the human condition, the world of suffering (*dukkha*) and of repeated birth and death, the Brahmanic and shamanic rituals point to a heavenly ascension that enabled one to partake in the world of the gods and assured one of a privileged condition after death, or to obtain some service from the Supreme Deity.³ The number seven which dominates Mithraic symbolism (e.g. seven celestial spheres, seven stars, seven trees, seven altars, etc.) is probably

1. Āpastamba *mantra-pātha* I, 3, 7-14; Āp.*GS* IV, 15-16; *ŚG*S I, 14, 6; *PG*S I, 8; *GS*S II, 2, 11; *HGS*S I, 21, 1.
due to Mesopotamian influences which affected Iranian religious speculation.¹

It has been suggested that as in the Buddha-carita (I, 22) the Bodhisattva is compared to the constellation of the 'Seven Rṣis', and that as the Buddha legend was deeply influenced by the solar myth, it is possible that the seven steps correspond to the seven planets which gave their names to the days of the week: Sun (Sūrya, Ravi), Moon (Candra, Soma), Mars (Maṅgala), Mercury (Budha), Jupiter (Bṛhaspati), Venus (Sukra), and Saturn (Saṅi).² The ascent to the heavenly regions along the Cosmic Tree (or sacrificial post) at the Centre of the World is, however, a widespread and archaic idea which is much older than the concept of traversing the seven celestial regions or planetary heavens, and which must have spread through Asia only after the Mesopotamian speculation on the seven levels of the universe. In India reference to the seven worlds (saptaloka) does not occur before the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka (X, 10, 1; X, 27, 28), where they are enumerated as Bhūrloka, Bhūvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janarloka, Tapoloaka, and Satyaloka.

According to Vedic literature, the first six lokas are supported by the seventh, satyaloka, which, as we shall see later, is identified with Aja Ekapād, the One Unborn and the First Principle, and in which is engendered the entire structure of creation. The early Vedic cosmic structure, consisting of three worlds identified with earth, atmosphere, and heaven, already occurs in the Brāhmaṇas as the tripartite mystic formula (utterances: vyahṛṭis) of Bhūr, Bhūvaḥ and Svāḥ, which enables the sacrificer to

'obtain' the three worlds.¹ in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad (I, 5, 1) a fourth Mahaḥ is added, denoting Brahman and the self: tad brahma, sa ātmā. Three higher worlds Janaḥ, Tapah, and Satyah were also imposed above these four, bringing the number to seven.

That the sole objective of the Brahmanical ceremonial rite was the 'obtaining or conquering' of these worlds which represented the totality of creation, is evident from a number of passages in the Brāhmaṇas, e.g. Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa I, 4, 9, 5 says: 'By means of the Vaiṣvadeva ceremony (the officiant) gives him (the sacrificer) a firm stand in this (terrestrial) world; by means of the Varuṇapraghaśe in the intermediate space; by means of the Sākamedha in yonder world. He who thus knowing performs these rites, becomes this All' (i.e. the universe). Satapatha Brāhmaṇa II, 6, 4, 9 informs us that 'he reaches the highest place (sthānam), the supreme goal', because he has transcended mundane existence. The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (I, 4, 9, 5) refers to the ritual technique by which the sacrificer was able to identify himself with the All.² Other passages also illustrate that the three divisions of the universe claimed the attention of the authors first and foremost 'because of the role they play(ed) in the religious and soteriological theories of the period'.³

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1. ŚB II, 1, 4,25. A considerable variety of ritual acts is performed three times, in order to 'conquer the three regions of the universe', e.g. ŚB XII, 8, 2, 32; TB III, 9, 3, 2; TĀ V, 9, 1; TS II, 3, 6, 2, etc. cf. FB VII, 1,1, where the gāyatra sāman is equal to the three parts of the universe; the chant belonging to it is to be recited in three sections as there are 'these worlds'; by chanting 'the gāyatra in three sections (the chanter) makes him (the sacrificer) commensurate with these worlds', and ŚB VII, 5, 2, 22 where the co-ordination of a ritual act and the threefold universe is explicitly based on an 'identity'.

2. esa ha tu自行er sat sārnava bhavati yā eva vīdauṁ cātmāśayair yajate. cf. ŚB I, 1,1,14: sārvam āpnoti.

3. J. Gonda: Loka, world and heaven in the Veda, p.44, cf. AB I,5,8; JB I, 105; TS VI, 6, 1,1.
Gonda's researches have ably demonstrated that by performing definite rites the sacrificer believed that he could identify himself with Prajāpati who is the All (the undifferentiated Totality), the Creator as well as Creation (i.e. the differentiated totality) and procure for himself 'a sacral and integral personality, the condition of 'immortality' in which every desire is fulfilled'.

It is significant that in *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* VIII, 5, 3, 5, the seven worlds are explained as an enumerative combination of the three regions of the universe, and the four quarters (*dīśāḥ*): the first the earth, the second the atmosphere, the third heaven, the fourth the eastern quarter, the fifth the southern, the sixth the western, and the seventh the northern quarter. The same text (X, 2, 4, 4) again expressly states that the four quarters and these three worlds are the seven worlds in which the gods are established (*saptāṣu deva-lokeṣu pātāśhitāḥ*).

Now, it may be noticed that the seventh *loka*, i.e. *satya*, identified with the northern direction (*saptamya udīc*) is the very same direction in which the Buddha is represented in the older accounts, *Majjhima Nikāya* III, 123, and *Jātaka* I, 53, as taking the seven steps. It is also noteworthy that as early as the *Rg Veda*, the highest heaven (IX, 86, 15) is also identified as the first (VIII, 13, 2), or the most ancient (IX, 70, 1); it is also co-existent with the 'earliest aeon' (*pūrva āyuni*) representing the moment before creation when Heaven and Earth were one and as yet undivided (X, 72, 3; X, 5, 7). In the cosmological scheme of the seven worlds occurring in the later Vedic literature therefore, *satyaḥ* representing the seventh *loka* is the highest and at the same time the most ancient world.

1. J. Gonda: *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.
We have already referred to the passages in the older Upaniṣads where the Light of Supreme Knowledge is identified with Brahman or the atman. It is also identified with satyam, the immanent aspect of sat, i.e. Being or Reality. According to Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad V, 4, 1: 'He who knows ... that Brahman, conquers these lokas'. In Mundaka Upaniṣad II, 2, 2, the words satyam and amṛtam occur as synonyms of aṅgaram brahma, the Imperishable Brahman. The same text (I, 2, 13) also applies the adjective aṅgara to Puruṣa who is satyam. In Maitri Upaniṣad VII, 7, satyam is mentioned together with Īśānāh, Prajāpatiḥ, Viśvasyrk, Viśnuḥ, Narāyaṇah, and other terms for the ultimate ground of world order in an attempt to describe the ineffable.

It is necessary to point out here that the authors of the earliest Upaniṣads, realizing the inadequacy of ritualism, shifted the emphasis from sacrificial technique in 'conquering' the worlds and thereby realizing identity with the All, to the realization of an identity with Brahman (the

1. cf. BAU II, 1,20, and CU VIII, 3,4.
2. cf. the ancient prayer in BAU V, 13, 1: hīrayaṃyaṇa pātrena satyaśyaṃphītah mukham ... The term sat is used to denote the Primordial Being in its unitary undifferentiated reality; satyam denotes the same Being as immanent within differentiation.

3. In KaU II, 2, 16 aṅgara and Brahman occur as the two names of the same Supreme Principle.

Van Buitenen's study of the evolution of the term aṅgara shows that on the one hand it continues to exist as an expression for syllable in the grammatical sense of the word, and on the other it retains the significance of the first and last principle of the cosmic order. In one milieu it persists as a name for the absolute, and is gradually re-interpreted as 'imperishable' in order to 'rationalize its function as a supreme entity'; after the period of the early metrical Upaniṣads, however, it becomes an adjective. In another milieu (probably that of the Śāma Veda), aṅgara is specifically identified with the syllable OM, which eventually becomes a name for the Supreme Principle, developing into a 'symbol for Hinduism in very much the same way as the cross is a symbol for Christianity'. J.A.B. Van Buitenen: 'Aṅgara', JAOS, 79, 1959, p.179.
All) by means of meditation and knowledge. With the identifactory knowledge of Brahman, one rises above any spatial limitation, and becomes the All (Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I,4,9 ff); he is omnipresent because he knows that his identity merges into the All. Equating the mental realization of the loka and the All, Chāndogya Upaniṣad VII,4,2 says: 'Through the willed mental realization of rites the loka is realized; through the willed mental realization of the loka, the All is realized'. The same text (VII,25,2) goes on to say that the ātman (i.e. Brahman) is everywhere and is this All (idam sarvam); one who sees and understands this, and who delights in, and enjoys union with the ātman is sovereign (i.e. autonomous: svarat) and has unlimited freedom to move (kāmacāra) in all lokaḥ. But he who knows otherwise (i.e. does not know the ātman-Brahman) is dependent on others; he lives in perishable worlds (kṣayya-lokaḥ); and he has no freedom to move in all the worlds'. (sarveṣu lokeṣu akāmacāra bhavati).

We have already referred to the passages in the Upaniṣads where sat-satyam is identified with Brahman-ātman. This sat-satyam occurs as the fundamental term in the doctrine of Uddālaka Āruṇi in Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI, where the psycho-cosmic drama is treated in all its stages, from the cosmogonic descent to the soteric return. This treatise, described as 'the doctrine by which the unknown becomes known' provides the saving knowledge by means of which one effaces all discriminating particulars, and becomes one with the ātman (tat satyam aha ātmā, tat tvam asī).

1. The cosmogony according to CU VI, adopts the traditional scheme of emanation: sat produced out of itself tejas; out of tejas is produced āpas, and out of āpas is produced annam (literally, food; here probably implying solid matter). What is most significant, however, is that sat penetrates into these three entities as jīvātman, 'making each of them threefold', and differentiating name and form (nāma-rūpa). Thus all the rūpas are truth (satyam); by knowledge one can reduce the variety of being, i.e. 'reconduct it to the primitive stage ere the rūpas were mingled up, that is to say, before the differentiation of name and form'. M. Falk: op. cit., p.25. In this cosmological scheme the universe is conceived as a downward succession of layers of spheres, each having been produced out of the preceding sphere by progressive grossening. The highest cosmic sphere which is not yet rūpa is therefore, only nāma, identified in CU VIII,14,1 as space: 'aṅgād vai nāma ...' and corresponds to hrdayākāśa, i.e. the space within the heart, in the microcosmic sphere.
The knowledge of Brahman-sat-satya then, represents the power which breaks the fatal course of continued birth and death, leading the individual by means of illumination back to the primitive, universal source. Such a return, realized in one's lifetime, and from which there is no falling away from the highest sphere of Universal Being, is expressed in Chandogya Upanishad VI, 14, 2 as tasya tāvad eva cīram yavam na vimokṣye 'tha sampatsye, reminding us of the frequently recurring expression noticed in Buddhist literature: na param itihātāya.

The seventh step of the Buddha, coinciding with satyam, the highest loka, i.e. the summit of the cosmos and the point from which creation was manifested, i.e. the most ancient 'place' in the cosmic structure, represents the primordial situation before the first appearance of Time. By declaring himself the 'eldest in the world' and the 'highest in the world' the Buddha proclaims his transcendence in relation to Time and Space, both images expressing a complete surpassing of the World, and a re-entry into an 'absolute' and paradoxical state beyond spatio-temporal existence. It is necessary to add here that in the light of Vedic cosmogonical speculations which we shall deal with later, the 'seniority' (jyeṣṭha) of the Buddha is a formula for Primordial Time, a figure of speech implying that he was already present before Creation; and that he witnessed the coming into existence of the World, and the first appearance of Time. 1

Besides this image of the seven steps which symbolises the Buddha's transcendence of time and space, a parable related in the Suttavibhanga (Parājika I, 3-4) also illustrates his abolition of time and space and his

return to the non-temporal moment which preceded Creation. The Buddha asks a brahmin; 'When a hen with eight or ten, or twelve eggs, has sat upon them properly, warmed them properly, and hatched them properly - is that chick which is the first to break through the egg-shell with the point of the claw on its foot, or with its beak - to be called the eldest or the youngest?' The brahmin replies: 'He is to be called the eldest ... for he is the eldest of these'. 'Likewise, Brahmin', says the Buddha, 'having pierced through the shell of ignorance, I ... am the world's eldest and highest (being)'.

It was pointed out long ago by Paul Mus, that the similarity between the imagery of the Buddha breaking out of, and emerging from an egg, and the birth of Brahmā from the cosmic egg (cf. Brahmāṇḍa of Puranic mythology) described in the Māṇava-Dharma-sāstra (1, 19 and 12), is far from coincidental.¹ This cosmic egg 'resplendent as the thousand-rayed sun' is no other than Hiranyagarbha,² the Golden Germ or Womb of Rg Veda II, 12 - 'the creator, animator, and sole ruler of the universe', and identified as Prajāpati in the last stanza of that hymn (II, 12, 10).

Now, Prajāpati's identity with the Year,³ the symbolic expression of Cosmic Time, as well as the worlds and quarters⁴ which represent Cosmic

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2. cf. AV IV, 2, 8: 'in the beginning the waters producing a calf (vatsaṁ) brought forth a germ (garbhah), which ... was enveloped in a golden covering' (ulbah hiranyayah), and RV X, 82, 5: 'That which is beyond the sky, beyond the earth, beyond all gods - what earliest germ (prāthetam garbhah) did the waters contain in which all the gods were beheld?' In SB VI, 2,2,5, Hiranyagarbha, Prajāpati, and Agni are identified: prajāpatir vai hiranyagarbhaḥ prajāpatir agnīḥ. cf. SB VI, 1,1,5 where Prajāpati, Puruṣa, and Agni are one and the same.
3. cf. SB VI, 2,1,4; VI, 2,2,5; XI,1,1,1; XI,1,6,3.
4. cf. SB VI, 3,1,11: loka diśaḥa prajāpatiḥ, and, KS 39, 4: diśam patiḥ prajāpatiḥ; cf. also TB III, 10,9,8,10,1,4.
Space, is a well-known theme in Brahmanical tradition. The year is the full time-cycle and by 'gaining' it one masters the whole of time; it is 'indeed the womb of all beings' (sāvatāra hi sarvesām bhūtanām yo'niḥ), and beyond it is the immortal. The year representing the totality of existence, and corresponding to samsāra, another image of cyclic time, may be identified with the mythical egg out of which the Buddha claims to have been the first to emerge. The breaking of the shell and emerging from the egg is equivalent to breaking out of samsāra, 'out of the wheel of existence - that is, to the transcending both of cosmic Space and cyclic Time'. In the Suttanipata (373) the emancipated man is described as 'released from the aeons' (kappātito ... vipparutto), and 'akappīyo', i.e. not of the aeons (860), while Samyutta Nikāya I, 141, expressly states that for him 'there is neither past nor future' (na tassa paccā na purattham atthi).

To return to the previous image of the Buddha's transcendence of spatio-temporal existence, i.e. the taking of the seven steps, the account in the Lalitavistara which is probably later than those related in the Majjhima Nikāya and the Jātaka, lays greater emphasis on his 'conquest of time and space' by stating that the seven strides were taken in the cardinal directions as well as towards the zenith and nether regions. This account closely resembles the description of the Rājasūya (consecration of

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1. PB XVIII, 9, 7: 'in the year are contained the past and the future'.
2. SB VIII, 4, 1, 18; cf. VIII, 4, 1, 25: sāvatāradhī sarvāni bhūtāni vivartah.
3. SB X, 2, 6, 4.
5. cf. Miln. 49; 50.
the king) ceremony where the sovereign takes a step in each cardinal direction and symbolically mounts to the zenith. As a result of these rites he acquires sovereignty over the four directions, space and seasons, and becomes master of the entire spatio-temporal world.

Another rite of the Rājasūya ceremony which may be compared to the Nativity of the Buddha, is the abhiśekā or, consecration of the king by sprinkling water. One of the marvellous and astonishing events relating to the birth of the Buddha and recorded in Majjhima Nikāya III, 123, is the descent of two streams of water from the sky, one cool and the other warm, with which the water-libation for the Lord was performed.

Now, this distinctive feature of the Nativity which is repeated in all the later biographies, is explained by Buddhaghosa in his commentaries in the most practical manner: as the streams of water were not required to wash away any defilements, the warm water was for playing while the cool water was for drinking.

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1. cf. Āp.ŚŚ. 18, 8,1; 11,1; 12,6; 16,1; 17,3,4 representing the king who is to be consecrated as 'desirous of the heavenly space'. He is identified with Brahmā and Savitar, with Mitra and Varuṇa. He becomes king of the five regions of the sky (cf. Āp.ŚŚ. 18,15,1). By taking the three Viśṇu strides (cf. TS I,8,10; 15; and Āp.ŚŚ.18,12,10), the king is said to rise high above everything here; becoming Viśṇu he gains these worlds. The importance of this sacrifice is apparent from the statement that after having performed the Rājasūya, one becomes a king. J. Gonda: Ancient Indian Kingship from the religious point of view, pp. 83-84. cf. also Gonda: Aspects of early Vaiṣṇavism, p. 58 ff.

2. J.C. Heesterman: The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration, p. 103, ff. A parallel of this rite occurs in MA IV, 54, 3, where the sacrificer is represented as 'going from the quarters to the heavenly world' (svarga-lokaḥ), and in SB V, 4, 1, 8 according to which 'he mounts' the seasons and the year, so that all lies beneath him'.

3. dve udakasena dhāraḥ antalikkā pātu bhavanti, ekā sūtassa ekā uhamma, yena bodhisattassa udakakātakaḥ karonti.


5. MA IV, 184; DA II, 438.
The real significance of the two streams of water, one warm and the other cool which refresh the Bodhisattva as he issues forth from the womb of his mother, appears to be the clear cut duality underlying the sacred waters with which the sovereign is anointed. The two principles of heat and cold represent as we shall see further on, the cyclic course of universal life. This duality is noticed with regard to Agni in the Rg Veda itself; according to X, 72, 7, Agni's celestial form, the sun, was hidden in the ocean and raised from it by the gods. The epithet aprāṇa nāpāt 'child of the waters' applied to Agni in several hymns of the Rg Veda is moreover, most expressive of his dual nature.

The procreative union of fire and water, Agni and Soma, which represent dual aspects of the same principle, is reflected in the union of the brahman power and the royal power, of priest and king: 'Agni is the brahman power, Soma the royal power', says the Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa (IX, 5). Their union, enacted by the preparation of the unction waters, 'engenders the king, making him the centre of their interaction'.

According to Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇa Sūtra XV, 13, 3, the hymn recited as ājyāḥāstra commences as follows: 'Thou, O Agni, art Varuṇa when thou art born'. The anointing of the king makes him identical with Varuṇa as well as with Agni; as a result of this rite, the sovereign combines in his

2. The Rājasūya is also known as Varunásava, indicating that the royal sacrificer being anointed impersonates the god Varuṇa. cf. ŚŚS XV, 13, 4: 'It is Varuṇa whom they anoint'; MS IV, 49, 17: 'the waters are of Varuṇa's nature; anointing him (i.e. the king) with the waters has made him (identical with) Varuṇa'. MS II, 6, 8; 68, 9 and 15; KS XII, 6; 293, 7 and 13 imply that the unction waters are themselves called Rājasūya. The word Rājasūya, Heesterman believes, originally referred to the unction water, the characteristic feature of the sava, and 'from there was transferred to the sacrifice as a whole'. Heesterman: op. cit., p.86.
person 'the aquatic principle (Varuṇa, Soma) as well as the igneous (Agni, the sun)'.

The similarities between an ideal universal emperor (cakravartin) and the Buddha, are too noticeable to be merely coincidental; both their bodies are characterized by the thirty-two auspicious signs of a Mahāpurusa, and both are in possession of seven treasures. An epithet frequently occurring in the Mahābhārata in connection with the sovereign is dharmatman, translated as 'dutiful' or 'religious minded' but the real meaning of which is 'whose personality is (absorbed in) dharma', and which may be compared with the title Dhammarāja applied to the Buddha. In Dīgha Nikāya I, 88 the title Dhammarāja is also applied to a universal emperor (cakkavatti). From the Mahāpādaṇa sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, it would seem that the birth of a cakkavatti rāja is attended by the same miracles as that of the Buddha. In Mahābhārata III, 185, 29, the sovereign is described as 'one who promotes or advances law' (dhammapravartaka) which may be compared to the act of dharmacakkapavattana of the Buddha.

We have already referred to the solar affiliation of the Buddha. Likewise, the cakravartin or universal earthly ruler has several qualities

1. Heesterman: op.cit., p.88
2. I,63,1; 68,7; 175,4; III,293,1.
3. J. Gonda: Ancient Indian Kingship, p.68.
5. This primarily implies that there was a traditional pattern for the ideal ruler and that the king was expected to act within the general framework of eternal law and order (dharma), in conformity with time-honoured rules and customs. J. Gonda: op.cit., p.70. According to Manu smṛti II, 6, and Yājñavalkya smṛti I, 7, the sources of the dharma are the Veda, tradition, the virtuous conduct of those who know the Veda, the customs of holy men, etc. It was the duty of the king to uphold the dharma, taking care that it remained unviolated and that it did not fall into decay. cf. Kauṭilya: Arthaśāstra 58, 50. cf. also Mbh.III, 185, 26 where the king is called Dharma.
and epithets in common with the great luminary: According to the Manu smṛti, the pratāpa (majesty, brilliance or energy) of the king is similar to the glowing heat or brilliance of the sun. The king outshines all rivals in wealth and splendour. Like the sun, he burns (tapati) eyes and hearts, and none can gaze at him (VII, 6). The king also possesses tejas (fiery energy or lustre) which enables him to perform great deeds. The Manu smṛtि (VII, 11) describes the king as having the tejas of all the gods, while Mahābhārata I, 171, 17 says that he outshines all beings in tejas. In the Rāmāyaṇa, epithets such as mahātejas (great lustre or energy), amālitejas (boundless light or energy) and dipatejas (radiant light and energy) are applied to Rāma and his brother Lākṣmaṇa.

The meaning of the term cakravartin, the title of the sovereign who, according to later belief, consisted of a part of Viṣṇu, i.e. was a partial incarnation of the Supreme Deity is: 'one rolling everywhere without obstruction', or 'a ruler the wheels of whose chariot roll everywhere without obstruction, emperor, sovereign of the world, ruler of a cakra'. According to Kauṭilya (Arthaśāstra IX, 1) 'the land extending from north to south, from the Himalayas to the sea, and measuring one thousand yojanas from east to west, is the kṣetra (i.e. sphere of influence) of a cakravartin'. That this region was conventionally regarded as the 'whole

1. cf. Mbh I, 171, 19; III, 52, 2 where the pratāpa of the king is compared to the heat of the sun, and III, 41, 20 where the touch of the king is like fire.
2. cf. Mbh. VII, 39, 7; 100, 11.
4. cf. Rām, III, 1, 10; 3,2; 5,35; 5,3.
7. Rājaśekhara's Kāvyamimamsā (ch. XVII) also says that the sphere of influence of a cakravartin is the land measuring one thousand yojanas and lying between Kumāripura (Kanyakumari) and Bindusaras (in the Himalayas according to the Purāṇas), and that the conqueror of this kṣetra is a cakravartin.
earth' is evident from *Mahābhārata* I, 73, 129 where the word *sārvabhūma* 'ruler of the whole earth' occurs as a synonym of *cakravartin*. The same text (III, 253) represents *Karṇa* as completing his *digvijaya* (conquest of the quarters) by conquering all the countries in the north, east, south, and west, and returning to Nāgasāhvaya (Hastināpura, the capital of Duryodhana) after having 'subdued the whole earth'.¹ That the dominions of a *cakravartin* were understood to represent the 'whole earth' is also evident from the edicts of *Aśoka*; In the Dhauli version of his Fifth Rock Edict the Mauryan emperor claims to have employed *Dharma-mahāmatras* 'throughout the earth' (*sava-puṭhaviyaṃ*), although the expression *sārvaratri vijite* (i.e. everywhere in the dominions) occurs in a similar context in all the other versions of the same Rock Edict.²

Gonda observes that the *vartin* occurring at the end of a compound regularly conveys the sense of 'being situated in, abiding, staying in, etc.', e.g. *kaṇṭhavartin* (being in the throat); *pārēvavartin* (standing by the side, attendant); *madhyavartin* (being in the middle, central); *vasavartin* (being in control of), etc.³ Now, this is precisely the imagery employed in *Prasna Upaniṣad* VI, 6, referring to the *Puruṣa* who is to be known and 'in whom the parts are well established as spokes in the centre of the wheel' (of the sun).⁴ According to the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*,

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1. cf. *Mbh* II, 26-32; cf. also *ŚB* XIII, 5, 4, 13 according to which *Bharata*, son of Duṣyanta, performed more than one thousand *Asvamedhas* (horse sacrifices) after having 'conquered the whole earth'.
4. *ratha-nabhau kaśa yasmin pratiṣṭhitah*. cf. *RV* I, 121, 13; 130, 9; 174, 5; 175, 4, etc., referring to the wheel of the chariot of the sun; and I, 164, 11 which refers to the one wheel of the year. From the *Mahāsudassana* and *Cakkavattī-sihanāda* suttas of the *DN*, it would seem that the treasure par excellence of the universal emperor is the *cakkavatana* which, as the symbol of dominion, wins the quarters of the world for him. Wherever it halts, the rulers of that quarter acclaim him as their sovereign. cf. *MN* III, 172-173.
Puruṣa, who is established in the cakra, is the 'lord and sustainer of the world, its eye and life-giver'.

We have already mentioned that as early as the Rg Veda, the wheel was associated with the movement of the sun, which illuminates the whole earth during its daily course across the sky, and that, at a fairly early period, the wheel acquired a metaphorical or symbolical value involving conceptions of a ritual or magico-religious order. The Buddhist Dhammacakka, identified with Brahmačakka (wheel of Brahman) in several passages of the Pali canon, symbolises the 'conquering efficacy, perfection, supremacy implicated in the Dhamma, which like the sun illumines and rules the earth'. It is representative of the world-wide extent of the spiritual domain of the Buddha whose secular counterpart is the universal earthly ruler, both of whom manifest the same universal principle (Dharma), the former on the spiritual and the latter on the secular plane. That the Buddha was indeed the cakravartin par excellence is evident from Suttanipata 554, where he declares: 'King am I ... , that peerless king of Dhamma; in accordance with the Dhamma do I roll my wheel ... ' That very same wheel of Dhamma was turned by all the Buddhas preceding Gotama; that wheel, the irreversibility of which is frequently mentioned in the Pali literature and which 'cannot be turned back by any samana or brahmaṇa, by any deva or Māra or Brahma, or anyone in the world'.

The myth of the sapta padāni with its inherent metaphysical implications appears to have been incorporated in the biography of the Buddha at a fairly early date and certainly contributed towards the definition of the

1. MN I,69; AN II,9; 24; III, 417; V,33; It. 123, etc.
mythical Buddhology as a characteristic of other Buddhas as well as Gotama. As soon as the Buddha Vipassin was born, facing north he took seven steps, and looking around, uttered with the voice of a bull: 'Highest am I in the world; most excellent am I in the world; oldest am I in the world; this is my last birth; henceforth there will be no more renewed existence' (Dīgha Nikāya II, 15).

It is significant that although the cosmological scheme of the lokas is intimately connected with Buddhist meditation and mystical experiences, the lokas (translated in Buddhist literature as 'planes of existence') which are theoretically divisible into the sensual plane (kāmaloka), the corporeal plane (rūpaloka), and incorporeal plane (arūpaloka), are all described as being in samsāra, i.e. within cyclic Time. Nirvāṇa, the summum bonum of Buddhism, lies beyond even the highest loka in which there is impermanence, and the brahma-loka ruled by Mahābrāhma, the god who believes he has created the universe, is actually represented as being inferior to the Buddha. The correlation of higher realms of existence with stages of meditation indicates that Buddhist metaphysics and cosmology is not merely theoretical and intellectual, but also existential.

Our study of the seven steps with which the Buddha magically abolished time and space (also confirmed by the parable of the egg), and that of sat-satya identified with the immortal Brahman (neuter) and the atman of the Upaniṣads, however, shows that the seventh step of the Buddha coincided not with the brahma-loka which is subject to karman and rebirth, but the immortal, eternal Nirvāṇa from which there is 'no falling away'. Although Nirvāṇa is generally described as transcendentally remote and defined only by negations, in the Pāli canon there are distinct traces, as we shall see further on, of a more positive concept, and of an unorthodox
ontology according to which Nirvāṇa 'is a place (pada), or an entity (and not merely a state) identical with the eternal and absolute reality (dharma), and with the translucent Thought or consciousness'.

Deliverance from existence, i.e. saṃsāra, is conceived, as we shall see, as a gradual purification of this consciousness, by means of exercises in meditation, to a state of pure, shining translucence.

The methods by which one attains this pure translucent consciousness are defined as jhāna (Sans. dhyāna), several descriptions of which occur in the Pāli canon. These jhānas or psychic states are themselves not permanent; while they constitute the various stages which ultimately lead to Nirvāṇa, it is Nirvāṇa alone which is considered permanent, and the true deathless state.

The similarities between Buddhist meditative practices and yoga are so striking that there is hardly any doubt regarding the one being influenced by the other. The reference in Majjhima Nikāya I, 63-66 to the Buddha learning some yogic trances (arūpa samāpatti) from his teachers, Ālāra Kālāma (identified in Buddhacarita XII, 16 ff. with Āraṇa, an alleged exponent of Sāṅkhya philosophy), and Uddaka Rāmaputta, and another passage in the same text (Majjhima Nikāya I, 243) describing the Buddha as practising breath-control (appānācchājñāna), indicates that yoga in some form or other was known in pre-Buddhist times. That yogic practices were known in the esoteric circles of Indian mystics and ascetics long before Patañjali, is indicated by a number of categories of physiological practices and spiritual exercises (called aṅga) by Patañjali and by which one attained

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1. E. Conze: Buddhist Thought in India, p.196.
the highest concentration: *samādhi*, which are already discernible in the earliest *Upaniṣads*. For example, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VIII, 15, 1, which refers to the 'concentrating of all of one's senses upon the self' (*atmani samvendriyāni sampratiṣṭhāh*), implies the practice of *pratyāhāra* (emancipation of sensory activity from the domination of exterior objects), while *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I, 5, 23, which postulates the vital breath (*prāna*) as the principle underlying the flux of time, implies the yogic practice of *prāṇāyāma* (rhythm of respiration).

We have already referred to the divine body of the mind's creation complete in all its members and limbs and with transcendental faculties, which can be drawn from the gross physical form in the same way as a reed may be drawn from muṇja grass, or a snake can shed its slough, or a sword may be drawn from its scabbard. It is indeed significant that the analogy of the reed and muṇja grass with reference to the inner self already occurs in *Kathā Upaniṣad* II, 17, in which a definition of yoga occurs for the first time.¹

Other parallels between Yoga and Buddhism may be noticed in the identical enumeration of the five faculties (*indriyas*): *saddhā*, *viriya*, *smṛti* (*sati*), *samādhi*, and *prajñā* (*paññā*), both regarding *prajñā* as the highest faculty. Likewise, the four *jhānas* in Buddhism also correspond in general with the four stages of conscious concentration (*samādhi*) of classical yoga.² Above all, it is the almost identical list of psychic powers (*siddhis*) which the emancipated man acquires, described in both

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¹ The term *yoga*, however, already occurs in its technical sense in an older *Upaniṣad*, *Taittiriya* II, 4, 1: *yoga ātma*.
² It must be remembered that although the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali is ascribed to a date later than the Buddha, Patañjali is neither the founder of Yoga philosophy nor the inventor of yogic techniques. In his *Yoga-sūtras* (I, 1) he admits that he is merely systematising (*atha yogānuśāsanaṃ*) the doctrinal and technical traditions of Yoga.
the Buddhist literature and in the Yoga-sūtras, that is the most important for our present study.1

The acquisition of the siddhis as a result of spiritual training and discipline is inevitable; while the possession of the siddhis themselves is not equivalent to deliverance, they prove that the monk or yogin is 'reborn' in an unconditional state. His death to the profane condition is manifested on the physiological, psychological and spiritual planes by a series of mystical experiences and magical powers which are indicative of total freedom.2 These miraculous powers attainable by the Buddhist recluse are described in Dīgha Nikāya III, 2813 as one of the six abhinnās (super knowledges):-

1) iddhi: being one he becomes many; or having become many he becomes one again; he becomes visible or invisible; he goes, feeling no obstruction, to the further side of a wall, rampart, or hill, as if through air; he penetrates up and down through solid ground as if through water; he walks on water without falling through, as if he were on solid ground; he travels cross-legged in the sky, like the birds on wing; even the moon and sun ... does he touch and feel with his hand; he reaches with the body up to the heaven of Brahmā.

2) Dībbasota (divine hearing): purified, surpassing the hearing of men, he hears sounds both heavenly and human, far and near.

3) Dībbāvakku (divine eye): purified, he discerns the multitude of beings faring according to their deeds.

4) Paracittanāna (knowledge of another's thought): by his mind he understands the thoughts of other beings and persons; he discerns the passionate mind as passionate ... the freed mind as free, the unfree mind as unfree.

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1. cf. Yoga-sūtras I,17; Mbh XII,195,15.
3. cf. DH I, 88 ff.
5) Pubbanivåsānusati (knowledge of previous lives): he recalls to mind the various existences ... in all their details and their modes.

6) Dhammasacchikata (realizing or experiencing things for oneself): he abides, having destroyed the ñæavas and attaining freedom of the mind; knowing and realizing this freedom himself with his super knowledge.

Now, of these six abhiññas, the first five are no different from the 'powers' at the disposal of a non-Buddhist yogin. Even the preliminaries of meditation that make it possible to attain them are similar to those in non-Buddhist Yoga, e.g. mental purity, serenity, etc. As Eliade has pointed out, the 'yogins of the Buddha's time possessed such "mystical powers" and the Buddha did not question their genuineness any more than he doubted the genuineness of their yogic ecstacies'. The Buddha, however, did not encourage his disciples to perform miracles. In _Dīgha Nikāya_ I, 213, he says: 'It is because I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders, that I loathe and abhor them, and am ashamed of them'. The real problem, according to him, was deliverance from renewed birth and death, and the possession of 'powers' entailed the danger that it might turn the monk away from his original goal, Nīrṇāṇa.

The exact meditational technique adopted by the Buddha is not described in the Pāli canon. Although Buddhist meditation certainly begins with experiencing the four jhānas, they only represent a means to the end, and not the final goal itself. Mrs. Rhys Davids observes that there is in 'both Yoga and Buddhist procedure, elimination of sense-impressions and mind-work on them' and that 'Buddhist jhāna may represent what current

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2. M. Eliade: _op. cit._, p.179.
Yoga became in Buddhism. Unlike Yoga, however, Buddhist jhāna neither results in union with God (Īśvara), nor in ' beholding the Self in the Yogin's Self'.

Of the abhiññās enumerated above, the mystical ability to remember one's previous lives (pūrvarañcānusati) is closely associated with the abolition of time, and the consequent arrival at the moment before Creation. According to the Abhidharmakosa (VII, 123) the 'ascetic who wishes to remember his previous lives, begins by grasping the nature of the thought that has just passed; from this thought he proceeds back considering the successive states of his present existence to the thought of his conception'. The procedure consists in starting from a particular moment and travelling through time backward (pratiloman, i.e. 'against the fur') in order to arrive ad originem, when life first began, setting time in motion. The importance of this yogic technique of unrolling time in reverse is obvious - arriving at the moment of the first cosmic manifestation is, as we have seen, equivalent to returning to the primordial situation, to eternity. To do so was to transcend the human condition and attain Nirvāṇa or Puruṣa in Śaṅkhya terminology. Already in the Katio Upaniṣad, ascribable to the 4th Cent. BC, the seven planes which may correspond to the seven lokas of contemporary belief are spiritually realized by the yogin in his quest for liberation. These seven stages which represent the involution of the individual into the primeval essence, are enumerated in I, 3, 10-11:

'Beyond the senses (indriyāṇi) are the objects of sense (arthaḥ) and beyond the objects is the mind (manas); beyond the mind is understanding (buddhi) and beyond understanding is the great self (ātmāmahān); beyond the great self is the unmanifest (avyakta) and beyond the unmanifest

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is the spirit (puruṣa). Beyond the spirit there is nothing; that is the final goal'. Of the Puruṣa, the Vājasaneyī Samhitā 31, 18 says: 'Only he who knows him escapes from the kingdom of death'. Kaṭha Upaniṣad II,3,8 referring to a slightly different sequence of stages\(^1\) realized by the individual, describes Puruṣa as 'all pervading and without any distinguishing mark whatever, knowing whom, a man liberated and goes to immortality'.

Although these verses clearly refer to Sāmkhya terminology, it is important to bear in mind that these Sāmkhya-like speculations are included in an overall yogic environment, e.g. II,3,10-11: 'When the five senses together with the mind cease from their activities, and the intellect itself does not stir, that they say, is the highest state ... they consider to be Yoga ...'.\(^2\)

It is necessary to bear in mind that the co-ordination of microcosmic and macrocosmic processes in yoga as in Buddhist meditation, is not based on vague ideas of analogy, but reflects the concept of the 'cosmicization' of man, i.e. the mental realization of the various planes and rhythms of the cosmos in order to recover the primordial Unity and re-establish the initial non-duality. The re-integration of the different modalities of being in a single undifferentiated whole is, as we have seen, equivalent to abolishing the twofold division of nāma-rūpa, and also time and space. This indicates that with the cessation of rūpa-individuality

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1. 'Beyond the senses is the mind; above the mind is its essence or intelligence (sattva); beyond the essence is the great self'.
2. The Yoga and Sāmkhya systems are so similar that most of the affirmations made by the one are valid for the other. The essential differences between the two systems, however, are: (1) Sāmkhya is atheistic, whereas Yoga may be termed theistic, as it postulates the existence of a Supreme God (Iśvara) who is not an omnipotent creator, but a god who can help the yogin in his efforts to attain samādhi. (cf. Yoga-sūtras I, 26; II,45). (2) Sāmkhya recognises metaphysical knowledge as the only means to salvation, whereas Yoga accords considerable importance to techniques of meditation.
in the psycho-physiological process of yoga, the cosmic rūpa-differentiation also ceases; reality is transposed to a stage where there is no physical individuation, but only one cosmic body - beautifully expressed in Chandogya Upaniṣad VI, 8, 7: 'That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for its self. That is the true; that is the self; that art thou ...' (tat satyam, sa ātma, tat tvam asi). The differentiation of nāma and rūpa is overcome simultaneously as we can see, 'by one common process which, though psychical in itself, also has a cosmical purport'.

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (V,6,1) identifies this cosmic body made of mind as Puruṣa (manomaya puruṣaḥ) whose nature is that of light. In his cosmogonic aspect this Puruṣa is represented as being upside down 'diving headlong into contingency from his hypercosmic sphere' with his head as bhūr, his arms as bhūvas, and his feet as svar (Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad V, 5,3-4); in his soteric aspect, however, he is upright and his head is the fire-region of the sky: 'Fire is his head ... out of his feet the earth (is born). These two aspects represent as we shall see later, the two forms of Brahman, the former as mūrti corresponding to asatya, and the latter as amūrti corresponding to satya; the former kāla and ēśabda and the latter akāla and aśabda.

We have already noticed in the previous chapter that the concept of the Buddhist Mahāpurusa was probably derived from the Rg Vedic Puruṣa, and that it was deeply influenced by the Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa of later Brahmanical mythology. We have also seen that the emblem par excellence of the Mahāpurusa cakravartin was the cakra, the sphere of influence of an imperial ruler conventionally described as the whole earth in both literature as well as in inscriptions.

It is significant that the accounts of the Buddha's Nativity in the *Majjhima Nikāya* and *Mahāvastu* represent the Bodhisattva as striding forth with 'feet firmly placed' on the ground.\(^1\) The *Lalitavistara* 86,15, however, says that 'auspicious and noble lotuses sprung up wherever the Bodhisattva placed his feet', and that the ground was decorated with all kinds of jewels.

Both these ways with which the Buddha traverses the seven levels of the cosmos - whether with feet firmly placed on the ground, i.e. with level tread, or placed on lotuses - are symbolical of spatial transcendence. The distinctive feature of the feet adhering to the soil without any gaps whatsoever, which also occurs in the accounts of the births of the Buddhas Vipassin and Dīpaṃkara (*Mahāvastu* I, 220; *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 15), and is defined as the first of the thirty-two auspicious signs of a Mahāpurusa,\(^2\) implies the absence of any discontinuity, and suggests that his feet, like those of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic Puruṣa, are the earth itself. Furthermore, the symbol of the 'thousand-spoked wheel'\(^3\) on the soles of his feet specified as another sign of a Mahāpurusa in *Dīgha Nikāya* III,143 indicates that his feet are co-extensive with the *aṅkra*, i.e. the *mandala* of the whole earth.\(^4\)

In Indian literature a familiar aspect of the lotus symbolism is its purity: growing in the mind, it betrays no trace of its origin, nor is the

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2. cf. *DN* III, 143: *supatiṭṭhita-pado*; *Mahāvastu* I,226: *sama ...*

3. hettha pāda-talesu oakkāni jātāni honti sahasārāṇi. In *DN* II, 172-74 it is the divine treasure of the Wheel (*dībaṇ caṇkaratanaṇaṁ*) with a thousand spokes that appears before king Mahāsudassana and conquers for him the earth bounded by the ocean (*samuddapariyāntaṁ paṭhavīṁ abhūtijīnati*). The number 'thousand' in Vedic tradition was symbolical of completeness or totality, i.e. the All. cf. *SB* VIII, 7,4,11; X,2,1,11: *sahas rṇaṁ sarvam asi*. cf. also *KB* 11,7; *TS* VII,1,5,7.

leaf or flower wetted by the water upon which it rests. This quality of purity is also typical of the 'wise man' who lives in the world but is not defiled by any direct contact with it. In Sūmyutta Nikāya III, 140 the Buddha declares: 'Just as a lotus born of the water, full grown in the water, rises above the water and stands untouched by the water, even so, the Tathāgata, born in the world, full grown in the world, transcends the world and is unaffected by the world'. This imagery is, however, reversed in Dhammapada 401 according to which the emancipated man who does not cling to sensual pleasures is like 'water on a lotus leaf' (vāripokkharapatta), an analogy occurring in Maitrī Upaniṣad III, 2, 2 where the immortal self is compared to a drop of water on a lotus leaf.

To return to the subject of the yogin's ability to recall every moment of his previous lives which has, as we have seen, a parallel in Buddhism; the numerous passages in the Pāli canon referring to the attempts of the sāmanas and brahmans to remember their previous existences, indicate that the Buddha attached great importance to this particular mystical ability which, as we have seen, implied an 'emergence from time'. In Dīgha Nikāya I, 19, the Buddha refers to gods who fall from their heavens when they have 'lost their memory'; some god having come hither withdraws from the world, practises asceticism and meditation and 'calls to mind his last life but not all his previous existences'. This inability to remember, i.e. 'forgetfulness' is defined as the cause of his entertaining a false view of the eternity of the world and the gods. In other words,

1. cf. DN I, 13 ff; III, 108 ff; MN I, 22, etc.
2. sati mūsati, satiyā cāmmaçā te devā tāmā kaṇā cāvanti. Although Sans. smṛti generally implies recollection of a memory, the Buddhist word sati has a deeper significance and denotes complete self-consciousness, alertness and wakefulness of mind. cf. Monier-Williams: Sans-Eng Dict, and Rhys Davids and W. Stede: Pali-Eng. Dict, s.v.
inability to recall all of one's previous existences in Buddhism is tantamount to metaphysical ignorance.

The stillness of the intellect referred to in *Katha Upanishad* II, 3, 10-11, and cited above, may also be paralleled in Buddhism. The numerous expressions in the Pāli canon such as *thita citto* 'one whose mind is stable' (*Digha Nikāya* II,257; *Sānụtta Nikāya* I,74), *thit'atta* 'whose self is stable' (*Digha Nikāya* I,57; *Sānụtta Nikāya* III,55), *parinībbutam thit'atta* 'quenched and stable of self' (*Suttanipāta* 359), and *thito anejo* 'stable, motionless' (*Theragāthā* 372), indicate that having transcended the human condition, the emancipated Buddhist or yogin is absorbed in the Eternal, Immutable, and Immortal. In other words, he is completely liberated from time, and 'stands' in the eternal, non-temporal present.

The myth of the seven strides of the Buddha then, with its cosmological and metaphysical implications, is really a reinterpretation of the archaic symbolism of ascent into heaven, and is also closely associated with the ancient Indian royal consecration. The seven steps which symbolise the Buddha's mastery over the entire spatio-temporal world also inaugurate the reign of the 'peerless king of Dhamma' endowed with the seven treasures, who rolls his *cakka* over his vast spiritual kingdom in accordance with the Dhamma.
CHAPTER IV

The anattavāda in Buddhist Philosophy.
The doctrine of the Buddha, as is well known, is that of the universally prevalent law of transitoriness. The practical problem of how one can free himself from this universal law and attain perfect bliss, is referred by the Buddha to a single proposition which finds frequent mention in the Buddhist canonical literature: 'The material shape is not self (rupam anatta); feeling is not self (vedanā anattā); perception is not self (saññāna anattā); consciousness is not self (vīññāna anattā); activities of the mind are not self (samkhāra anattā).1 Whatever is material shape (whatever is feeling; whatever is perception; whatever is consciousness; whatever are the activities of the mind), past, present, or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, mean or excellent, however far or near, being impermanent, should be regarded thus: 'This is not mine; this am I not; this is not my self',2 and is seen as it really is by means of perfect wisdom. Seeing is thus, the learned Aryan disciple turns away from material shape, he turns away from feelings, turns away from perception, turns away from the activities of the mind; turning away, he is detached; by this detachment, he is freed ...'

1. To understand the word samkhāra is of fundamental importance for the understanding of the whole doctrine of the Buddha. Samkhārakkhandha contains within itself all inner emotions arising in us in consequence of the sensation and perception of a sense - perceptible object, i.e. first, considering or thinking, and then, the willing originating from this thinking, in all its possible varieties, as desire, joy, enthusiasm, antipathy, wrath, anger, sadness, fear, etc., in short the whole complex of 'mentation and volition setting in, in dependence upon feeling and perceiving a certain object of sense. We comprehend this whole complex of mentation and willing as the totality of the motions of the mind roused by a concrete sensation and perception'. The expression 'activities of the mind' is therefore an adequate translation of samkhārakkhandha. G. Grimm: The Doctrine of the Buddha, p.76, note.
2. n'etam mama, n'es'ham asmi, na me so attā.
3. MN III, 18-20; cf. SN II, 253.
The belief of an individual self or ego, considered by the Buddha to be the root cause of all suffering (dukkha), is due to ignorance (avijja), while the destruction of clinging (upādhi) and craving (tanha) for the five aggregates (khandhas) of which the individual is composed—body (or form (rupa), feeling (vedana), perception (sanna), consciousness (viññāna), activities of the mind (saṅkhāra)—leads to Nibbāna, i.e. release. This insistence on what may be interpreted as anattavāda (doctrine of no self) is considered to be the specific contribution of Buddhism to religious thought.

It is interesting that while Edward Conze suggests 'not-self' as a translation for the word anatta (Sans. anātmā), so as to avoid a decision on whether the term should be rendered as not-self; not-a-self; not-I; is-without-self; unsubstantial, etc., Grimm contends that the literal meaning of anatta is 'not myself', presupposing the 'real existence of this my same(self)', and cites a passage in the Samyutta Nikāya (IV, 2) where the Buddha is represented as saying: 'What is transitory is painful; what is painful is anatta; what is anatta is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself'. The expression anatta, therefore, according to Grimm is an 'abbreviation, a symbol of this great formula. If we wish correctly to understand the word anatta, we must always replace it by this great formula'.

1. AN II, 157; cf. II, 197; MN II, 260; SN II, 262.
2. SN II, 246. cf. SN III, 189 where the destruction of craving is identified with Nibbāna.
4. E. Conze: Buddhist Thought in India, pp. 30-37.
E.J. Thomas points out that even if we translate the phrase *na m'eso attâ* (this is not myself) as 'this is not my soul', there is the possibility that the Buddha implied that there was a permanent soul somewhere else, even if not in the five *khandhas*. Such a translation, he adds, is 'perfectly arbitrary, and that sense would only have plausibility if we could suppose that the later community had suppressed the *atman* doctrine so effectually from the rest of his forty-five years of teaching that no one remembered anything of it. Yet, although at his death his teaching was preserved in the minds of thousands of his disciples (and indeed nowhere else), we find no trace of it even as a heresy amongst the Buddhists'.

We have already noticed that after the death of the Buddha, the various groups of reciters (*bhānakas*) attempted to systematically arrange the floating mass of oral tradition into the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas*. Although it is true that in the Pāli canon the Buddha is never represented as identifying any known entity with the *atta*, a position approaching the *neti, neti* 'not so, not so' of Upanisadic speculation, nevertheless the numerous passages referring to the *atta* indicate the ambiguous attitude of the early Buddhists towards the concept of self, and reflect conflicting interpretations of the *Buddhavacanam*.

The Pāli literature not only abounds with references to the impermanence of the five aggregates or *khandhas*, but also lays emphasis on the view that in the absolute sense, there is no individual to be found. The well-known simile of the chariot occurring in *Samputta Nikāya* I, 135 and *Milindapañha* 28 expressively affirms that just as the several component

parts collectively form the chariot, the individual is composed of the five aggregates which are in a continual state of flux or 'coming-to-be' (samudaya).  

'Even as the word chariot means,
Members joined to frame a whole,
So when the aggregates exist,
We use the phrase 'a living being'.

In Majjhima Nikāya III, 18-19, the Buddha refers to the learned Aryan disciple '... skilled in the dhamma of the worthy ones (sappuṇīsā, i.e. the Buddhas) ... well-trained in the dhamma of the worthy ones ... who does not regard material shape as self, nor self as having material shape ... he does not regard feelings as self, nor self as having feelings ... he does not regard perception as self, nor self as having perception ... he does not regard consciousness as self, nor self as having consciousness ... he does not regard the activities of the mind as self, nor self as activities of the mind'. Here it is worthwhile recalling Grimm's pertinent question: 'Is it possible to read in these words that the whole essence of man is exhausted in these five groups? Do they not rather clearly illustrate the fact that the high disciple exists as a self-evident presupposition, and lay stress upon the fact that he is something essentially different from the five groups constituting his personality?'

Grimm's conjecture may be justified by the Buddha's words of advice to Ānanda, occurring in Sānuttā Nikāya IV,53: 'Whatever has the

2. SN I, 135: yathā hi anisasambhārā, hoti saddo rotho iti, evam khandhāsu santessu, hoti saito ti sammuti.
element of dissolution (decay: paloka-dhamma), Ānanda is called 'the world' in the Aryan discipline. And what, Ānanda, has the element of dissolution? The eye has the element of dissolution; forms (rūpa) ...; eye-consciousness (cakkhu-vinñāna) ...; eye-contact (cakkhu-samphassa) ...; whatever happiness or sorrow, not-sorrow or not-happiness arises owing to eye-contact - that also has the element of dissolution'. The same is said of the tongue and tastes (rasa), tongue-consciousness (jihvā-vinñāna), tongue-contact (jihvā-samphassa); the mind, mind-states (mano dhamma), mind-consciousness (mano-vinñāna), mind-contact (mano-samphassa). The Buddha concludes: 'Whatever has the element of dissolution, is called 'the world' in the Aryan discipline'.

The same text (Saṃyutta Nikāya IV, 48-49) also refers to the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, eye-contact, emotions arising from eye-contact; the tongue, tastes, tongue-consciousness, tongue-contact, feelings arising from tongue-contact; the mind, mind-states, mind-consciousness, mind-contact, emotions arising from mind-contact - as being Impermanent (aniccam), Suffering (dukkha) and, Not-self (anatta).

It is indeed significant that in Saṃyutta Nikāya IV, 54, the Buddha is represented as describing the world as being 'void of self', or what belongs to the self (suññam attena vā attaniyena vā). The Buddha also goes on to say that the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, eye-contact ...; the tongue, tastes, tongue-consciousness, tongue contact ...; the mind, mind-states, mind-consciousness, mind contact ... are 'void of the self'. Undeniably, the most familiar exhortation of the Buddha to his disciples, as recorded in the canonical literature is that, whatever is suffering is not-self, and whatever is impermanent is also not-self. It is also significant that the Buddha is represented as describing the eye ...
tongue ... mind ... as the 'All', and subject to rebirth (jātīdhamma), old age (jarādhamma), sickness (vyādhamma), death (marādhamma), impurity (saṅkilesadhamma), dissolution (khayadhamma), growing old (vayadhamma), coming-to-be (samudaya), and ceasing-to-be (niruddhamma).

Logically, it is possible to infer from the passages cited above, that the five khandhas of which the individual is composed, constitute the 'world' and the 'All', are subject to rebirth, sickness, death ..., are 'void of the self', and that beyond the 'All' in the individual himself, is the Real Self. The basic doctrine of not-self may be described as a simple corollary of the impermanence of the 'All', there being no lasting individuality if the khandhas have neither permanence nor unity (piṇḍa). It should also be noted that in the formulas mentioned above, the absence of a self is confined to the khandhas, and that nothing is said either way about its existence, apart from them. The Buddha did not teach that the self 'is not', but only what 'it is not'.

In Sutta Nikāya III, 206, while referring to the annihilationist doctrine (propagated by his contemporary Ajita Kesakambali), the Buddha declares: 'Conditioned by feeling, by perception, by the activities, conditioned by consciousness, clinging to consciousness, adhering to consciousness, does the following view arise: "There is no alms giving, no sacrifice, no offering. There is no fruit, no result of good or evil deeds. This world is not, the world beyond is not ..."

Of the Four Great Elements is a man composed. When he makes an end,
his body, earth to earth returneth, to earth goes back (anupagacchati); his body, water to water returneth, to water goes back; his air to air returneth, to air goes back. His faculties rejoin the element of space ... fools and wise alike, when body breaks up, they are cut down and perish. After death, they are not'".

Again in Majjhima Nikāya I, 140, while referring to the accusation made by samanās and brāhmaṇās, the Buddha says: '... there are some samanās and brāhmaṇās who represent me untruly, vainly, falsely, not in accordance with fact, saying: "The reculse Gotama is a nihilist (vendyika); he lays down the cutting off, the destruction and the disappearance (vibhava) of the existent entity". But as this, monks, is just what I am not, as this is just what I do not say, these worthy samanās and brāhmaṇās represent me untruly, vainly, falsely, and not in accordance with fact ... Formerly, as well as now, monks, I lay down simply - suffering and the stopping of suffering'. This standpoint of the Buddha is further emphasised in Mahāvagga VI, 31: 'I teach the annihilation of craving, the annihilation of delusion, I teach the annihilation of manifold evil things that do not pertain to salvation'.

That the Buddha preached the destruction of the five khandhas in the individual but not annihilation, is also clear from Saṃyutta Nikāya III, 109-110, where some monks of the Order are represented as rebuking the monk Yamaka: 'Do not slander the Blessed One; it is not good to accuse the Blessed One; the Blessed One would not speak thus: "A monk who has destroyed the āsava (biases), on the dissolution of the body is annihilated and destroyed, and is no more after death"'.

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1. na hi bhagavā evam vadeyya khīnāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bhedā uchchijjati vinassati na hoti param maraya ti.
It must be borne in mind, however, that like the propagator of the annihilationist doctrine Ajīta Kesakambali, the Buddha also believed in the existence of the four great elements. ¹ In Samyutta Nikāya II, 174, he elaborates upon the nature of these four elements: 'He who takes delight (abhinandam) in the earth-element (paṭhaviddhātu), takes delight in suffering; he who takes delight in the water-element (āpodhātu), takes delight in suffering; he who takes delight in the fiery-element (tejodhātu), takes delight in suffering; he who takes delight in the airy-element (vāyodhātu), takes delight in suffering. He who takes delight in suffering, I say, is not set wholly free from suffering'. ² In the following passage, just the opposite is said of the man who does not take delight in the four elements; of him, the Buddha declares: 'He who does not take delight in suffering, I say, is set wholly free from suffering'. The Buddha goes on to say: 'Monks, that which is the coming-into-existence (uppāda), persistence (ṭhiti), rebirth (ābhinibbatī), and the manifestation (pātubhava) of the earth-element, is the coming-into-existence of suffering, the persistence of sickness, and the manifestation of old age; that which is the coming-into-existence ... of the water-element ... the manifestation of old age; that which is the coming-into-existence ... of the fire-element ... the manifestation of old age; that which is the coming-into-existence ... of the air-element ... the manifestation of old age.

Monks, that which is the cessation (nirodha), suppression (vāpasa), and destruction (athagama) of the earth-element, is the cessation of suffering, suppression of sickness, and cessation of death'. ³ The same

1. cf. SN II, 168, where the four elements are enumerated as earth, water, fire, and air. cf. also II. 175.
2. yo dukkham abhinandati aparimutto so dukhhasmi ti vadami.
3. SN II, 175.
is said with regard to the cessation, suppression, and destruction of the water-element, fire element, and air-element.

In *Samyutta Nikāya* II, 170, the Buddha referring to the satisfaction (assāda) and misery (adinava) connected with each of the four elements and the escape (nissarana) therefrom, says that the happiness and mental ease (somanassa) arising through each of these elements is the satisfaction that comes in connection with each; that the impermanence, suffering, and changing nature (viparītā-dhamma) of each, is the suffering that comes in connection with each; that the suppression of desire and lust (chandarāga) is the escape that comes in connection with each. The Buddha concludes: 'When I, monks, had fully come to know even as it really is, the satisfaction as such, the suffering as such, the escape as such, that there is in the four elements, then did I discern what it is to be Awakened, a perfect Buddha ...' ¹

The three characteristics of satisfaction, suffering, and escape discerned in the four elements are also discerned in the senses in *Samyutta Nikāya* IV, 7-13; V, 194; 203 ff., in the bodily and mental factors in general (*Samyutta Nikāya* III, 81; 160, etc.), and in feeling in particular (*Samyutta Nikāya* IV, 208; 234). They are also recognised in the sense-desires in *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 85; 92.

It is evident from *Aṅguttara Nikāya* II, 164 that each of the four elements of which an individual is composed, is characterised not only by impermanence and suffering, but also not-self. Here the Buddha advises Rāhula: 'Both the earth-element in the self and in eternal objects are just this earth-element. Thus it should be regarded as it

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¹ In his commentary, Buddhaghosa reads into these four elements the more abstract meanings of extension, cohesion, calorific property, and mobility, which they came to acquire in later Abhidhamma. He refers throughout to their presence in the human body.
really is, with perfect wisdom: "This is not mine; this am I not; this is not myself". So seeing it, as it really is, with perfect wisdom, one has revulsion for the earth-element ...'. The same is said of the water-element, the fire-element, and of the air-element. The Buddha finally declares: 'Now, Rāhula, when a monk beholds neither the self nor what pertains to the self in these four elements, he is called a monk who has cut off craving, has loosened the bond, and by perfectly understanding (this) vain conceit, has made an end of suffering'. It is almost clear here that the emancipated person recognises himself as having reached beyond the sphere of the four elements, and, consequently the realm of sense-desires, feeling, bodily and mental factors, and thereby the phenomenal world.

It is a matter of dispute, however, whether the Upanisadic doctrine of the ātma had any influence on early Buddhism. Certainly, as E.J. Thomas has pointed out, 'the doctrines of immortality (eternal life as distinct from mere survival after death), the existence of a permanent spiritual substance, and of a being thinking and feeling apart from material conditions, did not come within the range of evidence recognised by the Buddhists'. The critical question for the Buddhists was not the survival of the individual at death, which they maintained and defended against the doctrines of annihilation (ucchedavāda), but the existence of the individual when the aggregation of the khandhas has

1. imāsu catasu dhātusu n'eva'ittanāṃ nāttrāni yam sammupassati.
2. accehi tanhān vivattayi samyojanān sammā rānābhisamaya antam akāśi dukkhasati.
finally ceased. That question depends on the much disputed meaning of Nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa is purely and solely a state of perfection, the Absolute, to be reached in this life by moral practices, contemplation and insight. While it is therefore not transcendental, it is, nevertheless, the 'untranslatable expression of the Unspeakable, of that for which in the Buddha's own saying, there is no word; which cannot be grasped in terms of reasoning and cool logic'.¹ As Conze aptly remarks: 'No one can ever form an adequate idea of what Nirvāṇa is. Nirvāṇa is 'unthinkable' or 'unconceivable' if only because there is nothing general about it, and everyone must experience it personally for himself ...'.² As the final deliverance, Nirvāṇa is the 'raison d'être of Buddhism, and its ultimate justification'.³

An epithet frequently applied to Nirvāṇa in Buddhist literature is 'Deathless' (amṛta, amata) or Immortal. As the Deathless, however, Nirvāṇa is 'conceived not as an abstraction, but a living reality; not as a mere subjective state of mind, but as a 'something' that transcends any individual mind'.⁴ It is the absolute in the highest sense and represents that freedom from the profane human condition which has been the goal of yogins from time immemorial.⁵

So central to Nirvāṇa is its deathlessness, that several other epithets applied to it, more or less express the same idea. Nirvāṇa is permanent, stable, unchanging, imperishable (aṇyūta), without end (ananta),

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1. Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.
2. E. Conze: Buddhist Thought in India, p.57.
non-becoming, extinction of birth, unborn, not liable to dissolution (apalokina), uncreated (abhutam), unaging and, undying (amaranam). 1

Several passages in the Pāli canon refer to Nibbāna or the Deathless as being the final goal of the bhikkhu. According to Sāmyutta Nikāya V, 218, the aim of the holy life is 'to plunge into Nibbāna; it has Nibbāna as its goal, Nibbāna as its end'. 2 The same text also refers to the bhikkhu who follows the Aryan eightfold path which 'plunges into the deathless, has its goal in the deathless, and ends in the deathless'. 3 The absolutist quality of Nibbāna which may be noticed from the expressions 'plunging into the deathless', 'merging into deathless', and 'having the deathless as the end' (Anguttara Nikāya III, 307) 4 is also evident in the Sāmyutta Nikāya V, 244, where the Buddha says: 'Just as, monks, the river Ganges flows to the east, slides to the east, tends to the east, even so, a monk by cultivating the four right efforts, making much of the four right efforts, strives (towards), is intent upon, and tends towards Nibbāna'. 5

It is significant, however, that in Suttinipāta 284, the Buddha refers to the goal, not as Nibbāna or the Deathless, but as the self:-

'Ṛṣis of old, austere, restrained of self,
Quit of the five sense pleasures, reached the goal-of-self'. 6

1. E. Conze: op. cit.,
2. nibbānagodham hi brahma-mariyan vuesati nibbānaparāyanam nibbānapariyośananti; cf. MN I, 304.
3. amatagodham amataparāyanam amatapariyośanam. (SN V, 220).
4. cf. AK III, 78.
5. cattāro samappadhāne bhāvento cattāro samappadhāne bahulīkaronto nibbānarimno hoti nibbānapayo nibbānapabhāro.
6. Isaya pubbakā āsena saṅkhata-tā tapaseśo pāñca kāmaṅgo hitvā attādātattā ācarimman; Pali artha, i.e. Vedic artha means to reach, attain, or proceed to. Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.
Again, in Aṅguttara Nikāya III, 230-233, a comparison is made between the man possessed by 'lust and passion', 'illwill, and overwhelmed by illwill', dwelling 'with heart possessed by doubt, and overwhelmed by doubt', who 'knows not the escape therefrom', who 'knows not and sees not the self-goal as it really is', and the man who 'dwells with heart neither possessed nor overwhelmed by lust and passion, illwill, sloth and torpor', ... 'who knows and sees the self-goal as it really is'.

While describing the Aryan disciple in Aṅguttara Nikāya III, 80, the Buddha says 'he is a worthy man, keen-eyed who lays hold, even here, upon the real-in-himself'. The quest for the imperishable, the eternal, and the unchanging in relation to the self, is also referred to in Mahāvagga I, 14, where we are told of how thirty brahmin youths ask the Buddha whether he has seen a woman who had run away from them after she had robbed one of them of his belongings. The Buddha solemnly replies by asking them: 'What is better, young men, to look for the woman, or to look for your own self?'

It must be remembered, however, that while it is obvious that references to the 'goal-of-self', and the 'real-in-oneself', occurring in the passages cited above, are completely without meaning unless a 'self' and a 'reality in oneself' were intended, it is difficult to explain why the Buddha should refrain from commenting upon the existence of the 'self', if he believed that there was indeed such a self. In Sānuyutta Nikāya IV, 400, the wanderer Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether the self exists

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1. ... attattham pi tasmin samaye yathābhūtam pajanāti passati.
2. so tādissot supparito viśakkhaṃ ādiyati sāram idh'eva attano ti.
3. tass' kiṃ mahānāsa vo kumāra, katamam na kho tuskakam varam, yam vā tumhe itthin gaveseyyadha yam vā attānem gaveseyyadhā ti.
(atthatta ti) or, whether the self is non-existent (natthatta ti). To both questions, the Buddha chooses to be silent. After the departure of Vacchagotta, the Buddha explains to Ānanda that if he had answered that the self exists, it would have meant that he sided with those samaṇas and brāhmaṇas who teach eternalism (sassatavāda), i.e. the permanence of the self in time as an individual soul. If, on the other hand, he had replied that the self is non-existent, it would have meant that he sided with those samaṇas and brāhmaṇas who preach annihilation (ucchedavāda). He also adds that, had he answered that the self exists, his reply would have been in accordance with the knowledge (anulomanaṇṇa) that all things are permanent; while if he had answered that the self is non-existent, the bewildered Vacchagotta would have thought: 'Formerly, indeed I had a self; but now I have not'.

The same questions are asked of the Venerable Sabhiya, in respect of the Buddha - whether or not the Tathāgata exists after death,¹ and, the answer given is that the matter has not been explained (avyakatā) by the Blessed One. The Venerable Sabhiya concludes: 'Now, as to the reasons (hetu), the foundations (paccaya) for defining him as having form (rupiti), or not having form, as having consciousness (sanniti) or not having consciousness, as having neither consciousness, nor not-consciousness - if such reasons, such foundations should cease in every way, completely without remainder,² by what definitions could one describe him as having form, or not having form, as having consciousness, or not

¹. hoti tathāgato param maraṇā ti.
². sabbena sabbam sabbah āparisesam nirujjheyya.
having consciousness, as having neither consciousness nor not-consciousness'.
This implies that since the Tathāgata undergoes, at death, the utter
cessation of all that one can speak of (āsena viñāga nibodha), it is for
lack of words that a definition is not given.

K.N. Upadhyaya draws a comparison between the well-known simile of
the fire which has been extinguished, and the Tathāgata: 'Just as it
is inappropriate or meaningless to speak of the direction of the fire
which being free from the fuel has gone out, so also, it is inappropriate
or meaningless to speak of the existence or the non-existence of the
Tathāgata who being free from cognizable marks has become indeterminable'.
Perhaps the strongest evidence against the theory that the Upanisadic
view of the ātmā was continued in the teachings of the Buddha, is the
oft repeated saying of the Buddha himself: sabbe dhammā anattā, i.e.
all component things are not-self.

However, if, in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, the Tathāgata
is neither recognised (samanupassati), nor not-recognised as having or
being the five khandhas, neither exists, nor exists-not after death, it
is difficult to explain why the Buddhist monk should resort to taking
refuge in the Buddha (Buddhām saranam) after the Parinibbāna. Unless
the Buddha represented a timeless and eternal metaphysical principle,
Buddhist monks through the centuries, all over the world, would not
continue taking refuge in the Buddha.

That the Buddha was regarded from the Hinayāna standpoint as
being completely liberated from time, and as existing in the eternal,

   cf. SN IV, 384: dittheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgato
   anupalabbh yamāne.
2. cf. SN IV, 380-84.
non-temporal present, is evident from the *Milindapañha* (73), composed about the 1st Cent. AD, in which King Milinda (Menander) asks the monk Nāgasena if the Buddha exists (*Buddha atttiti*). The monk replies in the affirmative, but adds that as the Blessed One 'has passed away completely leaving no substratum of rebirth (*anupādisesāya nibbānadhatuyā*), he cannot be pointed out as being here or there'. The view that the Buddha is eternally present is also confirmed by the Bajaur casket inscription of the fifth regnal year of Mahārāja Minadra (Menander) referring to the corporeal (*dāra*) relic of the Buddha as *pra~samet* (*pra~sameta*: endowed with life), and implying that it was 'looked upon as a living organism, as animated as the body of the Buddha before Nirvāṇa'.

A quality often ascribed to the Buddha, by the Buddhists, is that of boundlessness (*appamāṇa*, literally, without measure). In *Suttanipata* 1076, the Buddha referring to the man who has attained Nibbāna says: 'Having gone home, he is without measure ...'.

The same text (507) says:

1. N.G. Majumdar: 'The Bajaur Casket of the reign of Menander', *Ep. Ind.*, XXIV, p.4. cf. *Mahāvamsa* XVII, 3: 'If we behold the relics, we behold the Conqueror' (i.e. the Buddha). It is necessary to remember that *sa-upādi-sesa-nibbāna* (It.38; *Dh.A.* II, 163) and *anupādi-sesa-nibbāna* (It.38; *Dh.A.* II, 163; *DN* III, 135; *MN* I, 148) are not two different kinds of Nibbāna, but represent the very same Nibbāna, the former experienced before death and the latter after death. These two phases of Nirvāṇa are also mentioned in the *BG*; referring to the state of supreme Peace (*sānti*: *BG* II, 70, 71) attained by the saint in his lifetime, *BG* II, 72 says: 'This is the supreme state (*Brahmi sthiti*), O Pārtha (Arjuna), having attained which one is no more liable to be deluded. Having remained in this state, even at the time of death, one attains supreme deliverance' (*brahmanirvāṇam*).

2. *attham gatassa na pomāṇam atthi*. 
'With lust and hatred expelled,  
Let him in boundless measure then  
Quicken a heart of amity,  
Day and night with zeal suffuse  
All quarters to infinitude'. 1

In Anguttara Nikāya II, 63, we are told: 'Boundless is the Buddha, boundless is the Dhamma, boundless is the Order'. 2 Majjhima Nikāya I, 488, and Samyutta Nikāya IV, 379, further testify to the boundlessness of the Buddha: 'Freed from denotation by consciousness is the Tathāgata; he is deep, immeasurable, and unfathomable as the great ocean'. 3

In the traditional formula of the threefold refuge, while the Buddha is regarded as distinct and different from the two other refuges, the Dhamma and the Samgha, he is identified with the Dhamma in certain passages of the Pāli literature. In Samyutta Nikāya III, 120, when the monk Vakkhali says he had been longing to set eyes upon the Blessed One, the Buddha replies: 'What is there in seeing this vile body of mine? He who sees the Dhamma, Vakkhali, sees me; he who sees me, he sees the Dhamma'. 4 The identity of the Buddha with the Dhamma, is also apparent from Anguttara Nikāya V, 225; 256, and Majjhima Nikāya III, 195, which say: '... the Blessed One has become the Eye (i.e. vision), has become knowledge, has become Dhamma, has become Brahman ... and giver of the Deathless'. 5 In Dīgha Nikāya III, 84, the Buddha explains to the

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1. so vītarāgo pavineyya do-em  
mettam cittaṁ bhāvanāṁ appamānām  
rattim dīvem satatan appamutto  
sabbā diśā pharate appamānām.
2. appamāṇo buddho appamāṇo dhammo appamāṇo saṅgho.
3. tathāgato gambhirā appamāṇyo duṇṇāpiyo govinda mahāsambuddho.
4. yo kho Vakkhali dhammam passati so mam passati; yo kho mam passati so dhammam passati.
5. cakkhubhūto nāṇabhūto dhammabhūto brahmabhūto ... amatassa dātā.
brahmin Vāsetṭha: 'These are names tantamount to the Tathāgata - having the Dhamma as his body, having Brahman as his body, become Dhamma and become Brahman',\(^1\) while in *Samañña Nikāya* V, 5, the Aryan eightfold path is explicitly described as *Dhammayāna* or *Brahmayāna*.\(^2\) It is significant that while the Buddha is described as turning the wheel of Law in *Samañña Nikāya* V, 423 (*dhammacakkāya pavatteti*), the same text (II, 27) refers to the turning of the wheel of Brahman by the Tathāgata (*brahmacakkāya pavatteti*). According to *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I, 207-208, to dwell in Dhamma, is to dwell with Brahman.\(^3\) In several other passages the word *nibbuto* (i.e. one who has attained Nibbāna) occurs as a synonym of *brahmabhūto* (i.e. one who has become Brahman).\(^4\)

In commenting on the influence of the Upanisadic conception of the universal ātman and Brahman upon the teachings of the Buddha, von Glasenapp remarks: '... in the whole Pāli canon, the doctrine of a permanent ātman is rejected and the word Brahman is never used in the sense of an ultimate reality underlying all worldly phenomena. In the rare passages which may perhaps refer to Vedantic teachings, the latter are clearly repudiated: thus in *Dīgha* I, 1, 30 ff. and the *Mahābhārata* 22 (vol. I, p.138), the doctrine 'so loko so attā so pecca bhavisati niṣco, avipariṇāmadhammo, saṃsātisamām tathēva thassām', is called an elaborate doctrine of fools (paripūro būladhammo) ... . It therefore seems improbable that the Buddha derived his tenets from the Upaniṣads; and it is even doubtful if he knew much about them'.\(^5\)

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1. *dhammakāya iti pi brahmakāya iti pi, dhammabhūto iti pi brahmabhūto iti pi*. cf. *MN* III, 195; 224.
2. *imassa eva kho ... ariyassa atthangikassa maggaassa adhivacanan brahmayānam iti pi, dhammayānam iti pi*.
3. *brahmānā saddhiṁ sampasati ... dharmena saddhiṁ sampasati*.
4. *MN* I, 344; *AN* II, 206: *diṭṭheva dhamme nirodho nibbuto ... brahmabhūtena aitamā viharati*.
The passages cited above, identifying the Buddha with the Dhamma and Brahman, however, leave no room for doubt that the word Brahman is indicative of the highest state - Nibbāna, while cakkhubhuto and ṇanabhuto are also suggestive of the supreme state of Enlightenment. While it has to be admitted that the methods of teaching and training of the Buddha display the greatest originality, the description of his attainment and realization of the state of supreme Perfection is certainly similar to that of the Vedic and Upanisadic seers who had also realized the Immortal.

The concept of the Buddhist Dhamma the absolute Law or Truth as identical with Nibbana the supreme Reality, seems to have gradually evolved from the Vedic theory of rta. In Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad I, 4, 14, Dharma is not only represented as the highest principle, but is also identified with Truth: 'There is nothing higher than Dharma ... Verily, that which is Dharma is Truth ... Both these are the same'. Notwithstanding the numerous mystical and metaphysical descriptions of Brahman in the Upaniṣads, there are passages where Brahman is referred to in terms of Truth, Knowledge, and Reality. While Taittiriya Upaniṣad II, 1, 1, describes Brahman as the Real, as Knowledge, and as the Infinite, Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad V, 4, 1, identifies Brahman with Truth, and the First-born. According to Kena Upaniṣad IV, 8, Truth is

2. tasmād dharmaḥ paraḥ nāsti ... yo vai sa dhammaḥ satyam vai tat ... etad hy eucitad ubhayam bhavati.
3. satyam jñānam anantam brahma.
4. prathamajā, i.e. the First Principle, satya, in which is engendered the entire structure of creation.
the 'abode of Brahman'. Again in *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 7, Brahman is described as 'unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, peaceful ...'.

K.N. Upadhyaya believes that it is precisely this line of approach which 'seems to have been developed and carried out systematically in Buddhism, giving no room for metaphysics or mystical speculation'. While making a comparison between the metaphysics of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and early Buddhism, he remarks: 'Even when the *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of the Eternal Law (Dharma) and absolute Bliss as synonyms of Brahman, it ties them with theological ideas, and considers Dharma as grounded in God. In Buddhism, unlike the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the Supreme Law (Dhamma) is independent of God or gods. To make it dependent on a being, be it supernatural or divine, would possibly amount to making it subjective or relative in some sense'.

We have already referred to the bhikkhu who, following the Aryan eightfold path, has the Deathless as his goal, plunges and merges into Nibbāna in the same way as a river flows into the ocean. That this goal should represent the sole reality in the Buddhist monk's life, is also clearly indicated in *Udāna* 80-81, where the Buddha says: 'Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. Monks, if that unborn not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be no escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded.' Nibbāna is also described as a region (*āyatana*) where there is neither

1. *adṛśatam aṇyaavāhāryam agrāhyam alakṣāṇam acintyam avyapadesyam sāntam ...*
earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air; neither the sphere of infinite space, nor of infinite consciousness, nor unconsciousness; neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor a world beyond, nor both; nor moon-and-sun. There is no coming (to birth), no going (from life); no standing; there is no falling, there is no arising. It is not grounded (on anything), it rolls not on (in saṃsāra). It is unimaginable (aññamaññam). It is indeed the end of suffering. Another contrast between the born, compounded, and the unborn, uncompounded, occurs in *Itivuttaka* 37:

>'The born, become, produced, compounded, made,
And hence not-lasting, but of birth-and-death,
An aggregate, a nest of sickness ...,
The escape therefrom, the real, beyond the sphere
Of reason, lasting, unborn, unproduced ...'.

It is significant that while on the one hand, the passages cited earlier describe the emancipated monk as plunging and merging into the Deathless, becoming thereby one with Nibbāna, *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 4-6, on the other hand, refers to the Buddha as being distinct and different from Nibbāna: 'The Tathāgata, the emancipated and fully-Awakened One, having known Nibbāna as Nibbāna, does not think of himself as identical with Nibbāna; does not think of himself as included in Nibbāna; does not think of himself as excluded from Nibbāna; does not think of Nibbāna as belonging to himself; (thus) he does not take delight in Nibbāna.'

Similar contradictions are apparent elsewhere in the Pāli literature; the *Visuddhimagga* XVI, 90 says:

1. cf. the reference above to the four great elements of which an individual is composed.
3. nībbānaṃ nībbānato abhiruddha nībbānānaṃ na maññati, nībbānasmiṃ na maññati, nībbānaṃ me ti na maññati, nībbānaṃ na'bhavinandati.
'Suffering exists, but none who suffers;
Doing exists, although there is no doer;
Nibbāna exists but not the man that enters it;
The Path exists, but not the traveller on it'.

In Anguttara Nikāya II, 38, the Buddha declares to the brahmin Dōnā: 'Just as, brahmin, a lotus, blue, red, or white, though born in the water, grown up in the water, stands there unsoiled by the water - just so, brahmin, though born in the world, grown up in the world, having overcome the world, I abide unsoiled by the world. Take it that I am a Buddha, brahmin'.

Coomaraswamy observes that while the Buddha assures the brahmin Dōnā that he will not become (na bhavissāmi) either a deva, gandhabba, yakkha, or man, because the conditions necessary for the arising of such a state have been destroyed, nevertheless his claim: 'I am a Buddha' (Buddho asti) is tantamount to proof that the previous bhavissāmi has a present value, for he evidently means: 'I am Awake; I cannot be classified or included in any category'.

Admittedly there are several passages in the Pali literature which testify to the superiority of the Buddha over all other beings. While we are told in Suttanipāta 559-560: 'Full rare and seldom seen are the Fully-Awakened; those rare men, seldom seen in the world ...', according to Anguttara Nikāya I, 22, the 'one person to be born in the world who is an extraordinary (wonderful) man ... is the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the

1. dukkham eva hi, na koci dukkhito,
ahāra na, kiriyā va vijjati,
atthi nibbuti, na nibbuto purā,
maggam atti, gamako na vijjati ti.
2. Buddhō ti mam brāhmaṇa dhāreṇhiti.
4. dullabham dassanan hoti sambuddhaḥo abhinahav yeṣeṇa vo dullabho
do lokā pāṭubhāvo abhinahav. 
Fully-Awakened One'. The same text also says: 'There is one person who is born into the world who is unique, without a peer, without a counterpart, incomparable, unequalled, matchless, unrivalled, best of bipeds... It is the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully-Awakened One'.

Somputta Nikāya IV, 384, describes the Tathāgata as the 'greatest man, the highest man, the winner of the highest gain' (uttamapuriso paramapuriso paramapattipatto). Finally, according to Anguttara Nikāya II, 35 'whatever beings there are, whether footless, two-footed, four-footed, or many-footed, whether with bodies, or without, conscious or unconscious, neither conscious nor unconscious, the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully-Awakened One, is declared the best'.

The Buddha is not only adored as the highest and holiest of men (cf. Somututta Nikāya I, 49-50), but is also regarded as omniscient (sabbanna), endowed with the 'ten powers' (dasa bala) which, as is well known, consist mainly of his perfect comprehension in the ten fields of knowledge. If, according to the passage in the Visuddhimagga cited above, suffering, kamma (i.e. deeds), Nibbāna, and the Path to Nibbāna, are the only 'realities', one might well ask - 'Who, then, is a Buddha?' While he did not identify himself with Nibbāna, as we have seen, he certainly was no ordinary 'traveller' on the Path, seeking the Deathless, plunging and merging into Nibbāna.

We have already referred to the passages where the Buddha is identified with the Dhamma, and with Brahman. His disciples styled themselves 'sons of the Blessed One, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma,

1. ekapuggalo loke upajjamo upajjati acchariyo manusea ti ... Tathāgatasse arahato sannā sambuddhassass.
2. adutiyo asahayo appatimo appatise amo appatibhāgo appatipuggalo asamo asasamo dipadānām aggō ...  
heirs of the Dhamma,\(^1\) in the same manner as brahmins were known to
describe themselves as 'genuine children of Brahman, born of his mouth,
created by Brahman, heirs of Brahman'.\(^2\) The relation between the Buddha
and the Dhamma is further evident from \textit{Dīgha Nikāya} II, 154, where the
Buddha advise Ānanda: 'It may be Ānanda, that in some of you the
thought may arise: "The word of the Master is ended, we have a teacher
no more". But it should not be regarded thus. The Dhamma and the
Vinaya which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after
I am gone, be the Teacher to you'.\(^3\)

It is significant that the Dhamma preached by the Buddha, which
constituted a distinct and separate Refuge in the threefold formula, but
is nonetheless identified with the Buddha in several passages, is also
the very same Dhamma taught by the six Buddhas preceding Gotama:

\begin{quote}
'The self-same Path by which Vipassi went,
The very same Path of Sikhī, and Vessabhu,
Of Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa;
By that straight Path comes Gotama.\(^4\)
The seven Buddhas, without craving, free from attachment,
Having destroyed the conditions of rebirth.
By whom, having the appearance of the Dhamma,
That Dhamma was taught.
The Four Noble Truths, compassion for living beings,
Suffering, its arising, the Path,
The cessation and destruction of suffering'.\(^5\)
\end{quote}

\(^1\) \textit{DN} III, 84: \textit{Bhagavatopamhi putto oraso mukhato jato dharmajoh}
dharmam-nimitta dharmam-dāyādo'ti.

\(^2\) \textit{MN} II, 84: \textit{brahmāna va brahmaṇo puttā orasā mukhato jātā brahmajā
brahmam-nimitting brahmādyāda'ñi.} cf. \textit{MN} II, 148; \textit{DN} III, 81.

\(^3\) \textit{yo vā māyā Dhamma ca vinayo ca desita pathatto, sa vo mānācayena
sattā.}

\(^4\) \textit{yen'eva maggena gato Vipassi
yen'eva maggena Sikhi ca Vessabhu,
Kakusandha Konāgamano ca Kassapa
Ten'āya lasā ca āgamani gotamo.}

\(^5\) \textit{Thera-gāthā} 490-492.
The Dhamma which was proclaimed by one Buddha after another, through successive ages of an endless world process, could therefore be described as eternal, and be said to belong to the realm of the Unborn and the Uncompounded. The Kathavatthu, one of the latest books of the Pāli canon, and said to have been recited at the Buddhist Council held during the reign of Asoka, contains a debate on whether certain terms belong to unconditional realities. In that work, Space, Nibbāna, and the Four Truths, are all described as uncompounded (anamkhata), uncaused, and belonging neither to the realm of time or change. It is clear that these Four Truths which are not occasional or fetched out of the vicissitudes of experience, but were permanent, had an independent being of their own. The Dhamma, identified with the Buddha, is described by Carpenter as a kind of spiritual continuum of his living energy, 'a survival of the Master's moral activity, unembarrassed by decay of his material form. It is an impalpable presence which provides a permanent standard of truth and a fountain of energy for all believers'. In commenting on the imaginative conception of the abiding presence of the Buddha in his Teaching, Carpenter remarks: 'The Buddha lived in his Truth. But that had been the same for all the Buddhas, and bound them into a mysterious unity. If all the Dhammas were really one and the same Dhamma, might not all the Buddhas be one and the same Buddha?'

It has to be admitted, however, that there is no hint of such a conclusion in the Pāli texts themselves. Nevertheless, the concept of the Dhamma representing an ideal and unchanging principle, which was 'revealed' in the same terms by a series of Teachers, probably provided the basis for

1. Book VI, 1-6, pp.185-192; cf. AN I, 122; SN II, 25; V, 430; Pitn 271; 388.
2. J.E. Carpenter: Theism in Medieval India, p.95.
the later doctrine of the unity of all Buddhas. Carpenter concludes: 'The Truth was immutable, and those who revealed it were no more many, but One. Behind an everlasting Dhamma stood an Absolute and Eternal Buddha'.

We have already observed that in the passages where the Buddha is identified with Brahman, the word Brahman is indicative of the highest state, Nibbāna. There are also some passages in the Pāli literature which describe the emancipated monk as 'abiding with self which has become Brahman'. Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 206; 208, and Majjhima Nikāya I, 344; 349, refer to the man 'who torments neither himself, nor another, with no craving, is desireless (appeased), cooled, one who has penetrated bliss, who lives with self which has become Brahman'. In Suttanipāta 508, the following question is asked: 'By which self is the Brahma world attained?' and in Aṅguttara Nikāya IV, 91, the Buddha advised his disciples: '... loving the self, and yearning for the great self (mahattā, Sans. mahātma), revere the True Law; pay heed to the Buddha's Word'.

Coomaraswamy observes that the word mahattā cited above, is defined in Aṅguttara Nikāya I, 249, as follows: 'The man in whom body, will, and intellect (kāya, citta, panna) have been made-to-become (i.e. developed, bhavita), he is not empty, but a Great Spirit (mahattā) whose behaviour has no measure' (appamāṇa vihārī). It is interesting that the Commentary

2. so anattantapọ aparantapọ diṭṭhe va dhammo niochātọ sitibhūto sukhapatiso mvedi brahmabhūtena attanā viharati.
3. ken'attanā gacchati brahmalokam.
4. tasma hi attakāmama mahattam abhihākhetā saddhammo garukātabbo sāram buddhānāsāsanaṃ ti.
5. aparitto, corresponding to Sans. apraṁkta, i.e. praṁkṣaya, also means to excel, surpass, or to be superior. Monier-Williams: op.cit., s.v.
avoids the idea of the 'self' or 'soul' by saying that the man is great
by his qualities, though his person be small (?), but in dealing with
the next expression appamāṇa vihāri, admits that he is an Arahant.\footnote{F.L. Woodward: \textit{The Book of the Gradual Sayings}, I, p.228, note.} In
\textit{Suttanipāta} 277, it is the Buddha who is explicitly described as 'one in
whom the self is made-to-become' \textit{(bhavitattātanam)}.

It is probably this self which the Buddha sought to perfect, which
is referred to in \textit{Sangutta Nikāya} I, 75, and \textit{Udana} 47: 'Finding naught
dearer to man than the self ... let the self-lover harm no other man',\footnote{nevajjhagā piyataram attanā kvaci ... tasmā na nīmē paraṃ attakāmo.} echoing \textit{Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad} I, 4, 8 where the self is described as
'dearer than everything, and is innermost'.\footnote{preyo'nyasmāt savasmatma antarātaram, yad ayaṁ ātma.} It is also clear that this
'self-held-dear' is not the same self referred to in \textit{Aṅguttara Nikāya}
IV, 97, where he disapproves of those who kill father, mother, brahmins,
and common folk, and who love themselves most: \textit{atā hi paramām piyo.}
A reference to two selves also occurs in \textit{Aṅguttara Nikāya} I, 149, where
the Buddha says:

\begin{quote}
'Nowhere in the world can one conceal his sin,
The self in man knows what is true and false,
Indeed, my friend, thou scornest the noble self,
Thinking of hiding the evil self in thee,
From the self that witnessed it'.\footnote{N'āthi loke roho nīma pāpakammām pokabbato attā te purisa jñāti
saccam vá yadd vá muddhā kalyāṇam vata ha sakkhi attānaṃ atimāññasi
yo santan attanā pāpan attānaṃ parigahast.}
\end{quote}

The noble self described above, is apparently the very same self
in which the Buddha kindles his light (of insight),\footnote{Commentary: 'Subjectively in my own vital continuum I burn the sacred
fire of insight'. cf. Mrs. Rhys Davids: \textit{The Book of the Kindred
Sayings}, I, p.212, note.} referred to in
\textit{Sangutta Nikāya} I, 169:
'The light I kindle, burns in the inner self,
Ever burning, ever composed-of-self,
Arahant I, living the holy life I proceed'.

Now, this light or fire (aggini) of insight kindled by the Buddha, and described as constantly burning, is evidently not the fire referred to in the famous fire-discourse (Mahāvagga I, 21) which the Buddha identifies as the 'fire of lust, anger, and delusion', burning with (the anxieties of) birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair.

We have already referred to the five khandhas as being impermanent, belonging to the World, the All, and being void of the Self. In the canonical literature, the cycle of birth-and-death (samsāra) is sometimes described as anamatagga, literally meaning 'whose beginning and end alike are unthinkable', best compared to the English idiom 'a world without end'. In Saṁyutta Nikāya III, 149, the Buddha declares: 'Without beginning and end is the round of birth-and-death. No beginning is known of beings caught in ignorance, fettered by craving, who run on, who fare on in the round of birth-and-death'. Again, in V, 441, of the same text, the Buddha says: 'Without beginning or end is the round of birth-and-death. No beginning is known of (the pain caused by) blows from spears, swords, and axes ...'.

1. Ajjhattam eva jalayāmi jotiṁ, Niccaggini niocsamāhitatto. Arahant aham brahmacariyam carāmi.
2. The word aggini occurs only in the Sn in the sense of 'pyre', and in combination with sama 'like', e.g. aggini-samā jalitam (668); aggini-śamāsu (670). The form aggini in the expression niccaggini can either be referred to gini (Vedic agni), or has to be taken as a nominative of aggini, meaning 'looking constantly after the fire, i.e. careful, observant, alert. Rhys Davids and W. Stede: op.cit., s.v.
3. rāgaginā dosagginā mohaginā aditam.
4. Jātiya jārīya mavanena sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upādāyābhi aditam.
5. Rhys Davids and W. Stede: op.cit., s.v.
6. anamataggayam sammāro pubbakoṭi ra paññāyati avijjānivarananam saṁvānaṁ taṁhaṁ samyojananam sandhāvatoṁ samyāvatoṁ.
Nibbāna, as is well known, represents the end of all conditions of rebirth (Sīmāyutta Nikāya V, 226), the end of craving, and the stilling of all passions. It is also explicitly described as 'worlds end' in a number of passages. In Sīmāyutta Nikāya IV, 157, and Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 5, the Buddha describes the man 'versed in the Vedas (vedagu), living the holy life (vusīta brahmaqariya), as one who has reached world's end and gone to the beyond' (lokantagu pāragato ti vuccati ti). Again in Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 48 and 49, he refers to the man who lives the holy life and knows the world's end by being calmed (lokassa antāṇ samitāvi). The Buddha also adds: 'It is in this very fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and insight, I proclaim the world-to-be, likewise the origin of the world, and the ending of the world ...'.

These passages clearly show that Nibbāna or the Deathless, identified with the world's end is, in the final analysis, within the individual himself. The supreme Goal is described in Sīmāyutta Nikāya IV, 373, as 'uncompounded, ultimate ... the truth, the further shore ... the unfading, the stable, the undecaying, the ineffable, the undifferentiated ... which the Sugata has taught'; 'indeed a dhamma, the form, or nature, or age, or measure, or likeness ... of which it is not possible to indicate', and which can be known and realized by the wise man (pañḍita vedaṇīyo), within himself. As the Buddha eloquently declares to Rohitassa of the devas, that

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1. Also SN I, 62: imasmīḥ eva vyāsamatte kalevare saññimhi samanake lokām ca pahīṇapetā lokasamudayaṁ ca lokanirdham ca lokanirdhamaginīṁ ca paṭipadām.
2. asaṅkhitaṁ anatanatho sa sacan ca pāram niṇpatuṁ ... ajajjaraṁataṁ dhuvam apalokitaṁ anidassanatam nippaṇṇaṁ ...
3. Literally, one who has gone well. We have changed the fanciful pseudo-archaic PTS translation of Sugata as 'well farer' and retained the Sans. original; not only does 'well farer' seem to contain false overtones of Bulman's Pilgrim's Progress, but it also fails to convey the force of the original. A Buddha is no longer 'faring'; he has arrived.
4. Milin, 316-317: atthi dhammas'eva nibbānassa na sakkā nipam vā sanāthano vā voyam vā pārammaḥ vā aparimaḥ ... upaddasyatum.
the realization of Nibbāna and worlds end, 'where there is no more birth, or old age, no death, no falling (from one existence) and rising up (in another), is not to be known by going, seeing, or reaching'.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the meaning of the picturesque words of advice given by the Buddha to Ānanda in Digha Nikāya II, 100: atta-dīpā viharatha, atta-sarāṇā anānīna-sarāṇā, literally rendered as: 'Abide having the self as a lamp (or island), the self as refuge, and none other for refuge'. While the expression atta-dīpa has been taken by some scholars to refer to a metaphysical self, others believe that in the light of the context, the term is used as a convenient phrase indicating self-reliance. The latter observe that in view of his impending death, the Buddha was advising Ānanda not to rely on anyone, but to depend on his own self, and cite passages from the Dhammapada, where it is said that one should consider oneself as the lord of oneself and no other lord (verse 160), and oneself to be a lamp (or island) for oneself (verses 236 and 238). K.N. Upadhyaya points out that if the metaphysical interpretation of the word atta (which in essence is supposed to be identical with Nibbāna) were correct, it would be difficult to make sense of such passages as - 'evil done by (one self) bring (one) self to grief' (Dhammapada 165), and 'evil done by (one) self, produced by (one) self, born of (one) self, oppresses the evil-minded, even as the thunderbolt does to the diamond' (Dhammapada 161). Upadhyaya concludes: 'It is absurd to think that evil is done by the pure metaphysical self or Nibbāna, and man is put to grief by the self or Nibbāna'.

1. nāḥam tām gamanena lokase aṁtan ha-teyam daṭṭheyyam patteyyam. cf. SN, I, 62.
2. Also in SN V, 163; cf. SN III, 42; V, 221.
The rendering of the expression *attādīpa*, referred to above (also occurring in *Dhammapada* 236; *Suttanipāta* 501), as 'self-as-island' is favoured by several scholars.¹ In *Dhammapada* 146, however, the word *dīpa* is, without doubt, used in the sense of 'lamp' or 'light', where the following question is asked: *anāhakāreṇa onaddhāpādīpam na gavesathā?* - 'Shrouded in darkness, would you not search for a light?' Now, the word *gavesati* derived from Vedic *gavesate*, originally meant to search after, or track cows.² It is clear that it is in this sense that the Buddha is represented as requesting the thirty youths to search for the self: *attānaṃ gaveyyasātha*, in *Mahāvagga* I, 14.

It may be pointed out that the Buddha's words of advice to Ānanda: *attādīpa viharatha* rendered as 'Abide with the self as a lamp', reminds us of *Maitrī Upaniṣad* VI, 30: '... who like a lamp dwells in the heart' (*dīpavat yath sthitāḥ hṛdī*). Coomaraswamy observes that to 'make a lamp of the spirit' is the same as to have the Buddha for one's light. He remarks: 'The spirit (atman) is precisely the light by which one sees, when all other lights have gone out' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV, 3, 6: 'gone out' as predicated of the 'fires', is *sāntāyam*, i.e. 'quenched'; it is also precisely when the 'Eye in the World' has gone out that the injunction *attādīra viharatha* applies): other lights are three, the fourth and best being the Buddha himself (*Sāmyutta Nikāya* I, 14), and so it is that World's End 'within you' is to be 'quenched' (samītāvi) in *Anguttara Nikāya* II, 49, and *Sāmyutta Nikāya* I, 62.³

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2. Rhys Davids and Steede: *op.cit.*, s.v.
It is curious that even the well known commentator Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on Udāna 67, identifies the Buddha with the self: Tathāgata ti attā.\(^1\) Buddhaghosa also understands the very same questions relating to the existence or non-existence of the Tathāgata, occurring in Dīgha Nikāya I, 27, as applying to the self or soul: Hoti Tathāgata ti ādiseu satto Tathāgato ti adhippeto,\(^2\) paraphrasing the word Tathāgata by satta, 'being', as if it were a question of the survival of any individual.

The Sāmyutta Nikāya contains two similes which illustrate the anattavāda of Buddhism most effectively:

1) Sāmyutta Nikāya III, 144: The Buddha is described as picking up a small pellet of cowdung in his hand, and saying: 'Even the acquiring of a selfhood (attabhāva) as small as this is not permanent, stable, having the qualities of steadfastness, abiding for ever.\(^3\) If the acquiring of a selfhood as small as this were permanent, stable, having the elements of steadfastness, and abiding forever, then the living of the holy life for the destruction of suffering, would not be set forth'.

2) Sāmyutta Nikāya I, 167-168: The Buddha says: 'Suppose a man in heart of heart-wood, searching for a heart-wood, taking a sharp axe should enter a forest. There he sees a mighty plantain trunk, straight, new-grown, and of towering height. He cuts it down at the root; he chops it off at the top. Having done so, he thoroughly peels off the skin. But he would not find there even the pith, not to speak of a heart-wood.\(^4\) Even so, a monk beholds no self or

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1. Paramatthadīpāni, 340.
3. nathī niśavo dhuvo sasse aviparināmadhammo sasse ati somam tatheva thasseati.
4. The plantain is really not a tree at all, but a very large plant, and thus it has no heart-wood.
anything belonging to the self in the sixfold group of contact'.

It has been pointed out that these analogies, especially that of the plantain tree, clearly illustrate that after stripping oneself of layer after layer of contingency, nothing of the individual is left which may be termed as 'essence' or 'self' - it is all empty, void, or non-self.

A further reference to the anatta doctrine of Buddhism occurs in Majjhima Nikaya I, 138, where the Buddha explains: 'Monks, when the self and that which pertains to the self, are really and truly not to be perceived, is not the view: 'This is the world, this is the self; after death I shall become eternal, permanent, stable, characterised by not developing further; I shall stand forever and forever' - a completely foolish doctrine?'

It is significant that the passage cited above has been interpreted by some scholars, not as a denial of the self, but as a reference to the possible existence of the self, a self which they believe the Buddha describes as incomprehensible.

1. *chaso phassaṭayatanesu nevattānam na attanīyam samanupassati.*
2. cf. Upadhyaya: *op. cit.*, pp.310-312. Grimm, however, observes that the 'essence of a thing is formed by that which may not be taken away from it without destroying it. In consequence of this, every reality has, of course, its own peculiar essence. So the plantain tree, though having no kernel, has, of course, an essence in the given sense. This essence consists in the phyllodium sheaths rolled one over the other. Now man is also a reality, therefore, an essence of man in the given sense must also exist. It is designed as the 'I' as the 'atta' or the 'self'. The question can therefore never be if there is such an 'I', such an 'atta' or 'self', but only wherein this 'I' or 'atta' or 'self' or human essence really consists. The Doctrine of the Buddha, p.139, note.
It is necessary, however, to distinguish between the self which the Buddha advises the thirty youths to go in search of, in *Mahāvagga* I, 14, and the self composed of the five *Khandhas* which is denied by him so frequently as *na me so attā*. That the Buddha would, on the one hand, deny the existence of a 'selfhood' as small as the size of a pellet of cowdung, and employ the use of similes such as the 'search for the heart of wood in a plantain trunk', and, on the other, advocate the search for the self, is highly unlikely. The middle path (*majjhima paṭipadā*) prescribed by him was not only one which avoided the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, but also one between the one-sided theories (*ekānta dīṭṭhi*) of eternalism and annihilation.

This is evident from *Samyutta Nikāya* III, 135, and II, 76,¹ where the Buddha declares: 'Everything is, is one extreme; nothing is, is the other extreme; not approaching either extreme, the Tathāgata teaches a middle way: conditioned by ignorance come the activities; conditioned by activities comes consciousness. This is the arising of the whole mass of suffering. By the utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance comes the cessation of activities. This is the ceasing of this entire mass of suffering'.

The denial of the two extreme views of eternalism and annihilation, is also evident in *Suttaṅgā* 858, which describes the man who has no sons, cattle, or fields (i.e. property): 'In him there is to be found neither self, nor no-self'.² The same text (787), referring to the man who has 'washed' away all views,³ says: 'There is neither self, nor

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¹ cf. *SN* II, 17; and IV, 400.
² *attā va pi nirattā va na tasmi naupalabbhati.*
³ *adhosi so dīṭṭhi-m-idh'eva sabbā ti.*
no-self', while verse 919, describing the man who is calm in his inner self, also declares: 'There is neither self, nor, no-self'.

However, the denial of the self should not be taken to mean the denial of the non-personal (i.e. completely devoid of 'I-ness') reality of Nibbāna, which, we have seen, lies within the individual himself. On the other hand, the use of the conventional expression attā, in Buddhism, should not be understood to indicate the ego-centric ātma of the Upaniṣads where the emancipated man declares: Brahmā'ham asmi or tat tvam asī. The total annihilation of the ego and the differentiating attributes of the individual such as 'I', and 'Mine', as preached by the Buddha, is clearly indicated in Dīgha Nikāya III, 273, where the question: 'Which one thing is to be eliminated?' is answered as follows: 'The conceit of 'I'; this is the one thing to be eliminated'. This 'I' is composed of the five khandhas identified with the 'world', the 'All', and is the very same self denied by the Buddha in the formula: 'This I am not; this is not mine; this is not myself'.

The use of the word attā both in the empirical and metaphysical sense, and the frequent occurrence of the terms Dhamma and Nibbāna as synonyms of Brahman, clearly indicate that the Buddha did not hesitate to adopt current modes of expression. The following explanation is given by the Buddha in Dīgha Nikāya I, 202: 'These are merely popular expressions (loka-saṃaññā), popular interpretations (loka-niruttiiyo), popular

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1. attam nirattam na hi tassa attthi.
2. n’attthi attā, kuto nirattam vā.
3. katamo eko dhammo pahātabba?
4. asmī mano,ayam eko dhammo pahātabbo.
definitions (loka-vohāra), popular concepts (loka-paññattiyo), which
the Tathāgata makes use of without being misled’. 1 In Samyutta Nikāya
I, 14-15, the Buddha refers to the Arahant who, having destroyed the
āsavas, and carrying his last body (antimadehadhari), says: 'I say;
this is mine', knowing and making use of the popular expressions in the
world. 2

It must be borne in mind, as Keith has pointed out, that the term
Nibbāṇa, representing the summum bonum of Buddhism, was, in all likelihood,
taken over from existing speculation. Not only does it occur frequently
in the philosophic sections of the Mahābhārata, which, though late in
their present form, represent earlier doctrine, but even the Jains are
found to describe Nirvāṇa as the safe, happy quiet place which the great
Tīrthakaras reach, putting an end to the stream of existence. Keith
adds: 'Associations strictly speaking not characteristic of Buddhism
might easily cluster around such a term, and we have in fact proof of
this in the term Nirvāṇa, an element free from determinations (anupādāti
or anupādhisesa nibbāna-dhātu). Such terminology may be traced back to
the distinction between Brahman and the absolute without determinations
(upādhi), through which the absolute appears as the universe ...'. 3

It is significant that even the simile applied frequently in Buddhist
literature, to the passing away of the emancipated man, also finds mention
in certain Upaniṣads. Suttanīpaṭa 1074 tells us: 'As the flame blown by
the force of the wind goes out, and can be named no more, even so the sage
liberated from 'name-and-form' (i.e. individuality), goes out and can be
named no more'. 4 According to Majjhima Nikāya I, 487, the flame ceases

1. yāhi Tathāgato vohārati aparāamaśānti.
2. loke samāñkaṃ kusalo viditvā vohāramattena so vohareyyati.
4. ... evam muni nāmakāya vimutto atthaṃ pāśī na upeti saṁkham.
to appear when the fuel is consumed. Similarly, when the different
constituents of the Buddha disappear, the fuel of the Tathāgata's fire
is consumed. But the Tathāgata, being liberated from the constituents
of name-and-form, is, as we have seen, 'deep, immeasurable and difficult
to fathom like the ocean'. The comparison according to Keith is indeed
significant 'for there is no doubt that the Indian idea of the
extinction of the fire was not that which occurs to us of utter annihila-
tion, but rather that the flame returns to the primitive, pure
invisible state of fire in which it existed prior to its manifestation
in the form of visible fire'. Keith concludes that the Svetāsvatara
Upaniṣad (I, 13), which contains a comparison between the supreme self
and a fire, the fuel of which has been consumed, shows 'emphatically
that the extinction of the fuel has nothing to do with the destruction
of the fire, though it ceases to be visible, and the Maitreya Upaniṣad
(which is older than the Maitri Upaniṣad), a text of the Yoga philosophy
with which Buddhism has much in common, applies the simile to the action
of the thinking principle: 'As fire for want of fuel comes to rest in
its own place of birth, so, through the cessation of its motions, the
thinking principle comes to rest in its own birth place'.

We have seen that, throughout the Buddhist literature, the character-
istic quality of anatta is applied scrupulously to all the five khandhas,
including the khandha of viññāna or consciousness. It is significant

becomes extinct in its own source, just so, thought becomes extinct in
its own source' (vrittiksayac cittam svayonāv upasāmyate). Keith's
view that 'the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad can be reasonably regarded as
evidence for the period of the coming into existence of the canon' is
quite acceptable, as the probable date of the Upaniṣad is c.350 BC.
Gonda: 'The concept of a personal God in Ancient Indian Religious
Thought', Selected Studies, IV, p.8.
2. cf. SN III, 66-68.
that a description of the term Nibbāna occurs in Dīgha Nikāya I, 223, and Majjhima Nikāya I, 329, where it is spoken of as an infinite consciousness (vinñāṇam ... anantam). To the following question:

'Where do earth, water, fire, and, wind, Long and short, and, fine and coarse, Pure and impure, no footing find? Where is it that both name-and-form, Cease to be, leaving no residue?'

the answer given is:

'It is consciousness (vinñāṇa) which is signless (anidassanam), endless (anantam) and luminous on all sides (sabbatopabham), There it is that earth, water, fire and wind. Long and short, and, fine and coarse, Pure and impure, no footing find. There it is that both name-and-form Cease to be, leaving no residue, (asesam uparujjhati) On account of the cessation of consciousness (vinñāṇa) All this ceases to be'.

In discussing the significance of this passage Upadhyaya remarks:

'Obviously the word vinñāṇa of the first line and the last lines is not used in the same sense, since the first vinñāṇa spoken of as 'signless, endless and radiant on all sides' is said to be a state where the second vinñāṇa ceases to be. There can be hardly any doubt that the second vinñāṇa refers to the fifth constituent of our personality, for elsewhere also in unmistakable terms all the five constituents are said to cease in
the state of Nibbāna. But the difficulty remains about the first viññāna which is equated with Nibbāna.\footnote{MN I, 487-488; SN III, 107-108; 111-112; 118-119; 122-124.}

The apparent contradiction between the first and last lines of the passage cited above, was noticed by Buddhaghosa who identified the former viññāna with Nibbāna,\footnote{Op. cit., p. 353.} and the latter with one of the five khandhas constituting the individual.\footnote{SumaitgaZavilasini II, 393; tatha vinicabban'ti viññānāna, nibbānassā tam nāmam. cf. Papāñcasiddani II, 413.}

It must be remembered, however, that not only is there a great difference between the older and more recent Buddhist interpretations of the word viññāna, but there is a varying use of the term in the canon itself.\footnote{Visuddhimagga XXII, 88: tatha viññānāna ti carimaka viññānāna pi abhisankhārā viññānāna ti. cf. Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.}

In what may be a very old sutta, Samyutta Nikāya II, 96, viññāna occurs as a synonym of citta and mano,\footnote{yā ca kho etam navaati cittaṁ iti pā mano iti pī viññānaṁ iti pī. cf. AN I, 170: itthānāni te mano iti pi te cittaṁ. cf. SN I, 122; III, 124.} and is contrasted with kāya used in the sense of 'body'. This simple uneclesiastical, unscholastic, popular meaning of viññāna is met with in other suttas.\footnote{SN I, 122; III, 124.}

It is this citta or viññāna which is represented in several texts, as surviving after a man's death. In Samyutta Nikāya II, 95, the Buddha declares: 'Monks, just as a monkey, faring through the forest catches hold of a bough, and letting it go, seizes another, even so, that which we call thought, mind, consciousness, arises as one thing, ceases as another, by night and by day'.\footnote{... yad idam navaati cittaṁ iti pā mano iti pī viññānaṁ iti pī; tam rattiyā ca divasassa ca ahkhā eva uppaññati ankhā nirajjhati.} Again, in Samyutta Nikāya V, 369-70, the Buddha says to the Śākyan Mahānāma: 'He whose mind has for a long time been practised in faith, in virtue, in learning, in giving up, and...'}
in insight - though this material form of his, of the four elements compounded, from parents sprung, of a nature to be worn away, pounded away, broken and scattered ... yet his mind if long practised in faith, virtue, learning, giving up, and in insight, his mind soars aloft, his mind wins the summit. ¹ The reference in Samyutta Nikāya I, 122, and III, 124 to the evil Mara seeking in vain for the consciousness of Godhika and Vakkhali² respectively, clearly indicates that it was consciousness that provided the conditions for 'becoming', or being reinstated in another birth.³

According to Samyutta Nikāya II, 65-67, and, III, 53-54, it is lust for the five khandhas which creates a 'support' or basis (patīṭhā) for consciousness. ‘The supportless consciousness has no growth; it generates no action, and is freed.⁴ By freedom it is steady; by its steadiness it is happy; owing to happiness it is not troubled. Being untroubled it is 'utterly cool' and knows: 'Rebirth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, done whatever there was to be done, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter'.

We have already referred to the simile of the fire being extinguished when the fuel is consumed. It is the supportless vinīṇāṇa of the arahant then, which, like the fire when put out, passes into a state of signlessness,⁵ and becomes incomprehensible, that is used as a synonym

¹. Yaśas khaśasa cittaṁ digharattam saśāparībhāvitam ālā-suta-saśa-parībhaavitam; tām āddhagami hoti visesagami.
². maro pāpind vinīṇaṁ ... samanvesati.
³. cf. SN II, 6; 8; 12, where nāmarūpa is conditioned by vinīṇāṇa.
⁴. tad apatiṭṭhān vinīṇāṇam avirūṭhāṁ anabhiseankhāraṇa vimsitam.
⁵. cf. DN I, 223: anidassanam.
of Nibbāna. It is a state beyond the meditative state, known as 'the sphere of infinite consciousness' (vinnānaññāyaññatā) and cannot be equated even with the state called 'the sphere of neither consciousness nor non-consciousness' (nevasaṅñāsaṅñāyaññatā). It is this vinnāna which is described in Udāna 80 as the 'sphere of neither coming, nor going, neither rising, nor falling ... is indeed supportless, and the end of suffering', and as 'endless, signless, and luminous on all sides', in Dīgha Nikāya I, 223.

It has been pointed out that not only does the description of this vinnāna (identified with Nibbāna) as supportless, endless, and luminous on all sides, closely resemble the definition of the atman given in a number of early Upanisadic passages, but even the doctrine of consciousness surviving after the death of the individual and acting as a transmigrant, is almost certainly pre-Buddhistic, as it is already anticipated in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. According to IV, 4, 2, at the moment of death one 'becomes consciousness' (vijñāna bhavati); when this person (i.e. consciousness) is born and obtains a body, he becomes connected with evil. When he departs, at death, he leaves all evil behind'.

We have already referred to the Buddha making use of popular expressions when preaching his doctrine. The very same terms used to describe the Self (= Brahman) in the Upaniṣads are also employed by the Buddhists while defining Nibbāna. According to the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, the Self is unborn, constant (IV, 4, 20), imperishable (III, 8, 8),

1. MN I, 352; 399; 436; II, 13.
2. MN I, 399; II, 13.
3. cf. AN I, 10, where the Buddha declares: 'This mind, monks, is luminous (pabhassāram idam cittaṃ), but is defiled by impurities that come from without'.
5. IV, 3, 8: sa vā ayaṁ puruṣo (vijñāṇaṁayaḥ) jāyamāṇaṁ, sarīram ..., maṁjāmaṁ pāram maṁ viṁstati.
incomprehensible (IV, 4, 22), immortal (III, 7, 22), luminous (II, 5, 12), undying and undecaying (IV, 4, 25). The unknown nature of Brahman, the ātman is also most emphatically declared in this Upaniṣad where Yājñavalkya speculates: 'He, the ātman, is not so, not so' (neti, neti).1 Likewise, Nibbāna, though defined as a positive reality to be attained and realized in this life, is described as an 'entity' hitherto unattained and unrealized by the individual: 'Whatever is seen, heard, reflected, known, attained, searched for, and contemplated upon by the mind - that is not mine, that I am not, that is not myself', says the Buddha in Majjhima Nikāya I, 136. Again in Sānnyutta Nikāya II, 29, he advises his disciples to strive 'for the attainment of what is not attained, for the knowledge of what is not known, and, the realization of what is not realized'.

The essential difference, however, between the Self (= Brahman) of the Upaniṣads, and the Ultimate Reality of Buddhism, may be recognised from a comparison between the following passages: 'Verily, this whole world is Brahman, from which he comes forth, without which he will be dissolved ... containing all odours, containing all tastes, encompassing the whole world ...'3 that art thou'.

'Monks, material shape is not yours ... feeling is not yours ... perception is not yours ... consciousness is not yours ... impulses and emotions are not yours ... What is not yours, put it away; putting it away, will be for a long time, your welfare and happiness ... this is the dhamma well taught by me.'

1. BAU IV, 2, 4; IV, 4, 22; IV, 5, 15; III, 9, 26.
2. cf. AN IV, 385.
3. CU III, 14, 1-2.
4. CU VI, 12, 3.
5. MN I, 141.
Objects are impermanent, and what is impermanent, that is suffering ... sounds are impermanent and what is impermanent that is suffering ... scents are impermanent ... mind-states are impermanent ...

What is suffering, that is void of the Self; what is void of the Self, that is not mind, that I am not, that is not myself ... The World is void of the Self, and what pertains to the self ...

From the passages cited above, it is clear that, while in the Upanisads, the World containing all desires, all tastes, all odours, is the Self, and that that Self is the individual, the 'Self' in Buddhism is what the World is not. Liberated from the World, that is, corporeal reality, everything that is cognizable, the emancipated monk is 'deep, immeasurable, and unfathomable as the ocean'.

The dialogue between the Buddha and Poṭṭhapāda, occurring in Dīgha Nikāya I, 178-199, clearly shows that while the Buddha did not deny the existence of the self, he also rejected the various concepts of the self put forward by Poṭṭhapāda, as they did not harmonize with his own view of the self. After having learnt from the Buddha about the highest state of conscious meditation (sāmpajāna saññāpatti), Poṭṭhapāda enquires whether this consciousness is identical with the self of man, or whether consciousness is one thing, and the self another. Thereupon, the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda what his definition of the self is, and the latter puts forward various concepts - the corporeal self (ōḷārikaṭṭaṁ attānaṁ) composed of the four elements; the mental self (manomayo attā) with senses complete; and the formless conscious self (uṇūpi attā saññānayo). As none of these

1. AN IV, 6.
2. SN IV, 54.
3. SN IV, 377; MN I, 488.
4. DN I, 185.
5. DN I, 186-187.
concepts of the self agrees with the description of the highest meditative consciousness given by the Buddha, he finally declares: 'Difficult it is for you indeed, Poṭṭhapaḍā, holding, as you do, a different view, having a different attitude, a different inclination, striving after a different perfection, trained in a different system of doctrine, to comprehend whether consciousness is the self of man, or consciousness one thing, and the self another'.

In Majjhima Nikāya III, 64, the Buddha says: 'It is impossible and cannot be that a man with right views (ditṭhi sampanno puggalo) should regard anything as the self ... such a thing cannot happen. But it is certainly possible that a 'common' (i.e. ignorant: puthujjano) man should regard something as the self'.

The significance of the passages cited above is that the highest state of meditative consciousness cannot be identified with any known concept of the self, and that it denotes a 'state' outside the range of ordinary mental comprehension. In his attempt to make a complete end of suffering, the Buddha rejected all contemporary philosophies and asceticisms because he regarded them as 'idola mentis interposing a sort of screen between man and the absolute reality', the one true Unconditioned; and laid particular emphasis on the concept of anatta, which as we have seen is not the doctrine of no-self, but the exposition of what the self is not. However, in spite of his avoiding metaphysical speculations, and mystical descriptions of the truly ineffable Reality, his frequent reference to the self, and the use of the word attā, which, we have seen, was adopted in

order to conform to tradition, has led a number of scholars to believe that the Buddha's conceptions of the self were 'connected with views with which we are already familiar from the philosophy of the Upaniṣads'.

CHAPTER V

Part I

The Cosmic Tree in Vedic Literature

Part II

The Bodhi Tree in Buddhist Art and Literature
It is well known that the aśvattha (Ficus religiosa, pippala) in Buddhist art primarily symbolises the attainment of Buddhahood by Gotama at Bodhgaya. That the ancient symbol of the tree (vrkṣa, Pāli rukkha), however, should have been chosen by the Buddhists to represent the Buddha is highly significant. Certainly of all the primitive customs and beliefs, the worship of the tree has had 'the widest distribution throughout the world and has left the deepest impress upon the traditions and observances of mankind'.

But it is the aśvattha, the religious significance of which may be traced to the protohistoric period of Indian civilization, that is revered in India as the tree par excellence, even in the present day. The fundamental implications of the symbol of the tree in general and the aśvattha in particular, in the pre-Buddhistic period, however, have to be taken into account, in order to appreciate the full content of Buddhist symbolism.

Both at Mohenjodaro and Harappa two forms of tree worship are represented on the seals: one in which the tree is in its natural form within an enclosed wall or railing (similar to those which commonly encircle the roots of sacred trees in the later reliefs of the historic period); and the other in which the tree spirit is personified and endowed with human shape and human attributes. On some interesting seals from Mohenjodaro, the tree appears conventionalised into the form of an arch surrounded by leaves in which the deity is framed as if

standing in a shrine. On another seal from Harappa, the manifestation of the deity in the tree is portrayed in a half-realistic, half-conventionalized way; here, the tree is represented by two branches only, springing from a circular seed or vessel on the ground. Between the branches is the deity, while in front of the tree is the half-kneeling figure of a supplicant. From its leaves the tree appears to be the aśvattha, identified as the Tree of Awakening by later day Buddhists. Whether it had any metaphysical significance at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, we have no means of knowing; but the conception of a 'Tree of Knowledge', and a 'Tree of Life' is traceable to a very early age in Mesopotamia, and may well have been equally ancient in India. It is significant that the aśvattha which is identified as the 'Tree of Brahman' (brahma-ṛṣeṣṭha) in Indian literature, is conventionalized at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, in a manner which is reminiscent of the schematized 'Tree of Life' in Babylonia.

Whatever the symbolism of the aśvattha may have been during the proto-historic period of Indian civilization, there is no doubt that as

1. J. Marshall: op.cit., Pl.XII, figs. 13;14;19. An almost identical motif is noticed on a Babylonian seal representing a goddess beneath a tree that has its boughs bent over to form a canopy. H.Ward: Seal Cylinders of West Asia, pp.149-50. The motif of the tree within a railing which occurs on so many seals from Mohenjodaro and Harappa, is represented on several Chaldean and proto-Elamite cylinder seals, as well as on rings and seals from ancient Crete and Mycenae, indicating the importance of tree worship in the religious beliefs and practices of the ancient world. C.L.Fabri: 'Mesopotamian and early Indian art: comparisons', Memoire de Raymonde Linossier, pp.214-17. Marshall: op.cit., I, p.64.
3. M.P.Nillson: The Minoan-Mycenean Religion, p.548. cf. also G. Widengren: The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion, IV, pp.5-67; Langdon: The Mythology of all Races, pp.152; 179;184;226. The importance of the Tree of Life in Mesopotamian religion is indicated by an inscription stating that Warad Sin (19th Cent. BC) of Larsa dedicated the House of the Plant of Life to Nininsina. G.A. Barton: Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad, pp.320 ff. The sacred cedar of the Chaldeans was not only the Tree of Life, but also the revealer of oracles of heaven and earth. Marshall: op.cit., I, p.64.
the deity is invariably portrayed as enshrined in the boughs of the tree, the asvattha represented his abode. The two branches of the tree, each shown with leaves on one side only, indicates perhaps that the two branches represent two halves of the tree, with the deity dwelling in the tree itself. Another seal shows a conventionalized asvattha emerging out of the seed or vessel; coiled about its trunk are two unicorns. It has been pointed out that the combination of the asvattha and the unicorn unmistakably points to their being connected with the deity inhabiting the tree. This suggestion is confirmed by a terracotta sealing from early Harappa deposits, which shows two figures facing each other, and holding an asvattha-and-unicorn motif with one hand, while the other rests on the hip. This motif which is symbolic of the asvattha-god also appears as the headgear of a number of figures, presumably deities, indicating that he was the supreme deity of the Harappan culture, while the Tree was worshipped as a cult object both at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The numerous seals, sealings, and pottery discovered at various proto-historic sites in India, which depict the asvattha in some form or other, also indicate that the tree was regarded with considerable veneration.

Both Marshall and Mackay believe that the figure of the asvattha-deity is feminine; Marshall remarks: 'The nude deity being very small and roughly portrayed, and the absence of any evidence of male sex coupled with the fact that tree deities in India are usually female, point to its being a goddess rather than a god ...'. In Indian literature,

3. W. Norman Brown: (ed.) *Chanhu-daro Excavations*, Pl. LII, Fig. 36; cf. K.N. Sastri: *op. cit.*, I, Pl. II, Fig. 3.
however, it is not only female deities that are associated with trees, e.g. *apsarases* (nymphs), *vṛkṣakās* (dryads), and *yakṣīs* (supernatural beings), but also male semi-divine beings, e.g. *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, and *yakṣas*, who frequently appear in the role of tree spirits. It must be remembered that the characteristic features of chalcolithic culture which extended from the Mediterranean to the Ganga valley, are matriarchy and a cult which focused on the worship of the Mother Goddess. From the discovery of numerous nude female terracottas at various sites of the Harappa culture, as well as at Bhir, Sankissa, Pataliputra, Lauriya-Nandangarh, and Bhir mound at Taxila, belonging to the pre-Mauryan and early Mauryan periods, it is clear that the Mother Goddess was worshipped continuously in India for several centuries.

Already in the *Rg Veda*, Vanaspati (Lord of the Forest) occurs as an epithet of the Supreme Deity; I, 188, 10, and II, 3, 10, of that text clearly identify Vanaspati with the sacrificial post which, when consecrated, was regarded as one of the forms of Agni, i.e. Jātavedas, the knower of beings. Jātavedas manifest in the sacrificial fire on earth, on the altar, in the stone (*Rg Veda* I, 70, 4) and in the final analysis in the individual, is directly linked with Apān Napat (Child of the Waters), the invisible fire of creation in the waters beyond the cosmos. In his celestial form Jātavedas is Vaiśvānara (Beloved of men), the luminary who shines for, and illumines all mankind, i.e. the sun.

1. Agni is called Vanaspati in *Brhaddevatā* I, 14, 66; cf *RV* III, 4, 10; 8, 1; V, 5, 10; X, 110, 10; *TS* VI, 2, 8, 4. In the *Satapatha Brahmana*, however, the Lord of the Forest is clearly identified with Soma.
2. *SB* X, 6, 1, 11: sa eṣa agnir vaiśvānaro yat puruçeh.
3. The Waters are his transcendental mothers; cf. *RV* III, 9, 2; X, 91, 6; cf. also, the expression ṛtaṁya yona gārbe occurring in *RV* IV, 40, 5; I, 65, 4; and agnimānān prathamajā ṛtaṁya in *RV* X, 5, 7.
4. cf. *RV* VI, 9, 1 where Agni as Vaiśvānara overcomes with his light the primordial darkness; and VII, 5, 7 referring to Agni's birth in the highest heaven.
Jātavedas, the sacrificial fire here on earth, is therefore only an aspect of the light which is born in the highest heaven and in the primordial darkness (of the Cosmic Waters).

Rg Veda IX, 5, 10 describes Vanaspati as 'evergreen, golden-hued and refulgent, with a thousand boughs' (sahasra valgam haritam bhrajamanam hiranyayam). Again, I, 24, 8 of the same text refers to the pure-minded king Varuṇa lifting 'the summit of the Tree from the nether regions,¹ the roots of which are high above, its rays streaming downwards; deep may they sink within us ...'.²

The birthplace of Agni as Apām Napāt, rta sadana (region of rta, Cosmic Order and Truth), is called kṛṣṇa niyāna (the dark descent) in Rg Veda I, 164, 47, and paramesṭhi in Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa I, 5, 5, 1 (rteva paramesṭhi). According to Rg Veda X, 190, 1 in the beginning two principles rta and satya were created from the Primeval Heat; of these, satya is Svayambhū or the self-existent Father principle representing Agni,³ and rta is Paramesṭhi, the Universal Mother principle or Primeval Flood. These are the Universal Parents from whom were made manifest a second group of parents, Heaven and Earth (dyauḥ pitaḥ prthivi mātā).⁴ These two parents held together by the ordinances of Varuṇa, Lord of Rta,⁵ are the cosmic parents of Agni.⁶ On the third level of creation, the firewood sticks and stone are identified as the parents of Agni on earth.⁷ Agni, therefore, in whom is vested the triple

1. vanagordham etupam dadate pūtadakṣah.
2. nicinā sthur upari budhma eṣōm aume antar nihitāh ketavah svuh.
3. cf. RV III, 4, 2; III, 29, 11, where Agni is Tanūnapāt, son of himself.
4. AV II, 28, 4; III, 9, 1; RV VI, 51, 5.
5. RV VI, 70, 1: dyāvā-prthivi varuṇasya dharmayā viśkābhīte.
6. cf. RV I, 141, 4, which refers to Heaven and Earth joining together to expedite his (i.e. Agni’s) birth. cf. also III, 3, 11: 'Agni sprang into being, magnifying both his parents, Heaven and Earth ...'.
7. RV IV, 7, 9: 'When she, pregnant (the piece of wood) conceived thee ...'; the same stanza also refers to Agni lying dormant in the kindling wood.
structure of creation, retains his identity in the Vertical Axis as Apāṃ Napat, child of the Waters (and Tānunapāt, son of himself) at the threshold of creation. In his celestial aspect as Vaiśvānara he is king of all creation (Rg Veda I, 98, 1: bhuvanāmpabhiśāri), a hero of light (Rg Veda II, 2, 1: svarnara) instituting order in the terrestrial realm, dividing time in its cyclical sequence, and assuming alternately two forms of day and night. As Agni Jātavedas, he takes his seat as the sacrificial fire on the altar established at the 'head' of the world (Rg Veda X, 88, 5: bhuvanasya mūrdham atiṣṭho). It is here, at the bottom of terrestrial space (Rg Veda II, 2, 3: budime rajasaḥ), i.e. at the altar, that the gods appointed him Herald of heaven and earth (divaspratyayor aratim ny ērīre). Agni, the leader (II, 1, 2: praśāstrām), and Sovereign, Lord of men (II, 1, 1: nṛnām nṛpatē) goes to the flood (arṇa) of heaven ..., 'goes to the waters in the light space (rocana) beyond (parastāt) the sun' (Rg Veda III, 22, 3).

Vedic literature contains several references to supamā (the word pama which means 'wing' suggesting rhythmic motion). In Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VI, 7, 2, 6, the creator himself is named supamā (prajāpati vai suparno garutmān), and the dynamic movement inherent in the cosmos is attributed to the flapping of wings by the Time-Bird or Saṃvatsara, also described as Mahāsupamā. The same text (XII, 2, 3, 7) says: 'Indeed the year is a great eagle'.

A reference to both the tree and birds occurs in Rg Veda I, 164, 20: 'Two fair-winged birds in conjoint amity embrace (i.e. perch on) one and the same tree; one eats the tasty fig; the other eating not, 1

1. cf. RV I, 115, 5: 'Sūrya maintains his eternal power, at one time bright and at the other, dark'. cf. also III, 55, 15: '... one is manifest, the other hidden ...'.
2. esa mahāsupamā eva yat saṁvatsaraḥ.
3. sayujā sakāyā sakānāṃ vṛkṣom parīṣevajāte.
regardeth only'. According to Sāyaṇa, the two birds are the Vital Spirit (jīvātman) and the Supreme Spirit (paramātman) who are associated in bonds of eternal friendship. The tree is the Cosmos, or the Tree of Life, identified as the One Aśvattha (ekāśvattha) in later Indian literature.\(^1\) The Vital Spirit and the Supreme Spirit dwell in the human body,\(^2\) but while the former enjoys the fruits (rewards) of action, the latter is merely a passive spectator. In Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa III, 35, 2, the life-principle (prāṇa) is symbolised as a bird (pataṅga) which is the same as suparṇa. The two wings represent the principles of contraction and expansion which underlie all rhythmic motion, all life being governed by this duality.\(^3\) This duality is the basic idea of Prajāpati’s being described as suparṇa.\(^4\) Whether it is one bird, two, or three,\(^5\) the rhythm of the cosmos is based on the fluttering of the wings of the Great Bird manifested as Āditya, and Agni, as immortal and mortal, and as Paramātman and Jīvātman.\(^6\)

Of the two birds perched upon the same tree, Ṛg Veda I, 164, 21 says:

'There, where the birds ceaselessly hymn their portion of immortality,\(^7\) the mighty keeper of the universe (viśvasya bhuvanasya gopāḥ), the wise one (dhiraḥ) has entered (taken possession of) me - ignorant one' (pākam atrā viveśa). The juxtaposition of the words dhiraḥ and pākam in this verse shows that the divine is characterised by a quality opposite to 'ignorant', i.e. by higher, intuitive knowledge.\(^8\) V.S. Agrawala

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1. cf. Mu.U III, 1, 2; Śvet.U. IV, 7.
2. cf. RV I, 164, 30; 38 where the immortal and mortal are said to have a common womb (avartyo martyenā soyonth).
3. cf. SB VIII, 1, 4, 10: prāṇo vai somaścana prabāravam.
4. In the Purāṇas the concept of suparṇa is transferred to Garuḍa, the vahana of Viśnu.
5. cf. AV XVIII, 4, 4: trayaiḥ suparṇāḥ, symbolising three aspects of the same principle, Agni, Vāyu and Āditya.
7. amṛtasya bhāgam arthasam vidathā ... bhīsvartaṇi.
identifying viśvasya bhavanasya gopāḥ with the transcendent Brahman who enters as the 'principle of consciousness' observes that pākā refers to the mind (manas) choked with Matter, while dhīra indicates the mind saturated with vijñāna, or thoughts of the Supreme Spirit.¹

Another reference to the Cosmic Tree and the birds occurs in Rg Veda I, 164, 22: 'The tree whereon the fair-winged birds taste the sweetness (madhva), roost and procreate, upon its top, the fig is luscious; none gaineth it who knoweth not the Father'.² It is clear that the fig (pippala) on the top of the Tree (of Life = Cosmos), is the fruit of higher knowledge and immortality, and the Father is the creator who is the immortal source of the entire cosmos and creation.³ The top of the tree represents as we have seen earlier, the source of the cosmos and creation; and knowing the Father implies the psychic process of enlightenment, i.e. an ascent to the summit of the world-tree where the transcendent fruit is attained, i.e. the essence of undifferentiated nāma-rūpa.

In the Brāhmaṇas, madhu represents the great sweetness⁴ which is identified with the universal prāna: sarvam vā idam madhu yadiḥam kīna (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa III, 7, 1, 11; XIV, 1, 3, 13).⁵ According to

1. V. S. Agrawala: op. cit., p.78.
2. pippalom svādy ugra tana nāśad yasya piturōn na veda.
3. cf. RV X, 85, 3: 'Of whom brahmans truly know as Soma, none ever tastes'. Here the distinction between the actual soma and the 'theoretical' soma is analogous to that between the spoken words of the ritual and that which cannot be expressed in words; and also, the visible representation and the 'picture that is not in colours'. Lankāvatāra Śāstra II, 118.
5. cf. Manusmṛti XII, 123, where Agni, Indra, Prāna, and the eternal Brahman represent the eternal aspects of Manu-Prajāpati (etameke vadantyagnīṁ manu manye prajāpatiḥ ... brahma śāsvatāṁ).
Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa III, 8, 14, 2, madhu is the symbol of the One deity that is supreme over all. ¹

Yet another reference to the Tree occurs in Ṛg Veda X, 135, 1: 'The tree with beautiful foliage where Yama drinketh with the gods, and welcometh the ancients ...'. It is significant that although Yama was the ruler of the deceased (Pañcaśiṁśa Brāhmaṇa XI, 10, 21), in the earliest sources he is not called a god. In the Atharva Veda (VI, 118, 2) and the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (III, 9, 20, 1),² his 'place' bears the name Yamaloka. In Ṛg Veda X, 123, 6, however, it is called a seat (yoni); in X, 135, 7, an abode (sadana) also described as the house of the gods (devamāna). Of the three celestial worlds or heavens (dyauṣaṇa) mentioned in Ṛg Veda I, 35, 6, one is said to be yamaśya bhuṣana, the other two being Savitar's lap. Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā (12, 63) speaks of Yama as being in the highest heaven. From Ṛg Veda IX, 113, 7-9, it appears that Yama is king of that loka in heaven in the highest firmament (Ṛg Veda X, 14, 8: parame vyōman), where there is light eternal (jyotir ajasram), which is deathless (amṛtam) and undecaying (ākṣita).³

Although the asvattha is not mentioned in any of these verses, the tree is specifically described as the 'home of the gods in the third

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1. mahātāma vā etat devatāyaṁ rūpam yan madhup. The term madhup (honey) in the general sense of sweet draught was especially applied to the soma juice and considered to be of heavenly origin, the essence of all vegetable saps. It was believed to confer mental and physical power on those who drank it. Hence, it was mythologically called amṛta, the draught of immortality, indispensable for gods and men. cf. RV X, 123, 3, where the words madhup amṛtasya probably mean 'the immortal soma draught'. cf. A. Macdonell: The Vedic Mythology, pp.105; 108; J. Gonda: Change and Continuity in Indian Religion, p.47.
2. Also JB I, 167; PB IX, 8, 4.
3. Gonda: Loka, world and heaven in the Veda, p.65. cf. RV X, 123, 6, where the mythical bird suparnā (identified with Prajāpati) is described as yamaśya yonī.
heaven from here' in **Atharva Veda** XIX, 33, 6: *āśvattha devasadam as trīṭyasyām ito divi.* 'There the gods procured the kuṣṭha, the visible manifestation of amṛta, i.e. immortality (*amṛtasya caṅkyaṇam*). The **Taittirīya Samhitā** (VI, 1, 6, 1) however, says: 'In the third heaven from here, is the soma; fetch it, and by it, buy your release', i.e. release from death. In **Atharva Veda** VIII, 7, 20, the āśvattha, darbha, and soma, king of plants, 'immortal oblations'² are described as 'immortal sons of heaven' (*divaeputtrāv amartau*).

A further reference to the third heaven and its relation with the āśvattha occurs in **Chāndogya Upaniṣad** VIII, 5, 3: 'Verily, ara and nya are the two seas in the Brahma-world, in the third heaven from here. And there is the lake Airammadiya and the āśvattha tree showering soma; there is the city of Brahman, Aparājita, and the golden hall built by the Lord'. The same text (VII, 5, 4) continues: 'Only they who find the two seas ... through the discipline of the holy life (*brahma-cārīya-nu-vindanti*); only they possess the Brahma-world. They have freedom to move in all the worlds' (*sarveṣu lokeṣu kāma-cāro bhavanti*). In order to appreciate the significance of the mythical āśvattha which showers soma in the Brahma-world, it is necessary to identify the third heaven in the cosmological schema represented in the Vedas.

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1. *trīṭyasyām ito divi* here indicates the parallelism that the myth establishes between the kuṣṭha and soma. cf. **AV** VI, 95, 1; V, 4, 3; The Kuṣṭha (*costus speciosus* or arabicus) is not mentioned in the **RV** but in the **AV**, three hymns are devoted to accounts of its origin and its healing properties. It was used especially as a remedy for fever (*takman*) in all its forms. Monier-Williams: Sans. Eng. Dictionary, s.v.

2. cf. **RV** X, 186, 3 where the phrase *amṛtasya niḍhiḥ* i.e. 'treasure of immortality', meaning continuance of life, is used for the offered soma draught.
Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Viṣṇu-mythology in the Ṛg Veda, is the taking of the three strides in order to traverse the whole universe (trīṇī pada viroakrame). The majority of scholars believe that the three steps of Viṣṇu refer to the threefold division of the universe, i.e. earth, atmosphere, and heaven, and represent the diurnal course of the sun in his ascent from the horizon of the earth, through the atmosphere, to the zenith or solar paradise. However, while there is a tendency ever since the oldest Yajurveda texts, to connect the three steps of Viṣṇu with the threefold division of the cosmos, there can be no doubt that the cosmological speculations upon which the Vedic (and particularly Ṛg Vedic) mythology is mainly based, is that of a cosmic dichotomy, e.g. 'Twofold indeed, is the universe, there is no third' (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa III, 3, 2, 2).

According to the śruti-sūkta of the Ṛg Veda (X, 129), in the beginning heaven and earth, the two 'ancient born' (sanajā) of one nest (saniṣe), formed the Transcendental One (X, 129, 2: tad ekam). In the first stage of pre-creation there was neither existence nor non-existence.

1. RV I, 22, 18; VIII, 12, 27. cf. I, 154, 3: 'traversed with three steps (trībhīr it padēbhīḥ), the extended sphere' (sadhasatam); and I, 154, I: 'traversed the earthly region (pārthivāni ... rājāmnī) and fixed the upper sphere (uttaram sadhasatam) while stepping thrice'. cf. also VIII, 29, 7"... strode three (steps) where gods rejoice (yatārā devāsā madantī).

2. Kuiper observes that in the RV, Viṣṇu has no particular connection with the sun, and that the three strides are not associated with any natural phenomenon. It is possible that the sun, when in the zenith, was associated with Viṣṇu just as the rising sun was a manifestation of Mitra and the setting sun one of Varuna (AV XIII, 3, 13). It is only later, especially in the Yajurveda, e.g. VS II, 25; TS II, 4; 12, 3; TB III, 1, 2, 6, that the three steps are equated with prthivī, antarikṣa, and dyauḥ. Kuiper: 'The Three Steps of Viṣṇu', Indological Studies in honour of W. Norman Brown, p.141.


4. cf. SB XI, 1, 2, 7: 'A productive pair consists of two, and which is produced is the third'; cf. also III, 2, 1, 12; 7, 1, 20: 'The father and mother are two and that which is born is a third'.

5. RV X, 129, 1: nāsad āsein no sad āśit.
in the precosmic darkness,\textsuperscript{1} and the unfathomable Waters.\textsuperscript{2}

The primeval monad which is manifest in pairs of opposites\textsuperscript{3} has Father Heaven and Mother Earth,\textsuperscript{4} also described as twin brother and sister in \textit{Rg Veda} IX, 68, 3 (sākaṇa vrāhā),\textsuperscript{5} as the parents of gods and men.\textsuperscript{6} The creation of heaven and earth from the One is attributed to a god who propped them apart and filled the distance between them with space (antarikṣa)\textsuperscript{7}. These two universal Parents are described in I, 164, 33 as two inverted bowls uniting together to form a common womb,\textsuperscript{8} and an upper and lower realm in \textit{Rg Veda} I, 164, 17; 18. (avāk pareṇa para ena vareṇa). Of these halves parārdha and avarārdha, one is identified in \textit{Atharva Veda} X, 8, 13 with Viśva 'the All',\textsuperscript{9} while the other half is described as the Unknown in \textit{Rg Veda} I, 164, 17: katamaḥ ardhaḥ, kahovidardham.

The passages cited above show that the dual division of the cosmos is probably earlier than the tripartite one, and, that the mythical significance of the number three in Vedic thought in respect to Viṣṇu's

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{RV} IV, 50, 4: adhamat tamānai.
\item \textit{RV} X, 129, 1: āśid gahanam gabhīram. cf. X, 129, 3: tama āśīt tamād gūlaṇa ... sāttam sarvan a ṭadam.
\item e.g. \textit{RV} X, 5, 7: upābhaśca dhenuḥ. cf. \textit{RV} X, 90, 14: 'The head is the symbol of Heaven (sīṣṇu dyaus samavartata) and the feet that of Earth' (padbhyaṁ bhūṁiḥ).
\item \textit{RV} I, 164, 33: dyaus me pita... mātā prākṛiṣi.
\item cf. V, 47, 5: jāte yāmya sabandhū.
\item \textit{RV} VII, 53, 1-2: devaputre ... pārvaśe pitaṁ.
\item This act of violence, of 'forcefully wedging apart' and bringing about the triple world (tridhatu: \textit{RV} I, 34, 7; I, 154; 4) is the creative deed of a number of gods. e.g. Indra (\textit{RV} V, 31, 6; X, 113, 5); Varuṇa (VII, 86, 1); Agni (VI, 8, 3; X, 121, 5); Soma (IX, 101, 15); and Bṛhaspati (\textit{RV}, 50, 1). S. Kramrisch: 'The Triple Structure of Creation in the \textit{Rg Veda}', *History of Religions*, II, (1), 1962, p.141.
\item uttīnayos caṃvōr yonir antar āтра.
\item Also \textit{AV} XI, 4, 12: ardhaṁ viśvom bhuvanām jājāna.
third step is 'x' plus a Transcendental One, i.e. the dyad plus One representing the primordial Totality. ¹

In Rg Veda I, 164, 6, and Atharva Veda IX, 9, 7, the following question is asked: 'Who is the (mysterious) One (kim api svīd ekam) in the form of the Unborn (ajasya rūpe) who established these six regions?' (śaḍ rajāṃsi). The answer is provided by Atharva Veda VIII, 9, 16: 'The First-Born, comprised of six elements' (śaḍ jātā bhūtā prathamajā ṛtasya). These six elements are explained in the same text (VI, 47, 3; X, 7, 35) as śaḍ īnvīḥ, i.e. the six wide ones. ² It is probably the same six that are referred to as the six burdens (śaḍ bhāran) which the One carries without proceeding (eko acaran bibharti), in Rg Veda III, 56, 2. It is significant that Atharva Veda VIII, 9, 16, referring to dyāva-ṛṣṭhvī together as six, ³ compares them with the six regions of space, i.e. the six wide ones, referred to above. A similar relationship is also noticed in IV, 20, 2 of the same text: tisro Ḟavas tisraḥ ṛṣṭhvī. In Rg Veda VIII, 41, 9, mention is made of Varuṇa's rays which pervade not only the three earths (tisraḥ bhūmiḥ) but go beyond and

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¹. As observed by Held, 'the number of the whole is obtained by adding one to the whole already obtained'. The Mahābhārata, an Ethnological Study, p.123. cf. the sixteenth part (soḍaśin graha) which is added to a total of fifteen parts, not only exceeds but also encompasses the fifteen-partite totality. J.C. Heesterman: The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration, pp.13 ff. Prajāpati and the year (which represents totality) are often connected with the number seventeen; in Śk IV, 4, 1, 16, this is explained as being sixteen plus one, Prajāpati himself being the seventeenth. In the KB the thirteenth month is said to represent the whole year. Kuiper: op.cit., p.149.

². cf. RV II, 13, 10.

³. śaḍ āhur dyāvāpṛṣṭhvī.
fill the three upper realms of heaven (*triv uttarāmyi paprituḥ*). The six regions (*saḍ rajāmei*) are evidently the same as the worlds (*lokaḥ rajāmei*) mentioned in Yāska's *Nirukta* (IV, 19), and *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* VI,3,1,18 (*ucyante ime vai loka rajāmei*). The reference to these six regions as the six wide ones (*saḍ ūrviḥ*) in a number of passages,¹ may be connected with certain epithets of Viṣṇu in the Ṛg Veda, e.g. *urugāya* (I, 154, 3); *urukṣiti* (VII, 100, 4; IX, 84, 1); *vigāman* (I, 155, 4), etc. Even in *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* I, 2, 5, 1, Viṣṇu's character as a traverser of space is prominent.

As Heaven represents the Father principle and Earth the Mother principle, it is clear that the division of the cosmos into six regions is to be equated with the imagery of the three Fathers and three Mothers mentioned in Ṛg Veda I, 164, 10 (*tiero mātpīś triṃ pitṛṃ bibhrad*) supported by the One who, unwearying, stands erect (*eka ārdhvas taethau nemava glāpayanti*).

Mention has been made in an earlier chapter that the three worlds (*loka*) of earth, atmosphere and heaven came to be denoted by the three mystic syllables (*vyahṛti*) of the sacrifice, i.e. *bhūr, bhuvah*, and *svar*, and that later, a fourth *mahaḥ* identified with Brahma and the ātman, was added (*Taittiriya Upaniṣad* I, 5, 1). Three higher realms, *janaḥ*, *tapaḥ* and *satyam* were also imposed above these four, bringing the total number of worlds to seven (*Taittiriya Āranyaka* X, 27-28). This cosmological schema of the seven worlds is, as we have seen, already anticipated in the early Vedic concept of the One in the form of the Unborn who supports the

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¹. *RV* X, 14, 16; *AV* VI, 47, 3; *X*, 7, 35.
six burdens, identified with the three Fathers (heavens) and three Mothers (earths). It is the prefigurement of creation in the image of that One who is also the First-born comprising six elements or wide ones, which he exceeds as the seventh, that has its sequel in later Indian cosmology of the seven worlds. The seventh region representing the total constellation of the structure of creation is satya of later Indian cosmology; it is also, as we have seen earlier, Brahman the ātman, and the final goal in the psycho-cosmic process of Enlightenment.

Evidence seems to point to the identification of Aja, i.e. Aja Ekapād, translated variously as the One-footed Goat, and the Uncreate One-foot, with the sun. According to Rg Veda I,164,6, and Atharva Veda IX,9,7, it is the Unborn who established the six regions; Rg Veda I, 164, 14, however, describes all the worlds as being supported by the Solar Eye encompassed by rajas. The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (III, 1, 2, 8) represents Aja Ekapād as rising in the east. In Mahābhārata III, 3, 6; XIII, 149, 95, Aja is one of the names of the sun, and Ekapād occurs as one of the names of Viṣṇu who is himself identified with the sun. According to the commentator of the Nirukta (XII, 29) also, Aja Ekapād is a form of Agni or the sun. A further allusion to the sun as Ekapād occurs in Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā 23, 50: ekena aṅgena paryemi. The correlation of the sun as Aja Ekapād in the passages cited, and the description of the sun in Mahābhārata VIII, 69, 16 as having a thousand feet (sahasrapadām), i.e. an

1. cf. RV X, 66, 11; AV XIII, 1, 6; Nighaṇṭu V, 6.
3. suryasya cakṣu rajasau tyāṣṭraṁ.
4. cf. AV XIII, 1, 6-7: 'Rohita (the ruddy One, the sun) begot heaven and earth ... there Aja Ekapād fixed himself; by his strength he made firm heaven and earth; Rohita made firm heaven and earth ...'.
indefinite number of rays, may be understood if, from the standpoint of
the individual, every ray represented the 'one foot' of the sun.

Coomaraswamy draws our attention to the representations of the
'Mansions of the Sun' reproduced from ālpōna drawings in A.N. Tagore's
Bāṅglār Vṛata (Calcutta), Pl. 99, where the one foot of the Sun is
supported by a boat. This shows that the concept of the sun as Aja
Ekāpaḍā must have at one time been visually represented, as it has
survived in folk art of the present day.¹

According to Rg Veda I, 154, 1-6 Viṣṇu with his three strides
crosses and pervades the entire cosmos. The third step is the highest
and mortals can only see the two lower ones: dve id asya kramaye svādṛśo.²
None can reach (the location of) his third step, not even birds in their
flight.³ This highest step is also connected with the third and highest
place of Agni, mentioned in Rg Veda I, 72, 2-4: tīrto yad agne śaṅcadas
... agnim pade parame tāsthī vāṁgsva. While Rg Veda VI, 8, 2 speaks of
Agni's birth in the highest heaven (jāyāṁnāḥ parame vyoṁani), X, 45, 1-2
of the same text explicitly says that Agni's highest birth is called the
third, in the Primeval Flood.⁴ The highest place of Agni, corresponding
to the third step of Viṣṇu which is 'high in the light of heaven',⁵ is
also the source of honey described in Rg Veda I, 154, 5: viṣṇoḥ pade parame
maḍhwā utsaḥ. This step is also described as 'the most beloved resort of
Viṣṇu',⁶ and the place 'where gods rejoice'.

2. cf. RV VII, 99, 1: ubhee te vidma rajasi pṛthivyā viṣṇo deva tvam
paramasyaś vītes.
3. RV I, 155, 5: tṛīyam asyaṅ nakir ā dadhārṣati vayaś cana patayantaṅ
patatiṁnaḥ.
4. cf. RV V, 3, 3: (to Agni) padeḥ yad viṣṇor upamēśaś nādāṁyī tena pāśi
ghuḥyāṁ nāma govaṁ; cf. also AV XIII, 1, 11: 'Agni shines forth
with keen light in the third space ...'.
5. RV I, 155, 3: tṛīyam adhi rocana divaḥ.
6. RV I, 154, 5: tad asya pṛjpaḥ abhi pātho.
In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is possible to identify the third and highest step of Viṣṇu and the source of honey, with the 'third' heaven and the home of the gods where the aśvattha tree showers the soma, referred to in Atharva Veda XIX, 39, 6 and Chāndogya Upaniṣad VIII, 5, 3. This is confirmed by Satapatha Brāhmaṇa III, 6, 3, 19 where Viṣṇu is explicitly identified with the soma: 'Viṣṇu is no other than soma'. A similar identification also occurs in III, 2, 4, 12 of the same text (cf. Mahābhārata XIII, 149, 67 where Soma is one of the 1000 names of Viṣṇu). It is also evident that the third heaven, i.e. the third of the three Fathers, represents the birthplace of Agni, which is the primordial waters (ṛtasya yoni).

Regarding the relation between Agni and Soma, of special interest are the following passages; e.g. Rg Veda IX, 66, 19-21 where the two deities are expressly identified: agnir yṛṣṇaḥ pavanānāḥ. In Mahābhārata XII, 328, 52 ff., Soma is combined with Agni, but in I, 220, 29 of the same text, the two are again identified. In Rg Veda I, 164, 35, Soma is described as the 'seed of the vigorous steed', but in V, 17, 3 is identified as the seed of heaven (divo ... reṭaḥ). According to Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VII, 3, 1, 3, Soma is the life-sap and Agni the body. The two deities are also closely connected in the sacrificial ritual in the later Saṁhitās. Atharva Veda III, 13, 5 represents Agni and Soma as being borne by the waters; in Mahābhārata III, 29, 1, however, they are born from the same womb. The same text (VIII, 34, 49) also says

2. Also AV IX, 10, 14; VS 23, 62: ayaṁ soma vṛṣṇa aśvasya reṭaḥ.
3. cf. also SB III, 3, 2, 1 where Soma is identified with reṭaḥ.
4. cf. also RV VII, 93, 6; VIII, 38, 4; 7-9. Macdonell: The Vedic Mythology, p.127.
5. agni-somaḥ kathāṁ pūrvam ekayoni pravartitaṁ.
that the whole world is represented by Agni and Soma.\textsuperscript{1} It is significant that this concept of the world comprising of Agni and Soma (agni-somaṇay mahaṅ jagat) and, consequently, of each individual living being as agni- somaṇa paśu, is already anticipated in Vedic literature.\textsuperscript{2} Agni is heat (ghraṇaśa) and Soma is cold (hima) and according to Atharva Veda XIII, 1, 46, they both represent two forms of Agni.

On the other hand, Soma’s identity with the waters is made quite clear in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa I, 7. 10: saumya hy āphaḥ; but according to Satapatha Brāhmaṇa IX, 5, 1, 7 'that same draught of immortality (amṛta) is soma' (tad yad amṛtam somaḥ sa). In Rg Veda I, 23, 19, it is the waters that contain amṛta: āpsu antar amṛtam;\textsuperscript{3} but again, VII, 4, 6 of the same text represents Agni as supplying an abundance of amṛta: ite hy aghir amṛtasya bhūrer ... ātoḥ. Similarly, in Atharva Veda XIII, 1, 7, it is said that the gods discovered amṛta through Rohita (the Ruddy One), i.e. the sun. This amṛta is not only the drink of the gods, evident from Rg Veda VI, 44, 16, which says: 'The amṛta dear to Indra has been drunk', but also their food (Chāndogya Upaniṣad III, 6-10).

To return to the tree, Rg Veda II, 39. 1, dedicated to the Asvins, says: 'Sing like two press-stones (grāvaneva) for this same purpose (arthaḥ); come like two greedy persons to the tree of treasure (grāhreva

\textsuperscript{1} agni-somaṇa jagat kṛteṇāṃ vaiṇavam oocyate jagat. cf. Mahābhārata XII, 288, 33: agni-somaṇo iḍam sarvam.
\textsuperscript{3} AB VIII, 20 also identifies amṛta with water: amṛtam vā etad asmiṇīl loke yad āphaḥ; cf. SB I, 9, 3, 7 where water means amṛta (amṛtam vā āphaḥ). cf. also IV, 4, 3, 15; XI, 5, 4, 5; XIII, 8, 1.9. See Gonda: Change and Continuity in Indian Religion, p.65.
1 Some light is thrown on the word nidhi in Taittiriya Aranyaka II, 3, 8: yat kusidam apratitam mayeha yena yamasya nidhinā oarāni, and Chandogya Upaniṣad VIII, 3, 2 where the Brahma world is compared to a hidden treasure. That the word nidhi denoted 'spiritual treasure' is evident from Buddhist passages such as Sutta 285 where the Buddha says: 'No herds had brahmins then, no gold or pelf; their wealth was lore and holy life' (brahmam nidhim aprālayi), and from Dhammapada 76 which compares a wise man to a revealer of hidden treasures.² That there existed an association between nidhi and deathlessness becomes clear from Taittiriya Aranyaka IV, 42, 2: yad ado vāta te gṛhe amṛtasya nidhir hitah, tato no dehi jivase tato no dhehi bhṛgajam, and from the following simile in Aṅguttara Nikāya V, 346: 'Just as a man searching for the entrance to a single hidden treasure (nidhi-mukhan),³ should at one and the same time come upon the entrance to eleven such treasures, even so I, in my search for a single door to the deathless (amrita-vāraḥ) ... should come to win eleven such doors whereby to enter'.

1. nidhi: a place for deposits or storing (Monier-Williams: Sans.-Eng. Dict., s.v.) denoted in later literature, the divine treasures belonging to Kubera, the lord of wealth and treasures, one of whose epithets was nidhipati (cf. dhanapati). Although the Vedic literature abounds with references to nidhi used in the sense of material wealth, and also in connection with rites such as agniparicarya (PGS II, 4, 2), pindapitryajña (cf. Kauṭītaki Sūtra 87, 22; AV XII, 2, 34; III, 47 and 48), and aivamedha (TB II, 8, 1, 3), the expression amṛtasya nidhiḥ 'treasure of immortality' occurring in RV X, 186, 3 implies non-material treasures, such as the 'continuance of life'. In RV I, 183, 4; VII, 67, 7; 69, 3, the word nidhi is used for the offered soma draught. See J. Gonda: The Savayajñas, pp. 186-192.

2. Khuddaka-pāṭha VIII, 9 referring to acorāhano nidhi may be compared to Matthew VI, 20, which speaks of 'treasures in heaven which thieves do not steal'. Rhys Davids and Stede: Pali.-Eng. Dictionary, s.v.

3. Translated as 'excellent treasure' by Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.
Rg Veda V, 54, 12 says: 'Maruts, shake the brilliant (ruqat) pipal (fruit) from the vault of heaven (nakam) splendid beyond conception' (agṛbhīta śoḍiṣam), while in III, 45, 4 of the same text, Indra is invoked: 'Shake, O Indra, the tree of ripened fruit (vrkṣam pakam phalam) to fulfil our desire for wealth' (samprāṇam vasu).

In the Atharva Veda (III, 6, 6), the asvattha is described as 'ascending the forest trees and overpowering them', and as 'that which rends or tears apart' (antarāmaḥatyaṁyarve: III, 6, 2-3), no doubt referring to the nature of the tree whose seeds germinate in the hollows of other trees and to the new growth which eventually destroys its foster parent.² The asvattha generally grows on the samī (Prosopis spicigera).³ The Ṣatapatha Brāhmaṇa (III, 4, 1, 22)⁴ deals with the production of fire by means of a fire drill, the upper part of which is made of asvattha (masculine) and the lower part or receptacle of the samī (feminine), representing the union of man and woman.⁵ The lower piece of wood is identified with Urvasī the mother, and the upper with Purūravas the father,⁶ their son Āyu, meaning 'living being' 'life or

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1. nakā which at first meant 'firmament' or 'visible sky', came more generally to denote the heavens. cf. RV I, 164, 50; AV III, 29, 3; VI, 123, 5; VII, 80, 4. In KB XX, 1, nakam is represented as the 'most real' (sattamam) of all the lokas. Gonda: op. cit., p.220.
2. The asvattha tree is endowed with magical powers somewhat similar to those ascribed to the mistletoe in Europe, especially when it grows on other trees, e.g. oak and hazel which usually do not bear it. R. Griffith: The Hymns of the Rg Veda I, p.88, note. cf. the whole of AV III, 6, which is addressed to the asvattha, invoking the tree to assist in overpowering enemies.
3. AV III, 6, 1, however, says 'masculine springs from masculine, asvattha grows from khadira' (Acacia catechu), the names of both belonging to the masculine gender.
4. Also VS V, 2; TS I, 3, 7, 1: VI, 123, 5; Kauśītakī sūtra 26, 7; 131, 3 ff; Ṛg. Śatī VII, 12, 10 ff.
5. cf. AV VI, 11, 103 which is a charm to ensure the birth of a male child: 'Asvattha upon sāni (samīnasvattha); there is made the generation of a male child; there is the finding of a son'.
6. SB III, 4, 1, 22; the myth of Purūravas and Urvasī is given at length in RV X, 95, and SB XI, 5, 1, 1-17.
genius of vital force' is the embryo, the sacrificial fire which is produced. In the Anuśāsana parvan of the Mahābhārata, Agni is described as emerging from the aśvatth and entering the womb of the sami.

In the Bhīma parva, the aśvatth (identified with the Supreme God Viṣṇu and worshipped as one of his multifarious forms) is described as the chief of trees and typifies the tree of life which is rooted above. To revere this tree is to worship God. The following description of the tree occurs in Bhagavad Gītā XV, 1: 'With roots above and boughs below (udrhva mūlam adhāḥ sākham), the aśvatth, they say, is undying (avyayam); its leaves are the Vedic hymns, and who knows it, knows the Veda'. The first line of this passage which is classified as a later interpolation by the editors of the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata, appears to have been borrowed directly from Kaṭha Upaniṣad II, 3, 1. The Taittiriya Āraṇyaka (I, 11, 5), however, also describes an unidentified 'upside down' tree with the same phraseology: 'He who knows the tree with roots above and branches below (udrhvamālam avāk sākham vṛkṣam), that person will not believe that death will kill him'.

1. cf. SB XI, 1, 2, 2: '... the fire is the womb of the sacrifice. The two pieces of wood occur in the version of the story in SB XI, 5, 1, 5.
2. 84, 39: aśvatthāṁ hi sṛtasāṅgīṁ saṁīgarbhagatas tadā.
3. cf. 32, 21, where Krṣṇa says he is adityah nāmaḥ vieṇu ..., and 32, 26, where he declares he is aśvatthāṁ sarva vṛkṣaṁ ..., cf. also BG X, 26, and Mbh XIII, 26, 46: 'That man who adores every day the aśvattha (aśvattham pujyayedyo narah sadā) ... I accept in that form the adoration that is offered' (tena mūpena teṣāṁ ca pujāṁ gṛihāṁ tatvataḥ).
In all probability this text is older than the *Katha Upaniṣad*, though perhaps not much older. Emeneau observes that direct borrowing by the *Upaniṣad* from the Āranyaka can neither be proved nor disproved, but some connection is obvious. Since the Āranyaka text is probably older, it is possible that the author of *Katha Upaniṣad* II, 3, 1, borrowed the first two words from an older tradition and adapted this tradition for the first time to the āśvattha. The adaptation of the cliché about a tree that was reversed in position, to the āśvattha in particular, in the *Katha Upaniṣad* and Bhagavad Gītā, is, according to Emeneau, a re-using of 'hoary, striking language' best adapted to the banyan, but here attached to a tree that had even greater sanctity.

We have already referred to Varuṇa lifting the summit of the Tree from the nether regions, its roots which are high above, its rays streaming downwards ... (*Ṛg Veda* I, 24, 7). It is obvious that the phraseology 'high above' and 'streaming downwards', does not refer to any botanical specimen but to the Sun. The metaphorical application of *nicināsthur upari budhna* is to rays (*ketavaḥ*) descending from the sun and sinking deep within us. The following verse referring to Varuṇa's making a 'pathway for the Sun wherein to travel' (*sūryāya panthām anvetava*) also clearly indicates that the Cosmic Tree is no other than the Sun.

3. Sāyaṇa understands that the Tree is a 'Burning Bush': the *ketavaḥ* are 'rays' (*raśmyaḥ*) and 'breaths of life' (*prānāḥ*), while the *stupa* is an 'aggregate of fiery energy' (*tejasas saṁgham*), a description which corresponds to Agni as Vanaspati. *cf. Mai U VII*, 11. *cf. also* the epithets *hiravya-stupa* and *arusa-stupa* applied to Agni in *RV* X, 149, 5, and *III*, 29, 3.
Another reference to the root described as 'thousand-jointed' (sahasrakānta) and 'stretching down from the sky, and stretching upwards from the earth' occurs in Atharva Veda II, 7, 3. In XIX, 32, 3, 7 of the same text, it is the darbha (associated with immortality and referred to above) which has the sky as its tuft and established on earth, that is described as having a thousand joints and supporting the sky (divi-sthambhena).

The universal diffusion of the Tree, its omnipresence in the phenomenal forms of the universe, is already anticipated in the Puruṣasukta of the Rg Veda, and in IV, 40, 5 of the same text which says: 'In the ether he is hamsa, in the air vāsu; the priest at the altar, the guest in the house; he dwells in man, in the cosmic order and truth (nrisad varasad rtasad); he springs from the waters, cattle, the cosmic order and truth, the mountain; he is cosmic order and truth'.

In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad (II, 3, 1) the asvattha as the World Tree with its roots above and branches below, is identified with Brahman: 'That indeed is the pure (tad eva śukram), that is Brahman (tad brahma); that (indeed) is called immortal (tad evāṃṛtam ucyate). In it all the worlds rest and no one ever goes beyond it'. The Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad (III, 8-9), describes the Supreme Person as of 'sunlike colour', i.e. lustre (ādityavāram) beyond the darkness (tamasah parastāt); than whom there is naught else higher, naught smaller, naught greater, who stands like a tree established in heaven (vrkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhati), and by whom the whole universe is filled'.

1. diva mālam avatataṁ prthivyaḥ adhyut tatam.
2. divi te tulum oṣadhe prthivyām asi niṣṭhitāḥ.
3. hamsasah śwacca gvacca vāsu antarikṣasad.
4. vyomasad abja gojā rtajā adrija rtam.
The Maitri Upanisad (VI, 4) describes the three-footed Brahman who has his roots above (tripād brahma dākhā ākāśa); its branches are space, wind, fire, water, earth, etc. This Brahman has the name of the 'lone fig tree' (eko'śvattha rūmaitad) and its radiance is called the sun (tejo yad aśā ādityāḥ).

In the Anugītā (Mahābhārata XIV, 47, 12-13), the tree of Brahman (brahma vrkṣa) is described as 'having its origin in the seed of the unmanifest (avyakta-bīja-prabhavo), understanding for its trunk (buddhi-skandha-mayaḥ), its innermost recesses the senses (indriyāntara-koṭarāḥ), its boughs the gross elements (mahābhūta-visākhā), ... always in leaf (sadaṁparṇaḥ), always in flower (sadaṁpuṣpaḥ), producing fair fruits and foul (subhāśubha phalo dayaḥ); the support of all creatures, the (Primordial) tree of Brahman stands'.

It was recognised long ago that the Anugītā is considerably later than the Bhagavad Gītā. The expression brahmavṛkṣa and the identification of Brahman with a forest (vana), however, points far backward as we have seen, to the Katha and Maitri Upanisads where the One Aśvattha is identified with Brahman, and finally to the question asked in Rg Veda X, 81, 4: 'what was the wood, and what was the tree (kīṁ svād vanam ka u sa vrksa) from which they fashioned Heaven and Earth (dyāvā prthivī niṣṭataksuḥ)?' and its answer in Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II, 8, 9, 6: 'The wood was Brahman; the tree was Brahman (brahma-vanam brahma sa vrksa āsīt) from which they fashioned Heaven and Earth; I declare to you

1. cf. BAU III, 9, 28: 'As is a tree, just so is Vanaspati; so indeed is man ...'.
2. The same question is also asked in TB II, 8, 9, 6; VS 17, 20; TS IV, 6, 2, 5; MS II, 10; KS XVIII, 2.
knowledgable men, that it is Brahman who stands supporting the world' (brahmādyā τίγγαν bhuvaṇāṃ āhāraya).

Coomaraswamy points out that this does not make Brahman a material cause of the world but an apparitional cause. 'Sanskrit vana (wood) is neither 'matter' nor 'nature' in the modern sense of these words. In Indian tradition, the world is a theophany and 'that which fills space' and by which Brahman enters into the world is 'form and phenomenon' (nāmarūpa as in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa XI, 2, 3, 4-5): it is by these powers of denomination and appearance that the divine possibilities of manifestation are expressed and can be apprehended in the dimensioned cosmos.¹ It may be recalled that in all periods of Indian literature Brahman is frequently called imperishable, immovable and firm; and that it is regarded as a sustaining principle, as a basis, i.e. support or firm and ultimate ground of existence. According to Radhakrishnan, however, the use of the expression bhūta-yoni in Mundaka Upaniṣad I, 1, 6 and the description of Brahman as: nityan vībhuv sarva-gataḥ susūkṣmaḥ tad anyayam yad bhūta-yonim paripaśyatīti dhīraḥ, i.e. 'eternal, all pervading, omnipresent, which the wise perceive as the source of all beings', suggests that Brahman is the material cause of the world.²

We have already referred to one creation myth in the Ṛg Veda where the creator god separates the monad of heaven and earth. Other myths in the same text include those telling of the creation of the cosmos by sacrifice, or by art. Each of these myths presupposes a materia prima:

the Puruṣa or cosmic man whom the gods sacrifice into creation, referred to in Ṛg Veda X, 90, 14;¹ the sculptor's clay or metal which Viśvakarman moulds or welds together into the shapes of heaven and earth, referred to in X, 81, 3;² or, the wood out of which the gods fashioned heaven and earth, referred to above.

In the Atharva Veda (X, 7, 35), it is the Skambha which is described as 'sustaining both heaven and earth', the 'atmosphere and the six wide ones; this whole existence has entered into the Skambha'. It may be noticed that this Skambha which sustains the six realms, is no other than Aja Ekapā, the One, representing the total constellation of the undivided structure of creation. The omnipresence and omniaspectuality of the Skambha is emphasised in Atharva Veda X, 7, 22: 'Where both Ādityas and Rudras, and the Vasus are set together; where both what is, and what is to be, and all the worlds are established, tell me forsooth, which Skambha is he?³ The text (X, 7, 31) goes on to say: 'Beyond it (the Skambha) there is no more any being', which is clearly echoed in Kaṭha Upaniṣad II, 3, 1: 'In it (i.e. the asvattha identified with Brahman, the immortal) all the worlds rest, and no one ever goes beyond it', and also corresponds to Kaṭha Upaniṣad I, 3, 11 according to which 'beyond the Person there is naught; that is the end, that is the final goal' (kaśṭha).

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1. 'From his navel was created mid-air (nābhya āśīd antarikṣam), from his head the sky (sīrṣo dyaḥ samavartata), earth from his feet (padbhyaḥ bhūmih), and from his ear the regions' (dīsah ērotrāt).
2. 'He, the sole god, produced heaven and earth together (dyaḥ-dhūmi janayat), welding them together with his arms' (bāhubhyāḥ dharmatī).
3. Here 'what is', referring to what has come into being, and 'what is to be' relate to time; what the three groups of gods are among the divine beings, represent the totality of existence. Gonda: Loka, world and heaven in the Veda, p.58.
The dual nature of the Skambha is also described in Atharva Veda X, 7, 10: 'Where men know the worlds and receptacles (lokaṁ ca kośāṁ), the waters, Brahman, within which are both the non-existent and the existent (asac ca yatra sac), that Skambha, tell me, which forsooth is he?' Gonda observes that this means that the frame of creation does not only comprise unorganised destructive 'chaotic' existence and the organised cosmos, but also the complimentary pair lokāḥ and kośāḥ. Generally speaking, the term kośa means a cask or vessel, intended to contain, keep or cover lifeless, or at least non-human objects, and is in contradistinction to a loka representing free room for living beings and which does not surround or close in. The complimentary pair lokāḥ ca kośāṁ may, in his opinion, refer to all space outside the waters where animate beings live safely and, where various objects may be stored, or, simply be.1

A reference to the universal diffusion of the Skambha occurs in Atharva Veda X, 7, 3: 'In what member of him is situated the sky; in what member is situated the atmosphere; in what member is the sky set; in what member is situated beyond the sky?' (uttarāḥ dīvāḥ). The answer is provided by X, 7, 21 of the same text, referring to the branch of the non-existent (asac sākham) which is known as the highest; X, 7, 25 says that the gods were born out of the non-existent (deva ye asataḥ), and that one member of the Skambha which is beyond, people call the non-existent.2 Again, X, 7, 39 describes the Skambha unto which the gods

2. ekaṁ tad aṅga skambhasya sad āhūḥ paro ṇaṇāḥ.
continually (prāgam) render tribute, as unmeasured in the measured out (vimita omitaḥ).

The term Skambha - prop, support, pillar, is used in these hymns to designate that which contains the whole universe. These hymns appear to represent an effort to formulate the ultimate foundation of things in a more subtle way, an effort which reaches farther than the grounds or principles hitherto described as Brahman and Puruṣa (cf. Atharva Veda X, 7, 10; 11; 19, where Brahman is enumerated among a number of entities that are in the Skambha). They also state that knowledge of Brahman and the ātman which represents the deepest insight into the ultimate ground of the universe, also delivers us from the fear of death, e.g. X, 8, 44: 'Free from desire, wise, immortal, self-existent (akśmo dhīro amṛtaḥ evayambuḥ), knowing that wise, unaging soul, one is not afraid of death (tam eva vidvān na bibhaya mṛtyor ātmānām dhīran ajaram yuvānam).

The author of X, 7, 17, moreover, adds that 'whoever knows the Brahman in man, knows the Parameśthin (the most exalted one, the Supreme Being) and whoever knows the Parameśthin ... knows the Skambha'. Finally, mention may be made of the line tasmai jyeṣṭhaya brahmaṇe namah (recurring at the end of the stanzas X, 7, 32; 33; 34; 36; X, 8, 1), i.e. 'To him (who is) the highest Brahman, be homage', 'him' referring to the theme of X, 7, 1-26, i.e. the Skambha.

It is therefore clear that the hymns cited above, which emphasise the concept that Ultimate Reality is a foundation, a basis or support, do not hesitate to identify the Skambha with Brahman. The term ātman met with

1. cf. J. Gonda: Notes on Brahman, p.44.
in Atharva Veda X, 8, 44, and its description as the wise, unaging young soul (ātmānāh dhiram ajaram yuvānām), indicates the proximity of the mystical speculations of the time, to the fundamental tenet of the teachings of the Upaniṣads, expressed in the formula ātman=Brahman.

The idea that the Ultimate Reality is a basis or foundation, is also expressed in Rg Veda X, 121, 1 and 5: Hiranyagarbha, the only Lord of all created beings, in whom are summed up the functions of creator, ruler, and preserver of the universe, and through whom the heavens are strong and the earth steadfast; by whom the realm of light and the vault of the sky are supported (yena svāḥastabhitam yena nākah); by him the regions in mid-air were measured' (yo antarikṣe rajasovimānāḥ).

The image of the Skambha, i.e. a post or pillar which is symbolical of motionlessness (cf. sthānarūpa of Śiva Purāṇa 51, 8), occurring in the hymns of the Atharva Veda, is already anticipated, as we have seen, in the Rg Vedic concept of the One who, without proceeding himself, engenders and sustains the six regions.

The Muyḍaka Upaniṣad (II, 2, 2) expounds that 'that which is shining (aroimat), subtler than the subtle (anubhyo'nu), in which are centred all the worlds and those that dwell in them, that is the imperishable Brahman (aṅgarāṁ brahma); that is the immortal; that is the true' (tad etat satyam tad amṛtam); the knowledge of Brahman is

1. bhūtasya jātah patir eka āsit.
2. cf. AV X, 8, 6: 'This all is set in (the ultimate basis, the Skambha); there is established this all which stirs and breathes'.
accordingly the foundation of all knowledge; it is 'the supreme object to be desired and is the highest beyond man's understanding'.

Other passages also show that Vedic man was deeply concerned about discovering a firm ground to rest upon, for sky and earth, for himself and the universe, e.g. the author of *Chandogya Upaniṣad* VI, 8, 4, reflecting on the ultimate foundation of existence, says: 'All creatures have Being (sat) as their root (mūla), have Being as their support (ayatana), have Being as their ground' (pratīṣṭhā). In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III, 8, 4-8), however, Yajñavalkya explains to Gārgī that the basic support of even ākāśa (space) is ākṣara (the Imperishable) which is Brahman, without measure (anātaram) and endless (anantarām), and which is the completely transcendental Reality. The *Brahmasūtras* (I, 3, 10) explain that Brahman is the ākṣara, the imperishable because it supports everything up to the ākāśa.

It is interesting that in a number of passages, the eternal and immutable principle, Brahman, is identified with the brāhmaṇa (member of the priestly class), e.g. *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* V, 1, 1. 11, says: 'The brāhmaṇa is Brahman' (brahma hi brāhmaṇah); and according to XIII, 1, 5, 3, and XIII, 2, 6, 9, the 'brāhmaṇa relates to Bṛhaspati, Bṛhaspati

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1. II, 2, 1: vaśenyam param vijñānād yad varistham prajānāṁ.
2. cf. *AB* VII, 19, 3: 'The sacrifice is established (pratīṣṭhītaḥ) in Brahman'; cf. also IV, 11, 1; *PB* XIII, 3, 2, says: 'He (the sacrificer) firmly establishes the sacrifice in Brahman'; and *SB* X, 2, 4, 6 says: 'The sun is established in Brahman'.
3. cf. *BAU* III, 8, 8: 'This the brāhmaṇas call ākṣara'. cf. also *ṬA* X, 26, 1, 2, and *Mahā Nārāyaṇa, U* XI, 1, 4, according to which the immutable is the highest power (Lord): ākṣaraṁ paramāṁ prabhūṁ; and *Su U* I, 1, 10; *Mu U* II, 1, 2. See P.M. Modi: Ākṣara. A Forgotten Chapter in Indian Philosophy, p.6.
4. According to Saṅkara, the word bhūman, meaning infinite, and occurring in *CU* VII, 23, 1: yo vai bhūmā tat sukhām ... is Brahman. The same text (VII, 24, 1) goes on to say: 'When one sees nothing else (nānyat paśyati), hears nothing else (nānyac ohnāti) understands nothing else (nānyād vijñānāti), that is the infinite (bhūmā), that is the immortal'. It may be pointed out here that the quality of being the bhūman which is plenitude (vaipulyā), agrees with the Supreme Self which is the cause of everything.
being Brahman'. In Apastamba-Srauta-sūtra XI, 15, 1, the seat of the
brāhmaṇa is addressed with the formula: 'You are the container of
Brahman's splendour, abiding in celestial light' (brahmajyotir asi
suvardhana).

The incomparable character of the brāhmaṇa is also indicated in
Manu I, 98: 'The very birth of a brāhmaṇa is an eternal incarnation of
the dharma; the author of Mahābhārata XIII, 35, 1 declares: 'By birth
alone is he (i.e. a brāhmaṇa) an object of worship to all creatures';
and in XIII, 15, 31: 'It is these wise men who uphold all the worlds;
they are the place of rest (vidhānam) of all beings'. While these
passages make no reference whatsoever to spiritual attainment, and
indicate that the association or identification with Brahman was a
prerogative of the members of the priestly class, a different trend of
thought may be noticed in some of the later Vedic passages and in the
Upaniṣads. The author of Atharva Veda X, 7, 24 claims that one who has
'intercourse with Brahman, is a knower, a brāhmaṇa'; and 'being Brahman
he goes to Brahman'. (IV, 4, 6). Eradāryanaka Upaniṣad III, 8, 10 says
that he 'who, knowing the Imperishable departs from this world, is a
brāhmaṇa', while the author of IV, 4, 17 declares: 'Knowing that immortal
Brahman, I am immortal' (vidvān brahmāṁrtomṛtōm). According to Mundaka
Upaniṣad III, 1, 3: 'when a person sees the Creator of golden hue (rukma-
vāram), the Lord, Puruṣa, the source of Brahman, then, being a knower
(vidvān), snaking off good and evil (puṇya pāpa vidhūya), and free from
stain (nirājanah), he attains supreme equality with the Lord' (paramāṁ
sāmyam upaiti). The same text (III, 2, 9) goes on to say: 'He who knows

2. cf. AA V, 3, 3: 'This is the name of the great being; he who
knows 'this' as the name of it, becomes brahman'.
the supreme Brahman, becomes Brahman himself' (paramam brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati).

In Buddhist literature the term brāhmaṇa occurs frequently as a synonym of arhat, i.e. one who has attained final and absolute emancipation or Nirvāṇa. In Sānyutta Nikāya IV, 157, the Buddha defines a brāhmaṇa as one 'who has crossed the ocean (of the eye and forms; tongue and savours; mind and mind-states, i.e. sensual pleasures), and having gone beyond, stands on dry land' (tipho pāragato thale tiṭṭhati brāhmaṇo). According to I, 48 of the same text, a brāhmaṇa is one who has destroyed the āsava, is a jhāyin, and has reached the end of birth-and-death (jāti-marāṇassā antam). Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 4, describes a brāhmaṇa as a 'world-ender' (lokantagu), while in Sānyutta Nikāya IV, 175, the brāhmaṇa and arahant are clearly identified: 'Crossed over; gone beyond; the brāhmaṇa stands on dry land - this is called an arahant' (arahato etam adhivacanam). The Dhammapada (383) advises: 'Knowing the destruction of conditioned things, be a brāhmaṇa, a knower of the Unmade' (i.e. Nibbāna). Of the summum bonum, verse 386 of the same text says: 'He who has attained the highest goal (atthamattham anuppattam) - him I call a brāhmaṇa'. Now, this is in perfect agreement with the brahmanical view illustrated in the passages cited earlier, that one who knows or attains Brahman becomes Brahman (i.e. a brāhmaṇa in the real sense of the term), for to know something at this level of civilization, as Gonda observes, means to have control over it, or to be unified with it. 2

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1. Also SN IV, 174; I, 47.
2. J. Gonda: op. cit., p.54.
It is significant that on the one hand the principle of unity underlies the philosophy of the Veda and is illustrated in such hymns as Rg Veda I, 164, 46: 'Sages speak of the One as Many', and X, 129, 2 referring to that One (tad ekam), the single Primordial Unit out of which the universe was developed; and on the other there are innumerable references to the dual nature of that One. We have noticed that the concept of a single creator or controller of the universe, variously called Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, Puruṣa and Prāṇa, was predominant in the period of the Samhitā literature. This divine controller, however, was yet only a deity. The realization that Brahman the sustainer of the universe is the ātmā, and that the ātmā which is in man pervades the entire cosmos, is first met with in the Upaniṣads.

Although Brahman is described as being of a single essence,1 the dual nature of Brahman (= ātman) is emphasised in a number of passages in the Upaniṣads, e.g., Brahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad II, 3, 1 draws a distinction between the two forms of Brahman, the formed and the unformed (mūrtam caiva mārtam), the mortal and the immortal (martyam cāmrtam), the unmoving and the moving (sthitam ca yac ca), the actual (existent) and the true (Being, i.e. sa ca tyā ca). According to the Maitri Upaniṣad (VII, 11, 8) the 'great self has a dual nature' (dvaiti-bhāva na tātmāna iti); 'there are two forms of Brahman, time and timeless; that which existed before the sun is timeless,2 and that which began with the sun (i.e. which coincided with the birth of Agni Vaiśvānara) is time, which is divisible'

1. cf. BAU IV, 4, 20: 'This indemonstrable and constant being can be realised as One only'. Kauś.Brah-U 1, 6: 'You are the self of every single being; what you are, that am I' (bhūtasya bhūtasya tvam ātmāsi, yac tvam asa'ham aṃti), and other similar passages indicate that these contrasts remain dominated throughout by the consciousness of the unity of the ātman. P. Deussen: The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, pp. 288-259.
2. Mai U VI, 15: prāgādityāt so'kalo'kalo'ètha.
On the one hand Brahman's independence of time appears as infinite duration, and, on the other, his independence of space is figuratively represented - as infinitely vast and at the same time infinitely minute, e.g. Chandogya Upanishad III, 14, 3 which represents the ātmā (i.e. Brahman) as 'smaller than a grain of rice, barley or a mustard seed ... greater than the earth ... greater than these worlds'.

In some later Upanishads, however, the question of whether Brahman is Being, or Not-being is of no significance; these, like all other pairs of opposites are transcended by Brahman. He is neither Being nor Not-being; higher than that which is, and that which is not; he comprehends in himself empirical reality, the realm of ignorance, and the kingdom of knowledge. The concept of the ātman (= Brahman) who is not a god (deva) as in the ancient Vedic sense, but is nevertheless the Lord (Īśvara) who, in later times became known as the Supreme Lord (paramēśvara), subsequently led to the monotheism of the later Upanishads.

The duality underlying the One, variously known as Aja Ekapād, Skambha, and Brahman, and which is discernable in the Vedic literature, however, is of utmost significance, as a corresponding dual nature may be noticed in the Tree with which Brahman came to be identified. We have seen that in the Rg Veda, Heaven and Earth were separated by the mid-space (antarikṣa). The frequent phrase ayam lokaḥ meaning 'this world' 6

1. cf. Mai. U VI, 14: 'The sun is the source of time (sūryo yoniḥ kālasya); and VI, 16: 'Brahman is the self of the sun' (ādityātmā brahmaṁ).
4. Mu. U II, 2, 1; cf. Sv. U II, 16: 'He has been born, and will be born ...
5. Sv. U V, 2: 'In the imperishable, infinite, highest Brahman are the two, knowledge and ignorance; ignorance is perishable, while knowledge is immortal. And he who controls knowledge and ignorance is another'.
6. cf. AV IX, 5, 7; 11; V, 30, 17; SB XIV, 1, 2, 24; Kauś.śūtra 58, 3; cf. imāṁ lokaḥ in PB X, 5, 15.
represents 'here' while amuṣmin lokaḥ meaning 'yonder world' represents 'there'.\(^1\) Kramrisch observes that while they are poles apart in the physical universe, the 'here' representing the visible world, and the 'there', the transcendent invisible world, in man Heaven and Earth, by an extension of their phenomenal position are, respectively, this whole manifest cosmos and that invisible world beyond. Their situation in the limitless inner world is realized moreover, not only in its superposition in and beyond space, but also with reference to time.\(^2\) The 'there' existing beyond time, is transcendent and metaphysical; it is at the same time prior and causal to, and beyond the 'here'. As the principal powers of duality, Heaven and Earth encompass the orbit of the cosmos and act as the poles of man's inner world.\(^3\) The twofold and inter-penetrating topography of 'here' and 'there' has its pivot in the vertical axis of which Aja Ekapād is the cosmic symbol and man's upright frame the visible frame.\(^4\) In the macrocosm of man, the One in vertical extension moves in two opposite directions, backwards and forwards (Ṛg Veda I, 164, 38: apān prāṇ ēti), the immortal having the same origin as the mortal (amartya martyena sayontā).\(^5\)

Yet another movement, upwards and downwards, is referred to in Ṛg Veda I, 164, 19: 'Those that (the sages) term descending, they also term

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1. cf. AV VI, 123, 3; PB XXI, 1, 9; TB I, 3, 7, 3; SB XI, 2, 7, 12. Gonda believes that Kauś. śūtra 85, 24, inviting the dead man to go to the principal loka which is 'there' (atra) being opposed to 'here' (iha), must refer to the beyond. Loka, world and heaven in the Veda, p.102.
3. cf. AV XIV,2,71, and BAUVI,4,19: dyauḥ aham, prthivi tvam...
5. cf. SB X,5,2,4: antarān mṛtyoḥ amṛtam.
ascending, and those that they term ascending, they term descending.\(^1\) The word \textit{arvāṅcaḥ} (approaching) refers to the downward movement, while \textit{parāṅcaḥ} (departing) refers to the upward movement, the implication being that the ascending node carries within itself the potential of descent and vice versa.\(^2\)

We have already referred to the tree with its roots above and branches below. In \textit{Atharva Veda} X, 7, 21, the lower (\textit{arvāk}) branch is identified with the existent (\textit{sātāśākha}) and the higher (\textit{parāk}) with the non-existent (\textit{asātāśākha}). According to \textit{Rg Veda} X, 72, 3, in the earliest age of the gods, the existent originated from the non-existent.\(^3\) This \textit{asat} is identified with \textit{prāṇa}, the eternal Life Principle in \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa} VI, 1, 1, 1.\(^4\) The \textit{asat} and \textit{sat} therefore, correspond to \textit{para} and \textit{avara}, to \textit{prāṇa} and \textit{bhūta} (matter), to \textit{ūrdhva} and \textit{adhah}, respectively.\(^5\)

Another reference to movement occurs in \textit{Rg Veda} I, 164, 31, describing the One Cowherd (\textit{Gopa}) who never stumbles; approaching and departing by his pathways,\(^6\) he ceaselessly travels these worlds, moving in different directions (\textit{visūcīḥ}), and returning to the same centre (\textit{sadhrīśāḥ}). This Cowherd is identified with Śūrya in \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa} XIV, 1, 4, 9;\(^7\) with Agni in \textit{Aitareya Brāhmaṇa} I, 28;\(^8\) with Indra in VI, 10 of the same text;\(^9\) and also with \textit{prāṇa} in \textit{Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa} III, 37, 2.\(^10\) This is also in agreement with \textit{Śaunaka} who says in

\(^{1}\) \textit{ye arvāṅcaś tān u parāṅca ahur ye parāṅcaś tān u arvāca āhuḥ.}
\(^{2}\) V.S. Agrawala: \textit{Vision in Long Darkness}, p.70.
\(^{3}\) 'Asat existed in the beginning ... the \textit{ṛṣis} were \textit{asat} ... the \textit{prāṇas} were the \textit{ṛṣis} ...'.
\(^{4}\) V.S. Agrawala: \textit{op.cit.}, p.71.
\(^{5}\) \textit{ā ca parā ca pathibhisvarantam.}
\(^{6}\) \textit{esa vai gopā ya esa sūryastapatī, esa hidaḥ sarvam gopāyati.}
\(^{7}\) \textit{agnir vai gopāḥ; cf. RV I,86,1: ca sugopātamo janaḥ.}
\(^{8}\) \textit{prāṇo vai gopāḥ, sa hidaḥ arūpyamāno gopāyati.}
Brhaddevatā I, 69, that Agni on earth, Indra and Vāyu in midspace (antarikṣa), and Āditya in heaven, are the three forms of the same immortal principle. The different movements referred to in Rg Veda I, 164, 19; 31; 38, i.e. backwards and forwards, ascending and descending, approaching and departing, are described as ceaseless and eternal (daśvanta), and represent the various forms of the basic rhythm (chandas) underlying all life. The One (tad ekam), the First-born of the World Order (prathamāja ātasya), identified with Agni, is wrapped up in the microcosm of its own intrinsic nature; all the different directions follow the extent of that One, coincide with the One, and go back to that One.

That One is Aja Ekapād; it is a pillar (skambha); it is also a tree. We have already referred to the two birds identified as the jīvatman and paramātman by Śāyāna, perched on the same tree, one eating the tasty fruit and the other merely looking on. The one which eats the fruit is the bird which must feed in order to live, while the other, having no such need, contemplates the fruit and knows it without eating. Kramrīṣch observes that the stillness, i.e. without eating, without intake of the outer world as food and without proceeding towards it, is a sign in which transcendence is seen to abide. The designation 'food' has, of course, a very wide application, covering all objects of desire, by the acquisition of which the individual functions as such.

1. āgnirasmīn nathendrastu maṁhyato vāyu ēva, sūryo ēvī divī viṁśeyastīra evaḥ devatāh.
2. cf. RV X,5,7: āgnirhi naḥ prathamāja ātasya.
3. cf. RV I,164,37: saṁmadho manasā cādyatī ...
This stillness has another image in the one wheel of the Āśvins which stands still while the other flies over spaces.\(^1\) One of the wheels of the chariot travels in the transcendental realm beyond change and movement, that is, it stands completely still. The other wheel travels in the sky high above the earth.\(^2\) The still wheel of the Āśvins' chariot travels in the transcendental realm which is in the inspired heart and mind of the poet, the polarity of the 'here' below and the 'there' beyond, having its locus, as we have seen, in man himself. The metaphysical principle of an underlying duality is also enunciated in the Nāsadiya sūkta (Ṛg Veda X, 129) as sad-asad, amṛta-mṛtyu, parastāt-avastāt, prayati-svadā; in the Purusa sūkta (X, 90) as īrṇāva-īha; in Ṛg Veda V, 62, 8 as aditi-diti; X, 190, 1 as rta-satya; X, 189, 2 as prānapāna, and many other categories of manifestation. These are all related to the conception of the dvipadi cow, one foot of which is fixed, changeless and eternal. This changeless foot is apparently identical with the one foot which the golden hamsa stationed in the Floods or pre-cosmic waters, does not move,\(^3\) while the other foot is identical with the rhythm or motion by which creation is engendered.

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1. ṚV V, 73, 3: vapiś cakram rathasya yemathuḥ, paryanyā nākūṣā yugā mahārajāmī diyathāḥ. cf. I, 30, 19; VIII, 22, 4. The chariot of the Āśvins is generally three-wheeled (ṚVI, 118, 2; I, 157, 3; I, 183, 7, etc.), but a distinction is drawn between its two wheels which are in motion around the world, and the One wheel that is hidden (ṚV X, 85, 16) and stands still.

2. The chariot of the Āśvins moves in two spheres, one making a circuit in space around the all, while the other has no dimension and is out of the manifest cosmos. The tension of the two is between the opposed movement in the all and the stillness of the naught. See Kramrisch: op. cit., p.117. The motionlessness and, at the same time, dynamic movement inherent in the one principle, is also referred to in Ka. U 1, 2, 21: 'Sitting, he moves far; lying, he goes everywhere ...'.

The two wheels of the chariot of the Aśvins and the two birds on the tree refer to the same vertical axis. As the tree of Life and Knowledge it extends through the cosmos; as the axle of the Aśvins' chariot, it links heaven with the centre of man, the microcosm, in the instant of divine inspiration where time stands still.

The polarity of 'here' and 'there', above and below, as it is in creation and in the microcosm of man, is also exemplified in the principles of fire and water, i.e. Agni, the spark and flame of life, and Soma, the elixir of life, both descending from heaven to earth, and then ascending again from earth to heaven. Their track of liquid fire extends from 'here' to 'there' and from the beyond down to the earth, 'with the systole and diastole, as it were, of inspiration and aspiration'. The place where each of these gods comes to earth and whence he arises, is the place of sacrifice - the altar, at the navel of the earth. The rites of the sacrifice confirm and celebrate the tracks of these two gods which traverse the cosmos and the inner world of man.

1. Aja Ekapād corresponds, as we have seen, to the single Erect One (ūrdhva eka) referred to in RV I, 164, 10, and to the Skambha in X, 149, 1.

2. Agni flies swiftly (RV X, 6, 4: rāghupatvā jīgātī) as a messenger between heaven and earth. cf. IV, 7, 8: adhvargāṣa dutiyāni vidvān ubhe antā rodasi samākītvā, and X, 4, 2: dūto devānasi asti mārtyānām. cf. also VII, 31, 9: 'Soma ascends to heaven (ūrdhvāsas . . . indavo upadyavi), and IX, 86, 42: 'Soma is a messenger between gods and men'.


4. cf. RV I, 59, 2 where Agni is called the navel of the earth (nābhīr agnih pṛthivyā athā bhuvād aratih rodasyah), and IX, 12, 1 where Soma comes to the navel, i.e. the centre (nābha) from the depth of heaven (IX, 110, 8: divāḥ . . . piśavyam).

A duality is also noticed in the two sides of the sun, the light and the dark, symbolical of its movement conveyed in terms of time whose unit is the year. According to Vedic cosmological speculations, the day comprises a two-fold rajas principle, i.e. black and white: ahaś ca kṛṣṇam ahaṃ arjunaṃ ca vivartate rajasī. The same idea is expressed somewhat differently in Mahābhārata XII, 362, 7-8 which refers to the sun's feet as his rays, his one foot which is alternately dark and bright (asīta, sucinā), being coincident with the axis of the universe. This corresponds to the description in Rg Veda V, 62, 8, where the pillar that the dual deity Mitra-Varuṇa mounts is golden at dawn (hīranya rūpam ugaśo vyuṣṭāv), and bronze-coloured at sunset (ayasthānaṃ utīta śūrasya); what they see from above when the pillar is golden, being the finite (dītim), and what they see when it is brazen is the infinite (adītim). Kramrisch, however, believes that it is the dark side of the sun which faces the inner world of man where his conscience is assailed by fear and doubt; and that the light in which the sun-god rises in the east (Rg Veda X, 37, 3) is the symbol of his emergence from the pit of fear and represents victory. The entire orbit of his journey through all the possibilities of his being is potentially within every man, and has its image in the annual course of the sun. These two opposite points of view which are situated in the vertical axis of creation, having its beginning in the focal point of Aja Ekapād, are not, however, terminal points; beyond the vaults of heaven and the Light worlds, the void of the uncreated (X, 129, 1; 3) and the abyss of bottomless darkness (VII, 104, 3; 17)

1. RV VI, 9, 1; AB V, 15, 5; KB 23, 8.
2. cf. RV VIII, 41, 10: skambhena vi rodasi ajo dyāṃ adhārayat.
both represent metacosmic contraries. They are bottomless, yet their
two infinitudes merge into each other. 1

We have already identified the Skambha with Brahman and with Aja
Ekapād. 2 The Atharva Veda (X, 7, 38) also identifies the Skambha
(= Brahman) with a great yakṣa (mahād yakṣa) moving at the back of the
waters (sālijasya prasthānāh) 3 in whom 'the gods inhere like the branches of
a tree about its trunk' (devā vyēṣasya skandheḥ) and unto which the gods
'continually render tribute, unmeasured in the measured out'. The same
text (X, 8, 15) also refers to the great yakṣa in the midst of creation
(mahād yakṣam bhūvanāsya madhye). In X, 8, 43, however, the yakṣa is
represented as being inside a lotus: 'The lotus flower of nine doors
(pūṇḍarīkaṁ navadvaram), covered with the three strands (tribhīr
guṇabhir ānyatam) - what yakṣa is within it, that the Brahman-knowers
know'.

The lotus with the nine doors indicates the human body with its
nine orifices, while the guṇas as pointed out by Whitney 4 most probably
refer to the three temperaments sattva, rajas, and tamas of later texts.

1. S. Kramrisch: 'Two in the Rg Veda', p.132-133. In Ai U I, 1, 2,
the primordial waters are represented as extending above and below
the three regions of earth, midspace, and heaven.
2. cf. AV X, 7, 35; RV I, 164, 6; cf. also AV X, 8, 11.
3. RV X, 82, 5 speaks of a 'germ' or 'womb' instead of a yakṣa in a
similar context: 'What was the primeval germ (or womb: garbhām
prathāram) which the waters received, where all the gods were seen
together?' cf. RV I, 164, 39: 'Upon which immutable (aṅgava) highest
heaven (parame vyomam) do the gods repose?', and the answer is given
in RV X, 82, 6: 'It rested upon the navel of the Unborn (ajasya
nāḥha) wherein abide all things existing' (yasmin viśvāṁ bhūvaṁ
vasthuḥ). cf. JUB I, 20, 4: 'All this (i.e. creation) is within it
tasmin idāṁ sarvam antah; because All this is in it, it is called
antar-yakṣa; is called antarikṣa in a metaphysical sense' (antarikṣam
iti parokṣaṁ ācakṣate).
However, these names do not occur before *Maitrī Upaniṣad* V, 2, where they are actually identified with Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Rudra. From the evidence of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Zaehner concludes that the three constituents represent the 'very stuff of nature or matter'. It is interesting to notice that in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (XIV, 5), the three *gunaḥ* are described as springing from nature, and as binding (*nibadhnanti*) the embodied self (*dehi*) in the body. This is also supported by *V*, 13 of the same text where the embodied self is described as sitting quietly in full control within the city of nine gates and, *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* III, 18 according to which the Universal Spirit (*hamsa*), the controller of the whole world, of the stationary and the moving, sports in the city of nine gates.

It is possible then, to identify the great *yakṣa* mentioned in the *Atharva Veda*, with the Universal Spirit in man himself; to know this embodied self was to know Brahman, presupposing thereby, the fundamental teaching of the *Upaniṣads*, represented in the formula Brahman = ātman.

We have already referred to the fourfold division of the Axial Column in *Atharva Veda* X, 7, 3 where three of its members (*anga*) correspond to earth, atmosphere, and sky, and the fourth member is situated in 'what is beyond the sky' (*tisphāty uttaraṁ divāḥ*). This division is, however, reversed in *Ṛg Veda* X, 90, 3-4, where one-fourth of Puruṣa is measured out as the cosmos, and three fourths of him transcend all manifestation. The three feet or quarters (*tripād*) of

Puruśa, also called amṛta and uryāha, is where the cosmic tree has its roots, i.e., in immortality, while one foot comprises 'that which is born repeatedly' (abhavat puruṣa).

It is interesting that in Rig Veda I, 164, 45 Vāk (speech, identified with Prajāpati) is also said to be measured out in four parts (pāda): three of them lie hidden and do not move (gṛha trīni nihitā nehaṅgayanti), while the fourth part of speech men speak; that is, three quarters are transcendant, unrevealed, or concealed. Likewise, Atharva Veda II, 1, 2 speaks of the three quarters of the highest principle (paramatman ātman) that remains concealed. In Śaṁkhyā Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa I, 7, 4, these three quarters which are hidden are identified with the three worlds (bhūr, bhūvaḥ, suvaḥ). Of the revealed quarter of speech Atharva Veda VIII, 9, 3 says that the 'brāhmaṇa may know it by austerity, the inspired one, in whom it is united as one; in which it is one', that is, in whom Speech or the Sacred Word is no longer divided but one, and complete. Mention may also be made of Maitri Upaniṣad VI, 11, 8 referring to the four distinct conditions of a person of which the fourth (turīya) is greater than the rest: 'Brahman with one foot moves in three quarters and with three feet in the last, the greatest (mahattaram). For the sake

1. cf. RV X, 90, 3: tripāṭ āṣāṃśat dīvi; X, 90, 4: tripāṭ uryāha ud ait puruṣaḥ. cf. also AV X, 8, 41: amṛta adhit vioakrane ... ājas tad drsṛ. 2. Also AV IX, 10, 27; TB II, 8, 8, 5; ŚB IV, 1, 3, 17. 3. ŚB V, 1, 5, 6; XII, 4, 1, 15: vāg vai prajāpati. cf. ŚB I, 3, 5, 10: sarvam vai prajāpatih, and, III, 5, 1, 34: vāk vai virāg. 4. trīni pādaṁ nihitā guhasya. 5. cf. AV XII, 3, 20 where the three worlds are said to be commensurate with the brāhmaṇa power. 6. The four conditions are enumerated in Mān. U 3-12 as the waking state (jāgarita-sthāna), the dreaming state (svapna-sthāna), the deep sleep state (susupta-sthāna), and the fourth 'which has no elements, which cannot be spoken of, in which the world is resolved, benign, and non-dual' (siva'dvaita). cf. Ka. U II, 8 describing Puruṣa as all-pervading and without any mark whatsoever! (vyāpako'lingo).
of experiencing the true, i.e. reality (satya) and the false (anrta),
the great self has a dual nature'. Of the fourfold division of the
highest principle, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 2 says: 'Brahman is indeed this
all (sarvam hy etad brahma), Brahman is the ātmā; so this ātmā has four
quarters' (so'yan ātmā catuspāt).

The (late) Tretā Upaniṣad (I, 11) enunciates the doctrine that the
four quarters (pāda) of Brahman are that of ignorance, knowledge, bliss,
and turiya successively. The three higher pādas are immortal (amrta) and
characterised by pure Intelligence and Bliss. There shines strongly an
immeasurable mass of brilliant energy (tejas) which is beyond definition
and consists exclusively of complete bliss. There is great Viṣṇu's
highest step (parāmah pādām).

All these passages attest the conviction that the Highest Principle
or 'concepts that can be homologised with it, are with three quarters of
their nature and essence transcendent'. The Highest Presence which is
identified with immortality is, without doubt, the ultimate expression,
or selfhood of the Supreme Principle.

Some passages in the Atharva Veda, however, indicate that it is
not three quarters of Brahman (Prajāpati) that remains transcendent, but
half; X,8,7 says: 'With half it has generated all existence (ardhena
viśvam bhuvaṁh jājāna); what is its other half; what has become of
that (yadāṣya yārdhā kya u tad babhuva)?' According to X, 8, 13, Prajāpati

2. Gonda: Triads in the Veda, p.123; cf. also Gonda; Vedic
   Literature, p.135.
is 'manifoldly born (vī̯jā); with half he has generated all existence;
what is his other half - what form is that (yadasyārdha katamah sa ketuh)\)?'

It is significant that in Atharva Veda X, 7, 41, the Skambha is
described as a golden reed (vetasa hiranyayam) which, according to Rg Veda
IV, 58,5, is situated in the midst of the 'descending streams of butter'.
In Satapatha Brāhmaṇa XI, 5, 1, 1, and Nirukta III, 21, the word Skambha
occurs in the sense of vetasa madhya āsām. Taittirīya Samhīta IV, 2, 9,
6 adds: 'Therein sits an eagle, honey making, and apportioning honey to
the deities'. In the same text (V, 4, 4, 2) the reed is described as the
flower of the waters (puspaḥ yat vetase-opām), evidently the same 'flower
of the waters' wherein gods and men inhere like spokes in a nave
referred to in Atharva Veda X, 8, 34, and the trunk of the tree in X,
7, 38 (devā vykṣasya skandheḥ).

It is worth mentioning that in Vedic terminology ghṛta is but
another name of seed or retas, e.g. in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (I, 3, 1,
18) we have: reto vā āyam, and, reto vai ghṛta (IX, 2, 3, 44). In VII,
5, 1, 3 of the same text, ghṛta occurs as a symbol of mid-space: ghṛtam
antarikṣasya rūpam, while honey is symbolical of the immortal world of
the gods and heaven: madhura amusya svargasya lokasya rūpam. The descending
streams of ghṛta then, must refer to the shower of fecundating seed from
its source in heaven, being deposited in the cosmic womb of Prthivī.

1. ghṛtasya dhārā abhi cākaśīni hiranyayo.
2. devaścā manusyaś cara nabhā viva śrītah.
Closely related to these references, is the phallic vaitasena of Rg Veda X, 95, 5, and Nirukta III, 21; and sīgyā of Rg Veda II, 32, 4.1

The concept of motion is implicit in the word pada, and Ekapada suggesting the total absence of movement in different directions, refers to 'the principle of rest or stasis (sthiti), the locking of directional motion in the centre' (hrdaya).2 In Śaṅkhāyana Āranyaka VII (cf. Aitareya Āranyaka II, 3, 5 ff), a series of pregenitive triads is expounded, of which the most significant from the point of view of motion is comprised of procession (gati = pravṛtti), and recession (nivṛtti), the parents of stasis (sthiti). The text goes on: 'Time unites procession, recession, stasis, and by these, All this (i.e. the universe) is united'.3 The root in sthiti is sthā, 'to stand', implying stability and permanence, in contrast with gam or car meaning to go, or to move, implying instability and impermanence. That procession, recession and stasis all had the sun as their source is evident from Rg Veda I, 115, 1: 'The sun is the essence (self) of all that moves and moves not'.4

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad (III, 11, 1) says of the knower of Brahman (i.e. the Comprehender): 'the sun having risen in the zenith, will no more rise nor set, but stand alone in the middle', implying that for the emancipated man there is neither procession nor recession, i.e. neither past nor future, neither birth nor death, but only stasis representing the eternal, non-temporal present. The same text (III, 1, 3) goes on to say: 'for him it is day for ever' (sa[kṛd divā). Here the 'sun' is not

2. V.S. Agrawala: op. cit., p.150.
4. sūrya ātmā jagataś tasthusad ca.
'the sun which all (men) see with their eyes', but the sun 'which not all (men) know with the mind' referred to in *Atharva Veda* X, 8, 14.\(^1\)

The references to the sun remaining overhead forever, imply a 'stillness' described in *Jaiminīya Upanīṣad* Brāhmaṇa III, 9, in which 'all directions are submerged' (mahyantā didati), that is, in which there is no distinction of direction, a concept underlying the miracle (pāṭihārya) of the Jambu tree described in the *Nidāna kathā* where the shadows of all the trees had moved, but that of the Jambu beneath which the Bodhisattva had entered into jhāna, remained steady and circular in form.\(^2\) The idea of motionlessness or 'stillness', and of time standing still, is also expressed in *Atharva Veda* VIII, 9, 26: 'The yakṣa on earth is one-fold, i.e. single (yakṣam pṛthivyāṁ ekāya);\(^3\) he is one-seasoned (ekartu); for there is no succession of days and nights in the world of Brahmā, only one long unending day'. The *Chāndogya Upanīṣad* (VIII, 4, 1-2) also says: 'The ātmā is the bridge ... Verily, on crossing that bridge, night appears as day, for that Brahma-world is ever illumined'.\(^4\) It may be remembered that it is in the same Brahma-world where the aśvattha showers the soma, in the third heaven from here.

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1. pāḍyantī sarve oaksūra na sarve manīsā viduh.
2. Jātaka I, 58: sesarukkhānam chāyā ativattā tassu pana rukkhasa parimandalā hutvā atthāeī.
3. cf. AV XIII, 4, 13: 'In him all these gods become one' (ete asmial devā ekaṁ ekartō bhavantāi), and RV X, 82, 3: yo devānām nāmadhā eka eva tam sampraśnam bhuvanā yantyanyā. The entire Vedic pantheon is governed by this spiritual law, i.e. the transcendence of the One principle and the immanence of the Many. The One is the Yakṣa in the centre of creation wherein all gods inhere like branches of a tree (AV X, 7, 38).
4. naktam ahar evābhiniṣpadyate sakāṇḍ vibhato hy evaisa brahma-lokaḥ.
Aja Ekapād the unborn, one-footed or motionless principle of transcendental Reality, therefore, represents the still, fixed state of Brahman which is defined in Bhagavad Gītā XII, 3 as the indeterminate imperishable Unmanifest ... unchanging, (kūtastham), immutable (acalom), and eternal (dhruvam).

Our discussion on the āsvattha identified with the cosmic Tree and with Brahman in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, would appear to imply that the philosophical ideas associated with the Tree are characteristic of the religious beliefs and practices of the Vedic Aryans. Chronologically, it is generally accepted that the speculative hymns of the Vedas are among the latest passages of those texts; that the earlier Brāhmaṇas were probably contemporaneous with those speculative hymns; and that the earlier Upaniṣads were composed about the same time as the later Brāhmaṇas.

The researches of Langdon, Kramer, Widengreen, and others have established beyond doubt that the Tree of Life played an important role in ancient Mesopotamian myth and ritual; it may have also been included in the religious beliefs of contemporary Indians. We have already noticed that from the numerous seals and sealings belonging to the Harappan culture, the tree and its presiding deity appear to have been the centre of a cult during the proto-historic period of Indian civilization.

It is significant that while a chain of development may be traced from the speculative hymns of the Vedas to the characteristic Indian philosophy which presents itself in a developed form in the Upaniṣads, another tendency is represented by the ritualistic aspect of Vedic
religion with its exaltation of the priesthood and the sacrifice, which became highly developed in the period of the Sutra literature. We have, therefore, side by side, two fundamentally different systems of thought - one strongly polytheistic with a highly elaborate ritual, and the other taking the form of a monistic or dualistic philosophical system. The latter phenomenon which appears to be newer, as the philosophical ideas find expression only in the later hymns of the Vedas, is characterised by beliefs which are best described as animistic, and which are attributed by a number of scholars to the Dravidian or pre-Aryan population of India. The most important of these beliefs is the doctrine of transmigration which may be regarded as a corollary and a counterpart to the animistic faith.

The speculative hymns reflect the first effects of this animism; the Upanisads demonstrate it more effectively. The first postulate of all the orthodox systems of philosophy is that all organic matter is permeated by spirit, and that the subtle essence which permeates all living beings is the essential element of the universe - a postulate which is the essence of animism. Our study of the anattavada in Buddhist philosophy shows that it was the viññāṇa, one of the five skandhas, which was regarded as the only transmigrant. According to Jain belief, it is the jīva that migrates from one birth to another. Modern Jainism still emphasises the belief, characteristically animistic, that not only every animal and plant, but every stone and clod of earth has its own jīva. The realization of Uddālaka Āruni expressed in Chandogya Upanisad VI, 10, 3: 'That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for its self ...
that is the self. That art thou ... ', is defined by G.W. Brown as 'simply systematized animism'.

Current orthodox belief, usually Vedantic, also maintains that the distinction of individual objects is illusion; there is but one spirit in the universe, whether that spirit permeate the twice-born brāhmaṇa, or the degraded Chāmar; the spirit which appears in its highest form in Viṣṇu or in one of his incarnations, is the same spirit which is in the Smallpox Goddess. 'Truly, with this conception', says Brown, 'all worship is one. Monism is thus seen to be the ultimate evolution from animism'.

The doctrine of transmigration constitutes one of the primary conceptions of all Indian thought. Indeed, no philosophy or religion in India has achieved a following of any importance unless it has accepted it, and the animistic conceptions it presupposes. So deeply rooted is the belief in transmigration, that no one has even tried to prove its truth. It is an axiomatic fact, and all the phenomena of life are interpreted in terms of this doctrine. Brown concludes: 'So universally is this doctrine held, and so unquestioned is it from the time of its appearance in Indo-Aryan literature, that one can only feel that it was taken over as a fully developed belief, with a long history behind it. In other words, it was something inherited or borrowed from the non-Aryan people with whom the Aryans came into contact'.

1. 'The Sources of Indian Philosophical Ideas', *Studies in honor of M. Bloomfield*, p.83.
Likewise, the asvattha, and the serpent among other cult objects of the Harappa civilization, which also came to be regarded as sacred by the pre-Aryan Vedic Aryans, are examples of deities being incorporated in the religion of the Veda. Our study of the Tree in Vedic literature shows that already in the Rg Veda, it appears as a manifestation of the Supreme Deity, and as a symbol of immortality. This confirms a common opinion of modern Indologists, that this poetry representing the earliest extant corpus of literature of the Vedic Aryans, which is so polished and so highly developed, not only in terms of poetical technique and phraseology, but also in its subject matter, is 'not the earliest production of the genius and devout mind of the ancient Indians'.\(^1\) Generations of poets must have preceded those to whom we owe the present collection. Several old hymns which were replaced, sunk into oblivion, for it 'may be supposed that the poets imitated the themes and techniques of composition of their masters rather than faithfully copied their poems'.\(^2\)

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PART II

A number of representations of the Bodhi tree from Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura, and Amaravati, datable between c.150 BC and 225 AD, show the tree with the vajrāsana (diamond-throne) surrounded by a two- or three-storeyed hypaethral temple. These temples, referred to as bodhi-gharas in Mahāvamsa XXXVI, 31; XXXVII, 15; and 31, invariably consist of a gallery surrounding the tree and are open to the sky. Strictly speaking, any Bodhi tree with or without a structure, is also a mukkha-
oetiya (vipasa-oatiya), although these terms occurring in Buddhist literature do not appear to refer to specifically Buddhist tree shrines.

As in the case of most temples, it may be assumed that there existed a close relation between form and function, and that the structure represented around the Bodhi tree in these reliefs was not merely honorific, but was adapted to requirements determined by the usual practices; that is, only a high surrounding gallery would have been suitable for the actual lustration of a tree.¹

The simplest form of a bodhi-ghara is represented in a relief from Mathura where four outer corner and four inner corner pillars may be assumed, the ground plan being square. The eight pillars support a heavy timbered superstructure which forms a flat gallery above, much wider than the basement itself. The flat surface of this aerial padakkhina-patha (circumambulatory path) does not support any construction and the whole structure seems to be of a size just sufficient to enclose the tree itself. The corbelled superstructure with its battlemented parapet is of an architectural type characteristic of the reliefs of Bharhut and Sanchi and suggests a date about c.150 BC-c. 25 BC.

In all the representations of the bodhi-gharas, the branches of the tree extend far higher than the structure itself. One Sanchi relief on the eastern torana (gateway) shows the branches of the tree emerging from the outer windows of the roof chamber and must be understood as passing through the inner windows which are not visible. Although all the

representations of the bodhi-gharas in the early reliefs vary in design and architectural detail, it may be assumed nevertheless, that they designate the original Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, e.g. at Bharhut, on the Prasenajit pillar, the relief representing the Great Awakening of the Buddha and inscribed Bhagavato Saka-manino bodho, depicts a circular bodhi-ghara;¹ at Sanchi (west torana), the relief depicting the Awakening shows an apsidal bodhi-ghara with three upper storyes; to the right is represented the assault of Māra, and to the left, the visit of the devas. The relief on the eastern torana illustrating the visit of Aśoka, however, shows an octagonal bodhi-ghara.² The memorial Bodhi trees planted as cult objects, such as the one in Ceylon of which we have precise information in the Mahavamsa,³ were also provided with bodhi-gharas.

Detailed references to the manner in which the Bodhi tree was worshipped, are met with in Buddhist literature. According to a Chinese recension of the Aśokavadāna, the A-Yu-Wang-Chwang, Aśoka wished to pour upon the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, perfumed water from 4,000 precious vessels. He had an enclosure made surrounding the tree on all four sides, and mounting it, fulfilled his desire.⁴ The Sanskrit Aśokavadāna does not

2. cf. H. Zimmer: The Art of Indian Asia, II, P1s. 36a; 20; and 18.
3. XX, 8-11; 23; XX, 1: 'In the 18th year (of the reign) of King Dhammāsoka, the great Bodhi was planted in the Meghavanārāma'. cf. Dipavamsa, ch. XVI.
mention a structure around the tree itself, but refers to the construction
of a stūpa at the site of the Awakening.¹

The honouring of a bodhi-rūkṣa planted by Ānanda at Jetavanārāma
during the Buddha's lifetime, is described in the Kālingabodhi Jātaka
(No. 479) where the ceremonies are collectively known as Bodhimāṇḍa
(Festival of the Bodhi tree). Here the king of Kosāla is described as
offering to the tree 'eight hundred jars of scented water, beauteous
with a great quantity of blue water-lilies, and causing to be set there
a long line of vessels, all full; the vajrasana and the vedikā (railing)
he has made of the seven precious substances (sattā ratana), sprinkles
gold dust about the tree, and around the entire bodhimāṇḍa builds an

¹. The tradition preserved in the Mahāvamsa and Dīpavamsa that Aśoka
built 84,000 vihāras, and in Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in
India that he had 84,000 caityas built throughout his empire, is
probably connected with the two-fold object of the royal pilgrimage
clearly stated in Divy. 389 ff: to worship at the spots associated
with the life of the Buddha, and to distinguish each of them with
a visible sign as a mark of favour to future visitors. The legend
expressly mentions that at Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kuśinara,
and other places, the king set up a commemorative shrine and made
an appropriate gift of money.

Aśoka's visit to the Bodhi tree is confirmed by the evidence of RE
VIII (Girnar version) which states that when King Devanāmiya had
been anointed ten years, he undertook a dhammadīya (journey for
the propagation of Dhamma), during which he visited the Bodhi tree
has recently been pointed out that as all the other versions
substitute the verb derived from Sans. vikrama with niśa for this and
other derivatives of vyā in the edict, it is almost certain that
the original contained viśākrama. If the phrase refers merely to a
pilgrimage or ceremonial visit to the Bodhi tree, it is surprising
that Aśoka as a recent and very devoted convert, waited for two
years (from the time of his conversion to the hypothetical visit
mentioned in RE VIII) before making it, and thought of recording
his visit. The use of the verb viśākrama, meaning 'to go forth' in
all the other versions, therefore, implies that the reference is
not merely to a visit to the Bodhi tree, but to a psychological
and spiritual journey (to sambodhi) undertaken by Aśoka himself.
A.L. Basham: Unpublished paper on Sambodhi in Aśoka's 8th Rock Edict;
read at the Conference of the International Association of Buddhist
Studies, Columbia University, Sept., 1978.
outer enclosing wall (*pakara*) with a gatehouse (*dvāra koṭṭhaka*) of the seven precious substances.\(^1\) There is no mention of a *bodhi-ghara*.

The same *jātaka* also refers to a king of Kaliṅga erecting a pillar of gold eighteen cubits high within the *bodhimandala*,\(^2\) a jewelled altar in front of the Bodhi tree, a jewelled railing on a cemented plinth around the tree, and a gateway of the seven precious substances.\(^3\) It may be pointed out that although the concept of erecting pillars does not have any specific Buddhist significance, it is quite likely that the author of the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka* was influenced by the legend of Aśoka erecting memorial columns throughout his vast empire.

From the evidence of the *Nidānakathā* (*Jātaka* I, 68-69), it is clear that the tree beneath which the Bodhisattva was seated on the day of his Awakening, was already the haunt of a *devāra* to whom offerings were made, and to whom Sujātā the householder’s daughter\(^4\) had prayed for marriage and fertility boons. It is quite possible, as Coomaraswamy has pointed out, that the building of enclosing walls, the hanging of wreaths and garlands, and other honours paid to sacred trees haunted by spirits, were the same as those offered to *bodhi* trees, and that the cult of the *bodhi-ghara* was taken over from a pre-existing and co-existing practice.\(^5\)

It is indeed significant that the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka* which appears to belong to the post-Aśokan period, makes no reference to a *bodhi-ghara*,

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1. *Jātaka* IV, 229.
2. *bodhimandale attharasahatham suvanna thambham uссāpesi*.
3. *Jātaka* IV, 236.
4. *senakutumbika*; cf. *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* II, 131, which refer to Sujātā as *nandika-grāmika-suḥitā*.
although the reliefs depicting the Awakening in the early art, clearly represent structural enclosures of various designs. Coomaraswamy points out that the description in the Chinese version of the Adokavadinā suggests that 'the structure was rather of a scaffolding type made of wood and not of stone', and that the bodhi-gharas illustrated in the early reliefs represent the original bodhi-ghara built by Aśoka (later restored in the time of Huviska), referred to in a Bodhgaya inscription (c. 100 BC) as rājāpasāda cetika.¹

Archaeological evidence, however, shows that the earliest known structure which is suggestive of a temple at Bodhgaya, appropriately described as Prāśina-Vajrasana-Gandhakuti (ancient Diamond-throne Chamber),² was not built by Aśoka. There is no extant relic of the time of Aśoka other than a highly polished sandstone slab serving as a lower cover for the ancient Diamond-throne. In front of the latter, Cunningham discovered three pillar bases (two of them in situ) indicating that a canopy or covering roof over the sandstone throne was supported by four pilasters, precisely as it is in the Bharhut relief illustrating the attainment of Bodhi by Śākyamuni.

From the evidence of the Nigliva and Rūndei inscriptions of Aśoka, according to which he set up pillars to commemorate respectively, his visits to the stūpa of the Buddha Konākamana (enlarged six years earlier), and the birthplace of the Buddha Śākyamuni,³ it may be suggested that he also erected a pillar at Bodhgaya when he visited the site of the

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2. cf. A. Cunningham: Mahābodhi, Pl. VI.
3. cf. the words hita Bhagavah jāte occurring in the Rūndei inscription, and Divy. 389: asmin mahārāja pradēśe Bhagavah jāte.
Awakening. This is confirmed by the Bharhut relief itself which represents an Asokan monolith, distinguished by its round shaft and elephant capital, standing in the front to the right of the Bodhi tree.\(^1\)

The earliest extant remains of any votive structures at Bodhgaya comprise of:

1) A sculptured (Buddhist) railing of sandstone of a quadrangular shape (not circular as shown in the Bharhut relief), serving as an enclosure for the Bodhi tree.

2) A small pillared open chamber built to the east and just in front of the original tree, with a cubical throne serving as an altar.

3) A pillared open shed with a flat or gabled roof containing a high platform of brick with lotus representations of the Buddha's footsteps, the whole structure representing the traditional Jewel-walk Shrine (ratana caikama cetiya).\(^2\)

The inscribedotive labels on these remains clearly indicate that all these structures were erected by the Matron Kurangi, wife of King Indragnimitra; Sirima, a female attendant; and Nagaodevi, wife of King Brahmamitra. Two coping-stone inscriptions of Kurangi and Sirima read: Rāño Kosika-putrasa Indāgnimitrasa pājavātīye jivapurvye Kurangiye dānam: rājā pasāda-caetika Sirimaye dānam, i.e. 'the gift of Kurangi, the wife of King Indragnimitra (who is) the mother of living sons: (the gift as well) of Sirima, a female donor from the royal palace'. Another inscription of Nagaodevi, on a stone-railing pillar reads: Rāño Brahma-mitrasa pājavātīye Nagaodevaye dānam, i.e. 'The gift of Nagaodevi, the wife of King Brahmamitra'.

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2. B.M. Barua: *Gaya and Buddha Gaya*, I, pp. 176-177.
The phrase *pasāda-cetikā* occurs not only in the coping-stone inscription of Kurāmagi and Sirimā referred to above, but also in a railing pillar inscription of Sirimā.\(^1\) It is clear that the word *cetikā* here does not denote a shrine or sanctuary as Coomaraswamy would have us believe, but is intended as an epithet of Sirimā. The word *cetikā* which may be equated to *cediga* of the Jaina Prakrit, means a female donor, but treated as an equivalent of the Pali *cetikā*, indicates a maid servant or a female attendant.\(^2\)

Paleographic evidence indicates that the Bodhgaya inscriptions of Kurāmagi, Sirimā, and Nāgadevi, referred to above, are earlier than the Udaygiri inscriptions of Khāravela of Kalinga, his chief queen, and others. Likewise, the reliefs of the Bodhgaya sandstone railing also appear to antedate those of the Udaygiri caves excavated by Khāravela. This shows that Kauśikaputra Īndragnimitra and Brāhmaśīvmitra most probably were the predecessors of Brhaspatimitra (Bahasatimita) the king of Magadha alluded to in the Hastigumpha inscription as a contemporary of Khāravela.

We have already seen that in the reliefs depicting the Bodhi tree at Bharhut, Sanchi, and Mathura, all of which appear to be earlier than, or contemporaneous with, the sandstone *Vajrāsana* and railing of Kurāmagi, Sirimā, and Nāgadevi, the *bodhi-gharas* vary in design and architectural detail. This seems to suggest that either there was no historical basis of the *bodhi-gharas* illustrated in the early art, and that the portrayals are nothing but examples of the artists' imagination, or that there existed a structural *bodhi-ghara* in the form of a hypaethral temple, at

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2. Barua: *op. cit.*, pp. 67 and 68.
an earlier date, which was probably built by Asoka. The phrase *caturdisyan vāraṃ baddhva* occurring in the *Divyavadāna* (404), seems at first sight to suggest that the method of construction was that employed by craftsmen working with wood, *baddhva* meaning 'tied'. It may be remembered that the carpenters' method of working with wood was exactly the same as that adopted by the Bharhut masons working with stone. The original *bodhi-ghara*, if at all there was one, must have been removed during the reign of Indragnimitra and Brahmamitra, and votive structures made of sandstone erected in its place.

The word *aśvāsṭha* literally means 'the station of the horse' (*aśva-stha*), the horse representing the Sun\(^1\) or Agni; that is, the station of Agni's descent in the cosmos which is the sun in the sky.\(^2\) While it has to be admitted that it is unlikely that the commonplace name of a common tree was originally based on mystical symbolism, it is possible that the Sanskrit name *aśvāsṭha* came to be applied to the tree whose solar affiliation was, as we shall see, already recognised in the pre-Vedic culture. Numerous texts refer to Agni as 'the standing horse' (*aśvēya tiṣṭhante*)\(^3\) kindled at the navel of the earth.\(^4\) An interesting explanation of the word

1. cf. *ŚB* IX, 4, 4, 3, referring to the region of the horse as the highest firmament. cf. also *ŚB* VI, 3, 3, 10; VII, 3, 2, 10; 12; 13; 16; etc: '... for that horse is indeed yonder sun'. *AB* VI, 3, 5; *TB* III, 9, 23, 2: *asau vā ādityo aśvaḥ*.

2. cf. *RV* X, 88, 10-12: 'the gods, engendered Agni in heaven ...; the gods set him as Sārya, son of Aditi, in heaven ...; Agni who hath spread the radiant mornings, and with his light unveils the darkness.' cf. *AB* VIII, 28, 5: 'From the fire is the sun born ...'.

3. *AV* III, 15, 8: '... standing horse, O Jātavedas'. cf. *VS* XI, 75; *ŚB* VI, 6, 3, 8.

4. cf. *ŚB* IX, 4, 4, 13: 'The sacrificer having touched the fire, mutters ... 'the navel of the earth, thou art' ...; *TS* IV, 1, 10: '... kindled at the navel of the earth, Agni we invoke' (*nābhā prthīvya emidhānām agnim ... havāmahe*); *RV* I, 143, 4: 'Him (Agni), all possessor ... was brought to the navel of the earth, the centre of creation' (*nābhā prthīvya bhuvanasya majmana*). cf. *RV* I, 164, 35; 38 referring to Agni as the navel of creation (*bhuvanasya nābhīḥ*).
aśvattha occurs in Maitrāyani Śāhītā I, 6, 8, where Prajāpati, having brought the entire creation into existence, became a horse, and casting his head upon the ground, lay in that condition for a year. Thereupon, the tree which burst forth from the head of the horse (aśvatthya mūrdhano udābhīnat), became known as aśvattha. That is why it is yajñavacare and sacred to Prajāpati (Maitrāyani Śāhītā I, 6, 2). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (VI, 5, 3, 9) also refers to Prajāpati as a horse: Prajāpatyo va aśvah.¹

Several passages in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also identify Prajāpati with Puruṣa: Puruṣah Prajāpatiḥ.² The same text (XIV, 4, 2, 2) not only identifies Prajāpati with the sun, but also with Puruṣa residing in the sun, and the real source of life and light. This Puruṣa who is the Primeval Being, the totality of the universe as represented in Rig Veda X, 90, 2,³ is the same as Brahma described as the One, and the All in Chāndogya Upaniṣad III, 12, 6 ff.

The solar character of the aśvattha is evident from a number of texts, e.g. Maitrāyani Śāhītā II, 2, 1 refers to the seven beams of light emanating from the aśvattha; according to Mahābhārata XIII, 135, 101-102, the aśvattha represents the solar aspect of the Supreme God Viṣṇu: 'He who is the sacred Fig tree ... who has seven tongues, seven flames, seven vehicles'.⁴ In III, 29, 10-25 of the same text, 'aśvattha' is given as one of the one hundred and eight names of Sūrya. The Gṛhya Sūtra of Gobhila (IV, 7, 22) also says that the aśvattha is sacred to the sun (aśvattham sūrya daivataḥ).

1. cf. TB III, 9, 17, 4.
2. VI, 1,1,5; 2,1,23; VII,1,1,37; 4,1,15.
3. 'Puruṣa is this All; that which has come into existence, and that which will be'.
4. sapta-jīvāḥ sapta-dhāḥ sapta-vāhanāḥ.
It was not, however, the Vedic Aryans alone who associated the asvattha with the sun. A number of potsherds from Chanhudaro exhibit the solar orb, its rays radiating in the form of asvattha leaves;\(^1\) a painting on a pottery cover shows an asvattha tree enclosed by a circumscribed rayed orb, which is obviously a portrayal of the sun.\(^2\) Again, a faience sealing from Harappa shows the solar orb with seven rays, each ray terminating in an asvattha leaf.\(^3\)

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that in India the asvattha was closely associated with the sun from as early as the period of the Harappa culture, and that this association culminated in the monistic philosophy of the \textit{Upanisads}, according to which the tree is identified with Brahman the self of not only the entire universe, but also the \textit{atman} within each individual.

We have seen that in Vedic cosmogony the place of the sacrifice was the central and most important point, the navel of the earth. The navel is, as evident from \textit{Rg Veda} I, 185, 1, the support of all things existing (\textit{vistara mānā bibhrīto}), the centre of the universe where heaven and earth meet and kiss each other (I, 185, 5: \textit{abhijīghranti bhuvanasya nābhīm dyāvā}). We have also noticed the three levels of creation where Agni operates - as Jātavedas on earth, as Vaiśvānara (the sun) in heaven, and beyond this manifested world; that is, in transcendency, in the lap of \textit{ṛta}, the highest station and birthplace of Agni. In the cosmogony of Agni, each level is directly linked with the source, for being the son of \textit{ṛta}, he himself is \textit{ṛta}.\(^4\) The place of the sacrifice at the navel of the

\(^{2}\) cf. M.S. Vats: \textit{Excavations at Harappa}, Pl. LXIV, 18.
\(^{3}\) cf. \textit{ASI}, Annual Report, 1928-29; Pl.XXII (b; 10b).
\(^{4}\) \textit{RV} IV, 40,5: 'Born amidst men, in the sky, born of Cosmic Order and Truth, in the highest firmament, in the water, amidst cattle, born of Cosmic Order and Truth, born in the mountains, he is Cosmic Order and Truth'. cf. \textit{ŚB} VI,7,1,8; \textit{AV} XIII,1,14, referring to the sun standing over the navel of the earth.
earth, and the lap of r̄ta in transcedency lie on one axis and 'coincide in the timeless dimension where Agni reveals himself'. This is the Cosmic Pillar at the centre of the universe, the Skambha, and the Cosmic Tree, which sustains all creation and is identified with the immutable, immortal Brahman of the Upaniṣads.

Mention has already been made of the two forms (dvāra rūpa) of Brahman described in Maitrī Upaniṣad VI, 15, as Time and Timeless (kāla-akāla); that which is prior to the sun is the Timeless and without parts (akāla); but that which begins with the Sun is Time (i.e. is temporal) and has parts (sakalaḥ). 'The form of that which has parts is the year; from the year are creatures produced ... in the year they disappear. Therefore the year is indeed Prajā-pati, is time, is food, is the abode of Brahman, is the self ...'. Elsewhere, the same text (VI, 14) clearly says that the sun is the source of Time (sūryasya kālasya), and that Brahman is the self of Time (VI, 16: ādiśyātmāḥ Brāhmaṇo).

We have already seen that it is Agni's birth in the lap of r̄ta in transcedency that represents Timelessness, and that it is his manifes­tation as Vaiśvānara, the sun, which marks the beginning of Time. While Rg Veda X, 5, 7 refers to the birth of Agni the First-born of the cosmic order in the earliest aeon (pūrva āyumi), and X, 45, 1; I, 95, 3-4 speak of Agni as being born first (jāyata prathamah), Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad V, 4, 1, identifies the great yakṣa as the First-born (mahād yakṣam prathamajāḥ), and the True (satyam), and Brahman.

2. sakalasya va etad rūpaṃ yat saṃvatsaraḥ.
3. saṃvatsaro vai praṭi-patikā kāloʿannam brahma-nidam ātmāḥ.
From a survey of the passages cited above, it may be inferred that the āśvattha identified with Brahman, is in Vedic ontology, a symbol of Time. It is, however, in the Bhagavad Gītā (XV, 2-4) that the temporal and timeless aspects of the āśvattha are best exemplified. Here the Cosmic Tree is identified with saṃsāra, the universe of transience, of birth-and-death, of constant change, and consequently, of Time: 'Below, above, its branches straggle outwards, well-nourished by the constituents (guna-prārpādhā); sense objects are the twigs; below its roots proliferate, inseparably linked with works in the world of men (karm'ānumbhandānī manuṣya loke) ... cut down this āśvattha with fully developed roots with the strong sword of non-attachment, and seek that 'station' (tataḥ pādam) from which, once reached, there is no return' (na nivartanti bhūyāh).

The author of the Anugītā (Mahābhārata XIV, 47, 12-14) like the author of the Bhagavad Gītā also advises that the tree of saṃsāra be cut down: 'Cut it down, chop it with wisdom (jñānena) the best of weapons. Cast it aside; win deathlessness; be done with death and being born again ...'. This āśvattha identified with the Tree of renewed birth-and-death in the Bhagavad Gītā and Anugītā, is obviously not the same as the āśvattha with which Kṛṣṇa identifies himself: 'Among all trees, the āśvattha am I ...' (Bhagavad Gītā X, 26).

The destruction of the āśvattha tree by the 'sword of non-attachment', and 'wisdom' referred to in the Bhagavad Gītā and Anugītā is, however, characteristic of Buddhist rather than upanisadic thought. In Samyutta Nikāya IV, 160-161, the Buddha refers to the sap of a young tender fig tree, which would flow if a man were to cut it with a sharp axe from every side. The sap of life for the Buddhist, as is well known, is passion (rāga), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). We have already seen that the basic tenet of Buddhism, is that all 'conditioned' things share three marks or
features (lakṣaṇas) - impermanence, suffering, and not-self. While the Bhagavad Gītā (IX, 33) teaches that the world is transient and full of unhappiness (aniṣṭyam asuḥkam lokam), the Dhammapada (277) says that all conditioned things (which, as we have already seen, are equivalent to the 'World', and the 'All') are impermanent (sabbe saṅkhāra anīcchā); all conditioned things are (characterised by) suffering; and all elements are not-self.¹ The root evil, according to Buddhism, is ignorance (avijjā); it is under the influence of ignorance that one looks for permanence in what is essentially impermanent; happiness in what is inseparable from suffering; and selfhood in what is not the self. According to Nettipakarana 27, ignorance has the mark of being unable to penetrate to all dharmas as they are.² It is due to ignorance that the individual succumbs to passion, hatred, and delusion; in other words, it is solely due to ignorance that the 'sap of life' is allowed to flow. The imagery of the tree flowing with the sap of life and nourished by ignorance, is employed in several passages in the canon according to which the emancipated man is like a tree cut at the root (uoṭṭhinammā) 'unable to become again; of a nature not to rise in future' (anabhāvakatā āyatān anuppāda-dhammā).³

Buddhism attaches the highest value to paranormal, supramundane knowledge. As the un faltering penetration into the true nature (i.e. dharmic reality) of objects,⁴ knowledge, or wisdom represents the highest

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1. cf. Dh.278: sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha; and 279: sabbe dhammā anattā.
2. sabbe dhamma yathāva sampativedha lakkhana avijjā.
3. cf. AN II,198; SN II,88; 90; 91; 93; III, 27, etc.
4. The Pāli canon contains several references to knowledge of objects acquired by seeing them as they really are: yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-ñāsana (SN II,30; V,432; AN IV,336). According to AN V,36, the yathābhūta-ñāṇa is knowing 'what exists as existing, and what does not exist as not existing' (saṁtan va atthāti nassati asantam va nattāthi nassati). The same text (V,37) adds that 'knowing things as they are and wherever they are, is the highest knowledge' (etad anuttarāyam ... nāyanam yad idam tatthā tatthā yathābhūto-ñānāyam).
virtue, in contradistinction to ignorance which is the root of all evil.

In Samyutta Nikāya III, 28-31, the Buddha claims to be Awakened (abhissambuddha) with that incomparable Supreme Awakening (amuttarasammasambodhi), after he had realized the true nature of the five khandhas, the grasping of the five khandhas, and the escape therefrom. In Dīgha Nikāya I, 12, the Buddha declares that having realised things for himself and seen them face to face, he has made them known; these things are 'profound, difficult to comprehend, serene, excellent, super rational, subtle, and comprehended only by the wise'.¹ He realized Nibbāna (Majjhima Nikāya I, 511: nībbānāṁ paccatī) after he had acquired direct knowledge and insight into things,² including the Four Noble Truths.³

It is evident then, that the dualism underlying the Supreme Principle in the Upaniṣads, is continued and developed further in the Bhagavad Gītā where the āsvattha is identified with Kṛṣṇa, as well as with renewed birth-and-death. In other words, the āsvattha is ontologically both the tree of Sāṃsāra (sāṃsāra-vrkṣa), as well as the Tree of Immortality or Brahman (brahma-vrkṣa); it is a correlated manifestation of both the elemental self and the Supreme self, represented by the temporal and Timeless aspects of Brahman, and referred to in the Maitrī Upaniṣad.

In commenting upon the species of the Tree at Bodhgaya, Coomaraswamy remarks that the aṅgava-papa (undying banyan tree) is not an āsvattha but a nyagrodha, and as 'the Pali texts refer to the Bodhi tree now as āsvattha,

¹. gambhirā duddasā duranubodhā santā pariṇātā atakkavacarā nipuṇa-paññita-vedaniyā.
². cf. Sn 84, where the Buddha is described as 'one who has knowledge and insight into all things' (sabbese dhammesu ca nāma-dassī).
³. The Four Truths are: a) Wordly existence is full of suffering (dukkha); b) thirst or craving (tāpā) is the cause of worldly suffering or the origin of suffering (dukkha-samudaya); c) worldly existence can be ended (nirodha) by the destruction of craving; d) there is a Path (maggā) for the destruction of craving.
and now as nyagrodha', the two trees are 'not clearly distinguished in practice; if the distinction of meaning ... in the two names aśvattha and nyagrodha continued to be felt, it must have been rather within an esoteric doctrine than publicly'.

It is true that the aśāya-vāṭa at Gaya, described in the Vanaparvan (Mahābhārata III, 95, 72) as 'famous in the three worlds' (trigu lokāsu viśrutah), is a nyagrodha. However, it is evident from the Mahābhārata that this nyagrodha was revered by Hindu pilgrims long before the rise of Buddhism, and had nothing to do with the Bodhi tree of Gotama; III, 95, 13-14, referring to the aśāya-vāṭa says: 'the undying banyan tree derives its greatness from the great sacrificial performances of the ṛgīs ... There the Pāṇḍavas observed the holy fast with perfect composure of mind' (pāṇḍavā virāḥ ... tatropavāśiśī tu okaṁ niścita-mānasah); III, 84, 82-83 says that the devout pilgrim who makes an offering at the foot of the undying banyan tree, to the departed paternal spirits, is granted an imperishable future. Reference to a nyagrodha tree is also made in III, 86, 81-83, and 114, in the story of the Dissolution of the Universe, according to which the sage Mārkandeya perceived in the midst of the all-encompassing deluge, a giant nyagrodha tree on the branches of which rested the Divine Child. In the Vāyu Purāṇa (105, 45; 111, 26-27; 35), the aśāya-vāṭa, the Grāhrakūṭa-vāṭa, the Brahmāprakalpita əmrā, the Bodhidruma aśvattha, are described as sacred trees.

3. dattham pitṛbhyaś tu bhavatyakṣaram uṣyate.
While it is possible that the imagery of the Inverted Tree, with its roots high above the ground, referred to in the *Rg Veda* and *Katha Upanishad*, was originally based on the *nyagrodha* which means 'downward growing', it is difficult to agree with Coomaraswamy that any confusion existed regarding the two distinct species of trees. Moreover, Coomaraswamy is mistaken in believing that the Bodhi tree is sometimes described as a *nyagrodha* in the Pāli literature. Certainly the tree under which Gotama received an offering of milk-rice from Sujātā at Uruvela was a *nyagrodha*, as mentioned in *Jātaka* I, 60: 'Now, at that time, at Uruvela, in the village of Senāni, in the house of Senāni the landowner, was born a girl Sujātā who, when she had grown up, made a vow at a *nyagrodha* tree, saying: 'If I go (marry) into a family of equal rank, and my first child is a son, then I shall make an offering of a hundred thousand (gold pieces).' The text (I, 69) continues: 'Adorning herself with all her ornaments, she placed the vessel (of milk-rice) on her head, and went in great splendour to the foot of the *nyagrodha* tree (*mahanubhāvena nyagrodhamūlaṁ gantvā*); seeing the Bodhisatta, she was filled with great joy, taking him for the deity of the tree' (*rukkhadevacatā ti saññāya*).1 However, *Jātaka* I, 70 explicitly states that the 'Bodhisatta spent the day in a grove of *sāla* trees in full bloom, on the bank of the river.2 In the evening, when the flowers drop from their stems, he proceeded along a path decked by *devas*, like a lion when roused, towards

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1. Earlier in the narrative, the Buddha is represented as having seen five dreams, and as making the following resolution: 'Today I shall become a Buddha'. At the end of the night he washed and dressed himself, and waiting till it was time to go around for alms, he sat at the foot of that (*nyagrodha*) tree, lighting it up with his radiance. Sujātā's maidservant Pupā arriving there, saw the Bodhisatta sitting at the foot of the tree and lighting up the entire region of the East; she saw that the tree had become gold-coloured from the rays issuing from his body. And she thought: 'Today our *deva*, descending from his tree, is seated to receive our offering with his own hands'.

2. *bodhisatto pi nāditirakñhi eupupphitasalavane divāvihāroṁ katvā*. 
the Tree of Awakening' (*siho va vijambhāno bodhirukkhabhimukhe pāyasi*).

The passage cited above makes no reference to either a *nyagrodha* or an *asvattha*, but only to the Bodhi tree. Indeed it is significant that in the Pāli literature, the Bodhisatta is represented as attaining Enlightenment under an *asvattha* only in the *Dāravīrādakathā* of the *Jātaka-nidānakathā* and the *Mahaṭpadāna suttā* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In *Jātaka I*, 15-16, the Buddha Dīpamkara prophecies that countless ages hence the brahmana Sumedha 'will become a Buddha in this world; at the foot of an *asvattha* tree he shall be Awakened (*assathassā mule bujjhissati*). The mother that bears him shall be named Māya; his father will be named Suddhodana; he himself will be Gotama ... The Bodhi tree of this Bhagavat is known as the *asvattha* (*Bodhi tassa Bhagavato asattho ti pavuocati*). That the *nyagrodha* tree beneath which Gotama received the offering of milk-rice from Sujātā was not the Bodhi tree, and was not confused with the *asvattha* at the foot of which he became a Buddha, as Coomaraswamy suggests, is evident from *Jātaka I*, 15, where the Buddha Dīpamkara declares: 'Having made the Great Renunciation (*mahābhinikkhāma*), having made the great effort, having received milk-rice at the foot of the *nyagrodha* (*nigrodhamule pāyaṃ paṭiggahetvā*), and partaken of it on the bank of the Neranjara, he will at the foot of an *asvattha*, become a Buddha' (*assatthārakkanamule abhisambuddho*).

*Dīgha Nikāya* II, 52 also says that the Lord became a Buddha at the foot of an *asvattha* tree (*assatthassā mule abhisambuddho*).

It is interesting that the *Ariyapariyesana sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* I, 167) describing the Bodhisattva's struggle for Enlightenment does not

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1. *aparimeyye ito kappe Buddhho loke bhavissati.*
even mention a Bodhi tree. Here, the Buddha says: 'I saw a delightful stretch of land and lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a well established ford, and a village for support nearby ... So I, monks, sat down just there, thinking: 'Indeed this does well for striving'. Perhaps the earliest reference to the Bodhi tree in the Pali literature occurs in the Mahāvagga (I, 1) which does not, however, mention an āsava: 'The Lord sat cross-legged in one posture (ekapallakkhena) for seven days at the foot of the Tree of Awakening (bodhirukkhamūla), experiencing the bliss of freedom' (vimuttisukha).

The account of the Enlightenment in the Majjhima Nikāya is 'remarkable in being confined to describing the Buddha's victory as consisting in the discovery of the true method of concentration, after the trial and rejection of the practices of other ascetics'.¹ Not only is there no mention of either Māra, or the Bodhi tree, but the text also contains direct evidence to show how some of the later incidents have developed out of mere epithets. The river with the 'well established ford' (sūpatīthha) is turned into a proper name in Jātaka I, 70: nahanaṭṭānānī sūpatīthinatīthha nāmarājā, while the neighbouring 'army township' (sena-nigama) which was probably unknown or unintelligible to the commentators, becomes 'the village of Senānī (Jātaka I, 68: senānīnigama); and in Lalitavistara XVIII, 267, becomes senāpatigrāma, the village of the 'Commander of the army'.²

In commenting on the date of the Ariyapariyesana sutta, G.C. Pande observes that the autobiographic form of this narrative which distinguishes

it from the two other main canonical accounts of the Buddha's life, the Mahāparinibbāna sutta (Dīgha Nikāya 16), and the opening sections of the Mahāvagga, 'should be regarded as an apocryphal contribution'. Pande also adds that although the Ariyapariyesana sutta seems to belong to the same genre of balladic biography as the Mahāparinibbāna sutta, unlike the latter, not only does the former show no obvious late features, but moreover, an earlier form of this biographical tradition does not occur anywhere else in the Pāli canon.¹

Higashimoto and Nanayakkara also describe the Ariyapariyesana sutta as one of the earliest suttas in the Pāli canon which refers to the Enlightenment. They point out, however, that although neither the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Pitaka nor the Jātakaniḍāṇakathā is as old as certain suttas in the Nikāyas, they 'incorporate an earlier tradition which had gained acceptance by the time these texts were composed', and so 'it may be surmised that the tradition recorded in them belongs to an early period'.² The date of the Mahāpadāna sutta is likewise uncertain, but the text ‘clearly belongs to a period that had developed the doctrine of the marvellous career of all Bodhisattvas, and of the six previous Buddhas’.³ Not only are the trees of all the six preceding Buddhas mentioned, but the thirty-two marks of a great man (Mahāpurusa-lakkhana) are also described in detail. In the four Nikāyas, the name of the Buddha's father occurs only in the Mahāpadāna sutta, which also gives the names of the fathers of the six previous Buddhas; presupposing an advanced stage in the development of the Buddha legend. Although the very title of the sutta, Mahāpadāna suggests

². Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, III, fasc. 2, p.250.
its lateness.\(^1\) It is possible, as Waddell has pointed out, that this sutta and the Lalitavistara can be traced back to a common source and that the Mahāpadāna sutta incorporates a tradition of about the 3rd-1st Cent. BC.\(^2\) This is confirmed by the sculpture at Bharhut illustrating the seven distinctive trees with their respective altars (vajrāsana) and label inscriptions which give the names of the six previous Buddhas.

The belief in previous Buddhas seem to point to the actual existence of at least one of them, as we know from Asoka's inscription that he enlarged the stūpa of Konākamana, the fifth of the six preceding Buddhas. It has to be admitted, however, that this only proves that legends concerning them existed at that time, but does not prove that these Buddhas were historical, any more than the footprint of the Buddha on Adam's Peak proves that he visited Ceylon (Sri Lanka).\(^3\) Although the six previous Buddhas described in the sutta agree with the list of the six in the Sanskrit texts, the longer lists of Buddhas vary; all of them, however, agree in describing Dipankara as the Buddha under whom Gotama (as the brahmin Sumedha) made the vow to become a Buddha, and who first prophesied his career. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the varying additions to the list of six previous Buddhas represent more or less independent inventions and enlargements of an earlier form of legend, and the fact that even the earlier six are absent from most parts of the Pali canon, suggests that they too do not belong to the earliest tradition.\(^4\)

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It must be remembered, however, that the fact that the Ariyapariyesana sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya makes no reference to the Bodhi tree, does not necessarily mean that the Gotama was not seated at the foot of a tree at the time of his Enlightenment. There are numerous references in the Pāli literature to the solitary bhikkhu resorting to a secluded dwelling, either in a forest, at the foot of a tree, mountain glen, cliff cave, cemetery, open space, or a heap of straw - where he sits cross-legged, with his body erect and sets mindfulness before him'. A survey of the Pāli literature shows that greater emphasis was laid on meditating in seclusion, rather than at one particular place. The Visuddhimagga (XXI, 18) states that the yogin, having meditated deeply and for a long time on the nature of this world, sees for himself that there is nothing in it that is not 'sorrow' (dukkha) and his urge towards its opposite becomes correspondingly more intense. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya (IV, 233), the Buddha is represented as saying: 'Monks, this Dhamma is for the secluded; this Dhamma is not for one who is fond of society' (pavittassāyam bhikkave dhammo nāyam dhammo sanganikārassā), while IV, 235 of the same text describes the Venerable Aniruddha who 'dwelling alone, secluded, earnest, zealous, realized not long after, in this world: 'Birth is destroyed (khīna jāti) ... there is no more life in this state' (nāparam itthattāya). Aṅguttara Nikāya IV, 244, also refers to the Buddha being pleased with a bhikkhu's forest abode: 'I see a forest-dwelling monk, seated composed and I think: 'Presently he will free the unfreed mind, or will acquire a state of mind which is free...

So I am pleased with that monk's forest abode. (avimutta-vīṭtāna-vihāra). The reference in the Suttanipāta (221) to the 'solitary sage meditating in the wood (munino vīvitasa vanamhi jhāyato), and to dwelling at the foot of a tree (mukkhamalā-senāsavan) as one of the four requisites (nissaya) of a bhikkhu in Mahāvagga I, 30, 4, indicate that the concept of a wandering, homeless monk, meditating in seclusion, remained an ideal even after the members of the Saṅgha began leading a well-established, cenobitical life. Mahāvagga VII, 1, 1, and Cullavagga XII, 1, 8, referring to numerous bhikkhus living in forests, feeding solely on alms, wearing cast-off rags, and never having more than three pieces of cloth (araṇhaka pīṇḍapattika-pahusulikā terivariyā), indicate that cenobitical habits developed slowly amongst the earliest bhikkhus.\(^1\)

It is significant that the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment while seated at the foot of a tree has a parallel in the Jain canonical literature. In the Kalpasūtra, which records the lives of the predecessors of Mahāvira the last Tīrthakara (literally, one who creates a ford across the stream of existence), in a manner clearly intended for liturgical purposes,\(^2\) all the saints are represented as attaining complete knowledge and intuition (kevala) at the foot of a tree. Another parallel occurs in the account of the enlightenment of Pārśva, the predecessor of Mahāvīra;

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1. cf. S. Dutt: *The Buddha and Five After-Centuries*, p.70.
2. Winternitz observes that when the images of the Jinas are worshipped in the Jain temples, hymns are sung to them, one of which summarises the happy moments of their lives; it is precisely of these that the biographies of the Jinas treat. The biography of Mahāvīra which is told in great detail, 'with great diffusiveness, with descriptions in the *kavya* style, and with exaggerations beyond all measure', remind us of the Lalitavistara. *Op. cit.*, II, p.463.
while there is no mention of an enemy in the Kalpaśūtra, according to the commentary, Pārśva was assailed by a demon closely resembling Māra of the Buddhist literature. The Jina was seated at the foot of an asoka tree\(^1\) when he was attacked by an asura named Meghamāli, who assumed the form of a lion, and later caused a torrential downpour of rain in order to drown the saint. The Nāga king Dharana, however, protected Pārśva by wrapping his coils around him, and covering him with his hood.\(^2\)

The story of the Nāga king Dharana protecting the Jain Tīrthakara by wrapping his coils around him, corresponds to the myth of the Nāga king Mucalinda sheltering the Buddha during a terrible storm, in a similar manner, after his Enlightenment. A further parallelism is evident in the story of the conception of the two religious leaders; the mother of Mahāvīra, Trisālā, is said to have had fourteen auspicious dreams, and the interpreters, as in Buddhist legend, prophesied that he would either become a universal emperor (cakravartin), or a Jina.\(^3\) Like the Buddha, Mahāvīra also displayed marvellous knowledge as a boy when he was sent to a teacher.

These parallels in Buddhist and Jain mythology cannot be attributed to mere coincidence, and it is quite possible, as Thomas has suggested, that these legends, which do not belong to the canon of the Buddhists or the Jains, grew side by side mutually influencing the rival hagiographers.\(^4\)

As the earlier Pāli accounts of Gotama's Enlightenment do not specifically mention that the aśvattha was his Bodhi tree, it is difficult

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1. In the canonical account, the tree is identified as a Dhātaki. cf. J. Jacobi: Jaina sūtras, SBE, 22, p.273.
to state with certainty that it was originally an aśvattha under which
the Awakening took place. It is interesting that in the accounts of the
Enlightenment, in the literature of other schools of Indian Buddhism, the
aśvattha is not specifically mentioned as Gotama's Bodhi tree. Both
Mahāvastu II, 131, 286, and Lalitavistara 278, 6; 7, describing his struggle
for Enlightenment, refer to the tree under with the Awakening took place
merely as the Bodhi tree. The Buddhacarita of Aśvaghosa, however,
explicitly states that the Bodhisattva attained Enlightenment under an
aśvattha; XII, 115 says: 'With resolution as his sole companion, he set
his mind on Enlightenment and proceeded to the foot of the aśvattha
(aśvattha-mūla), where the ground was carpeted with green grass'; while
XIII, 7 says: 'Then seizing his flower-bow and his five world-deluding
arrows, (Māra) the causer of unrest to mortal minds, approached the foot
of the aśvattha, accompanied by his children'.

According to the Ceylonese chronicles, Dipavamsa (XX, 20-21) and
Mahāvamsa (XXXIII, 100-101), the Buddhist canon was completed and committed
to writing during the reign of King Vaṭṭagamini of Ceylon (c. 88-76 BC).
The evidence of the votive inscriptions of Bharhut and Sanchi referring
to dhammakathika (preacher of the Dhamma), bhāyaka (reciter), peṭakān
(knower of the Piṭakas), suttaṁtika (reciter of the suttas), and
paconekāyika (knower of the five nikāyas) also shows that by c. 125 BC -
c. 25 AD, there already existed a Buddhist canon by the name of Piṭaka
which was divided into five nikāyas, and that there were suttas in which
the Dhamma was preached. 1 It has been pointed out that, as the name of

the great Buddhist emperor Asoka does not occur anywhere in the Pāli literature, the compilation of the canon was more or less completed by the middle of the 3rd Cent. BC. 1 However, it may be argued that the authors of the Pāli canonical literature may have felt it was unnecessary to mention the name of Asoka and the part played by him in the propagation of the Dhamma, while compiling the canon. It may also be added that the names of Kings Pāsenadi of Kosala, Bimbisāra and his son Ajatasattu of Magadha, were included in the canon probably because they were contemporaries of the Buddha, and while describing the life of the Master and his ministrations, mention was made of the three most powerful kings of eastern India. Moreover, the attempt on the part of the compilers to present the entire Theravāda canon as the Buddha's Word (buddha-vacanam) 'without omission or addition' (Dīpavamsa V, 52), is clearly evident from passages such as Rīgha Nikāya II, 87, where the greatness of Pātaliputra is stated in the form of a prophecy.

The discovery at Bodhgaya of the highly polished sandstone slab acting as a lower cover for the Ancient Diamond Throne, and the inclusion at Bharhut of the As'okan monolith in the scene of the Enlightenment, indicate that the tradition that the Bodhi tree at Gaya was no other than an aśvattha, is as old as the time of Asoka, and probably was current before his time.

We have already discussed the importance of the aśvattha and its role in Vedic ritualism and cosmological speculations. We have also referred to the summum bonum of the teachings of the Upaniṣads as the realization of the equation Brahman = ātman; and to the world of change (temporal) and

that of the Changeless (eternal), the time and the Timeless, constituting the dual form of Brahman. This Brahman, as we know, is for the first time identified in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad with the Lone Fig tree (eko’svattha), representing the totality of existence in terms of time as well as space. Although the Kaṭha Upaniṣad belongs to one of the three older Vedas, the (Keśa) Yajur Veda, it is nevertheless one of the metrical Upaniṣads ascribed by Deussen to a period much later than that of the ancient prose Upaniṣads.1 Winternitz, however, holds that although the Kaṭha Upaniṣad belongs to a period somewhat later than that of the earlier prose Upaniṣads, it is still early, and most probably pre-Buddhist.2

It is significant that the last of the four signs (nimittā) which led to Gotama’s renunciation of the world—a wandering almsman (bhikkhu)—indicates that the ancient Buddhist writers were aware that the act of renunciation was neither original nor without precedent.3 Reference to the world-forsaking almsman already occurs in the oldest Upaniṣads; Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III, 5, 1 says: 'Men knowing Brahman, give up the desire for sons, wealth and prosperity, and become almsmen' (bhikṣaṇaṁ ca vartanti), while according to Chāndogya Upaniṣad VIII, 4, 3, 'those who practise the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, i.e. live the holy life (brahmacaryaṇaṁ vānindanti), possess the Brahma-world'.

The somewhat later Maudgalya Upaniṣad (I, 2, 11) says: 'Those who practise austerity ... in the forest, the knowers of tranquility, dwelling as almsmen (bhikṣaṇaṁ ca vartanti) ... depart from sin ... to the immortal,'

3. cf. S. Dutt: Buddhist Monks and Monasteries, p.36.
imperishable Person'. The Kaivalya Upaniṣad (2) and Mahānārāyana Upaniṣad (X, 5) affirm: 'Not by deeds, nor by offspring or wealth, but only by renunciation, does one attain Immortality'.

These passages clearly reflect the emphasis laid on the supreme virtue of renunciation (tyāga) by which alone one acquires knowledge of the Supreme Reality, and indicate that it is the bhikṣu, sanyāsin or parivrājaka who is regarded as an embodiment of this virtue, and as practising the doctrine of tyāga. These almsmen are referred to in the Upaniṣads as knowers of Brahman, while the quest for Brahman and the striving for the highest spiritual attainment (with which Brahman is identified), is styled brahmaṇaṣṭrīya. It may be recalled here that the aśvattha tree showering soma and located in the third heaven from here, which is referred to in Chāndogya Upaniṣad VIII, 5, 3, is only to be known (attained) by those living the holy life (brahmaṇaṣṭrīya); they also possess freedom to move in all the worlds (kāmaśārīn).

It is precisely this brahmaṇaṣṭrīya which is referred to by the Buddha in Mahāvagga I, 11, 1: 'Go along in accordance with what has been enjoined, having realized ... the Supreme Goal of brahmaṇaṣṭrīya, for the sake of which householders go forth from home into homelessness'. Thus the concept of 'quest for Brahman' in the Upaniṣads and in the Pāli literature is identical, the difference lying only in the definition of the Ultimate Goal - (impersonal) Brahman in the Upaniṣads, and (impersonal) Nibbāna for the Buddhists.

Although in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, the Buddha is not apparently distinguished from any other arahants other than that he has the exceptional genius necessary to discover the truths unaided, whilst the
rest were helped by him, he was gradually given a higher status by the Theravādins, eventually being endowed with complete omniscience, in their more popular propaganda. Passages in the Pāli literature, such as: 'in the world of devas, Māras, Brahmās, together with recluses, brahmins, devas and mankind, a Tathāgata, an arahant, a Supremely Enlightened Buddha is considered the best' (Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 15), to which we have already referred, clearly indicate that he was no ordinary traveller on the Path to Nibbāna. While the basic humanity of the Buddha is never denied by the Theravādins, the Mahāsāṃghikas believe that he was far above other human beings (lokkottara), perhaps not really a human being at all; thus beginning the 'transformation of the Buddha and his doctrine which led step by step to the Mahāyāna, from the humanism of the original Tipitaka, to the supernaturalism of most of the Mahāyāna sūtras'.

The Rumīndei Pillar inscription of Asoka, referring to the King's visit to Lumbini, the birthplace of Bhagavān Buddha, clearly shows that by the middle of the 3rd Cent. BC, and possibly even earlier than that date, the Buddha was elevated to the position of a god. In the reliefs of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, and Amaravati, illustrating the scenes of the life of the Buddha, the aniconic symbols representing the figure of Gotama, such as the vrkṣa, oakra, and stūpa, are clearly portrayed as objects of worship. Some of the label inscriptions at Bharhut refer to

the Buddha as Bhagavat, e.g. the scene of the Descent from the Tusita heaven is identified by the inscription Bhagavato Ukrahti; the relief illustrating the Festival of the Lord's lock of hair is labelled Bhagavato oṣūmaho; Erāpata the Nāga king worshipping the Buddha is identified by the inscription Erāpato nāgarāja bhagavato vadate; and Ajātasatru worshipping the Lord is identified by the inscription Ajātasatru bhagavato vadate.2

It is unlikely that it was the abstract symbolism which is employed in the Vedas and Upaniṣads to describe and define the Supreme Deity or Being, and with which Gotama came to be identified, that was responsible for the deification of the Buddha. While one passage in the Pali literature affirms that Gotama having 'overcome the world, abiding unsoiled by the world'3 and with all the āsavas destroyed whereby he might become a god, gandharva, yakṣa, or a human being, is a Buddha, another says he is neither a brahmana, nor a king's son (i.e. kṣatriya), nor a peddling trader (i.e. vaiśya), but a veritable naught (ākiṃcānā).4 These passages indicate that the word 'Buddha', literally meaning 'the Wake', as contrasted with the rest of mankind which is in the sleeping

1. The word bhagavat (Lord) derived from the Sans. root bhaj, meaning 'to grant, to bestow, supply, or divide', indicated one possessing fortune and glory, but was also applied to gods, semi-divine beings, and saints, as a term of address. cf. Monier-Williams: Sanskrit-English Dictionary, s.v. It is significant that Kubera - Vaiśravana, king of the yakṣas, one of whose epithets is dhanādhipa (Lord of Treasure, or Wealth) is frequently styled bhagavat in the Mahābhārata. cf. E.W. Hopkins: Epic Mythology, p.145. That the Buddha was invoked upon by divine, semi-divine, and human worshippers, as a bestower not of material wealth but 'spiritual riches', is apparent from AN V, 226, and MN I, 112, where he is described as the 'giver of immortality' (amatassā data). cf. SN I, 210, where he is extolled as the 'giver of light' (pabhākārō).

2. Luders: Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, II, part II, Bharhut Inscriptions, pp. 89; 93; 110; 118.

3. AN II, 38: lokaṁ abhibhuyya viharāṁ anupaliṭto lokena.

4. Sn. 455.
state of ignorance, represents a metaphysical principle, or a state of Being, rather than an object of worship. In a system where the Founder's teachings and sayings are of supreme importance, and the Dhamma consists of the Noble Eightfold Path, the progress along which is marked by sīla (behaviour), samādhi (concentration), pañña (wisdom), and vīmutta (release), a Saviour has no place. The concept that the man of faith must, of his own volition, control and direct his will towards a goal and its attainment, also implies that neither the grace of a Saviour, nor the need to invoke his grace by prayer or worship, was necessary. The Dhammapada (276) explicitly says: 'You yourself must put forth exertion, for the Tathāgatas are but proclaimers' (tumhehi kho sam atappam akkhātāro Tathāgata).

It has been asserted that it was the introduction of bhakti (devotion to a personal god) into Buddhism, which transformed it from a system of cold philosophical and ethical doctrine, into a religion marked by passionate fervour and spiritual devotion. The transformation of Buddhism, however, does not appear to have been an abrupt one, as traces of bhakti may be detected in the Pāli literature itself. In Majjhima Nikāya I, 142, the Buddha is represented as saying: '... all those who have faith in me, and love for me (yesam mayī saddhā-mattah pema-mattah), all of them will go to the highest heaven' (sabbe te saggaparājanā ti), echoing Bhagavad Gītā IX, 22, where Kṛṣṇa says: 'For whosoever makes Me his haven, base-born though he may be, yes, women too,

1. DN II, 123.
and artisans, even serfs, theirs is to tread the highest way'.

S. Dutt observes that some of the elements of bhakti in Theravāda Buddhism consist of the three-fold refuge (ti-sarāṇa) which was at first used in the ceremony of ordination, but later became a credo; the emphasis on the kārūnīka (compassionate) aspect of the Buddha; the numerous passages in the Thera-Theri Gāthā, Apadāna, Petavatthu, and Vimānavatthu, referring to the efficacy of worship - offering to the Buddha (even though no image had as yet been invented); and the ritual worship of the stūpa and the dhātu (holy relics). While the word pūjā occurring in Dhammapada 195-196, clearly implies a mental attitude or act, the simple paying of honour or reverence, it later became a ritual performance in the worship of the Buddha.²

'These notes in Theravāda Buddhism are indicative of a strengthening and upsurge of the bhakti element in the religion. It eventuated in trends that slowly materialized in institutions, which Buddhism in its primitive form knows nothing of. Perhaps it was through the lay mind that these trends came to maturity. While for the monks the discipline and doctrine of the Way was of primary importance, for the mass of lay Buddhists bhakti-offering in the form of prayer and worship became the essence of the faith'.³

We have already mentioned that the concept of 'quest for Brahman' as represented in the Upaniṣads and in the Pāli canon is identical, the

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1. According to F.D.K. Bosch 'the various forms of divine worship may be summed up in the word bhakti. This worship implied pūjā ...'. The Golden Germ, p. 199. P. Thieme, however, elaborates that pūjā represents a form of service to God which is not derived from the Vedic sacrifice (yajñā), and is a 'more or less complex worship accompanied by offerings which one makes to a God, especially to its picture or symbol; thus it stands for the central idea of the ritual'. See 'Pūjā', Journal of Oriental Research, XXVII, (1), 1957, pp. 6-7.
2. S. Dutt: Buddhist Monks and Monasteries, p.182.
difference lying only in the definition of the Ultimate Goal, Brahman in the Upaniṣads and Nibbāna in the Pāli literature. It is significant that in the Bhagavad Gītā, Brahman is equated with Nirvāṇa; II, 72, says: 'This is the fixed still state of Brahman (esa brāhma-niṣṭhitiḥ); he who wins through this is never more perplexed. Standing therein, at the time of death, he goes to Nirvāṇa, which is Brahman' (antakāle pi brahma-nirvāṇam rohanti).

The term brahma-nirvāṇa does not occur in the Pāli canon or in the principal Upaniṣads, and seems to have been coined by the author of the Bhagavad Gītā from the Buddhist term brahma-bhūta (become Brahman) used to describe the Buddha, and Nirvāṇa. In the Bhagavad Gītā (V, 24; VI, 27, XVIII, 54), the wise man is described as brahma-bhūta, while according to the Mahābhārata (XIII; Appendix I, No. 16, verses 20 and 130), Kṛṣṇa is always brahma-bhūta. Although in the Upaniṣads, the expression brahma bhavati occurs only in Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV, 4, 25, and Mundaka-Upaniṣad III, 2, 9, the term brahma-bhūta is found frequently in the Pāli literature, and most often in the phrase: nīcchāto nibbuto sīlī-bhūto sukkha-pātiṣeampvedi brahma-bhūtena attanā, 'without craving, appeased, cooled, experiencing joy, with his self become Brahman'.

In Aṅguttara Nikāya V, 208, the Buddha advises his disciples to see the Dhamma in the Self (imaṃ pi kho attani dhammaṃ sampasegamā), while in Sutta Nikāya IV, 94-95, he himself is styled as 'become (all) eye, (all) wisdom, the Dhamma, and Brahman'.

1. cf. also V, 24; 25; 26.
2. AN V, 226; 256; DN III, 84; MN I, 111; 195; SN IV, 94; Sn. 561.
The expression brahma-sthiti occurring in the Bhagavad Gītā, and referred to above, has a parallel in the Buddhist phrase sa-upādi-seva nibbāna (present with some residue of the factors of existence) occurring in Suttanipāta 354, Itivuttaka 38, and Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā II, 163, and used to describe a saint who has attained liberation during his lifetime. Likewise, the term brahma-sthiti, similar to the phrase niṣcalā samādhīva acañña buddhī (motionless concentration and immovable intelligence) occurring in Bhagavad Gītā II, 53, is equivalent to the stable motionlessness of an arahant described in Theragāthā 372: 'He who like the sea, stands motionless, stable, with profound wisdom, seeing the subtle goal, is indeed immovable'. This stillness is also referred to in 1243 of the same text: 'For he (the Buddha) has shown a manifold way to cross the flood ... seers of the doctrine stand immovable' (thito asamhīra), and in Suttanipāta 920: 'As in the ocean's midmost depth, no wave rises, but all stays still (thito hoti), so let the bhikkhu remain motionless, stable ...' (thito anejo). We have already referred to expressions such as thit'atta (steadfast self), and thitacitta (steadfast thought) occurring in the Pāli literature, which describe the emancipated man who stands in the eternal present; who is not dominated by Time, who has reached the Timeless state of Brahman.

1. cf. BG II, 65: '... for once his (the wise man's) thoughts are calmed, his intelligence stands firm' (prasanna-cetaso hy āhu buddhī paryavatīghate), and Ka. U II, 3, 10: 'When the five knowledges (senses) together with the mind cease, and the intelligence does not stir, that is the highest state'.
2. yo ve samuddo va thito anejo gambhīra pañño nipunattha dasi asamhīriyo.
3. Theragāthā 5; 7; 8; DN I, 57; SN III, 55.
4. DN II, 157; SN V, 74; cf. BG II, 56: '... from whom all passion, fear and wrath have fled, he indeed is a man of steadfast thought, a silent sage' (sthita-dhir munir uyate). cf. also cittam samādhiyati occurring in MN I, 38.
If Brahman (= ātman) is identified with the ātmattha, it would follow that the Buddha 'become Brahman' and become 'the self', in Buddhist metaphysics, is also to be identified with the ātmattha. A similar identification also occurs, as we have seen, in Bhagavad Gītā II, 26, where Krṣṇa says he is the 'ātmattha among all trees'.

Coomaraswamy points out that the ātmattha itself is 'analogically the Great Awakening, not merely the sign of the place where the Awakening was accomplished, which from the standpoint of the developed Buddhology, was not an event in time'.¹ The Buddha, resolute and intent on Awakening (sambodhi) becomes an arahant, equipped with (profound) knowledge and (good) conduct² and is Fully Awakened (samma-sambuddho). The concept that the emancipated man who has attained (reached) Brahman, himself becomes Brahman is, however, already anticipated in Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad I, 4, 10: 'Whosoever ... became Awakened (pratyabuddhyati) to this (Brahman), he indeed became 'that' . Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brhadāranyaka IV, 19, also says: 'It (Brahman) is regarded as known with Awakening, for thus one finds the Immortal (pratibodha-viditam matam amrtatvam hi vindate); by the self one finds the strength (ātmanā vindate vīryam); by knowledge one finds the Immortal (vidyaya vindate amrtam)'.

The Maitrī Upaniṣad (VII, 11) refers to the intrinsic nature (svarūpa) of the 'space within space' (nabhasah ke'antarbhūta) which is the same as the Supreme Brightness (param tejas), manifest in a threefold way- in fire, sun, and in the breath of life³ ... which is Immutable (akṣaram), which Awakens (ubuddhyat), and which is truly the everlasting

¹. A.K. Coomaraswamy: Elements of Buddhist Iconography, p.64.
². AN III, 285: vijjācarana sampanno.
³. cf. Brhadāranyaka I, 69, where Agni on earth, Indra and Vāyu in mid-space, and Aditya in heaven, are the three forms of the same Immortal principle.
basis of the boundless vision of Brahman (ajasram brahma dhīyalamba) ... the One Awakener (eka sambodhāyitr) ... one should meditate on that light'.

It must, however, be borne in mind that these statements in the Upaniṣads about space (nabhākāśa), become meaningless and unconvincing when understood in terms of the conventional concept of space with which we are familiar. They refer to the 'cosmic space' of the mystical seers of old, and it is difficult to achieve a communication between the 'rational' and 'mystical' conceptions of space.

Coomaraswamy observes that the connection between nabhas (space) and nabhi (navel) occurring in Maitri Upaniṣad VI, 6, is anything but accidental for in the 'all-supporting universal form' (viśva-bhūt) of Prajāpati in which the world is hidden, 'the atmosphere is his navel'.

This navel, the centre of the universe, the place where the Awakening of all Buddhas takes place, which is merely an analogical assumption not to be literally interpreted, is, in the final analysis, within man himself. Indeed the Mahāyana text Mahāsukhāvati-Vyūha (32) merely paraphrases the words of the Maitri Upaniṣad cited above, when it says: 'All those beings who are constant in never turning away from the vision of that Bodhi tree are by the same token, constant in never losing sight of the Supreme and Perfect Awakening' (tasya bodhi-vṛksasya ... yad uta anuttarayaḥ samyak sambodheḥ).

2. Jātaka IV, 232: sabba-buddhānāṁ Jayapallisakāṁ puṭha nābhiṁ Mahābodhimaṇḍa ...; cf. also Mahābodhiyamāṇa 79 according to which the Bodhiţmaṇḍa (area around the Bodhi tree) is paṭhabī-nābhi.
That the Bodhi tree was not a botanical specimen at all, is clear from Mahāvastu II, 309-313, where some of the devas are represented as seeing the Bodhi tree 'as a tree of gold; Others, according to their disposition (svakāye adhimuktiye) saw it as a tree of silver; others as a tree of beryl; others as a tree of crystal; others as a tree of emerald; others as a tree of the seven precious stones, and others as a tree of a hundred thousand precious stones. And according to their disposition other devas saw the bodhi tree as a tree of red sandal-wood; others as a tree of aloe and sandal-wood ... Other devas saw the Bodhi tree adorned with every jewel; others saw it sparkling with gems ... with gems of white coral ... gems of emerald ... beautiful 'moon-stones' ... Those devas whose root of virtue started when they beheld the Bodhi tree, saw it adorned with the adornment befitting their state ... Then some devas saw the Bodhi tree one yojana high; others saw it five yojanas high; others ten ... others twenty ... others thirty ... forty ... fifty ... others saw it one hundred yojanas high. They saw the Bodhi tree at a height in accordance with their knowledge. Some devas saw the Bodhi tree one thousand yojanas high. Other devas who in the course of their long lives had served former Jinas, saw the Bodhi tree a hundred thousand yojanas high. Other devas who had won escape by means of the root of virtue which they had acquired, saw the Bodhi tree as the highest heaven'.

1. II, 311: svalambhaptam, literally '(as) adorned by themselves'.
2. II, 312: yathāsvakāsvakena śūneṇa bodhipṛavamucatvaṃ evaṃ jñānaṃ saṃjñānti.
3. abhinandita kusalamūla nīryātā. Nīryātā here is connected with (mārga) nīryānta (nīgānīka) i.e. the way leading out (from rebirth). J.J. Jones: The Mahāvastu (trans), II, p.293, note.
It must be remembered, however, that the principle tenet of the Mahāsāṃghika school was that a Buddha is supramundane, above the laws and conditions of ordinary human existence, and that it was only a mind-formed image of him which appeared in the world. That the Bodhi tree is represented in the Mahāvastu as 'proportionate to the disposition' of the individual, is in perfect accord with this docetic view. In other words, the Bodhi tree has a 'mind-formed appearance' in the same way as the Buddha was regarded as an apparitional being; and if in the art of the Mahāsāṃghika and its sub-schools, the aśvattha was represented as the Bodhi tree, it was because it was an earthly manifestation of a cosmic principle. The concept that the aśvattha was a manifestation of the Supreme Deity is, as we have seen, evident in the Rg Veda itself, and was most probably taken over from pre-existing religious beliefs.

Although there is no evidence of the docetism referred to above in the Pāli literature, it is nevertheless clear that the Theravādins subordinated the Buddha as a historical person to the Buddha as a metaphysical principle. Gotama's preparation for Buddhahood, and his firm resolve to attain complete Enlightenment incalculable aeons ago, during the time of Dīpankara Buddha, shows that it is a fallacy to regard him as a 'person' in the ordinary sense of the term. Indeed, it is his figure as a Teacher (sattha) and a Proclaimer of the Way, rather than his individual personality as such, which predominates throughout the Pāli literature, and which led Oldenberg to remark that 'in all its essentials,

1. *Mahāvastu* I, 145: *upapādika*, i.e. Pali *upapattika* derived from *upapatti*, meaning 'to arise or to be born without visible cause (i.e. without parents), apparitional rebirth'. Rhys Davids and Stede: *Pāli-English Dictionary*, s.v. cf. *Mahāvastu* II, 20; cf. also I, 218 which refers to the mind-formed body of the Buddha Dīpankara.
the Buddhist doctrine would remain what it is, even if the concept of a Buddha were omitted'.

Conze observes that even in the Abhidhamma, the Buddha's personality remains in the background; far more than a person he is: 1) an impersonal metaphysical principle; 2) a supernatural potency; and 3) a type.

According to Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosa (III, 145-146), the actual living Buddha is a combination of the impersonal metaphysical principle of Dharma with a 'vile body'; the Buddha has at all times been subordinated to the Dharma, and his significance lies in being a channel of its eternal truth. In the procedure of taking refuge (Buddham sararyam) in the Buddha, it is the Dharmas which make a Buddha, or which lead to someone called a 'Buddha', in which refuge is taken. 'His body, born of his parents, consists of impure dharmas, and is not worth taking refuge in; refuge is taken in the dharmas of an adept, which bring about Enlightenment, and constitute the Dharma body'. (IV, 76-79).

The Buddha is 'clearly more than a solitary individual who quietly fades out from this world. His actions or deeds have great repercussions for this world and those who live in it'.

When the Buddha is called a Tathāgata, 'his individual personality is treated as of no account. Tathāgatas are 'types' who at certain pre­destined times appear in solemn procession in this world, from the unthinkable past to the unthinkable future. The period of each Tathāgata is fixed beforehand, and each one undergoes a stereotyped career and follows the same Path, fixed once and for all, for all of them. The Tathāgatas differ only in trivial details (Vibhāpā-sāstra 34-39) but in essentials, in their Buddha-dharmas, they are all alike'.

2. E. Conze: *Buddhist Thought in India*, p.171.
CHAPTER VI

The Awakening at Dawn
In Buddhist literature, Gotama is represented as having become a 'Perfectly Awakened Buddha' (sammāsambuddha) at daybreak. The Pāli Nidanakathā (Jātaka I, 75-76) says that 'in the first watch of the night he acquired the knowledge of his previous existences (pubba-nivāsana-ñāna); in the second watch he acquired the 'heavenly eye' (dībbasaṅkhaṇu); in the last watch of the night he acquired the knowledge of the chain of causation (paticcasamuppāde ñāna). After having thoroughly realized the twelvefold chain of causation, the 'great man' (mahāpuruṣa) attained complete omniscience at break of day (arunugga-manavelaya sabbāññata-ñānam pātivijjhanta).

This detail of the Awakening at dawn, like the specific mention of the asvattha as Gotama's Bodhi tree, is omitted in the Pāli canon, but is included in all the biographies of the Buddha - the Nidanakathā referred to above, the Mahāvastu, the Lalitavistara, and Asvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita. That its inclusion in the Buddha legend represents an advanced stage in Buddhology, is evident from the fact that the canonical account of the life of the Buddha Vipassi (Mahāpadāna sutta, Dīgha Nikāya XVI) makes no mention of the Awakening at dawn, but the Mahāvastu (I, 229) referring to the attainment of Buddhahood by the Buddha Dīpaṁkara, describes his

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1. cf. Mahāvastu II, 415: 'In the last watch of the night, at the time when dawn was approaching (rātrya paścime yāme arupadghāta samaye), in the 'joy-faced night' (nandimukhāyam rajanyām), the Man, the Real Man, the Great Man ... Awakened to the incomparable Perfect Awakening' (anuttarīṃ samyak sambodhi abhisambuddhā); Lalitavistara 350, 5: 'In the last watch of the night, at the time when dawn was approaching, in the 'joy-faced night', (nandimukhyam rātrau), the Man, the Real Man, the Great Man ... Awakened to the incomparable Perfect Awakening'. Buddhacarita XIV, 86: 'At that moment of the fourth watch, when dawn was approaching ... the great seer reached the stage which knows no alteration ...'.

Awakening at dawn in exactly the same words used to describe the attainment of Buddhahood by Gotama.¹

It is significant that references to the part played by sunrise in 'spiritual realization', or the transmission of 'vision', occur in the Ṛg Veda itself. In a hymn (VII, 79, 5) addressed to Uṣas (Dawn), the poet implores: 'Impart to us whilst breaking, 'visions'...' (vyuḥkantināḥ ... dhiyo ṛhāḥ). The importance of 'visions' in the early morning is also indicated by VIII, 102, 22 of the same text: 'The man who, in the early morning kindles his sacrificial fire, should mentally acquire a vision (or gain an intuitive insight) of what he is doing: 'I have kindled the fire with the rays of the morning light'.'²

It has been pointed out that the Sanskrit noun dhiḥ, like vision is closely associated with a verb expressing the idea of 'seeing'. By 'vision' is to be understood 'the exceptional and supernormal faculty, proper to 'seers', of 'seeing', in the mind, things, causes, connections as they really are, the faculty of acquiring a sudden knowledge of the truth ...'.³ That daybreak was the point of time especially proper to the manifestation of 'visions' is also apparent from Ṛg Veda X, 172, 2 addressed to Uṣas: 'Approach, with a bright vision ...' (ā yāḥi vāsunā dhiyā). The relation between dhiḥ and the early morning is again emphasised in III, 39, 2 of the same text: 'Born before daylight,

1. 'In the last watch of the night, at the time when dawn was approaching (rātryā paścime yāme amūpendhata samaye), in the 'joy-faced night' (nandimukhāyām vajanyām), the Man, the Real Man, the Great Man ... Awakened to the incomparable Perfect Awakening'. (anuttarām samyak abhisambuddhalḥ.

2. āgnim indhāna māngā dhiyām saceta māryāh āgnim ēche vīcāsvabhrāh.

attentive, recited in parts, when the sacral functions are performed, dressed in beautiful-and-auspicious white clothes, this is our ancestral 'vision' which was born long ago.\textsuperscript{1} Gonda points out that this passage is particularly interesting as the vision (\textit{dhi~}) which Sāyaṇa explains by \textit{stuti} (eulogy) is 'on the one hand said to be born in the early morning, and on the other, to be 'ancestral' and to belong to the far past. Obviously the poet Viśvāmitra is of the opinion that the vision which comes to him at daybreak is identical with that which manifested itself to his father ... and his grandfather ... that all \textit{dhiyāḥ} are reproductions of one and the same archetype'.\textsuperscript{2}

We have already referred to the passages in the Pāli canon which state that the Dhamma preached by Gotama is the very same Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddhas before him. According to the \textit{Mahāvastu} and the \textit{Lalitavistara}, the vision seen by Gotama and his consequent Awakening is also the very same vision leading to the Awakening of the former Buddhas. The former text (II, 415) explicitly says: 'As dawn approached he Awakened to the most excellent Awakening sought by previous Buddhas' (\textit{udgate ca aruṇo varabuddhim yattakām purīma buddhānu buddhān}). \textit{Lalitavistara} 350, 11 also refers to the 'vision that the former Buddhas had acquired and proclaimed' (\textit{pūrva-buddha-dārśināṃ tasmin sammipatīta dēvatē'vocan}) while \textit{Jātaka} I, 76 says that having acquired complete omniscience he uttered (i.e. repeated) the triumphant utterance of all the Buddhas (\textit{sabbabuddhānāṃ avijñātān udānān udānesi}).

Another reference to the ancestral \textit{dhi~} occurs in \textit{Ṛg Veda} X,67,1:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{1.} \textit{divas āid ā pūrveya jāyamanā vi jāgrvir vidathe \textit{sāyamanā/bhadra vastrāny arjuna vārāṇ seyan asme sanajā pīrya dhi~}.
\textbf{2.} J. Gonda: \textit{op.cit.}, p.77.
\end{quote}
'Our father found the seven-headed dhīḥ, born from r̥ta, which is great and firm.' It is significant that while the epithet saptā śirṣānam (possessing seven heads), occurring in Rg Veda III, 5, 5, is applied to Agni, in IV, 50, 4, of the same text, it is Brhaspati who is described as saptāśyas (having seven mouths), and saptā raśmir (possessing seven rays). Again, while the epithet kaviḥ kaviṇān (the sage among sages) is applied to Brhaspati in Rg Veda II, 23, 1, in X, 91, 3, it is Agni who is praised as kaviḥ kavyendāt viśvavit (a sage, a real sage, and omniscient). Here the quality of omniscience is closely associated with Agni's status as a kavi. We have already seen in an earlier chapter, that in the beginning when Heaven and Earth were lying in close embrace, forming a monad, the act of forcefully wedging them apart was the creative deed of a number of deities, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, Brhaspati, and Savitṛ, all of whom represent different aspects of one and the same cosmic principle.

To return to the relation between daybreak and the manifestation of 'visions', the Taittiriya Brahma (IV, 3, 11, 5) says: 'She who shone forth as the first (born) of r̥ta ... who wanders in the places of rendezvous with the sun'. Here the expression r̥tasya garbhaḥ prathama meaning 'primordial representative of the universal order, and eternal course of things', frequently used to describe Agni in his manifestation as Apam Napat, is applied to Uṣas herself. In Rg Veda VII, 10, 1, it is

1. imām dhīḥam saptā śirṣānim pītā na r̥trajātām bhātīm avindat. cf. AV XX, 91, 1; Vaitāna śūtra 33, 21.
2. r̥tasya garbhaḥ prathama vyuṣasi ... sūryasākā evātī niṣkṛtā. cf. MS II, 15, 10; PG III, 3, 5; KS 39, 10.
Agni 'the yellow, radiant bull who shines brightly, and has stimulated the eager, visionary thoughts, rousing them'. The poet of III, 62, 10 says: 'May we attain that excellent radiance (effulgence, glory) of Savitar (the light of heaven, identified with the sun in V, 81, 203), who will stimulate our visions'. Furthermore, Ṛg Veda IV, 11, 3, makes it clear that it is from Agni that the qualities of the inspired seers emanate; from him proceed the inspired thoughts and eulogistic recitations which are able to achieve success. The poet of X, 111, 2 also informs us that 'visionary thought shone brightly from the seat of ṛta', which suggests that ṛtasya notionally belongs to dhitih (ṛtasya hi sadaso dhitir adyaut).

On the other hand, Ṛg Veda I, 14, 2, refers to the dhih of Agni himself: 'The Kaṇvas (the family of the ṛṣi Kaṇva) have invoked thee; O inspired one, they praise thy visions'. Again, in VI, 1, 1, of the same text, Agni, described as the sacrificer who has accomplished wonderful deeds (āsma hota), is explicitly called the first to 'find' by manas (mind, intellect), the dhitih. In other words, Agni is not only the first kavi (ṛṣi) to have become inspired by a 'vision', but is the dhitih itself, anticipating the teaching of the Upaniṣads, that he who 'finds' (i.e. knows) Brahman, becomes Brahman. That the epithet uṣarbudh (awakened at

1. vṛśā karīḥ suvaś ābhāti bhāsā dhiyō hinvāna uśatir ajīgaḥ.
3. tat savitar varenym bhargo devasya dhiṃahi/dhiyō yo nāh pracodayāt.
4. tvad agne kāvyā tvam maniśās tvad ukthā jāyante rādhyāni.
5. J. Gonda: cp.eit., p. 178.
6. ā tva kaṇvā uṣ حت hat vi prasna te dhiyāḥ.
7. tvam bhag śa prathamo manotāyā dhiyō abhavo āsma hotā.
8. cf. RV 1, 23, 24; 1, 31, 17; 36, 5, etc.
dawn) occurring in *Rg Veda* III, 2, 14, and VI, 15, 1, should be applied to Agni is particularly significant in respect of Buddhist mythology, as Gotama is represented as having become a Buddha (the Wake) at daybreak.¹ Not only is he described as 'bringing light' in *Suttanipata* 349 (*pajjotakara bhavanti*), and one 'who creates light' (*pabhamkaro*) and an 'ouster of darkness' (*tamonuds?no*) in 1136, but he is also styled 'the fair uprising dawn of light' in *Suttanipata* 178 (*suppabhâtan suhu?thidam*).

The importance of the term *manaS* with which the concept of *dhiiJ* is closely associated in *Rg Veda* VI, 1, 1 and which is applied to all mental powers - intellect, intelligence, understanding, perception, sense, consciousness, and will² - is evident from X, 129, 1-4, according to which *manas* was the causal genesis of the universe: 'In the beginning when there was neither the existent nor the non-existent (*n?sad ?s?n no sad ?sit*), neither death nor deathlessness (*?n?y?r ?s?d amrtam*), when all this was undistinguished water, in the Void there arose for the first time, desire which was the primal seed (germ) of *manas*.'³ This is also confirmed by *Satapatha Brâhma?a* X, 5, 3, 1-3: 'Verily, in the beginning this (universe) was, as it were, neither non-existent, nor existent ... there was then only the Mind ... This Mind wished to become manifest ... more substantial'. The *Bhadâranyaka Upani?ad* (1, 5, 3) gives the following interpretation of the word *manah*: 'It is with the mind that one

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¹. That he should achieve Enlightenment at dawn is particularly appropriate in view of the terminology of Buddhism; it is often overlooked that the primary meaning of *buddha* is 'awakened', 'wide awake', i.e. 'fully conscious'; and of *bodhi* 'awakening' 'waking up' from the dark sleeping, state of ignorance.

². Monier-Williams: *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. cf. however Gonda: *op. cit.*, p.84, where he prefers 'wilful, directed, intentional thought'.

sees and hears; desire, conception of ideas, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, 'vision', fear, all this is 'mind'. The important role played by manas in Vedic eschatological speculations, is also apparent from Chandogya Upaniṣad VII, 3, 1, which says: 'Mind is indeed the self; mind is indeed the universe; mind is indeed Brahma'.

So far, the relation between Agni and the dhiḥ has been discussed. It is interesting, however, that the expression pratīr dhiyaḥ (Lord of 'visions') occurring in Ṛg Veda IX, 75, 2, should be applied to Soma. It has been pointed out that as it is a well-known fact that a god who is regarded as the Lord or possessor of a certain power, is also believed to bestow that power on his worshippers, it may be contended that the qualification 'Lord of dhiḥ' was appropriately given to Soma 'to characterise this divine power as being able to dispense visions'. The elaborate description given in Ṛg Veda IX, 75, 2: rṣasya jihvā pavate madhu priyam vaktā pratīr dhiyo aṣyā adabhyah - 'the tongue of rta, the speaker, and Lord of vision, who is not to be deceived', is applied to Soma, who, as the instrument (tongue) of the universal order and ultimate truth on which the universe is based, imparts the 'vision' to the ṛṣis. Furthermore, in Ṛg Veda IX, 100, 3, Soma is invited to pour forth the dhiḥ yoked to manas, like thunder the rain. This indicates that manas, 'the psychical organ in which the processes of thought, will, and feeling, take place'

1. mano hy ātmā, mano hy lokah, mano hy brahma.
2. Gonda: op.cit., p.74.
3. dhiyam manoyujan śrīyā upśitaṁ na tanyatatḥ.
produces the dhiḥ, or that manas is its birthplace.¹ That Soma is closely associated with manas is also evident from the epithet manasas patih (Lord of manas) applied to him in Rg Veda IX, 11, 8, and IX, 28, 1.² However, in VI, 9, 5 of the same text, it is Agni who is manas, the 'swiftest among all flying beings'.

We have already discussed the close relation between Agni and Soma; the passages cited above further indicate that both deities regarded as 'bestowers' of dhiḥ, represented dual aspects of one and the same divine source of supernormal knowledge and intuition.

It is significant that in Rg Veda VII, 4, 6, Agni is represented as being 'established' in Immortality (i.e. Deathlessness);³ according to VI, 9, 7 of the same text, he himself is Immortality (Vaiśvanaro ... amaryayah). As the Protector of Immortality (VI, 7, 7: amṛtasya rakṣitā), and the highest Immortality, he bestows it on mortals (I, 37, 7: amṛtatva uttame, martyr eva dādhasi).⁴ It is equally noteworthy that the tenet familiar in the earliest Upaniṣads, that to know Brahman, was to become Brahman, and thereby become immortal, has its counterpart in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa X, 6, 1, 4-10, which explicitly states that 'he who knows Vaiśvanara, repels recurring death, and attains all life'.⁵ The same text continues: 'This Agni Vaiśvanara is no other than Puruṣa; verily, whosoever knows that Agni Vaiśvanara as Puruṣa-like, as established within

¹. Gonda: op.cit., p.75.
². cf. Śāma Veda Sākhītā II, 79, 8.
³. iśe hy aignir amṛtasya bhūrre iśe nīyah svāryasya dātōh.
⁴. cf. AV XIX, 64, 6: 'Agni ... grant us length of life and give us hope of immortality'.
⁵. yo vā'etam Vaiśvanaranam vedāpa punamrtyum jayati sarvan āyur eti.
Puruṣa, repels death, and attains all life', which is echoed in Chandogya Upaniṣad IV, 11, 1-2, where the Gārhatṛya (i.e. household) fire says: 'Earth, Fire, Food, and Sun (are forms of me), the Puruṣa that is seen in the Sun, I am he, I am he indeed. He who knowing this meditates (on the fire) destroys sinful actions, becomes (this) world, reaches full life...'. The Mūndaka Upaniṣad (III, 1, 3) adds: 'When a seer sees the creator of golden hue, the Lord, the Puruṣa, the source of Brahman, then being a knower, shaking off good and evil, and free from stain, he attains supreme equality with the Lord'.

It is clear from Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad IV, 18, that Agni in his manifestation as the sun, is the source of the ancient akṣara: 'When there is no darkness, then there is neither day nor night, neither being nor non-being ... that is imperishable, the choicest splendour of Savitṛ (the Sun), and the ancient wisdom proceeded from that'. Finally, Maitri Upaniṣad affirms: 'The fire ... is unthinkable, formless, unfathomable, hidden ... pure, brilliant, unproduced, the master yogin, omniscient, mighty, immeasurable, without beginning or end, possessing all excellence, unborn, wise, ... the creator of all, the self of all ... the innermost being of everything'.

We have hitherto established that Agni and Soma, bestowers of 'visions' and identified with manas, represent dual aspects of the same

1. cf. VS 31, 18: 'I have known this mighty Puruṣa, refulgent as the sun beyond darkness; only by knowing him does one overcome death'.
2. tad akṣarasya tat savitār varenyaḥ prajñā ca tasmāt praśptā purāṇi.
divine source of supernormal knowledge. Although as early as śrī Veda I, 115, 1, the sun (i.e. Agni as Vaiśvānara) is recognised as the essence of all that moves and moves not, and according to Satapatha Brāhmana X, 6, 1, 4 ff., to know this Agni Vaiśvānara was to 'repel recurring death and attain all life', it was realized only in the period of the Upaniṣads, that Agni Vaiśvānara (= ātma = Brahma = Puruṣa) was within the individual himself, and it was only by knowing the ātma within oneself, that one attained immortality. The significance of this transcendental vision lay in the complete emancipation of the mind and soul, and man's final victory over death, and consequently, Time. We have seen that the Buddhists were also aware that the Ultimate Reality was within man himself, as 'world's end' (lokantagu) and the 'beyond' identified with Nibbāna, the world-to-be (lokasamudayam), the origin of the world and the ceasing of the world (lokanirodhadā ca lokanirodha gaminim), are proclaimed by the Buddha to be 'in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and insight'. We have also seen earlier that it is the signless, supportless, and luminous viññāṇa (distinguished from viññāṇakkhandha) which is identified with Nibbāna. In what is probably a very old sutta (Sānyutika Nikāya II, 95) we noticed that viññāna occurs as a synonym of citta and mano, and is distinguished from kāya meaning body. That the basic duality underlying the Supreme Reality in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads is continued in Buddhism, is evident from Anguttara Nikāya I, 10, where the Buddha declares: 'This mind is luminous (pabhassaram idam cittaṃ), but it is defiled from impurities that come from without'.

1. sūrya ātma jagatas tasthusas ca.
Reference has already been made to the 'Supreme Light which is the essence of that which resides in the infinite space of the heart', described in Mātrī Upaniṣad VII, 11; earlier, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIV, 8, 10, 1), it is Agni who is identified as the life-principle within man (ayam agnir vaiśvānaro yo'yan antah puruso), while according to VI, 3, 1, 21 of the same text, Agni is identified with prāṇa (vital breath). Elsewhere, prāṇa is Prajāpati. But in X, 4, 1, 12, Agni is no other than Prajāpati (sa eṣo agnīḥ praṇāpatīr eva). According to the author of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VII, 3, 1, 42, Prajāpati is 'the whole Brahman' (sarvam brahma praṇāpati). The passages cited above clearly indicate that in the Brāhmaṇas, Prajāpati, Agni, Prāṇa, Brahman, and Puruṣa were terms applied to the same macrocosmic-microcosmic principle. That this principle had a dual nature (dvait bhava) as Brahman of the Upaniṣads is also anticipated in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa X, 1, 3, 2, where 'one half of Prajāpati is mortal, and the other half immortal', and in VII, 2, 4, 30, where Prajāpati is 'both the undefined and the defined, the limited and the unlimited'.

A survey of Vedic literature shows that the ancient poets and ritualists had a predilection for the numerals three and seven, rightly described by Hopkins as 'the most revered cardinals of the Rg Veda'.

While it is not our intention to discuss the significance of numerical

1. SB VI, 3, 1, 9: prāṇa vai praṇāpatīk.
2. cf. SB II, 3, 18: 'The fire is indeed Prajāpati'.
3. cf. Śāṅkhāyana Aranyaka IV, 1: 'Breath (prāṇa) is Brahman'.
4. cf. SB VI, 1, 1, 5: 'Puruṣa is Prajāpati, and that Puruṣa which is Prajāpati, is this very Agni ...'.
5. ardham eva mātrīm āśirdagham amṛtaḥ.
6. uśaṣyaṃ netat praṇāpatīr niruktaśaṁ-niruktaśçe parimritaśçe-parimritaśçe.
symbolism in Vedic literature here, it is necessary, however, to point out that a characteristic feature of the religious expressions of the ancient poets seems to have been an obsession with triads and heptads, upon which they believed creation was based. There are several references in the Rg Veda itself, to the seven heads, seven tongues, and seven rays of Agni.\(^1\) The same text also mentions the seven-reined chariot, the seven wheels, and seven horses of the sun.\(^2\) These and similar heptads enunciate the sevenfold manifestations of the same immortal principle, both on the cosmic and individual level.

One heptad which finds frequent mention in Vedic literature is that of the seven primeval ṛṣis (saptarṣayaḥ). According to Rg Veda I, 164, 15, these ṛṣis are born of the gods (devaja): the description that six are born simultaneously and move in various forms on a fixed substratum (sthāte), while the seventh is single born (ekajam), is reminiscent of the imagery of One in the form of the Unborn supporting the six burdens without proceeding. These seven, also referred to as the 'seven divine ṛṣis' (Rg Veda X, 130, 7: ṛṣayaḥ saptā datvāh) and the 'ancient Āngirases' (I, 139, 9: pūrvo āṅgiraḥ), are identified with the non-existent (asat) and with prāṇa in Satapatha Brahmana VI, 1, 1, 1. The Āngirasa sages (descendents of Āngirasa, i.e. Agni)\(^3\) are described in Rg Veda X, 67, 2, as 'the inspired sages endowed with visionary insight, who imagined the first form of worship' (i.e. the sacrifice).\(^4\) These seven ṛṣis of

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1. cf. RV III, 5, 5: sapta śirṣāram agnīḥ; III, 6, 2: agne ... saptajihvāh; I, 146, 1: sapta rashmih ... agnim.
2. RV VI, 44, 24: ratham ... saptā rashmin; I, 164, 3: saptā cakram; I, 164, 3: saptāśvāh.
3. RV VIII, 44, 8: āṅgirastamemā ... agne.
4. vipram padam āṅgiraso dadhānā yajñasya dhāmā prathamam mananta.
varied form (Rg Veda X, 62, 5: virūpāsah rṣayāḥ), styled the seven sons of Agni (I, 164, 1: viśpatiṁ saptaputram), are also represented in Rg Veda I, 164, 36, as the seven sons of (the Transcendental) half of creation (saptārdhagarbhā bhuvanasya), 'endowed with wisdom, through inspiration and thought, they are omniscient, encompassing us on all sides'. The seven differentiated forms of ardha, collectively form the cosmic seed of creation (bhuvanasya retaḥ) mentioned in Rg Veda I, 164, 36. As V.S. Agrawala has rightly observed, 'it is valid to speak of the Unborn principle as ekam (Rg Veda X, 129, 2: tad ekam), and ardham, since we have to deal with the mathematics of Infinity ...'.

While the primeval rṣis are represented in Vedic mythology as instituting the sacrificial ritual, mention is also made of their counterparts, the seven 'human seers' (Rg Veda X, 130, 5: rṣayō manusyaḥ), the 'fathers' who explain the ancient ritual by means of speech. The 'vision'

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1. The epithet viśpati 'Lord of settlers, or settlements', is frequently connected with the domestic Agni who caused mortals to settle (RV III, 3, 17), protecting (I, 96, 4: vidom gopa), and leading them (III, 2, 5). cf. Gonda: Epithets in the Rg Veda, p.95. cf. X, 62, 5: te angirasāḥ siṃhavaste agneḥ pari jātire.

2. cf. AV X, 8, 3: ardhaṇa vidvam bhuvanam jājana yadasyārdham katamah sa ketuḥ; and X, 8, 7: ardhaṇa vidvam bhuvanam jājana yadasyārdham kva tad bhūvā.

3. te dhitibhūr manasā te vipāśitaḥ paribhuvaḥ pari bhavanti viśvataḥ.


5. RV X, 114, 7: tam dhīrā vācā pra nayantī sarta. cf. VS 11, 4: 'They harness manah and they harness the 'visions' - for both the manah and vital breaths (prānāḥ) they harness for this ritual work ...'. cf. SB III, 5, 3, 11: 'With manah and with speech they perform the sacrifice ...'.

The connection between speech and mind (SB VI, 1, 2, 7; PB VII, 6) as elements in Prajāpati himself is expressed by the figure of union between the two within him, while either of them is occasionally described as the final entity of the universe. Thus in TB II, 2, 9; KB 26, 3; SB X, 5, 3, 1, manah is identified with Brahman, with Prajāpati, and with the first principle which is neither being nor not-being; similarly in PB XX, 14, 2; Kauśītra VII, 5; SB V, 1, 3, 11, vāc (speech) is identified with Prajāpati, or even placed above him; identified with Viśvakarman, with the whole world, and with Indra. A.B. Keith: The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, II, p.444.
of these seers is referred to in *Rg Veda* I, 67, 4: 'The men who have visionary insight, found him (Agni) when they recited the sacral-and-powerful formulae which they fashioned with(in) their heart' (i.e. mind: *hirya yat taṣṭan mantrān ancāhean*). 1

It may be pointed out that this concept of the one ritual explained by seven sages is possibly related to that of Prajāpati-Agni represented in *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* VI, 1, 1, 6, as being composed of seven puruṣas, and also to the seven vital breaths emanating from one cosmic principle, referred to above. The seven human ṛṣis, Bhāradvāja, Kāśyapa, Gotama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, and Jamadagni, 2 are explicitly described in *Rg Veda* I, 146, 4, as following Agni's track. That Agni, in his manifestation as Apām Nāpāt, was the source of 'vision' and supernatural wisdom and insight is clear from X, 177, 2 of the same text, describing the inspired thought as 'bright, like lightning, and of the nature of the light of heaven, at the abode of ṛṣī'. 3 *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* XII, 3, 1, 9, however, refers to the sage (*dhīraḥ*) who is seated, free from pain, on the heights of the ruddy one (the sun).

1. It should be borne in mind that all the theories and speculations of Brahman which in its ātma aspect is believed to reside in the heart, refer not to the physiological heart or the heart in the ordinary sense of the term, but to the 'centre of the integral individual or personality, of which the corporeal modality does not constitute more than a very limited part'. The heart represents the centre of life, in the physiological as well as in the higher sense with regard to the Universal Spirit in its relations to the individual; it 'is the seat of consciousness, of manah and buddhih, the latter being the highest psychical organ and the basis of intelligence, which is illumined by the light of consciousness'. J. Gonda: *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, p.286.


3. *dyotamānāḥ svaryam maniṣam ṛṭasya pade.*
In view of the fact that the legend of the Buddha is, for the most part, intelligible only from the standpoint of Vedic mythology and cosmology, it is most likely that the concept of the seven Buddhas who preached one and the same Dhamma, was borrowed from the Vedic myth of the seven primeval ṛṣīs who were the institutors of the sacrificial ritual. In Ṛg Veda I, 71, 3, the seven Aṅgirases, the mythical patriarchs, are stated to have established a 'special manifestation of ṛta, of the regular, normal, true, harmonious and fundamental structure and nature of the universe, underlying and determining the cosmic, mundane and ritual events', and to have started its 'visions' (dadhann ṛtam dhanayann asya dhitim). Ṛg Veda III, 4, 7 (= III, 7, 8) also affirms: 'Stating ṛta, they spoke ṛta, receiving whilst observing the religious ordinances, visions in accordance with the ordinances'. As ancestors and sons of heaven, the Aṅgirases found the light (Ṛg Veda IV, 1, 14) ... the secret rites (I, 72, 6) ... and produced Dawn (VII, 76, 4), indicating that these sages were credited with the achievement of 'establishing' law. Of special interest is Vājasaneyī Samhitā 18, 58, referring to the transcendental world of these seven ṛṣīs: 'What has flowed from 'purpose' or from the heart, or mind, or from the eye (visual faculty), follow that to the region of the ritual work where have gone the first-born ancient ṛṣīs'.

Now, the epithet Tathāgata applied to the Buddhas, can be understood in Sanskrit only as tathā-gata (thus gone) or tathā-āgata (thus come),

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2. ṛtam samaanta ṛtam it ia āhur vratāṁ vratapā didhyānāh.
3. Also TS V, 7, 7, 1; KS 40, 15; EB IX, 5, 1, 45: yad ākutat samanuvrød dhīryo vā manaso vā sambhṛtam așkṣuco vā, tad anu preta sukṛtam u tokah yatra ṛṣayo jagmuḥ prathamajāh purāṇāh.
'thus' implying as the previous Buddhas have gone or come, although the
word may well have been a Prakrit, or perhaps even a pre-Aryan, term, the
precise meaning of which is now lost.

The word Dhamma, derived from the Sanskrit root dhṛ (to uphold, to
support), denoted that which the Buddha preached; it also represented
the order of law of the universe, immanent, eternal, uncreated, not as
interpreted by Gotama only, much less invented or decreed by him, but
intelligible to a mind of his range, and by him made so to mankind as
bodhi: revelation, awakening.¹ The Buddha (and other Buddhas preceding
him)² is a 'discoverer of this order of the Dhamma, this universal logic,
philosophy, or righteousness ('Norm') in which the rational and ethical
elements are fused into one. Thus by recognition of the Truth, the knower
becomes the incorporation of the knowable' (or the sense of the universe
= Dhamma),³ and therefore a Real Man (sappurisa)⁴ who is fully-awakened
(sammāsambuddha). The idea of dhamma as the interpreted Order of the
universe is carried further in the poetical quasi-personification of the
Dhamma, with the phrase: dhammaja dhamma-nimitta-dhamma dayāda 'born of
the Norm, created by the Norm, heir of the Norm', used to describe a
disciple of the Tathāgata in Dīgha Nikāya III, 84. Buddhaghosa explains
the epithet dhamma-kāya (literally, having a Norm-body) applied to the
Buddha, as 'having devised the Three-Pitaka Buddha-word by his mind,
he conducts it forth by his speech.⁵ Therefore, his body having Norm-ness

¹. cf. Rhys Davids and Stede: Pali-English Dictionary, s.v.
². cf. SN I, 140: ye pi te ahesum atitam oddhanam arahanto
   sammāsambuddha te vi dhammaṃ yeva sakkatva.
⁴. MN II, 212.
⁵. cf. the relation between manas and vāc in Vedic literature,
   referred to above.
(dhammatā) is considered to be the Norm, and is so called'. By the
same token, his disciples also styled themselves as 'sons of the Blessed
One, born from his mouth'. As the sixth sense-object, dhamma is also
called the counterpart of mano in Samyutta Nikāya IV, 185: manasā dhamma
viṁśāya.

The Buddha's exhortation to his disciples to see the Dhamma in the
self in Aṅguttara Nikāya V, 207, and his identification with the Dhamma,
coupled with the belief that his disciples regarded themselves as 'sons
of the Blessed One, born from his mouth' referred to above, clearly
anticipate the statement of Buddhaghosa in his commentary on Udāna
37, that the Buddha is himself the spiritual self: Tathāgato ti attā (Udāna
Aṭṭhakathā 340).

According to Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad II, 5, 11, the Dharma is 'indeed
the Law which is (like) honey for all beings': a description which may
well be applied to the Buddhist Dhamma extolled as 'noble (kalyāṇa) at the
beginning, noble in the middle, noble at the end', in Majjhima Nikāya I,
179, and 213. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (I, 4, 14) also affirms that
'there is nothing higher than that Law' (tasmād dharmaḥ parah nāstī), and
'that which is Law is Truth' (yo vai sa dharmaḥ satyam vai tat), which is
emphasised somewhat differently in Suttanipata 884: 'This Truth is One,
indeed, there is no other' (ekam hi saccaṁ na duṭṭhaṁ atthi). The former

2. DN III, 84: 'Bhagavato'mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto'.
3. Imam pi kho attani dhammayam sampassamāṇaṃ.
4. cf. EN III, 120: yo kho dhammayam passati so maññ passati; yo maññ
   passati so dhammayam passati; and DN III, 84, where the Buddha descri-
   bes himself as dhamma-bhūto.
5. ayam dhammaṃ sārvesaṁ bhūtāṃ samdhū ...
text (II, 5, 11) continues: 'That person in this Dharma who is made of radiance, made of amṛta (i.e. whose essence is immortality), whose self is Dharma, that person made of radiance, made of amṛta, is indeed this self, is amṛta, is Brahman'. In the light of what has hitherto been established regarding the Buddha-nature, the above description may well apply to the Buddha whose self has become Brahman, who is indeed Brahman and the Dhamma, and who represents an eternal metaphysical principle which has been recognised as a 'refuge' by countless Buddhist monks through the centuries.

We have already referred to the 'vision' (dhiḥ) which manifests itself to the seer at daybreak, and which is 'ancestral', belonging to the far past. Mention has also been made of the seven-headed dhiḥ born from pta (Law) which is great and firm (i.e. immutable). That this pta identified with Truth, is no other than Agni is apparent from Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VI, 4, 4, 10: 'The Law, the Truth; the Law, the Truth - the (divine) Law is this Agni; and the Truth is yonder sun ... this Agni is both one and the other'.¹ According to Taittiriya Āranyaka X, 12, 1 'this Truth, this Law, is the highest Brahman' (pta satyam param brahma).

There are numerous references in Buddhist literature, to the 'ancient' Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha. According to Suttanipata 453, the 'Truth is the deathless word, and the ancient Dhamma'.² In Samyutta Nikāya II, 106, the Buddha claims to have 'seen the ancient way, the old road that was traversed by the former All-Awakened ones';³ and that having followed that ancient path, the same Aryan eightfold path traversed

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¹ Also VS 11, 47; MS II, 7, 4; KS XXVI, 4.
² saccam ve amatā vacā, esa dhammo sanantano.
³ evam eva khvāham ... addasam purāṇam maggam purāṇādipsaṁ pubbakēhi
sammasambuddhēhi anuyātaṁ.
by the previous Buddhas, he had realized the Four Noble Truths. Itivuttaka 28-29 says that those who follow the (ancient) way taught by the Buddhas, are called Mahātma.¹ In Suttanipāta 284, the Buddha refers to the 'issus of old, ascetics, self-controlled',² who were free from the five (sense) pleasures, and had 'reached the goal-of-self'.³ The Milindapañha (217) also mentions the ancient way, the old road traversed by the former Buddhas.

It is significant that the reference to the ancient way followed by the previous Buddhas, has a parallel in Upanisadic literature. In Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV, 4, 8, Yājñavalkya refers to the 'narrow ancient path which stretches far away',⁴ followed by the knowers of Brahman and leading to the deathless state. That path is explicitly described as being discovered by a brāhmaṇa (i.e. a knower of Brahman). Now, in the Tevida sutta (Dīgha Niκáya XIII), the Buddha declares that brāhmaṇas well versed in the Three Vedas cannot know Brahman (i.e. cannot enjoy a state of union with Brahmā, cannot be real brāhmaṇas) while they are 'imprisoned by the fetters of what is described in the Aryan discipline, as the five sense-pleasures'. These five sense-pleasures relate to the eye and forms, tongue and tastes, nose and odours, ear and sounds, and body and physical contact. The Buddha concludes: 'Brāhmaṇas versed in the Three Vedas but omitting the practice of those qualities which really make a brāhmaṇa, and adopting the practice of those qualities which really

1. esa maggo mohattehi anuyāto maheśino ... yathā buddhena desitām.
2. isayo pubbakā āsā sannatattā tapassino.
3. attadattham ācarisum.
4. anuk paniḥ viṭataḥ purāṇaḥ.
make men non-brāhmaṇas - clinging to these five sense-pleasures ... that these brāhmaṇas should after death, on the dissolution of the body, be united with Brahmā - this cannot be'.

The Buddha, Fully-Awakened, and a knower of Brahmā, whose quest for Brahman (brahma-patiriya) is, as we have seen, no different from that of the Upanisadic seers, is therefore a brahmaṇa in the real sense of the term. The fact that in the Pāli literature the Buddha is addressed as Ṭhaḷakaṇḍa (i.e. a descendent of Agni, and one of the seven ancient ṛṣis) described in Ṛg Veda X, 67, 2, as an inspired sage 'endowed with visionary insight who imagined the first form of worship', clearly indicates that Gotama's Awakening at Dawn, reminiscent of Agni's usarūḍham, represents a reinterpretation of the archaic mythology of the Vedas.

1. DN I, 245-246.
2. DN I, 249: 'Brahmāṇam p aham... pājānāmi.
3. SN I, 81, and AN III, 239: 'Behold the Ṭhaḷakaṇḍa shining (Ṭhaḷakaṇḍa passa virocamāna) brilliant as the midday sun'. cf. SN I, 196, and Thera-gāthā 1252, where the glory of the Buddha who is addressed as Ṭhaḷakaṇḍa the great sage (ṭhaḷakaṇḍa tvam mahāmuni), is represented as illuminating the whole world. cf. also Thera-gāthā 536: buddhassass putto 'mhi... Ṭhaḷakaṇḍas' appatimassa tādino.
CHAPTER VII

The Conquest of Māra
The word *māra* derived from Sanskrit *mrā*, meaning 'to die, or decease', appears throughout Buddhist literature as the personification of evil, sin, desire, and temptation. Several passages are devoted to the Buddha's teaching regarding Māra, especially in the Majjhima, Aṅguttara and Sutta Nikayas. In all these instances, the mythological figure of Māra appears as an important feature in stories which purport to describe episodes in the life of the Buddha, and those of his disciples.

The concept of Māra, however, is older than Buddhism and can be traced to the Vedas. The *Atharva Veda* (VI, 93, 1) mentions an Agha Māra who is associated with Yama (the Aryan god of the Dead), Mrtyu (Death), Nirṛtha (the Destroyer), and Sarva (the prototype of Siva). Elsewhere, the same text (XI, 8, 19) mentions the deities named Evil (or Misfortune): *pāpmāno núma devatāḥ*, and contains deprecatory invocations to Evil. On the other hand, Kāma, the Vedic god of Desire, who is identified with Māra in the Buddhist texts, is represented in *Atharva Veda* IX, 2, 19, as the Supreme Divinity: 'Desire was born first; no gods, no Fathers, no mortals attained to him; to them art thou superior, All-Slayer, always great; to thee, O Kāma, do I pay homage'. Again, according to IX, 2, 24 of the same text: 'No wind attains Kāma; not fire, not the sun, also not the moon'.

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1. *yamo mṛtyur aghamāra nirṛtho babhruh sarvo asta nilasīkhandah*.
2. cf. *AV* VI, 26, 1-2; 113, 2; XVII, 1, 29.
3. *kāma jajñē prajñamāḥ nātim deva āpūḥ pitaro na mṛtyah/tatas āpah/āpoh śivam viśvāha mahānām taṃmat te kāma nāma itkṛṣṇom.*
4. *na vai vataśeṇa na kāmaṃ apnoṭi nāgriḥ suryo nāyaḥ candramāḥ.*
Although Atharva Veda III, 25, 1-2, describes Kāma as piercing the heart of a woman with the arrow of love (īṣuḥ kāmasya), he is not, as far as appears from the few references that we have for him in Vedic literature, a god primarily of human love, although it is possible that that side of his character existed from the beginning, or was attributed to him soon after. In his cosmic aspect, however, which is in accordance with the theosophic tone of Atharva Veda IX, 2, 19-24, Kāma is represented as the first seed of mind, in one of the most important cosmogonic hymns of the Rg Veda (X, 129, 4). It is not, however, until the latest strata of epic literature, that we meet with the Indian Cupid with his arrows, described as the disturber of the hearts of men whom he vexes with the pangs of love.  

In post-Vedic literature, Mṛtyu is identified with Pāpmān; Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VIII, 4, 2, 1 ff, describes how Prajāpati became 'pregnant with all beings; whilst they were in his womb, Evil-Death seized them ...'. The same text (X, 4, 4, 1-2), which tells how Prajāpati created living beings when Death, the Evil ones, overpowered them, adds: 'He practised austerities for a thousand years, striving to leave Evil behind him. Whilst he was practising austerities, light emanated from the pores from which his hair grew; and those lights became the stars ...'. In Satapatha Brāhmaṇa X, 4, 3, 1-3, not only is

3. etad va Prajāpati retasminn ātmanāḥ pratikrte sarvāṇi bhūtāni garbhya bhavat tānasya garbha eva santi pāpma mrtyur grīmānti.
4. sa tapo ātapyata sahasrāṃ savayatarāṃ pāpmaṇāṃ viṣiḥāsan.
Death identified with the Year, and Ender (Antaka), but Prajāpati himself is represented as the Year, Death, and the Ender. Again, X, 4, 3, 10 refers to those who do not become immortal, come to life again 'when they die, and become the food of Death, time after time'. According to X, 6, 5, 1 of the same text, death existed before creation: 'There was nothing here in the beginning; by Death this (universe) indeed, was covered; by hunger, for Death is hunger'. In the later Nrisinhotarataparaniya Upanisad (II, 6, 1) reference is made to Pāpmān attempting to swallow the heavenly beings while they are trying to comprehend the ātman.

An epithet often applied to Māra, the Evil One, in Buddhist literature, is Namuci, literally interpreted as 'he who does not let go'. In the Rg Veda (I, 131, 4) Namuci occurs as the name of an asura (demon) who withheld (na-müncü) the waters, but was eventually smitten by the thunderbolt of Indra, and forced to release them. The story is elaborated in Satapatha Brahmāṇa XII, 7, 3, 1, ff: 'The asura Namuci carried off Indra's strength (indriya), the essence of food, and the

1. ēṣa vai mṛtyur yat saṁvatsarāḥ.
2. etasmād antakān mṛtyoh saṁvatsarāt prajāpateḥ.
3. Also BAU I, 2, 1. In mythological form, this passage may be regarded as anticipating the anicca doctrine of Buddhism.
4. Although the asuras (derived from the root as, meaning a spirit), are represented as enemies of the gods throughout the YV, AV, and all subsequent Vedic literature, this connection can be traced occasionally only in the latest hymns of the RV. The term asura often occurs in the RV as a normal attribute of the Supreme God Varuna and sometimes of other high gods. In the Brāhmaṇas, however, the asuras, like the gods, are represented as sons of Prajāpati, though born of a less worthy part of the god - from his descending breath, not the mouth - who are in constant conflict with the gods, and have to be defeated by ritual performances. They are also associated with darkness, untruth, and error, as opposed to the gods. Keith: op. cit., pp.231; 233.
draught of soma, together with wine. He (Indra) hastened to the Aśvins and Sarasvāti and said: 'I have sworn to Namuci, I will slay him neither by day, nor by night, neither with club, nor with bow, neither with the palm of my hand (prthena), nor with my fist, neither with dry, nor with moist, and he has carried off that (strength) of mine. Will ye recover it for me?'. They answered: 'Let us have a share of it, and we will recover it'. Indra replied: 'It shall be common to us all; recover it therefore'. The Aśvins and Sarasvāti then anointed the thunderbolt with the foam of the waters, saying: 'It is neither dry, nor moist'. With that, Indra struck off the head of Namuci, when night was passing into dawn, and the sun had not yet risen when (as he said): 'It was neither day nor night'...

While it is evident that some of the designations of Māra in Buddhist literature - Pāpiyān, Maccu, Kāma, Antaka, and Namuci - are met with in Vedic literature, it is clear that the fully developed form of the Māra symbol as it appears in the Buddhist canon, is a unique fusion of the Vedic Pāpān - Mrtyu, with the figure of Kāma, who is represented separately in the earlier literature as the god of desire or passion. An example of the way these two elements of evil and desire have been combined is provided by the Māra suttas of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. It is significant here, however, as Ling has pointed out, that while the names by which the Evil One is addressed are predominantly coloured by the idea of death, the activities in which he is engaged are those of Kāma. 'The

lesson to which the Mara samyutta points among others, is this: he who thus acts, and seeks to distract men from the Path, is desire (Kāma), and his true name is destroyer (Māra or Antaka).\(^1\) By supplying all creatures with some of the joys of life, Kāma as Namuci holds them within his power, so that the produced beings fall prey, over and over, to death, the joy of life and the grip of death acting respectively as the bait and the hook. This essentially two-fold, but complementary aspect of Māra, makes it clear that Māra is not merely a figure of speech for the passions, but rather represents, as Radhakrishnan observes, 'the power for evil that makes for death'.\(^2\)

We have already seen in an earlier chapter, that the essence of the Buddha's doctrine, is that craving or thirst (taṇhā), leading to rebirth, is the sole cause of all suffering. In Samyutta Nikāya V, 421, the Buddha declares: 'This, monks, is the Aryan truth regarding the origin of suffering; it is recurring (pono-bbhavika) craving (taṇhā) attended by enjoyment and passion (nandirāga), seeking enjoyment on all sides, namely sense-craving (kamataṇhā), the craving for existence (i.e. to be born again: bhavatanhā), and the craving for non-existence' (i.e. no rebirth: vibhavatanhā). The Buddha goes on to say: 'It is the utter passionless cessation of (asessavirāgasirodha), the abandoning of, the rejection of, the release from, not clinging to that craving, which is the Aryan truth regarding the cessation of suffering'.

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Grimm observes that the 'thirst' in every individual (which, following the terminology of Schopenhauer, he replaces with the word 'willing'), acts in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, it acts as willing, determined by consideration and rejection, and, on the other, as inclination, which makes itself felt in spite of consideration and rejection. 'Our whole willing, almost, is more or less the outcome of such inclinations within us'. \(^1\) He adds that while it takes a definite direction, it is, nevertheless, from the outset, more or less determined, so that the will of every individual, taken as a whole, represents a totality of certain dispositions of will, known as his character. Grimm sums up: 'It is just this kind of willing manifesting itself as inclination peculiar to each man, which the Buddha in the most vivid manner designates by the expression, thirst. ... It is this willing manifesting itself as inclination in particular, which at the moment of death, ever and ever again drives us to a new grasping of a new germ, brings about another such new grasping and thus ever and again chains us to a new organism'. \(^2\) Hence, it is this willing which must be completely eradicated, root and branch during our present lifetime, if at death, we wish to escape from the cycle of rebirths.

Since the complete eradication of thirst or desire represents a fundamental tenet of the teachings of the Buddha, it is clear that it is the fusion of the Vedic figure of Kāma, the god of desire and passion, with that of Pāpāmā-Nṛtyu, which constitutes much of the special effectiveness of the Māra symbol in Buddhist mythology.

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2. Grimm: *loc. cit.*
Numerous references occur throughout the Pāli literature, to the bonds of Māra (Mārabandhana), the snares of Māra (Mārapāsa), the stream of Evil (pāpimato sota), the realm of Māra (Māradheyya), the army of Māra (Mārasena), and the precincts of Māra (Māravisaya).

It is significant that the three fundamental blemishes of character, defined in Buddhism as rāga (passion or lust), dosa (hatred), and mohā (delusion), the last mentioned often being replaced by avijjā (ignorance), are frequently associated with Māra. In Dīgha Nikāya II, 135, the Buddha declares: 'The righteous man casts off evil (pāpakas) and when, lust, hatred, and delusion are destroyed, he is 'cooled' (i.e. at peace: nibbuto). According to Dhammapada 251, 'there is no fire like lust (rāgasamo aggī), no prison like hatred (dosasamo gaho), no net like delusion (mohasamam jālam), and no river (i.e. stream) like craving (tanhāsamā nadi).'. The same text also says that one who is 'exceedingly lustful' (tībarāga), and in whom craving increases (tanhā pavaḍhāti), makes the bond of Māra stronger. Itivuttaka 83 describes lobha (greed), dosa, and mohā as 'inward stains, inward enemies, inward rivals, inward destroyers, and inward opponents' while in Dīgha Nikāya III, 214,

1. Dh 37; 276; 350.
2. SN IV, 91; 158; cf. macupāsa occurring in Sn 166.
4. AN IV, 228; Sn 764; Dh 34.
5. Sn 561; 563.
6. MN II, 262; Dhammasaṅgani 1059; 1136.
7. Ud 85.
8. Lobha is often combined with dosa and mohā, and represents one of three principles of demerit in AN IV, 96; and Vism 116.
9. antarā malā antarā amittā antarā sapatta antarā vadhakā antarā paccathikā.
these three elements are referred to as 'the roots of evil action' (akusala mulani). Again, in Itivuttaka 92, reference is made to the 'three fires of greed, anger, and delusion'\(^1\) burning within mortals.

The contrast between the three 'blemishes' associated with Mara and referred to above, and Nibbāna, is evident from Somyutta Nikāya IV, 251, where the monk Sāriputta declares: 'The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, and the destruction of delusion, is called Nibbāna'.\(^2\) The same text (IV, 252) also identifies Arahatship with the destruction of these three elements: 'The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, and the destruction of delusion - that is called Arahatship'.\(^3\) Sāriputta continues: 'Those in the world who teach the Dhamma of the abandoning of lust, who teach the Dhamma of the abandoning of hatred, who teach the Dhamma of the abandoning of delusion, they are the Dhamma Preachers in the world ... they are the Sugatas in the world'.\(^4\)

Itivuttaka 93, referring to the wise men, the Aryan seers (Ariyaddasā) who have completely overcome suffering (asesam dukkham accagā), and are no more bound for rebirth (nāgacchanti punabbhavam), states that they are 'those in whom the fires of lust, hatred and delusion are utterly quenched' (asesam parinibbanti). Again, Theragāthā 281-282, draws a comparison between the 'fools, the unwise, who have bad advisers (dhamma), who are cloaked in delusion (mohaparutā) - such (men) who find pleasure

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1. rāgaggi, dosaggi, mohaggi.
2. rāgakkhaya dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idam vuccati nibbānanti.
3. rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idam vuccati arahattanti.
4. SN IV, 252-53: rāgappahanāya dhamman desenti dosappahānāya dhamman desenti mohappahānāya dhamman desenti, te loke dhammavādino ... te loke sugatā ti.
therein, when Māra throws his fetters' (Mārakkhaṃti bandhane), and 'those in whom lust, hatred, and ignorance have been abandoned, who find no pleasure therein; who, having cut the cords (of rebirth), and are unfettered (by Māra)'. Finally, Itivuttaka 57-58 describes the emancipated man as follows:

'He who has abandoned lust, hatred and ignorance, Whose 'self is developed' (bhāvita-tattva-kattaram)\(^1\)
One become Brahman, a Tathāgata, Awakened (Buddham), who has passed fear and dread, Who has rejected the All (sabbapahāyinam)
He who has abandoned lust, hatred, and, ignorance, Has crossed over the ocean with its sharks\(^2\)
Is bond-free, has escaped from death, and is without basis (for rebirth)\(^3\)
Transcending suffering, to become no more,
He has fooled the King of Death (amohaya maṇu-rajan) ...'.

These passages, which are suggestive of Mahāyāna doctrine, clearly indicate that it is only after abandoning the three vices, rōga, dosa, moha (avijja) closely associated with Māra, that one becomes a Buddha. It is also evident from Dīgha Nīkāya III, 195-196, that it was not only Gotama who conquered Māra's host, but that the Buddhas preceding him had also to contend with the Evil One.\(^4\) The Buddhavamsa, describing the life of the twenty-first Buddha Sikhī says: 'Sweeping away Māra's army,

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2. samuddam sagāham sarakkhasam.
3. sangātīgato maṇu-dāho nirupādhi.
4. cf. nam'atthu Kakuseṇdhassa Māra-sena-pamaddino.
he attained Perfect Awakening, and turned the Wheel of the Dhamma with untrembling hand'. 1

A comprehensive form of expression occurring frequently in the Pāli literature, to indicate all unwholesome mental and moral States, is Mārasena (i.e. Māra's army) or Māraparisa (Māra's assembly). These are enumerated in Suttanipāta 436-437 as desire (kāma), dislike (arati), thirst-hunger (khuppipasa), craving (taṅghā), sloth and drowsiness (thinamiddham), fear (abhira), doubt (vicikicchā), selfishness and obstinacy (makhotthamo). It is precisely his success in overpowering Māra and his forces that led to the epithet Mārabhisibhumī (the sage who is the conqueror of Māra) occurring in Suttanipāta 545 and 571, and, Mārasenappamaddana (crusher of Māra's army) in verses 561 and 563 of the same text, being applied to the Buddha.

It is significant that the means by which Māra and his host are overcome, are precisely the very same means by which the individual escapes from the cycle of birth-and-death, and reaches Nibbāna, and emphasised throughout the Pāli literature. While there are numerous references to the Eight-fold path by which one gains the state of Perfection and is utterly freed from suffering (i.e. delivered from Māra), samma-dīthi (right view), samma-samādhi (right concentration), samma-vāyama (right effort), and samma-sati (right mindfulness) are especially mentioned as the means of overcoming the Evil One. Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 15 ff, enumerating upon the four-fold right effort by which one makes an end of Suffering, says:

'By right effort they have conquered Mara's realm (Māradheyyabhibhuno),
Freed, they have passed beyond the fear of birth and death,
The pure and contented ones have defeated Mara's mount (Māraṃ savāhāno),
Being free from the powers of Namuci (Namuccibalam), they are happy'.

One of the elements of the four-fold right effort defined in Anguttara Nikāya II, 16, as 'the seven factors of Enlightenment' (sattannam bojjhaṅgā), is also prescribed in Sāmyutta Nikāya V, 99, as the method for crushing Mara's host (Māra-senapamaddana). Of these seven factors of Enlightenment, which form part of samma vāyāna, two are specifically mentioned as being important in respect of the conquest of Mara. These are samma sati and samma samādhi. In Udāna 61, the Buddha says:

'With body firm, and mind firm.
Standing, seated, or, lying down,
When a monk concentrates on mindfulness (sati bhikkhu aditthahano),
... He goes beyond the sight of the King of Death'. (adaseppana
Macourājassa yaashe’ti).

In Sāmyutta Nikāya V, 147, the four stations of mindfulness (sattāro satipatthāna) are described as one's own ground (petti ko visayo) where 'Māra gets no access, Māra gets no opportunity'. The Buddha advises his disciples not to stray beyond their own ground into 'uncongenial pasture-ground, others' range', which he identifies with the five sensual elements (pañca kāmaguṇā).

1. The seven bojjhāṅgas are sati (mindfulness), dhamma-vicaya (investigation of the Dhamma), viriya (energy), piti (joy), passaddhi (repose), samādhi (concentration) and, upākā (equanimity). See Rhys Davids and Stede: Pali-English Dictionary, s.v.
2. Literally, one's ancestral precincts.
3. na lacahati faaro otiiram na lacchati Māro arammana.
4. agocare caratam paravisaye.
It is, however, samma-samādhi which is most frequently emphasised as the means by which the individual protects himself, and releases himself from Mara.

Samadhi denotes a 'concentrated, self-collected, intent state of mind and meditation, which, concomitant with right living, is a necessary condition to the attainment of higher wisdom and emancipation'.

According to Sumangalavilāsinī I, 2, 17, and Visuddhimagga 126, two grades of samādhi are distinguished—upaśāra-samādhi (preparatory concentration), and appanā-samādhi (attainment concentration), of which only the latter results in jhāna. To these, Visuddhimagga 144 adds a third (preliminary) grade, khanika-samādhi (momentary concentration).

The word jhāna (Sanskrit dhyāna), literally meaning 'meditation', is a technical term for a special religious experience, reached in a certain order of mental states. It was originally divided into four such states, the condition of the mind after the experience of the four jhānas being described in Dīgha Nikāya I, 76, as follows '... with his heart thus serene, made pure, translucent, cultured, void of evil, supple, ready to act, firm and imperturbable'. It will be seen that there is no suggestion of trance, but rather of an enhanced vitality. The jhānas, therefore, represent only a means, and not the end; to imagine that experiencing them was equivalent to Arhatship (the goal) is condemned as

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2. Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.
3. These may be summarized as follows: i) The mystic, with his mind free from sensuous and worldly ideas, concentrates his thoughts on some special subject (e.g. the impermanence of all conditioned things). This he thinks out by attention to facts and reasoning; ii) Uplifted, above attention to facts and reasoning, he experiences joy and ease both of body and mind; iii) Then the bliss passes away and he becomes suffused with a sense of ease; iv) He becomes aware of pure lucidity of mind and equanimity of heart. The whole, however, really forms one series of mental stages. Rhys Davids and Stede: loc. cit.
a heresy in Dīgha Nikāya I, 37, ff. In the Abhidhamma Pitaka, the four jhānas are developed into a five-fold system enumerated in Dhammasangani 167-175, and a gradation of eight stages described in Vibhanga 267.

It is not necessary to describe in detail each of the jhānas here. However, what is significant for the present study, is that the jhānas are specially emphasised in the canon as a means of overcoming Māra. According to Anguttara Nikāya IV, 113, when an Aryan disciple is possessed of the seven good elements (sattahi dharmehi), and can obtain easily, without difficulty, the four jhānas, he is said to be 'one who cannot be done (i.e. overcome) by Māra, the Evil One' (akassanīyo Mārassa akassanīyo pāpinato). The same text (IV, 433-434), alludes to the jhānas as a 'refuge for the fearful' (bhīruttā); entering and abiding in the jhānas, a bhikkhu 'overcomes clinging in the world, and, removing and destroying Māra's vision, he becomes invisible to the Evil One'. In Itivuttaka 40, the Buddha, referring to the virtue of mindfulness, declares:

'He who delights in the jhānas, and, is ever attentive and ardent (saddā jhānaratā samāhitā),
Sees the destruction and end of birth (jāti-khayantadassino),
The monk who overcomes Māra's forces (māraṃ sasanva abhiphuyya),
Becomes one who transcends birth and death (jāti-maraṇassa pāraga')

According to Dhammapada 276 'he who practises the jhānas (jhāyino) and follows the Way, is released from the fetters of Māra' (pamokkhanti marabandhanā). While Samyutta Nikāya I, 48, refers to the emancipated man,

1. These are enumerated in MN I, 356 as: faith in the Awakening of the Tathāgata; ashamed of wrong conduct; fear of blame; right understanding of what he has heard; dwelling with stirred-up energy for getting rid of unskilled mental states and acquiring skilled mental states; mindfulness; wisdom.
2. Māraṃ apadām vadhītvā Māracakkhum adassanīya gato pāpinato tiyo loke visattikanti.
the wise jhāyin, who, having destroyed the dāvas, reaches the end of birth-and-death,¹ and I, 53 of the same text alludes to the man 'who is alert, mindful, and delights in the jhānas and banishes all sorrow',² Aṅguttara Nīkāya I, 150, identifies the man who conquers Māra and vanquishes Death by striving, as one who attains the destruction of rebirth.³

Evidence that Māra was recognised as a 'developed' symbol of Evil and Death in Buddhism from the earliest times, is provided by the Suttanipāta. The Aṭṭhaka and Pārāyanavagga of the Suttanipāta which probably represent some of the most ancient passages in the entire Sutta Piṭaka,⁴ contain a number of references to the gloom of Māra, his power, and his forces. In verse 967, the Buddha advises: 'When one perceives one's mind is agitated (āvilattā manaso), let one dispel it (i.e. the agitation) like the darkness⁵ (of Māra). Verse 1095 refers to the 'mindful who are 'cooled' (i.e. quenched) by the vision of the Dhamma,⁶ who are neither in Māra's power, nor subject to Māra'.⁷ Again, in Suttanipāta 1103, the Buddha declares: 'Above, below, or, in the middle; those things in the world to which living beings cling, by those Māra

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1. pappuyya jāti-marayassa antam.
2. samāhito jhānarato satimā, sabbassā soka vigatā pahīnā.
3. Paśayha Māram abhībhyyya antakan yo ca phuse jātikkhayaṃ padhānāvā.
4. The early date of the Aṭṭhaka and Pārāyaṇa Vaggas as well as the Khaggavisāṇa sutta of the Uraga Vagga, is suggested by the inclusion of the ancient commentary, the Niddesa, in the Pāli canon itself.
5. Kapphassu pakkho’ti vinodayeyya.
6. satā diṭṭhadhammābhinibbutā.
7. na te Māra-vasānuga, na te Mārassa padhāgū.
follows them'. 1 That Māra and Death are identical is also clear from verse 1104, which refers to 'those creatures intent on grasping', as 'those who are entangled in the realm of Death'. 2 Again, in verse 1119, the Buddha advises Mogharāja: 'Regard the world as void; always alert, uproot false view of self, and you will cross Death (maccutaro); regarding the world thus, the King of Death will not see you'. 3

These passages reflecting the antagonism between the emancipated man and Māra, contain the germs of the legend of the full-scale conflict between the Buddha and the Evil One, described in the Buddhacarita, Lalitavistara, Mahāvastu, and Vidānakathā. The close association between Māra and the concept of upadāna (grasping) in the passage cited above may also represent a primitive stage in the development of the Māra myth, and indicates that the Māra legend, in essence, was closely connected with Buddhist doctrine from the earliest times. The Buddha's victory over Death, and his putting an end to saṃsāra, poetically expressed in the Mahāvagga, which contains one of the oldest fragments of the Buddha legend: 4 'You are overcome, O Death', 5 has been explained by Windisch as providing a link with the older expressions such as Pāpamā-mṛtyuḥ, occurring in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and referred to above. 6

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1. Yāp yāp hi lokasmim upādiyanti, ten'eva Māra anvetti jantum.
2. Adānasate iti pakkhamāno pajaṃ imaṃ maccudheye visattan.
3. Eバン lokam avekkhantam maccurāja na passati.
4. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature, II, p.27. Also see p.33 where the texts of the Vinaya-piṭaka are said to bear a certain resemblance to the Vedic Brāhmaṇas.
death of the Buddha, Windisch observes, such sayings were taken literally, and woven into legends. ¹

In spite of the Buddha's decisive victory over Death and saṃsāra while seated at the foot of the Tree of Awakening, it is interesting that there are numerous references in the canon to Māra approaching the Buddha after his Enlightenment, and attempting to confuse him. In every instance, however, the Buddha is represented as being unassailable and the 'attack' ends with Māra's admission of despair and defeat: 'The Bhagavat knows me; the Sugata knows me'. ² The formidability of Māra as an opponent is unequivocally expressed in Dīgha Nikāya 37, where the Buddha declares: 'Monks, I consider no single power so difficult to subdue, as the power of Māra'. ³ The Mahāvagga (I, 11) makes it clear that this power is represented by the realm of the senses. Here Māra remarks:

'That by which the limits (i.e. everything) are ensnared, and the mind,⁴ By that I shall bind you; you will not be free of me, O samaya'.

To which the Buddha replies: 'whatever forms, sounds, odours, savours, or contact, that are pleasing to the mind; desire for these has ceased in me'. ⁶ Samyutta Nikāya, I, 133, represents the power of Māra extending

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2. Jānati mam bhagava, jānati mam Sugato.
4. antalikkhacaro pāso ṣa añey carati manaso
5. tena tam baddhayissāmi.
6. rūpa saddā gandhā rasā phoṭṭabbā sa manorāmā, ettha me vigato chando.
not only over mankind, but also over the gods of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, the realm of Yama, the gods of creation (kīmānarati), the Tusita heaven, and the gods of power (Vasavatti), who are all described as being 'bound by the fetters of the senses (kāmabanāhanabaddhā) and in the power of Māra'. (Māravasamyana).

The religious significance of the figure of Māra in Theravāda Buddhism, is perhaps most graphically expressed in Samyutta Nikāya III, 189, where the venerable Rādha asks the Buddha: 'They say Māra! Māra! How far is there a Māra?' To which the Buddha replies: 'Where there is body, Rādha, there is Māra, or that which slays it, or that which perishes.' Therefore, regard the body as Māra; regard it as perishable. Regard it as illness (roga), and disease (gaṇḍa); regard it as a dart (salla); regard it as misfortune (agha), and as a source of misfortune. Those who regard it thus, regard it rightly. The same is said with regard to the other khandhas - vedana, sanna, saṅkhāra, and viññāna.

Since the five khandhas in Buddhism represent the totality of the physical and mental phenomena of existence, it is clear that Māra symbolises the entire existence of unenlightened humanity. In Samyutta Nikāya I, 115, Māra affirms that the realm of the senses is his: 'Mine indeed is the eye, and forms; mine is the sphere of contact-and-consciousness of the eye (cakkhusampahasa-viññāṇayatanam). Where will you go, recluse, finding

1. Kittāvatā nu kho Māro.
2. Rūpe kho Rādha sati māro vā asa māretā vā yo vā pana miyati.
release from me? Mine, indeed, is the ear and sounds, ... the nose and odours, ... the tongue and tastes, ... the body and its contact, ... the mind and its impressions, and the sphere of contact-and-consciousness of the mind. Where will you go, recluse, finding release from me?'

The Buddha concedes: 'Yours, indeed, Evil One, is the eye and forms; yours, the sphere of contact-and-consciousness of the eye. But where there is no eye, no forms, no contact-and-consciousness of the eye, there is no coming for you, Evil One'. (agata tava tattha pāpimā). The same is said with regard to the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and its contact, and the mind and its impressions.

We have already discussed, in an earlier chapter, the doctrine that represents the basic tenet of Buddhism: all 'conditioned things', i.e. all the factors of the normal experience of the individual, share three features (lakkhana) - anicca, dukkha, and anattā. Since the five khandhas, comprising the totality of existence, are all defined as anicca, dukkha, and anattā, and identified with the World, and the All, in contradistinction to Nibbāna, which is permanent and the end of suffering, it follows that Māra representing the five khandhas, the World, and the All, is what Nibbāna is Not. In other words, in Buddhist terminology, Māra and what is of the nature of Māra, is anicca, dukkha, and anattā.

The whole of samsāra then, the endless cycle of birth-and-death, caused by grasping (upadāna) rooted in desire, is the realm over which

Māra rules; this is his domain, his precincts. In *Suttanipāta* 357-358, the realm of Death is described as a net (*mãcunā jālam*), very difficult to cross (*mãcudheyyam sũcudattarāṇī*), while *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 226-27 refers to Māra's realm as the stream of Evil (*pāpimato sota*); those who cut across Māra's stream (*Mārossa sota*), go safely beyond (*sotthinā pāram gamissanti*).

It is clear then, that in order to become an Arahant or a Buddha, the 'confrontation' with Māra, the personification of temptation, evil, and death, and representing the whole of *samsāra*, was inevitable. In other words, without the victory over Māra (*māraṇijaya*) which represents the complete eradication of desire (or thirst) conditioned by the grasping of the five *khandhās*, and thereby leading to rebirth, there would have been no Buddha. The fact that in the Māra legend, emphasis lies heavily upon the Buddha's, rather than any of his disciples' encounter with the Evil One, is not surprising. As Ling rightly observes: 'It is an illustration of where the emphasis naturally lies, throughout the Buddhist scriptures, on the Buddha. In this case, it reflects the belief of those who encountered this opposition, that there was One who had overcome it, who had broken through the frontiers of Māra's realm, into the transcendent world'.

Ling goes so far as to conclude that if an 'association of the *Sammāsambodhi* with a crucial defeat of Māra were not a feature of the Buddha legend, then one of the two inferences would have to be drawn: either in view of all that is said of Māra in the canon, the Enlightenment was not complete enlightenment; or, Māra is not intended to be regarded

1. Ling: *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil*, p.52.
by Buddhists as the deadly enemy which everywhere in the canon he is made out to be'.

We have already referred to the three akusala-mulāni, or roots of evil action - rāga (lobha), dosa, and moha (avijja), as the fetters of Māra (mārabandhāna). It is significant that the word kiñoana (literally meaning 'something'), is defined in Dīgha Nikāya III, 217, as the very same impurities of character, rāga, dosa, and moha, which are the bonds of Māra. From the frequent occurrence of the word kiñoana in the older texts, it appears to have 'assumed the moral implication of something that sticks, or, adheres to the character of a man, and which he must get rid of, if he wishes to attain to a higher moral condition'. In Anguttara Nikāya II, 177, the emancipated man who has no conceit of 'recluse am I'; 'brāhmaṇa am I'; 'superior am I'; 'equal am I'; or 'inferior am I', says of himself: 'I am not part of anything (i.e. associated with anything) anywhere, and therein for me there is no attachment to anything'. According to Sutta Nikāya V, 202, he who has the above mentioned 'conceits', is a bondsman of Māra (mārasa buddho), while he who has no 'conceits' is freed from the Evil One (amaññamano mutto pāpinato). Theragāthā 306 says of the righteous man: 'Uprooted is the net of craving; he is the

1. Ling: op. cit., p.53.
2. Also MN I, 298; SN IV, 297: tayo kiñoana, rāgo kiñoanam, doso kiñoanam, moho kiñoanam.
4. na somano ti maññati na brāhmaṇo ti maññati na seyyo'ham asmi ti maññati na asadiso'ham asmi ti maññati na kiño'ham asmi ti maññati.
   This passage and passages such as Suttaññāta 455, where the Buddha declares that he is neither brāhmaṇa, ṭhāṭṭiya, or vessa, clearly indicate that it is the 'conceit' of social status that the Buddha is referring to; on the other hand, the numerous passages cited in which the Buddha is styled 'brāhmaṇa', and the arahant is equated with the brāhmaṇa, show that the brāhmaṇa in Buddhist terminology is the emancipated man, and a knower of Brahma.
5. na'ham kvaññ kassaci kiñoanam taśmin na ca mama kuaci kathaci kiñoanam k'atthi.
6. cf. maccanojāla referred to above.
destroyer of rebirth, and he is not 'anything' (*khīna-samēra na o'atthi
kiṇcanaṁ*), implying that there is no substratum for rebirth.

Now, the adjective *akiṇcana* meaning just the opposite, literally
'having nothing', is defined in *Cullaniddesa* 5 as 'not having the (above
mentioned) three impurities - rāga, dosa, and moha',¹ and is also used
in the sense of 'being without any moral stain', in *Milindapañha* 181 ff.
The term also occurs frequently as an attribute of an arahant (= brāhmaṇa).
According to *Dhammapada* 421, and *Suttanipāta* 645, a brāhmaṇa is one 'who
does not cling to anything, neither past, future, nor present; who has
nothing; having nothing, he is free from attachment'.² The former text
(221) referring to the state of *akiṇcānīta*, says: 'Let him give up anger
(kōdha), let him abandon pride (mana), let him overcome every fetter
(sapāṇjanam) attaching him to name-and-form; sorrows do not befall him
who has nothing' (*akīṇcānām*). In *Anguttara Nikāya* V, 232,³ and *Dhammapada*
88-89, the expression *kāme akiṇcana* (completely devoid of sense-pleasures),
occurs as an epithet of a *khīnāsava* (one in whom all inclination, i.e.
grasping, has been destroyed). The term *akiṇcana* also occurs in
*Suttanipāta* 620; 1094, and *Dhammapada* 396, combined with anādāna, meaning
'free from all attachment'. Again in *Mahāvagga* I, 22, and *Suttanipāta* 176;
1059, the expression *akiṇcana kāmasubhāve asutto* - having nothing, and not
attached to sense-pleasures - is used to describe the Buddha.

From the passages cited above, it is clear that the word *akiṇcana*
denotes the total absence of rāga (lobha), dosa, moha (avijja), and freedom
from attachment to worldly pleasures, in contradistinction to *kiṇcana*

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¹. *The Cullaniddesa* also adds *mana, &itthi* (dogma, speculation,
especially false opinion, rejected by the Buddha as pāpa in *AN* IV,
172), *kilesa* (impurities), and *duccarita* (improper conduct).
². *yassa pure ca pačchā ca majjhe ca natthi kiṇcānam akiṇcānām
anādānaṁ tam ahem briṇi brāhmaṇaṁ.*
³. Also *AN* V, 255.
identified with these three roots of evil action, and consequently representing the fetters of Mara.

It is significant that in the Pāli literature, this state of akincannātā is identified with cetovimutti (freedom of mind), suññatā (the void), and animitta (signlessness). In Majjhima Nikāya I, 297, the venerable Sāriputta declares: 'Whatever is immeasurable freedom of mind, is naught; and whatever is freedom of mind, is the void and is signless'.

Sangutta Nikāya IV, 296-297, enumerating the three concepts of appamāna cetovimutti, akincannātā, and suññatā, refers to akincanna cetovimutti (freedom of mind that is naught), suññatā cetovimutti (freedom of mind that is void), and animittā cetovimutti (freedom of mind that is signless). While identifying the three 'moral stains', rāga, dosa, and moha as pañāna (limit), nimitta (productive of signs), and kincanā, Sāriputta concludes: 'Indeed, that steadfast (immovable) freedom of mind is void of lust, void of hatred, and void of delusion'. The contrast between the concepts of kī cena and akincanna, is most expressively described in Udāna 13-14, where the Buddha remarks:

'Happy is he who is 'nothing' (na hoti kīcch),

Master of the Dhamma, one very learned (bahusutāsa),

Look! at these worldlings who suffer hardship (swayed by rāga, dosa, and moha),

One person to another, bound by forms'.

'Happy are they who are 'nothing'.

They who are versed in the Vedas, are 'nothing'.

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1. Ya ca yā appamāna cetovimutti ya ca akincannā cetovimutti ya ca suññatā ceto vimutti ya ca animittā.
2. Sā kho pana akuppa cetovimutti suññā rāgena suññā doṣena suññā mohena. Also MN I, 298.
5. Sukhino vata ye akincannā.
Look! at those worldlings who suffer hardship,
One person to another, bound by forms'.

Dhammapada 92-93 associates the emptiness and signlessness referred to above with the condition of an arahat 'for whom there is no accumulation (of rebirth - saṃsāyo catthi), and whose track (destiny), like the course of birds in the air, cannot be traced'. Udana 46 also refers to the monk who 'destroys birth-and-rebirth (jatisamkṣara) and is freed from the fetters of Māra'. That the immeasurable freedom of mind, referred to above, is identical with freedom from Māra, is clearly evident from Dhammapada 37: 'Faring far, wandering alone, bodiless, lying in a cave; those who subdue the mind are freed from the fetters of Māra'.

The important role played by the mind in the round of birth-and-death, is especially noticed in Dhammapada 1: 'Mind is the forerunner of all states; mind is chief; mind-made are they.' If one speaks or acts with a wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one even as the wheel follows the hooves of the ox'. Verse 2 of the same text continues: 'If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one, even as one's shadow never leaves one'. That the mind was responsible for all actions, good and evil, is, however, already anticipated in Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā 34, 3, where the poet invokes: 'That without which men do no single action, that, my mind, (manah), move by right intention.' and Maitreya Upānīṣad, adhyāya 1: 'It is citta (mind) alone which is

1. Duḥṣaṅgamah ekacāram asaṅgānam guhāsoyam.
2. Ye cittaṁ saṁmānassanti mokkhati māravandhanā.
3. Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoṣeṭṭhā manomayā.
4. Tato nam dukkhaṁ nanvti cakkam'va vahato padaṁ.
5. Tato nam sukhaṁ nanvti chāyā'va anapāyini.
samsāra. It should be cleansed with effort. Whatever is a person's citta, of that nature, he becomes.¹ The Maitri Upaniṣad (VI, 34)² also says: 'Mind, indeed, is the cause of bondage and liberation for mankind; bondage if it is bound to objects; freedom from objects is called liberation'.³ It is interesting that this definition of bondage and liberation with regard to objects, occurs in Samyutta Nikāya IV, 184-186, where paritta-cetasa (limited mind) is described as 'attachment to forms cognizable by the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, where Mara gets an opportunity, and access', and appamāṇa-cetasa (immeasurable mind), identified as 'non-attachment to forms cognizable by the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, where Māra gets no opportunity, and no access'. The same text also makes a distinction between paritta-cetasa described as 'conquered by forms, sounds, scents, savours, tangibles, and (mind) states - not conqueror',⁴ and appamāṇa-cetasa described as 'conqueror of forms, sounds, scents, savours, tangibles, and (mind) states - not conquered'.⁵

The conceit of the personal ego, representing the fetters of Māra, and the attachment to sense-pleasures, referred to above, are often closely associated with ignorance. According to Majjhima Nikāya I, 47 and 48, the Aryan disciple, having got rid of all passionate attachment (rāgānusyoḥ paḥāya), abandoning the view and predisposition of pride of

¹. vittam eva hi saṁsāram tat prayatnena sūdhayet yevi cītto sān-mayo bhavati guhyam etat sanātanaṃ.
². This upaniṣad, however, belongs to a considerably later period, and is probably post-Buddhistic. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature I, p.238.
³. Mana eva manuṣyoḥ kāraṇam bandha-mokṣayoh/bandhāya viśayāsangim nukgo nīrviśayam upyatan.
⁴. rūpādhibhūto saddādhibhūto gandhādhibhūto rasādhibhūto phoṭṭhābādhibhūto dharmādhibhūto adhibhūto anadhibhūto.
⁵. rūpādhibhūto saddādhibhūto gandhādhibhūto rasādhibhūto phoṭṭhābādhibhūto dharmādhibhūto adhibhūto anadhibhūto.
I am', removing ignorance, and having made knowledge arise, is the maker-of-the-end of Suffering. In *Sangutta Nikāya* IV, 127-128, 'forms, sounds, odours, tastes, things touched and perceived', are described as *dukkha* by those in whom pleasures have ceased, but *sukha* by gods and men:

'Bewildered, are the unwise, *samujjhettaka avidassu*

Enveloped in darkness; the blind see not.

But by the mindful, whose (eyes) are opened,

A light is seen (*āloko passatam idha*) ..., Skilled in the knowledge of the mighty Dhamma.

But by those who are in Mara's realm (*Maraheyyaṃ pomehi*)

Not fully comprehended is this Dhamma'.

The true nature of lust, hatred, and delusion, is also described in *Anguttara Nikāya* I, 134-135, where the Buddha declares: 'Monks, there are three causes from which actions originate (*nidanāni kammānam samudayaya*) ...

lust, hatred, and delusion. An act performed in lust, born of lust, originating in lust, has its fruit wherever the self is born (*attabhava*). Wherever that act comes to fruition, one experiences the fruit thereof, whether it arises in this life or in another' (*apare va pariyāye*). The same is said with regard to hatred and delusion.

The Buddha, however, continues: 'There are three (opposite) causes from which actions originate, ... non-desire (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). An act not performed in desire, not born of desire, not originating in desire, - without desire, that act is abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made unable to

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1. *asmīti ditṭhināmanussayo avijjao pahāya vijjāo uppaṭṭevā ditṭhe vā dhammo dukkhas'antakaro hoti.*
2. *nivutamān tamo hoti, andhakāra apassatāṃ.*
3. *Sataka va vivatāṃ hoti.*
become again (anabhāvakatam), of a nature not to arise again in time, i.e. future (āyatim anuppāda-dhamman).

We have already identified kiñcana with nāga (lobha), dosa, noha (avijjā), described as the fetters of Mara. It is clear from the passage cited above, that the term akiñcana representing just the opposite - alobha, adosa, and amoha, - denotes a state where there is no Mara. Thus, akiñcana where Mara has no access, and no opportunity, also represents the conquest of the lust for forms, sounds, savours, odours, and tangibles, referred to above. It is significant that Suttanipata 974-975, refers to the mindful monk who has disciplined the desire (vineyyachanda) for the five 'dusts' in the world (pañcaarajñīloke), with his mind completely released (suvinuttacitto), - as a 'remover of darkness' (vihane tamam). That this darkness represented the realm of the Evil One, is clearly evident from a number of passages in the canon where the epithet kañha is applied to Mara.\(^1\) Moreover, Mara's connection with the concept of darkness is also confirmed by his appearance to the Buddha and his followers, as a 'smokiness and murkiness' (dhwnriyitattam timiriyitattam) in Cūḷaputta Nikāya I, 122, and III, 124; by the idea that his army is routed as darkness is dispelled by the sun in Udāna 3,\(^2\) and the association of thick darkness (tamokkhandha) with his power in Mahāvagga I, 5, 3,\(^3\) Theragāthā 128, and Therīgāthā 28 (tamokkhandhāpadāliya). The dark states of Mara are also vividly contrasted with

\(^1\) Sn 355; 439; Theragāthā 25; 1189; 1191; 1193; 1195; 1197; 1201; 1203; 1209; DN II, 262. 
\(^2\) vidhiyayam tiṭṭhati Māraenaṃ suṭṭhiyo daḥsayaṃ antalikkhaṇ ti. 
\(^3\) rāgarat্তa na dakkhanti tamokkhandhena’ti.
ckiñoana in Dhammapada 87-88: 'Coming from home to the homeless, the wise man should abandon the dark states (kañhà dhammàn vippahàya), and cultivate the bright in distant seclusion. There, having completely abandoned sense-pleasures and desires,¹ the wise man should cleanse himself of the impurities of the mind'.

Ling observes that it is instructive to place beside the Buddha's words in Dīgha Nikāya III, 77: 'I consider no power so difficult to subdue as the power of Mara', the following passage in Itivuttaka 8: 'I see not any single hindrance ... like the hindrance of ignorance' (avijjà). The word avijjà (Sanskrit avidyā) in Buddhist usage, Ling adds, 'has a special meaning of not knowing (or not seeing) things aright, not seeing things as they really are; having one's view distorted'.² Nyanatiloka defines avijjà as 'that which veils man's mental eyes ... preventing him from seeing the true nature of things'.³

That avijjà in Buddhism was tantamount to a-dhamma is also evident from Majjhima Nikāya I, 54-55, where Sāriputta declares: 'Whatever is not-knowing (aññāna) with regard to suffering, not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the path leading to the cessation of suffering, is called ignorance⁴ ... When the Aryan disciple comprehends ignorance thus, comprehends the origin of ignorance, comprehends the path leading to the cessation of ignorance ... he is certainly one who is confident in the Dhamma, has understood, and has come to this pure Dhamma'.⁵ In Mahāvagga I, 1, 2-4, the detailed exposition of the twelve-fold papicca-samuppāda (chain of dependance origination) with avijjà as the starting point, and the root of all dukkha

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1. tatvabhārvina ittheyya hiwā kāne akiñoano.
2. Ling: op. cit., p.61.
4. dukkhasamudaye aññānaṁ dukkhanirrodhe aññānaṁ dukkhanirrodhagāmini-paṭipadāya aññānam ayañ vuṣeṣat avijjà.
5. dharmine avoccaappasaddena sammanāgato, āgato iman saddhamman ti.
and saṃsāra, is followed by the Buddha's utterance: 'When the real nature of things becomes manifest (i.e. clear) to the ardent, meditating brāhmaṇa, he stands, dispelling the hosts of Mara, like the sun illuminating everything'.

The affinity of thought between avijjā and tama is obvious and close; both are commonly experienced by blind men. It is also important to notice that besides ignorance, darkness and blindness are frequently associated with Mara's activities. In Sānyutta Nīkāya I, 110-115, the approach of Mara with the intention of 'darkening or blinding the intelligence' (vicakkhu-kammāya) of the Buddha's followers, is a stereotyped formula.

The close association of higher insight, knowledge, and light, in contradistinction to the darkness of ignorance, referred to above, is evident in several passages in the Canon. Suttanīpāta 763 says: 'Shrouded in darkness, the blind cannot see; but by the wise whose (eyes) are opened, a light is seen'. In Sānyutta Nīkāya IV, 233, the Buddha declares: '... there arose in me vision, there arose in me knowledge, insight arose, wisdom arose, light arose'. According to Suttanīpāta 349, the inspired ones (dhāra), are bringers or producers of light (pajjotakara), while verse 539 of the same text ascribes to the Buddha 'vision, light and great wisdom' (jutimā mutimā paññātapañña). Itivuttaka 108 describes such monks as 'teachers, caravan-leaders, passion-scatterers,'

1. cf. Ud. 3.
2. vi + oakkhu, meaning eye-less, i.e. blind.
3. cf. SN IV, 127-128.
4. oakkhum udapādi hānam udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.
dispellers of gloom (tamoniḍa), bringers of light (ālokakarā), bringers of lustre (obhāsakarā)\(^1\) and radiance (pajjotakarā), torch-bearers, enlighteners (pabhaṅkarā), - such are called Aryans, such are called seers.

Extolling the Buddha in *Samyutta Nikāya* I, 193, Vāngīṣa describes him as 'the conqueror of Māra's devious ways' (ummaggapathāṃ Māraṃ saḥbibhuyya), and deliverer of bondage (bandhapamucakarā), a light-bringer (pajjotakarā), who has pierced beyond, who, knowing and realizing himself, the topmost height, shows others that vantage-point of sight'. The same text (I,210) also says of the Buddha: '... to gods and men who are bewildered he is a giver of light', and describes him as one who 'has overcome all the expeller of Mara (sabbābhībhū māramuḍo), who is unconquered everywhere, wholly freed, and the Seer of all ...'.\(^2\) That the emancipated man crosses over from darkness and obscurity to light, is also implied in *Samyutta Nikāya* I, 113, where it is said that the 'mindful disciple of the Buddha passes beyond the realm of Māra, and shines like the sun'.\(^3\) In this connection, it may be pointed out that an epithet frequently applied to the Buddha is ādioccabandhu (kinsman of the sun).\(^4\)

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1. The meaning of obhāsa (Sanskrit avabhāsa) seems to vary from context to context. While the translation given by Nyanatiloka in his *Buddhist Dictionary*, as 'effulgence of light' is rather too strong, 'aura' preferred by Hare in *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, IV, p.201, can hardly be accepted as the right rendering. Although light is implied, the inclusion of the term āloka in the same passage, suggests that obhāsa may, perhaps, be understood as light-manifestation, or, light-radiation. It is connected with the appearance of light produced in meditation, by which objects can be seen by the non-physical deva-vision operating as it does super- or, extra-sensibly. I.B. Horner: *The Middle-Length Sayings*, III, pp. xxii-xxii, and 202, note.


3. sato buddhassā sāvako māradheyyam atikkamma ādiaco va virocatiti. cf. It. 50.

4. cf. *SN* I, 186; 192; *AN* II, 54; *Sn* 54; 915; 1128.
The close connection between the Buddha's supernatural vision, and light, is perhaps best illustrated in Majjhima Nikāya III, 161, where he says: 'So I, living diligently, ardently, self-resolutely, perceived both a limited light-manifestation (paritta-obhāsa)\(^1\) and saw a limited (number of) material shapes (paritta-rūpanimitta); and for a whole night and a whole day, I perceived a boundless light-manifestation and saw a boundless (number of) material shapes. Regarding this, it occurred to me: 'At the time when concentration (samādhi) is limited, my vision (cakkha) is limited; so with limited vision, I perceive both a limited light-manifestation and see a limited (number of) material shapes. But at the time when my concentration is not limited, my vision is boundless, so with boundless vision ... I perceive both a boundless light-manifestation and see a boundless (number of) material shapes'.'

The idea is that 'the man who concentrates his mind in profound meditation or intense contemplation so as to identify himself with the object meditated upon, enters upon the ineffable joy of seeing an endless, pure and immortal light'.\(^2\) It is only in samādhi, the culmination of āhyāna, that the truth, i.e. Reality, be it Nibbāna or Brahman, is realized; for it is 'only when the sphere of sensation, emotion and speech-thought is consciously transcended, man enters the realm of the Immortal, of the really Existent, where the 'Light of Lights' is 'seen', Brahman is 'known', and bliss 'enjoyed' ...'.\(^3\)

1. i.e. a light-manifestation with regard to a limited object of meditational exercise. Papañcaśudānī IV, 209.
Knowledge (vījā), then, means Awakening, 'the intense all-alive, concentrated, glowing, profound Awakening in the deeps of consciousness ... He who has vījā is the Awakened One, the Enlightened One'.

On the other hand, ignorance (avījā) represents sahmāra, and the realm of Māra. It marks the unawakened state, a state of darkness, and of suffering, wherein one is ignorant of the truth that this suffering characterises individual existence and the phenomenal world. As Ling observes, avījā in association with the two other akusala-mālāni, rūga and dosa, is more than intellectual ignorance; 'it has a moral connotation and appears to represent the lack of real insight which accompanies, and, indeed underlies, passionate desire and hatred'. This association of passion and moral myopia occurs very frequently in Therīgāthā 59: 'Everywhere enjoyment of pleasure is struck down; the mass of darkness (ignorance) is destroyed. Thus know, Evil One, you are defeated, Death'. With the extinction of ignorance, suffering is eradicated, Māra utterly defeated, and the light of Nibbāna wholly suffuses the Dhamma-become, Brahman-become Arahant.

It must be remembered, however, that the use of the terms for light in religiously metaphorical sense was far from rare in India, and that the

1. P.D. Mehta: Early Indian Religious Thought, p.211. The word vījā is, however, not always the positive of avījā (which has quite a well-defined meaning from its first appearance in Buddhist psychological ethics), but has been taken into the terminology of Buddhism from Brahmanic and popular philosophy. The opposite of avījā is usually rūga (but cf. SN III, 152 ff; 171; V, 429). Although certain vījās pertain to the recognition of the 'truth' and the destruction of avījā, yet they are only secondary factors in achieving vimutti (cf. abhinna, rūga-dassana, and pāññā). A different aspect of 'knowledge' again, is understood by the term bodhi. Rhys Davids and Stede: op. cit., s.v.


3. sabbattha viññānaṁ nandā tanakkhanāho padālīto evam jānāhi pāpima nīkato tuvam aeit antaka. cf. Therīgāthā 59; 142; 188; 195; 203; 235.
Highest Principle, whatever its designation, was frequently defined as that by contact with which the individual becomes illuminated. Certainly the author of Rg Veda VIII, 48, 3, was well acquainted with the metaphorical use of the word *jyotiḥ* (light) when he declares: 'We have drunk the soma, we have become immortal, we have come to the light, we have found the gods'.

III, 26, 8 of the same text refers to an internal light to which the poet gains access in his heart; that is the 'light of inspired thought and vision or supranormal sight'. Again, in II, 23, 15, the poet implores: 'O Brhaspati, bestow upon us the bright substance (*dṛvaṇaṃ cītram*) which excels in worth, that of the outsider; which produces brilliant light, which shines powerfully, 0 thou that art born of Rta' (i.e. the son or manifestation of the universal law, which is at the same time, truth), the 'bright substance' rightly interpreted as the 'treasure of wisdom' by Geldner.

In Rg Veda VI, 9, Agni Vaisvanara is glorified not only as the physical light of the universe but also as the internal light which illuminates the seers; according to stanza 4 he is 'the immortal light among mortal beings'. Stanza 5 explains: 'He is *manah* (the psychical and intellectual faculties), which is the swiftest among all flying beings', while stanza 6 refers to the light (*jyotiḥ*) that is placed in

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1. *apiṁa somam amṛtā abhūmāgamam jyotir avidāna devān.
2. *hrda matim jyotir anu praṇānam.*
4. For *dṛvaṇaṃ* in the context of highly valued and important gifts of those gods who give 'visions', see RV IV, 5, 12; 11, 3; 54, 1; V, 54, 15; VII, 10, 3; X, 37, 10; Gonda: op. cit., p.203.
5. *dyumad vibhāti kratumad jānequ.*
7. *idam jyotir amṛtam martyequil*.
the heart of the seer who has gained insight. The author of \textit{Rg Veda} VIII, 6, 10, expresses himself unequivocally: 'I inherited from my father the seer's power of truth; I was (re)born like the sun'. 1

\textit{Atharva Veda} X, 2, 31, explaining the structure of man, states that in 'that impregnable stronghold of the gods, there is a golden vessel (\textit{kosa}), which goes to heaven and is covered with light'. \textit{Vājasaneyi Sāhūtā} 34, 3, also refers to 'the wisdom (\textit{prajñā}), intellect (\textit{cetā}), and firmness (\textit{dhṛti}) and immortal light (\textit{jyotि}), which creatures have within them ...'. The author of \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa} VII, 4, 2, 21, observes that the sacrificer prays for light which is immortality. In \textit{Rg Veda} VIII, 16, 10, 'light' occurs as a term for victory: \textit{Kartāraṃ jyotiḥ samatsu}, and for wellbeing or welfare (as opposed to the darkness of hunger and distress') in \textit{Vājasaneyi Sāhūtā} 12, 73. Here it is worthwhile recalling Gonda's remark that the 'belief in a light which, being superhuman in origin and penetrating into the heart of inspired poets, illumined their mind, was the complement of the conviction that these poets owe their praeternormal knowledge and their religious and poetical inspirations to 'visions'; that they 'saw' the truth about the deeds and the power of the gods which they formulated in their hymns'. 2

In the case of the founder of Buddhism, it was the 'vision' 3 of the Four-fold Aryan Truth – that all phenomenal existence is characterised by suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of that suffering, and the Eight-fold Path leading to that cessation – which he formulated in his Dhamma. \textit{Majjhima Nikāya} II, 9, describes this Dhamma as having a

1. \textit{aham id dhi pitaṃ pari medhām ṛtaśaḥ jāgrābhā; aham sūrya śvājani.}  
3. cf. \textit{MN} I, 167, and III, 162: 'knowledge and vision arose in me (\textit{pāṇama ca pana me dussanam udapādi}) unshakable is freedom for me; this is my last birth, there is no more becoming'.
causal basis (sanidāna) and as convincing (sappāṭīhāriya); 'when the recluse Gotama says: 'I know, I see', - it is because he does know, he does see; the recluse Gotama teaches Dhamma from super-knowledge' (abhīññāya).

To return to the subject of the Buddha's victory over Mara, it is significant that according to the Buddhavamsa, 'wherever heat (unha) is found, its opposite, cold (sītāla) is found; just so, where the three fires (rāga, dosa, moha) are found, Nibbāna must be looked for'. The same text continues: 'Where evil (pāpa) is found, there goodness (kalyāṇam) is also found; so also, where birth is found, non-birth (i.e. the end of rebirth) must be looked for. Where sorrow is found, there joy is found; so also, where individual existence is found, the opposite of existence (i.e. the end of existence), must be looked for'. (II, 10-12).

The Buddhavamsa contains poetical legends of the twenty-four Buddhas who are supposed to have preceded Gotama in the last twelve ages (kappa) of the world. This narrative text belongs to that phase of the popularisation of Buddhism, to which the convenient term 'edification' may be applied, and is, perhaps, to be dated to the 2nd Cent. BC. However, it must be borne in mind that the relative duality underlying the one and the same cosmic principle, in Indian religious and philosophic thought, is already anticipated in the Vedic literature, e.g. sad-asad; amṛta-mṛtyu; parastāt-avastāt (Rg Veda X, 129); uṛdhva-īha (Rg Veda X, 90); aditi-diti (Rg Veda V, 62, 8); krṣṇa-rauḍad (IV, 4, 9); hina-ghraiva (Atharva Veda XIII, 1, 46); kṣara-aṅga (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VI, 1, 3, 6; Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa I, 24, 1).

1. evam tividhaggi vijjante nibbānam i乔hitabbakam.
2. evam eva jāti vijjante ajaṭtim-p'i乔hitabbakam.
3. evam bhave vijjamāne nibhavo p'i乔hitabbakam.
We have already referred to Nibbāna as representing world's end (lokantagu), in an earlier chapter. This world's end (= Nibbāna) is also described by the Buddha, as lying within the 'fathom long body, with its perceptions, mind (i.e. mental impressions) and intelligence', in Anguttara Nikāya II, 48, and Samyutta Nikāya I, 62. If Nibbāna, identified with ajāti and vibhava, is, in the final analysis, within the individual himself, the three fires rāga, dosa, and moha, representing the bonds of Māra, are also within the very same individual. Man begins in the darkness of ignorance, the unawakened consciousness, and only through directed will and conscious effort, does he realize the light of Nibbāna or Brahmā, becoming thereby the giver of the Immortal himself. He, of his own volition, has to struggle to cease being a producer of suffering, and to escape from the unending cycle of saṁsāra, which represents the realm of Māra.

These passages in the Pāli canon clearly suggest and anticipate the philosophy of the Mahāyāna that within every individual is a Māra and a Buddha, evil and good, darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge, death and immortality. It is only by eradicating, that is, by conquering or overcoming the Māra in oneself, does one become a Buddha. This conquest/tanamount to a complete transformation of the individual's consciousness (viññāna) enmeshed in the cycle of saṁsāra, and the grip of Māra, from a state of upadāna-viññāna, consisting of the basis of rebirth, to that of the supportless consciousness (appatiṭṭhitena viññāna) described as signless (anidassanam), infinite and luminous on

1. SN I, 122; III, 124.
all sides (anantaḥ sabbatopabham)\(^1\) and identified by Buddhaghosa with Nibbāna.\(^2\) The ultimate fulfilment consists of a transmutation of one's state of consciousness which is worldly, and which belongs to the Lord of Death, into the perfected consciousness of the liberated one, the Nibbāna of the arahant.

Although it has hitherto been established beyond doubt that the conquest of Māra is, in essence, most closely connected with the doctrine and teachings of the Buddha, it is necessary to determine the reasons for the emergence of Māra as the single figure dominating the background of evil, in Pāli Buddhism.

It is significant that the theme of the conquest of evil underlies a considerable portion of the Vinaya Piṭaka - the Pārājika Dhammā of the Pātimokkha - which, however, makes no specific reference to Māra.\(^3\) In commenting upon the close connection between the title Pārājika and the other words in Buddhist usage, such as parājī (to suffer defeat), parājīta (defeated), and parājaya (defeat), Rhys Davids and Oldenberg concur with the Buddhist commentators, that the word pārājīka really means 'involving

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1. DN I, 223.
2. cf. Sunāgalavilāsini II, 393, and Pāpaṇāsūdani II, 413.
3. According to Mahāvagga II, 4, 1, the Buddha himself ordained that the Pātimokkha was to be recited at the fortnightly Uposatha ceremony. This Uposatha was probably modelled on ceremonies of a similar character among earlier sects of ascetics, as there may be some historical foundation for the story occurring in Mahāvagga II, 1, that the heretical paribbajakas convened assemblies for the recital of their Dhamma, on the 14th, 15th, and 8th days of each half-month, and that King Bimbisāra proposed to the Buddha that similar assemblies should be organised by the Buddhists. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature, II, p.23. S. Dutt observes that as the form of address bhikkhave occurs twice in the Pātimokkha of the Theravāda school, presumably through the inadvertence of the compiler, but is omitted in later versions (Mulasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda), it undoubtedly represents an early redaction of the original Pātimokkha. Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, pp. 68-69.
defeat'. 'This may mean specifically defeat in the struggle with Māra, the Evil One; but more probably defeat in the struggle against evil generally, defeat in the effort to accomplish the object for which the Bhikkhu entered the Order, in the effort to reach the 'supreme goal' of Arahatship'.  

Ling observes that it is 'scarcely necessary to differentiate between Māra the Evil One and 'evil' generally. Nothing could be more general than the range of function ascribed to Māra in the Suttas; nothing more comprehensive than his identification with the five khandas. It is scarcely necessary to ask whose, according to the Suttas, is the advantage when a bhikkhu fails to accomplish the object for which he has entered the Order, or by whom he has been defeated. The whole range of references to Māra in the Canon, leave no doubt on the subject'.  

So far, reference has been made only to the abstract and intellectual aspect of Māra in Buddhism. Māra variously known as the Kaṇha, Maccu, Antaka, and Namuci, represents, as we have seen, a unique combination of the Vedic Mrtyuḥ, Pāpman and Kāma, and is the metaphorical equivalent of the dark aspect of human existence, which in terms of doctrinal Buddhism, is Dukkha. Subsequent scholasticism actually divides the Māra symbol into five aspects - Khandha-Māra; Kilesa-Māra; Abhisankhāra-Māra; Maccu-Māra; and Devaputta-Māra.  

It is necessary to note, however, that the didactic material regarding Māra and the conquest of samsāra, which is scattered through the Canon, is interwoven with other important aspects of the Māra symbol. Several references to Māra and his encounters with the Buddha and his

followers, occurring in the Pāli literature, may be described as being of a legendary nature. These take the form of colourful stories of Māra's attempts to confuse and tempt the Buddha and his disciples, and to place them within his power. Other stories are partly legendary and partly didactic in nature. In Dīgha Nikāya II, 262, Māra appears as the general of a great army (mahāseno) who bids his dark hosts (kañhasena): 'Seize and bind me these (i.e. the assembly gathered round the Buddha) with the bond of lust! Surround on every side, let not one escape ...' 1 Ling points out that the narrator's remark preceding this command, bidding the reader observe the stupidity of Māra: passa kañhassa mandiyam, is significant; as it may well indicate the purpose of the story: to expose the folly of Māra. 2 In Dīgha Nikāya II, 113, Māra is described as approaching the Buddha immediately after the Awakening, and urging the latter to enter into Parinibbāna. To this, the Buddha replies that he would not enter into Parinibbāna until this 'pure religion (i.e. holy life) should become successful, prosperous, widespread and popular and made known among men'. 3 While Ling's observation that the underlying assumption in this legend seems to be that Māra was anxious that the knowledge of the Enlightenment should not spread abroad, is probably correct, it is also clear that it is Māra's aspect as Namuci which is hinted at here; the more individuals that heard the Dhamma, and knew of the means of escaping from samsara, the fewer there would remain in his realm.

1. Ṗeta gaṇhaṭṭha bandhaṭṭha rāgena baddhamatthu ve, samantā parivāretha ma vo mūṣīṭṭha kocinām.
2. Ling: op. cit., p. 98.
3. idam brahmaarāṇiyam na iddhaḥ c'eva bhavissati piliṇaḥ ca vitṭhārikaṃ bāhujaññam puthu-bhūtan, yāvad eva manussehi suppakāsita.
The Majjhima Nikāya (I, 332-338) records Moggallāna's encounter with Māra, and describes how the Evil One entered into the monk's stomach, causing severe discomfort. Moggallāna, however, reflecting on the possible cause of the pain, understands that it is Māra, and bids him come out: 'Nikkhama pāpima, nikkhama pāpima'. In the Bhikkhuni Samyutta, there are several instances where Māra approaches the sisters, and seeks to arouse fear and dread, and make them desist from meditating. In every case, however, the bhikkhunī's response is: 'Now, who is this, human or non-human ... It is Māra the Evil One who seeks to arouse fear and dread, and make me desist from meditating'. Samyutta Nikāya II, 226, represents Māra as a fisherman whose flesh-baited hook (āmisagatam baliso) is swallowed by any fish with an eye for flesh (āmisacakkhumaccho) and thus falls into misfortune and disaster. The hook is identified as 'gains, favours, and fame' (labhasakkarasiloka). In the following sutta (Samyutta Nikāya II, 227), Māra is described as a hunter, who shoots and traps a tortoise swimming in a forbidden area, with his corded harpoon (papata). Māra's harpoon is explained as representing gains, favours, and fame, while the cord by which his victim is held fast, is identified with lustful enjoyment (nandirāga). The details of this parable correspond with ideas regarding Māra in Dīgha Nikāya III, 58, where the Buddha advises his followers to keep to their own pastures, so that the Evil One finds 'no opportunity, no access', which are referred to above.

Other references to Māra occur in the Canon, where he is mentioned in a conventional cosmic formula. In Anguttara Nikāya V, 50, the Buddha refers to 'the world with its devas, its Māra, its Brahmā, its host of

1. bhayaṃ chambhitattam lomasahāsano uppādetukāmo samādhimhā cāvetu-kāmo.
recluses and brahmins, together with devas and mankind'.

According to Majjhima Nikāya I, 179, and II, 133, the Buddha 'realizes and makes known', this entire cosmic hierarchy by his 'own superknowledge'. It is of special interest that Samyutta Nikāya II, 170, makes a distinction between the Buddha's inability before, and his ability after the Awakening, to 'discern what it is to be Enlightened with Supreme Enlightenment with regard to the world, and its devas ... and mankind'.

Indeed, it is this knowledge of the world and the universe, which the Buddha gained at the time of the Awakening, which provides the basis for the epithet lokavidū (knower of the world), applied to him in Dīgha Nikāya III, 76, and Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 49.

We have already referred to the legendary aspect of the Mara symbol in Pāli Buddhism. This aspect of evil is closely associated with the ideas of popular demonology and has obvious affinities with it. The fact that in several instances, Mara appears in a gross and fearsome fashion, making him seem very much like a demon, reflects the religious situation in which he developed. There are numerous allusions to demons and spirits in the Jātakas (e.g. rakṣhasas, piśācas, yakkhas, and bhūtas), which comprise one of the most popular sections of Buddhist literature and have, from as early as the 2nd Cent. BC, held a prominent place in Buddhism, as a medium of instruction. These stories, as is well known, contain a good deal of non-Buddhist material drawn from the folk-lore

1. sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake saśeśvāna-brāhmaṇiya pañjāya
   saśeśvamunussāya ... cf. MN I, 85; III, 60; 77; 120; etc.
2. abhiññā sacchikatvā pāvedetī. cf. also MB I, 401.
3. abhiññāsīṁ athāhaṁ sadevake loke ... munussāya anuttarakam
4. cf. SN I, 62; V, 197; 343.
of India, and represent a rich source of popular demonology. In
commenting upon the resemblance between the yakṣas of popular mythology,
and Mara, Ling observes: 'There is no sharp distinction between the
popular yakṣha-mythology and the Mara-mythology. Material belonging
originally to the former, has, without much apparent readjustment, been
pressed into the service of the latter'.

The similarities between the yakṣha and Mara, apparent in Buddhist
literature, are too numerous to mention here. It is important to notice,
however, that in Suttanipāta 449, Namuci or Mara is explicitly referred to
as a yakṣha, while in Mahāvastu II, 260, Mara is actually called a
'great yakṣa' (mahantam yakṣam). Yet another trait linking Mara with
popular demonology is the epithet kaṇha, frequently applied to him,
which was also an ancient name for a pisāca.

So far, an attempt has been made to discuss the different aspects
of the Mara symbol separately, the popular picturesque Mara closely
associated with yakṣha-mythology, and, the more abstract, intellectual
Mara, the embodiment of Evil, and recurring birth-and-death, the conquest
of which constitutes a fundamental tenet in the teachings of the Buddha.

It has to be pointed out, however, that it is not possible to
establish a clear line demarcating the Mara symbol into two separate
entities, as the 'popular' features are in several instances interwoven
with those of the 'monastic' Mara. The purpose of this rigid distinction,

1. Ling: op. cit., p.44.
2. Also SN I, 222; MN I, 338.
3. Also Mahāvastu II, 261, 11.
4. cf. DN I, 93, where the Buddha declares: Yathā kho pana satarahi
manussā pisāce pisācā ti sarñjananti, evam eva kho tena samayena
manussā pisāce pi kaṇhā ti sarñjananti.
originally suggested by Masson, appears to be to credit the lay followers of the Buddha with the development of the popular, picturesque Mara, and the monks with the abstract, intellectual Mara. As Ling points out, there is 'no valid reason why monks should be thought to have no interest in the picturesque elements of the Mara legend, and why this should be regarded as solely for the diversion of the simple lay folk'.

The numerous references in the Canon to the patronage received by the Buddhist Order, from kings and noblemen, as well as to the largesse and generosity of landowners, householders, traders, and artisans, throw some light on the relation between the monks and lay disciples. The evidence of the gahapativaggas of the Sutta pitaka, in which the householders were instructed on ethical ideals and moral practices (sīla), representing the way to heaven rather than arahatship, shows that there existed a regular intercourse between the monk-community and lay society. Moreover, the lay observance of the Atthangika Uposatha (the Uposatha ceremony of the eight parts, or the eight precepts of morality), the aim of which was the 'purification of a soiled mind by a proper process', must have also helped to popularize the religion and propagate it in the initial stages of its history.

We have already seen that the absence of the fetters of Mara, i.e. rāga, dosa, moha (avijja), represents the state of akīnaṇṇatā, arahatship,

2. Ling: op. cit., p.77.
Nibbāna, or Ultimate Release from the cycle of saṃsāra, and that without a Māra, there would not have been a Buddha. Only one who is Supremely Awakened, can, with his faculty of supra-normal sight, discern the world with its constituent beings, including Māra. The ability of only a Buddha, to recognise Māra is also amply demonstrated in the Māra suttas where the Evil One assumes various disguises in order to confuse the Buddha's followers.

It is interesting that although the ancient Pātimokkha decrees that a bhikkhu who expounded the doctrines of the Dhamma to the unordained, was guilty of a pācittiya offence,¹ the names of several lay arahants occur throughout the canonical literature.² If the concept of Māra is as closely associated with the fundamental tenets of Buddhism as we have hitherto established, it is difficult to explain how the lay disciple could attain Nibbāna (= arahatship) without being aware of the 'didactic' or 'monastic' aspect of the Māra symbol. This discrepancy may be explained if Māra is regarded as representing an individual approach to the Dhamma, and a doctrinal device rather than an item of the doctrine itself. As Ling rightly observes: 'Whether the symbol of Māra is of much or little value to a man, will depend on his initial viewpoint; whether Māra is regarded as a grossly demonological or a more subtly metaphysical symbol will depend upon the degree of understanding which he has reached. Māra is to be regarded in whatever way it is most useful to regard him ...'.³ It is not difficult to see why the symbol of Māra,

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1. Pācittiya, 4: Yo pana bhikkhu anupasaṅgāpanāṁ padaso dharmāṁ vāceyya pācittiyaṁ.
2. For examples of lay arahants see DN II, 93; SN V, 360; 94; AN 451; Kathāvatthu 267. cf. Rhys Davids: Dialogues of the Buddha, III, p.5, note.
3. Ling: op. cit., p.94.
whose roots are in popular demonology, should have appealed to monks as well as lay followers. The monk who was one of the people amongst whom animistic and demonological beliefs prevailed, would find the Māra symbol especially appropriate as, on the one hand, it was 'constructed from the kind of popular conceptions which were familiar to him, and yet which, on the other, served as a focus for essential Buddhist insights into the human condition, and the essential Buddhist method of dealing with it'.

That the 'popular' aspect of Māra was inextricably linked with the 'monastic' Māra, is especially evident from the scenes in Buddhist art, depicting the Buddha's conquest of the Evil One while seated at the foot of the Tree of Awakening. This conquest, as we have already seen, is an abstract expression of the victory over the senses and the empirical self, and represents the annihilation of all that is dukkha, anicca, and anatta. Yet, in the representations of the Māravijaya, Māra is portrayed sometimes as a grotesque figure, sometimes accompanied by his three daughters Tanhā, Arati, and Ragā, personifications of craving, aversion, and hatred, who attempt to seduce the Buddha, and at other times, surrounded by a host of demons representing his army. It may be argued that the artist could not represent the conflict in any other way, a battle which, as we know, took place in the Buddha's mind. While it is evident that the conception of Māra of the senses is considerably removed from that of Māra as a yakṣha, it is, nevertheless, the fact that the abstract, intellectual Māra should be conceived in an animistic way, which constitutes the significance of

1. Ling: *op. cit.*, p.78.
the Mara symbol. Indeed, as Ling observes, to regard the Mara mythology as containing a dichotomy, of the nature suggested by Masson, is 'precisely to miss its essential function in Theravāda Buddhism, namely, that of a symbol which connects; a bridge between popular demonology on the one hand, and the abstract terms of the Dhamma, on the other. ... Into this symbol there run, at one extreme, strands of gross, popular demonology, and out of the symbol at the other extreme, there issue abstractions pointing in the direction of the Abhidhamma'.

The description of Mara as a 'great yakṣa' in Mahāvastu II, 260, 10, and referred to above, is also not without significance. The expression mahād-yakṣam occurs in Atharva Veda X, 7, 38, with reference to Varuṇa, Brahman, or Prajāpati, as the supreme and ultimate source of life: 'A great yakṣa in the midst of the universe, reclining in concentrated energy (tapas) at the back of the waters; therein are set whatever gods there are, like the branches of a tree about a trunk'. The same text (X, 3, 43) referring to the indwelling spirit or self of man, says: 'The lotus flower of nine gates, veiled by the three guṇas (strands) - what self-like yakṣa (ātmanvat yakṣa) dwells therein, (only) the Brahman-knowers know'. In Gopatha Brāhmaṇa I, 1, and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa III, 12, 3, 1, Brahman declares: '... by concentrated energy (tapas), I became the primal yakṣa'. According to Brahmaṇya Upaniṣad V, 4, 1: 'He who knows that great yakṣa, the first born as the True Brahman, conquers these worlds'.

1. Ling: op. cit., p.77.
Now the term *yakkha* used as a philosophical expression denoting the individual spirit or self, also occurs in the Pali literature. *Suttanipāta* 478, describes the Buddha as: ‘... one who bears his last body; has attained perfect Awakening and unsurpassed bliss, - to that extent, is the cleansing, i.e. purifying, of the spirit - the oblation-worthy Tathāgata’. The same text (876) again emphasises the cleansing of the inner spirit: ‘To that extent, the one most excellent (thing) declared by the wise, is the cleansing of the spirit here’. It is also probably in the sense of the indwelling spirit, that *Mahāniddesa* 282 equates *yakkha* with *satta*, *nara*, *puggala*, and *manussa*.

Elsewhere in Buddhist literature, however, it is difficult to distinguish between *deva*, *devatā*, and *yakkha*, where all alike are regarded as rebirths of human beings, and subject in due course to further incarnation. In *Anguttara Nikāya* II, 30, the *yakkhas* rank between *manussa* and *gandhabba*, while in *Jātaka* V, 420, they are mentioned with *devas*, *rakhasas*, *dānavas*, *gandhabbas*, and *kinnaras*. In *Jātaka* No.347, the terms *devatā* and *yakkha* are used synonymously, but in *Samputta Nikāya* I, 54, a *yakkha* is styled *devaputta*.

In the *Grhya Sūtras*, yakṣas are invoked together with a numerous and miscellaneous host of major and minor deities - Agni, Vāyu, Śūrya, Viśṇu, Prajāpati, Soma, Brahman, *gandharvas*, *aparases*, *serpents*, *rākṣasas*, and others - all classed as 'bhūtas' (beings). The yakṣa figures from Patna, Parkham, Baroda, Besnager, Pawaya, and other places, which represent a

1. *ettavatā yakkhassa suddhi*.
2. *ettavat 'aggam pi vadanti h eke*.
   *yakkhassa suddhim idha panditāse*.
3. *SGS IV, 9; AGS III, 4; PGS II, 12*; Keith: The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads I, p.213.
primitive form of art probably originally practised in wood or clay, are among the oldest stone sculpture of India.

These examples clearly illustrate that the term yakkha (yakṣa) was used in both Vedic and Buddhist literature, in the sense of the indwelling spirit or self of man, as well as a bhūta of the same class as rākṣasas and piśācas.

Later accounts, especially the Mīdānakathā¹ and the Buddhavamsa commentary,² contain a lively and detailed description of the temptation of the Buddha by Māra. These accounts describe how Māra, the devaputta, seeing the Bodhisatta seated, firmly resolved on becoming a Buddha, summoned all his forces and advanced against him. The forces extended to a distance of twelve yojanas in front and behind the Bodhisatta, and nine to the right and left. Māra himself, thousand-armed, rode on his elephant Girimekhala, one hundred and fifty leagues in height. His followers assuming various shapes, some monstrously deformed, swirled around the Bodhisatta with frightful noises, in a vain attempt to disturb his meditation, swinging clubs, hurling rocks, uprooting trees, and spitting flame as they advanced. At Māra's approach, the devas, nāgas and other semi-divine beings who were gathered around the Bodhisatta, singing his praises and paying him homage, took to flight, leaving him alone. The Bodhisatta, however, undaunted, and relying only upon the ṭhānapārami (ten perfections) practised during his previous lives, resolved to battle with Māra and his tenfold army. Each division was faced by the Buddha with one pārami, and was put to flight, while the last weapon, Cakkāvudha,

¹. Jātaka I, 71 ff.
². Simon Hewavitarne Bequest Series (Colombo), pp. 239 ff.
when hurled at the Bodhisatta, stood over him like a canopy of flowers. As a last resort, Māra challenged the Bodhisatta to prove that the seat on which he sat, was rightfully his. When Māra's followers gave evidence that the seat was Māra's, the Bodhisatta, having no other witness, asked the Earth to bear testimony on his behalf, and the Earth roared in response. At this, Māra and his army were utterly routed and fled in dismay, while the devas and others gathered once more around the Buddha, singing his praises.¹

This account of the Buddha's conquest of Māra, was greatly elaborated in later chronicles and illustrated in numerous Buddhist shrines and temples, with a wealth of riotous colour and fanciful imagery. However, as Malalasekara points out, that 'this account of the Buddha's struggle is literally true, none but the most ignorant of Buddhists believe, even at the present day'.²

The Māra legend, without doubt, has its origin in the Pādīhāna Sutta of the Suttanipāta (425-449). There Māra is represented as visiting Gotama on the banks of the Neranjarā where he was meditating, and tempting the latter to abandon his search for 'peace from bondage' (yogakkhema).³ Māra's army is described as consisting of lust; aversion; thirst-hunger; craving; sloth and indolence; fear; doubt; self-will; gain, fame and honour falsely obtained; exalting one's self and condemning others. The Buddha says: 'Seeing Namuci and his dark army attacking (kaṇhassābhīpapārāṇī); seeing this army on all sides (samantā dhajinī); I was prepared to meet Māra and his mount (savāhanaṇi) in battle. He will not

3. Literally, rest from work or exertion; figuratively in scholastic interpretation 'peace from bondage', i.e. perfect peace or 'uttermost safety'. See Rhys Davids and Stede: Pāli-English Dictionary, s.v.
make me yield. That army which neither the world nor devas can conquer, I shall break, as stone an unbaked bowl. Here, as we can see, are practically all the elements found in the later elaborated versions.

The portrayal of Māra in the form of a demon, however, may represent another symbolical aspect of the Buddha's Awakening. The legend of the nāga king Mucalinda wrapping his coils seven times around the Buddha and sheltering him with his hood from a great storm, shortly after the Awakening, has been explained not as an instance of the remarkable power over animals often attributed to holy men, but as the ascent of latent all-conscious spiritual energy in the form of a radiant serpent, within the individual. In the manuals of Hathayoga this serpent is called Kuṇḍalinī or Vāg-devī. The concept of the serpent energy, however, is already met with in Ṛg Veda X, 189, where Vāc-Virāj is represented as Sarparājñī the Serpent Queen, and also in Atharva Veda IV, 1. 2, where the radiant serpent (suraṃ ṛṣāraṇ) brahmān is called 'fatherly queen' (pīryā ṛaśtri). The process of yoga consists in rousing the radiant serpent and lifting it up from the lowest sphere to the heart, where in the union with prāṇa its universal nature is realized, and hence to the top of the skull. Here Brahman emerges from the micromacrocosmic frame through the opening called brahmārāndhara which in the cosmic organism corresponds to the opening formed by (or in) the sun in the vault of the sky. On returning to its primordial transcendent condition of all-consciousness, Brahman may be understood to be 'revealed in its own Form', as the universal Androgyne Puruṣa-Vāc. The beautiful

1. na-ppasahati senam loko sadevako.
3. cf. the hymn of Vāc, RV X, 125, 3: ahaṃ rāśtri.
youthful form assumed by the nāga Mucalinda has been explained as the 'purely spiritual body into which the Buddha's exalted realization has transmuted the energies of his human personality', while the serpent king bowing before the Buddha symbolises the serviceability of that body as the instrument of the Enlightened Mind. ¹

Likewise, it is possible that Māra and his dark host symbolise the upsurging energies of the unconscious mind in their negative and destructive aspect. We have already referred to the compilers of the Nidānakathā and Buddhavamsa commentary as 'objectifying' the psychological experience of the Buddha's battle with the senses, and projecting it into the world of external events in the vivid and colourful form of the well-known episode of the conquest of Māra. It is fruitless to enquire whether this was done deliberately for pedagogical reasons, or whether the minds of the early Buddhists were able to apprehend the spiritual truth of the Buddha's conquest of Māra only in concrete images and pictures, rather than in psychological abstractions.

It is significant that the grandiose scale in which the Buddha's conflict with Māra is conceived, is already anticipated in the Vedic myth of Indra's battle with Namuci (also known as Ahi-Vṛtra), to which reference has already been made. According to Rg Veda I, 30, 11,² heaven and earth tremble with fear when Indra strikes Vṛtra with his bolt; trees shake violently, and bend as if in fear (I, 55, 4; V, 32, 10); everything trembles when the war between Indra and Vṛtra takes place (VI, 31, 2); the thundering god (X, 92, 8) raises the dust high (VI, 18, 2).

¹. Bhikshu Sangharakshita: op. cit., pp. 33-34.
². Also RV II, 11, 9-10; VI, 17, 9.
A comparison may also be made between the *Nidānakathā* account of the 'temptation of the Buddha by the daughters of Māra', and the Vedic tradition that the *dāsa*¹ is said to have used 'women as weapons', represented in *Ṛg Veda* V, 30, 9,² and that Indra's foe is said to have 'warred against the Bull with women' in X, 27, 10.³

Coomaraswamy finds a further parallel in the Indra-Vṛtra myth, and the *Mārvijaya*; according to him a stucco sculpture from Hadda reproduced in Hackin's *La Sculpture Indienne et Tibetaine au Musée Guimet* (p. 9, and Pl. XIV) representing a demon, a member of Māra's army, in the act of raising his hands and removing his own head, reflects the description in *Mahāvastu* II, 410, that of Māra's troops 'some were headless trunks' (*anye aśīṛgacā kahandhāḥ*), and in *Lalitavistara* 306, 7, that 'some were headless' (*kecid aśīṛgāḥ*).⁴ These allusions may have some connection with the decapitation of Namuci by Indra in the fierce battle described in the *Ṛg Veda* and *Sātpathā Brāhmaṇa*.

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1. The word *dāsa* occurs in the *RV* in the sense of a slave, only three times. According to Hillebrandt *dāsa* was probably the name of a hostile tribe such as the Dahae, whom the Aryans conquered in the course of their early wanderings. *Vedische Mythologie*, III, p.268 ff. Later on, however, the word came to be applied to any tribe hostile to the Aryans; the expressions *dāsavarṇa* occurring in *RV* II, 12, 4 and *dāśīr viṣāḥ* in II, 11, 4; IV, 28, 4; VI, 25, 2, imply that these unfriendly tribes were racially distinct from the Aryans. In later mythology, *dāsas* came to denote demons in general. The original sense of 'Vṛtra' (Vṛtra in the *Avesta*) derived from the root *vaṛ* meaning 'to resist', is 'resistance'. As in the *RV* the word *vṛtrāṇi* occurs in the neuter plural indicating foes in general, Dandekar holds that it was the tribes which had 'resisted' the Aryans that came to be looked upon as *vṛtras*. *Vṛtrāḥ Indra*, *ABORI*, XXXI, 1950, pp. 28; 31.

2. *strīyo hi dāsa ayudhāni cakre kām nā karam abala asya senāḥ.*

3. *strībhīr yo atra vyarṇam pṛtyāḍ ayuddho asya vi bhajāti vedaḥ.*

The description of Mara as footless (apada) in Aṅguttara Nikāya IV, 434, and Majjhima Nikāya I, 160, i.e. as an Ahi (serpent) is also not without significance. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (II, 36) declares that Ahi Budhnya (the Serpent of the Deep) is invisibly (parokṣena) what Agni is visibly (pratyakṣena); and in Vājasaneyi Sūtra 5, 33, Ahi Budhnya is identified with the sun. In other words, 'the serpent is simply a virtuality of fire, while darkness is light in its latent state'.

In the light of what has hitherto been established, it is clear that all that is anicca, dukkha, and anattā, representing the darker aspect of the individual's consciousness, is Māra's realm (Māradheyya). Māravijaya, as we have seen, represents the transmutation of this consciousness supported by grasping (upadāna) and craving (tāṇhā), to the state of the pure, translucent, and supportless consciousness which is not Māra's realm (a-Māradheyya). From our study of the Māra symbol, it is evident that the Buddha's conquest of Māra - a personal victory over the senses, which assumes cosmic proportions in later Buddhist literature and art, is really a re-interpretation of the primordial Vedic myth of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict. It is quite possible that the upsurging energies of the unconscious mind in their negative and destructive aspect, appeared before the Buddha in the form of menacing or alluring shapes. Nevertheless, it should not be imagined that Māra and his host actually appeared on the scene in gross material forms; 'vividly as they can at times be perceived, the basic reality of such externalized mental phenomena is purely psychological'.

1. M. Eliade: Patterns in Comparative Religion, p.418. cf. SB I, 6, 3, 9, where Soma is identified with Vṛtra.
2. cf. MN I, 225, where a distinction is made between Māra's realm, and non-Māra's realm; the realm of death (maccudheyya), and the realm of non-death (a-maccudheyya).
CONCLUSION

A survey of Theravāda Buddhist literature shows that, for the earliest disciples of the Buddha, it was his Word (Buddhavacanam) rather than his life, which was of paramount importance. It was his discourses that were remembered, rehearsed at his death, and carefully preserved and transmitted through the centuries in the community of his followers. Apparently the Buddha's biography was not of great interest, since the canon of the Theravāda school, which is representative of early or 'primitive' Buddhism (though not necessarily exclusively), contains no continuous narrative of his life. It is also possible, however, that the concept of 'biography' was foreign to the mind of that age, and to take the life of a man as a whole - its development from beginning to end - as a unified subject for literary treatment, may not have occurred to anyone then.

The late nineteenth century wave of scepticism regarding the historicity of the Buddha has now receded, and today most scholars admit that the founder of the vast spiritual, cultural, and social movement we call Buddhism, was a historical personage, who lived and taught in the 6th-5th Cent. BC, in the area corresponding roughly to the modern Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh regions.

Comparatively few incidents are recorded in the older Buddhist texts about the life of the Buddha, prior to his Awakening. It was much later in Buddhist history that his followers, overcome with religious zeal, piled wonder upon wonder while writing full-length biographies of the

1. cf. DN II, 100, where the Buddha advises Ananda that, as he had preached the Dhamma without making any distinction between the exoteric and esoteric, his followers were to regard the 'Dhamma as a lamp (or island), the Dhamma as a refuge, and no other refuge'. cf. also DN II, 154: Yo vo Ananda maha Dhammo ca Vinayo ca desito paributto, so vo man'asseyyena satthā.
Buddha, e.g. the Mahāvastu, Buddhacarita, and the Lalitavistara. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that while the earliest disciples of the Buddha do not appear to have been interested in recounting his entire life, nevertheless, the incidents recorded by them, and which are scattered throughout the Canon, relate to the most crucial and significant events in the Buddha's life - his birth, his renunciation of worldly life, his Awakening, his turning of the Wheel of Law (i.e. the inauguration of his public life as a teacher), and, finally, his decease. These major events provide a framework for the pattern of the life of not only the Buddha Vipassi related to the Mahāpadāna sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, but also those of all the twenty-four Buddhas believed to have preceded Gotama, and described in the later accounts such as the Nidānakathā and Buddhavamsa.

In the legend of the Buddha, there has without doubt been a development, and, even in the oldest texts, records of varying antiquity can be traced. An example is the account of the Awakening of the Buddha related in Mahāvagga I,1, and in Majjhima Nikāya I, 167; we have seen that in the former account Gotama is represented as becoming a Buddha while seated at the foot of the Sodhi Tree (bodhirukkhamulā), but in the latter there is no mention whatsoever of a tree. In the Mahāpadāna sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya (II, 52), Nidānakathā, Buddhacarita, and Buddhavamsa, the tree under which the Awakening takes place, is identified with the Aśvattha. ¹ The aśvattha, as we have seen, is the tree par excellence in Vedic literature, and according to the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, is the

¹ If we work on the presupposition as Thomas has done, that the Buddha legend progressed from the simple to the complex, or, from brevity to elaboration, then the account of the Awakening related in the MN, which mentions neither the tree nor Mūru, must be regarded as earlier; these details were not part of the original story and they 'came to be inserted in one place or another, according to individual ideas of fitness'. The Life of Buddha, p.68.
immortal Brahman identified with the 'space within the vacuity of the individual (nabhasaḥ khe'ntarbhūtasya), and the One Awakener (eka-sambodhayiḥ). ¹

The Āṭṭhaka and Pārāyana vaggas of the Suttaniṣṭāta, regarded as some of the oldest sections of the entire Sutta Piṭaka, frequently refer to the lone-wandering, silent muni, ² 'lone-minded' and 'lone-of-seat', ³ meditating at the foot of a tree, in a cemetery, or in a mountain cave, ⁴ where sounds are few ⁵ and devoid of pleasures. ⁶ The account of the Buddha's search for the 'incomparable and matchless path to peace' occurring in Majjhima Nikāya 1, 166-167, clearly shows that it was just such a lonely spot, situated in a 'woodland grove' on the 'banks of a clear, flowing river', which Gotama came upon on the day of his Awakening. While he may well have chosen to sit at the foot of a tree, it is hardly likely that he would have especially selected an asvattha for the purpose of 'ardent and resolute' meditation, and his struggle for Awakening. Since the earlier accounts of the Awakening make no reference to the asvattha, the specific mention of which occurs only in apocryphal accounts, e.g. Mahāpadāna sutta, Nidānakathā, Buddhavamsa, and the Mahāvastu of the Mahāsāṃghika school, all of which are replete with astounding miracles,

¹. Mai U VI, 4.
². cf. Sn 820 and 844: ekacariyam ... munī santavāni.
⁴. Sn 958: rukkhāmaḷam susānaṃ vā pabbataṃ susānaṃ guhāsu vā.
⁵. Sn 925: appasadāsu.
⁶. Sn 844 Kāmahi ritto.
the premise that the ancient Buddhist hagiographers were probably influenced by Brahmanical metaphysical speculations is not completely unfounded. The aśvattha tree, identified with the impersonal Brahman in the Upaniṣads and later, with Kṛṣṇa in the monotheistic Bhagavad Gītā, may well have been regarded by the pious Buddhist writers, as specially suitable as the Tree of Awakening, for one who had himself become Brahman.

It must be remembered, however, that archaeological evidence shows that the legend of Gotama becoming a Buddha while seated at the foot of an aśvattha, is at least as old as the time of Aśoka. Furthermore, as we have noticed, the reference in Aśokan edicts to the Buddha as bhagavat and to the stūpa of Konākamana, presupposing the belief in at least one previous Buddha, indicates not only the deified status of the Buddha, but also that the legend of the Buddha was well established by the middle of the 3rd cent. BC, and must have been in existence even earlier than that date.

It is significant that in the life of the Buddha, a distinction may be made between the nature of the legends relating to his life before the Awakening, and that of the incidents reported to have occurred after he had become a Buddha. It is also worthy of note, that it is not until he had left his home and had come to Magadha, that we find the slightest reference to any historical or geographical fact independent of his personal life. As Thomas observes, the 'period of his youth in a distant country before he won fame and honour as a teacher, would be largely, if
not wholly, a blank, and would all the more easily and eagerly be filled up by the imagination of his disciples'.  

While the legends pertaining to the life of the Buddha prior to his Awakening, fantastic as they appear, may be disregarded as historical evidence, their importance, nevertheless, in relation to contemporary theories of cosmogony, Buddhist dogmatic beliefs and metaphysics, should not be underestimated.

We have seen that the seven steps taken by the Buddha as soon as he was born, represent a symbolical expression of his traversing the seven _lokas_ of the universe and his transcendence of spatio-temporal existence. The concept of these seven _lokas_ evolved from the cosmogonical pattern in the _Rg Veda_, of the six regions (ṣaṭ raṇāṁśi) supported by the seventh in the form of the Unborn (aja) who carries the six burdens without proceeding (acarat). These six burdens, as we have seen, are no other than the three mothers and three fathers, identified with the three earths and three heavens, which follow the image of the original pair of Father Heaven and Mother Earth which were in intimate contact before they were separated at the creation of the cosmos. This cosmogonical pattern, also referred to as the 'seven regions of _prthivi_\textsuperscript{2}' in _Rg Veda_ I, 22, 16 ( _prthiviḥ sapta dhamabhīḥ_), has its sequel in later Indian cosmology with its seven worlds.

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1. E.J. Thomas: _op. cit._, p.3.
2. In one hymn in the _RV_ only (I, 108, 9) does _prthiviḥ_ stand for earth, air, and heaven, being described as lowest ( _avama_ ), middle ( _madhyama_ ), and, highest ( _parama_ ). The word is an appellation referring to the triple world strata superimposed, and occurs here as a synonym for 'world' or 'region'. S. Kramrisch: 'The Triple Structure of Creation in the _Rg Veda_ ', _History of Religions_, II, (1), 1962, p.151, note.
In this pattern of creation, it is the One Unborn, identified with Aja Ekapad, upon which the entire triadic cosmos rests, but which never becomes weary (*nemavaglapayanti*), that prefigures the creative act; it also represents the undifferentiated transcendent principle which is fundamental to Vedic cosmology. This transcendent principle, variously described later as Skambha, Brāhmaṇ, and Puruṣa, represents the immortal source of all creation in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas, and in the Upaniṣads is identified with the ātman within the individual himself. ¹

Although throughout the Pāli canon, emphasis is laid on the non-existence of the substantial self (*atta*), the individual being nothing but a conglomerate of the five *khandha*,⁵ we noticed that the Buddha did not preach total annihilation but only the 'extinguishing' of one's selfhood in the ordinary sense of the term. We also saw that, on the one hand, the Dhamma which points to the highest state to be achieved by the individual, i.e. complete emancipation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*), is identified in the well-known parable of the chariot occurring in *Sakya Nīkāya* I, 33, as the driver of that chariot, and, on the other, in several passages in the Pāli canon, is identified with the Buddha himself.

From this it may be inferred that the driver of the chariot² (the component parts of which are right effort, conscience, and heedfulness),

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¹ cf. *RV* VI, 8, 3 where Agni Vaiśvānara, the fire that is in the sun, separates heaven from earth by light (according to *RV* X, 121, 5, it is Agni as Hiranyagarbha), and, *CU* VIII, 4, 1: 'The ātman is the bridge (*setu*) that keeps these worlds apart'. The same act of creation, according to the Ēṛg Veda, however, is also performed by Indra, Varuṇa, Savitṛ, Soma, and Bhṛṣpati. cf. also *BA*: IV, 4, 22, according to which the great Unborn Self (*mahān aja ātman*) is the 'bridge that keeps these worlds apart ...'.

² cf. *SN* IV, 292, where the chariot is identified with the 'body composed of the four great elements, born from mother and father, fed on rice gruel, subject to decay, dissolution and disintegration'.

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is no other than the Buddha himself. Furthermore, the epithet 'supreme charioteer' (uttamam sārathinam) applied to the Buddha in Suttanipāta 83, and the frequent reference throughout the Pāli canon to the 'incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed', implies that from a fairly early date, the Buddha was conceived of as a personification of the 'inner monitor' of mankind, according to the Theravāda soteriological tradition itself.

The fact that in his commentary on the Udāna, Buddhaghosa, the well-known advocate of the Theravāda tradition, identifies the Buddha with the self (Tathāgato ti atta), also implies the acceptance, by the 5th cent. AD, of the atta in the sense of the Absolute, within the tradition of Theravāda eschatological beliefs. It is also interesting that the identification of the Buddha with the self in the commentary on the Udāna, in so many words, has an exact parallel in the Sanskrit Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra, ascribable to a date well before the time of Buddhaghosa:

'The Self is none but the Tathāgata ... the Tathāgata is none but the eternal, bliss, Self, and the pure, and the void ... the non-self is none but birth and death (i.e. samsāra)... The Middle Path is the Buddha. The Buddha is Nirvāṇa'.

1. DN I, 49; 62; Sn. p.103; It 79; Vin I, 35: anuttaro purisa dhamma sārathi.
2. We have seen that the concept of the Buddha entering Nibbāna, i.e. becoming one with the Immortal and the Unconditioned, is traceable in the Pāli canon itself; moreover, the fact that Buddhist monks all over the world, through the centuries, have continued to take refuge in the Buddha, also implies that the Buddha represented an eternal metaphysical principle. The metaphysical interpretation of the Buddha nature is also clearly demonstrated in the Abhidharmakosa of Vasubandhu. See N. Dutt: Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism, p.106.
3. As one of the Sanskrit recensions was translated into Classical Chinese by Dharmarakṣa (385-433 AD), between 416-423 AD the Sanskrit original must be ascribed to a date not later than the last quarter of the 4th cent. AD.
4. K. Yamamoto: (trans.) The Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, pp. 145; 653; and 657.
To return to the subject of *Rg Veda* cosmological speculations, we noticed that the highest heaven which we identified with the third step of Visnu and the source of honey (*madhva utsaha*), is also the first or most ancient, described as the 'earliest aeon' (*pūrva āyuni*), and the age of bisexual monadic wholeness of Heaven and Earth (*Rg Veda* X, 5, 7).

The seven strides of the Buddha, as we have seen, also have a parallel in the (later) Vedic sacrificial ritual where the celebrant 'ascends' the *yupa* identified with the cosmic tree and declares: 'I have attained to heaven; to the gods; I have become immortal.' Of course, in Buddhism, it is no longer the 'world of the gods' nor Vedic 'immortality' that represents the goal of the Buddha: it is transcending the human condition. Equally significant, is the utterance of the Buddha: '... I am the eldest in the world', for, by passing through the seven levels of the universe, he has reached the summit, to the point before time, at the threshold of creation which, according to Vedic cosmogony, coincided with the moment of the birth of Agni as Vaiśvānara. The Buddha's voice resembling that of a bull is also reminiscent of the mythology of Indra and Agni (Soma), the most prominent of the *Rg Veda* gods and to whom the epithet *vrīṣabha* is frequently applied. The lustration of the Buddha, the peerless King of Dharma as he issued forth from his mother's womb, by two celestial streams of water, one warm and one cool, also recalls the *abhiṣekha* ceremony of the *Rajasūya* sacrifice in which the *akravartin* is anointed by the sacred waters possessing the qualities of both Agni and Soma.

1. cf. also *ŚB* II, 5, 3, 18, where the bull is stated to be Indra's form, and *SN* I, 220, referring to the Buddha as the Bull among men (*narāsaṅgha*).
We have also noticed the analogy between the symbolism of the seven steps of the Buddha which refer to the Buddha's abolition of Time and his arrival at the moment before Creation, and the yogic practice of remembering one's previous lives (pūrvanivāsānusmṛti). Starting from the present moment, the yogin mentally travels backwards through time, in order to arrive ad originem when life first began in the world, setting time in motion, and reaching the paradoxical moment beyond which Time did not exist and Creation was not yet manifested. The epithet jātissaro occurring in Milinda pañha 79, is also anticipated in the Vedic mythology of Agni as Jātavedas, for Agni too 'knows all births' (viśvā veda janīnā), and is the 'All-knower' (viśevavit). The rṣi Vāmadeva says of himself in Ṛg Veda IV, 27, 1: 'Being now in the womb (garbhe nu san), I have known all the births of the gods'. In the Bhagavad Gītā (IV, 5) also, Kṛṣṇa is represented as remembering all his lives.

Likewise, the miraculous powers attributed to the Buddha, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, and levitation, are all included in the list of siddhis enumerated in Patañjali's Yogasūtras, and are, for the most part, stereotyped, as they occur in all Indian ascetic and mystical literature.

We must, however, remember that for Buddhism, as for Yoga, salvation could be attained only as a result of personal effort, and an individual confrontation with truth. This truth was based neither on metaphysical speculation (e.g. of the Upaniṣads), nor on exaggerated asceticism, but had to be understood and at the same time, known experimentally. It was the Buddha's conviction that salvation and the

1. RV VI, 15, 13.
2. RV III, 29, 7.
resultant freedom had been attained, coupled with the refusal to postulate the existence of a Puruṣa or a creator god, and to define the condition of the liberated man after death, which represents a departure from the orthodoxy of tradition, but not the tradition as a whole. The oft-repeated Buddhist phrase sabbam dukkham, sabbam aniccam, may well be described as a fundamental tenet of the Sāṁkhyā-Yoga system of Indian philosophy, as far as embodied existence is concerned, and is a dominant recurring theme of all post-Upanisadic Indian speculation. The seemingly paradoxical position in which the Buddha rejects 'both orthodox doctrines and ascetics - contemplative disciplines, yet at the same time adopts their premises and techniques,¹ may be understood if we consider that the Buddha progressed beyond all the contemporary philosophical formulas and mystical rules, in order to set man on the path to the Immortal and the Unconditioned. That he had no intention of denying a final, unconditioned reality beyond the eternal flux of cosmic and terrestrial phenomena, a reality which transcends all human and divine experience, is clear, as we have seen, from several passages in the Pāli canon. The description of the emancipated man in Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 206, as 'one who has no hunger (i.e. is without craving), is quenched (i.e. is passionless), cooled (as opposed to the heat of passion), who has penetrated bliss, with his self become Brahman, also clearly resembles that of the ātman-mukta in non-Buddhist texts.²

Furthermore, a comparison between the passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya cited above, and Bhagavad Gītā V, 24, referring to the yogin 'with

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¹. M. Eliade: Yoga, Immortality and Freedom, p.163. From Sāṁkhyā, Buddhism probably borrowed the mechanical conception of the universe, and from Yoga, the methods of psychotherapy.
². M. U III, 2, 6.
his joy within, his delight within, his light within', as one who has become Brahman (brahmabhūta) and attained Nirvāṇa—that is—Brahman (brahma-nirvāṇa), also suggests the homology between Brahmanical and Buddhist ascetico-mystical traditions.

We have noticed the close connection between the Māra legend and early Buddhist doctrine. In order to become an Arahat or a Buddha, the 'confrontation' with Māra, the personification of temptation, evil, and death, and representing the whole of saṃsāra is inevitable; that without the victory over Māra which represents the complete eradication of taṇhā conditioned by upadāna, there would have been no Buddha. We have also seen why the symbol of Māra, whose roots are in popular demonology, appealed to both monks and lay disciples, and that it is the fact that the abstract, intellectual Māra should be conceived in an animistic way, which constitutes the significance of this symbol of evil.

Considering, however, that the evidence of the Pāli literature shows that the struggle with Māra took place in the Buddha's mind, or in other words, was a symbolic expression of a 'personal confrontation' with evil and temptation, it is interesting that the theme of the Māra-viśaya, as depicted in Buddhist art, and related in the Nīdānakathā and other texts, appears to have acquired unnaturally gross, almost cosmic proportions, reminiscent of the Vedic conflict between Indra and Vṛtra. The fact that in Buddhist literature more than one Buddha is credited with overcoming Māra's forces, and that in the light of what has hitherto been discussed, the assumption that all the previous Buddhas must have likewise won a victory over temptation, evil and death, not only indicates
the importance of the Māra symbol, but also that the Māra-vijaya represents the recurrence of a primordial reality in narrative form. This reality and its revelation synchronise with the dawn of Buddhism, when, according to mythology, the first Buddha—Vipassi in the older texts, and Dīpamkara in the later accounts—put an end to samsāra by overcoming temptation, evil, and death, and became a Sammāsambuddha while seated at the foot of his Tree of Awakening.

Likewise, the Buddha’s Awakening at dawn to the primordial Truth, also realized by each of the Buddhas preceding him, is anticipated in the Rg Veda, where the vision (dhiḥ) which manifests itself to the seer at daybreak, is a reproduction of one and the same archetype.

In the attempt to analyse certain myths and symbols in the Buddha legend, it will be noticed that in our study emphasis has been laid on the continuity of mystical and speculative thought in India, from the age of the Rg Veda, through the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, to the period of Buddhist literature. In spite of Buddhism being regarded as an heterodoxy from the Brahmanical point of view, and the fact that Buddhist doctrine was propounded by a historical personage believed to have lived and taught in the 6th-5th cent. BC, it is indeed significant that Buddhist mythology is for the most part, derived from that of the Vedas, the eternity and divine origin of which is attested by the Rg Veda and Atharva Veda.¹

It has been pointed out that from the chronological point of view, the end of the Vedic period does not coincide with the beginning of

1. cf. RV X, 90, 9, according to which the main elements of the Veda proceeded from Puruṣa (Prajāpati) and AV XIX, 54, 3, which says that the Veda came into being from Time.
literary Hinduism, nor with the beginning of the Jaina and Buddhist movements', and that in the 'richness of mythological inventions and assured handling of mythical themes, the *Rg Veda* was destined to have no successor'.

Some of the most expressive of *Rg* Vedic myths are those that deal with the creation of the universe, the emergence of light at the dawn of creation, and the release of the waters. The theme of Indra's struggle with *Vṛtra* is connected with these types of myth, and appears to have been superimposed on an older theme - that of the victorious human hero, *Vṛtrahan* (later identified with Indra), who overcomes the enemy resistance. The word *vṛtra*, according to Renou, originally meant 'resistance' and later came to be used as the name of a demon in the shape of a dragon or a serpent, identified with Ahi. The idea of evil, adds Renou, is 'never clearly personified as a major demon, but is represented under the multiple forms of 'hostility', 'violence', 'resistance'. To translate these words as personal names ... is to do violence to Vedic terminology'.

Likewise, in Buddhism also, we noticed that the Buddha's full-scale conflict with *Māra*, as represented in later accounts, probably evolved from the concept of the bhikkhu's struggle against evil generally, referred to in what may be regarded as one of the earliest redactions of the original *Pātimokkha*.

We have seen that the Buddhist concept of Dhamma, the Absolute Law, seems to have evolved from the Vedic idea of *rta* (cosmic order and truth).

1. L. Renou: *Religions of Ancient India*, pp. 6 and 23.
In the *Vedas*, opposing the idea of primitive anarchy or chaos, there are the powers of order, both static like *ṛta* and *dharma*, and dynamic like *indriya*, *tejas* (brilliant energy), and *vāja* (generative power). It is these forces which regulate relationships in the supernatural world, and are endowed with life in Vedic mythology. The opposition between *ṛta* and *anṛta* (falsehood, evolving from the concept of primitive anarchy) on the ethical plane, and between *ṛta* and *nirṛta* (dissolution) on the cosmological plane, is the precursor of the later contrast between *dharma* and *adharma*, and is continued in Buddhism in the distinction between the *dhamma* leading to Nibbāna the Unconditioned, and *adhamma* leading to Samsāra, the conditioned. We have seen that the last named two represent dual aspects of the individual consciousness (*vinnana*) according to Theravāda literature, which not only anticipates the epistemology of the Mahāyāna, but also echoes *Ṛg Veda* X, 121, 2, describing the One 'whose

1. Place, sphere, phenomenon in which a divine power is located; a holder or container of a numinous potency. cf. Gonda: *The Meaning of the Sanskrit term dhaman*, p.21.

2. Power; also denotes faculty or organ of sense. H.W. Bailey traces the word *indriya* in the *RV* to an adjective *indra*, meaning 'forceful', and not to the name of the god. *Analecta Indoscythica*, *JRAS*, 1953, pp. 103 ff. The term occurring in *AV* XV, 10, 10 ff; XIX, 42, 4, is, however, associated with Indra, and is translated by Whitney as 'Indra's quality'.


4. The Mahāyāna does not represent an innovation but a development and unfoldment of Hinayāna (later known as Theravāda) Buddhism. Bhikshu Sangharakshita eloquently describes the two branches of Buddhism as 'representing two tendencies, one centripetal, and the other centrifugal, in the teaching of the Buddha'. While the Hinayāna 'prevents disintegration', the Mahāyāna 'preserves from petrifaction'. Throughout the history of Buddhism we witness the 'constant interplay of these two tendencies or forces, each of which exists in a subordinate manner within the sphere of influence of the other ... the very existence of Buddhism depends upon the maintenance of an absolute equilibrium between the literalizing and liberalizing influences which the Hinayāna and Mahāyāna respectively exert over the doctrines and methods constituting the Dharma'.

*A Survey of Buddhism*, p.264.
shadow is death, whose shadow is immortality'.

On another plane of thought, the Vedas portray a correspondence between the microcosm of the world of men, the performers of the sacrifice, on the one hand, and, the macrocosm of the world of the gods, on the other. In the Upaniṣads these correspondences between entities which belong to entirely distinct conceptual systems are reduced to the comprehensive formula, ātman = Brahman.

In the Brāhmaṇas - 'explanations or utterances of learned priests, doctors of the science of sacrifice, upon any point of ritual' - reference is made to cosmogonic myths, ancient legends and narratives, but it is the sacrifice which is the one and only theme from which all discussions start, and upon which everything hinges. The gods here are relegated to a far less important position than in the Vedas. In the Upaniṣads, the essence of which is reflection (mimamsā), they appear mainly as minor figures who have lost much of their importance in face of the impersonal Brahman, or personal beings of a new type, who were believed to have created the cosmos. Seen in this light, Vedic literature may be described as representing a full circle, and epitomizing the entire course of the evolution of Indian thought.

There is little doubt that the Buddha made use of elements of religious thought and tradition prevalent prior to his time. It is, however, the remarkable transformation of ideas and practices effected by him, which testifies to his great originality and insight.

Since the work of Heinrich Zimmer, it has been recognised that the complex of belief in the eternal self, rebirth, and release from the

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1. yaśya chāyāṁ toṁ yaśya mṛtyuh.
2. Winternitz: History of Indian Literature, I, p. 188.
cycle of rebirth, is non-Vedic.¹ This complex, coupled with the denial of a Supreme Creator, is typical of the two great 'unorthodox' Indian religions, Buddhism and Jainism, except that Buddhism also denied the existence of the self. The anattāvāda, so deeply entrenched in the Pāli canon, may, therefore, be regarded as an important departure from the non-Vedic background.²

We have seen that, rather than the concept of the underlying self, which persisted from one birth to another, the Buddha (emphasising the causality involved in rebirth), defined the substrate beneath the shifting phenomena of the whole sequence of individual lives as viññāna (consciousness), supported by grasping. There is, therefore, in the Buddha's scheme of thought, the doctrine of a plurality of consciousnesses, rather than selves. We have also noticed that it is this very same viññāna supported by grasping, which may, with the conscious will and effort on the part of each individual, be transmuted into the supportless consciousness (appatīṭṭhita-viññāna) which is 'devoid of growth, unconstituted and absolutely free',³ signless (anidassanam), infinite (anantam), and luminous on all sides (sabbatopabham), that is identified by Buddhaghosa with Nibbāna. In this sense, Nibbāna according to Theravāda Buddhist philosophy, may be said to have the flavour of pluralism, rather than that of the monism of the Upaniṣads. On the other hand, the references in the Pāli canon, to the monk approaching and entering Nibbāna in the same way as a river flows into the ocean, indicates

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1. H. Zimmer: Philosophies of India, see especially pp. 252 and 413. cf. N. Smart: Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, p.32; G.W. Brown: 'The Sources of Indian Philosophical Ideas', Studies in Honor of M. Bloomfield, pp. 80-87.

2. N. Smart: op. cit., p.37.

that the absolutist tendencies which characterize the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism, originated in the Theravāda literature itself. Strictly speaking, however, Nibbāna is not regarded in the Theravāda tradition, as an Absolute underlying or constituting the essence of empirical reality, but an unconditioned state which transcends all impermanent states governed by causal laws.

The central dogma, common to Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, is the assumption of a moral world order, manifesting itself throughout the cosmos. Its expression is the automatic law of cause and effect implicit in all activities, and the conditioning factor of rebirth. The manifold differences between these three Indian religions have been described by Glasenapp as 'only secondary compared with the fundamental world concept which unites them'. ¹ The teaching of a moral world order which is manifested by karmic causality, however, is obviously best demonstrated in those religions which do not postulate the existence of a Creator god, and so do not have to define the relation between an omnipotent power and an all-embracing law.

In Buddhism, this cosmic law produces the harmony between the natural course of events and the demands of moral consciousness, shaping the world as well as individuals by its automatic action of cause and effect. The whole cosmos is, therefore, a continuous manifestation of the inexorable consequences of the moral or immoral actions of its countless inhabitants. The universe with its innumerable realms of heavens, hells, and worlds, is in constant mobility, driven by dharma

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¹ H. Von Glasenapp: *Buddhism - A Non-Theistic Religion*, p.48. cf. L. Renou: 'The danger in considering Indian religions as separate groups of phenomena is that one tends to forget that certain essentially Indian features characterize them all'. *op. cit.*, p.7.
and perpetually bound by *karma*. It has always been in movement and can
never come to rest. The Pāli literature states repeatedly and explicitly,
that the law of existence governed by cause and effect, is immanent in
the nature of the world, and is independent of the mission of a Buddha.
According to *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I, 286 'whether Tathāgatas appear, or whether
Tathāgatas do not appear, it remains a fact, an unalterable condition of
existence (*dhātu dhammāṭhitattā*), that the orderly certainty of the law
prevails: that all conditioned existences are impermanent ... are
suffering (*dukkhā*) ... are not-self. Regarding this, a Tathāgata is
fully awakened and understands completely. So enlightened, and under-
standing, he explains it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it,
reveals it, proclaims it, makes it clear'.

This cosmic law in Buddhism, may be compared to the personal god
of theistic religion, for it conditions the origin, existence, and end
of the countless inhabitants in the world, by rewarding good actions and
punishing evil ones. But it is never revered as the creative or directive
principle of the world. As Glasenapp observes, to the Buddhist this
cosmic law is a 'dire necessity rather than a semi-divine entity'; but
it is, at the same time, within limits, the subject of a cult, in its
'aspect of leading from the world to the transcendence of it'.

In *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 84, the king of Kosala is represented as venerating and

1. Also *AN* III, 134; cf. *MN* I, 131: 'Whether a Tathāgata preaches
the Dhamma to his disciples, or does not preach it, the Dhamma
remains the same'.
paying homage to the Dhamma in the following manner: 'As the king honours the Dhamma, respects the Dhamma, pays homage to the Dhamma, worships the Dhamma, reveres the Dhamma, so king Paśenadi renders service to the Tathāgata, respects the Tathāgata, reveres the Tathāgata, salutes the Tathāgata (añjali kamma), pays homage to the Tathāgata'.

The Buddha identified with the Dhamma in Samyutta Nikāya III, 120, and Dīgha Nikāya III, 84, is obviously not the historical Buddha, but corresponds with the Dhammakāya (body of the Law) - of the Trikāya (Three Bodies) concept - occurring in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and recognised in the commentaries of the Pāli canon. That this 'body' was distinct from the temporal body of the Buddha is clearly evident from Majjhima Nikāya III, 29, and Samyutta Nikāya II, 221, according to which the Dhammakāya from which the disciples of the Buddha are born, is clearly contrasted with the physical body. The Buddha, therefore, according to the tradition of Theravāda soteriology itself, is noticed to have acquired, in addition to his material form (rupakāya), an eternal aspect, a supranormal body—the Dhammakāya which represented the Ideal of Awakening both in its universal aspect and its ultimate reality.

In the Mahāyāna sense, Kimura observes that Dhammakāya is generally interpreted as Dharma-Tathatā, or real substance of the universe, although it also occurs sometimes in the sense of 'Law' or 'Doctrine'; kāya may be rendered as 'body' not in the sense of personality, but as the organised totality of creation, or the principle of cosmic unity, and as an object of religious consciousness rather than a purely philosophical concept. Dhammakāya In Mahāyāna Buddhism, therefore, may be regarded as the 'body of cosmic unity', a notion similar to the idea
of Nirguṇa Brahman in the Upaniṣads, and Godhead in Christianity. 1

The germs of the developed Dharmakāya doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism are, however, as we have seen, to be traced in the passages of the Pāli canon, cited above. 2

We have noticed that as the Buddha's earliest disciples seem to have had no interest in recounting the life of the Buddha prior to his Awakening, there was no reliable information and details regarding his childhood and youth were reverently invented. Mention has also been made of the major events of the Buddha's life, which provided a framework for the various legends woven around his name. In addition, there are a number of incidents in the Buddha's life recorded in the Pāli literature, which may also be regarded as actual occurrences, as there seems to have been no reason for their invention. These events include his sexennial fast, his hesitation to proclaim his gospel to mankind, the rebuff he received from the sceptical Ājivika monk Upaka, the attempts on his life, and, lastly, the ordinary illness to which his death is attributed.

Other details recorded about his life may also be regarded as actual facts, as one would not ordinarily expect to find these in the life story of a holy man: that the Buddha was married and had a son (he might well have been portrayed as an upholder of eternal chastity, in the same way as Mahāvīra is represented by the Digambara Jains to have led

1. R. Kimura: 'Buddhakāya as an Idea', Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Vols, III, pt. 3, p.524. cf. MacGovern: 'Though originally the spirit of the Buddha may have been synonymous with the doctrines of the Buddha, it was not long before it became synonymous with the root of life, the essence of being, the norm of the universe'. Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism, p.30.

2. Bhikshu Sangharakshita believes that it would be a mistake to regard the distinctively Mahāyāna teachings as 'altogether different from, or discontinuous with, the teachings incorporated from Hinayāna sources ... and however unorthodox certain Mahāyāna doctrines may appear in the eyes of modern Theravādins, all of them can be discovered in germinal form in the pages of the Theravāda scriptures'. A Survey of Buddhism, p.261.
an ascetic life since boyhood\(^1\); that he renounced worldly life against the wishes of his parents (contrary to the Indian tradition of filial devotion); that he studied under Brahmin teachers (and so attained his insight after experimenting with various methods of meditation); that he first followed the 'false' way of extreme asceticism, and only later discovered the Middle Path; and, that his first adherents deserted him, believing that he had abandoned his search for peace.\(^2\)

The Buddha's search for peace led to the profound experience which he underwent on the bank of the river Nairāñjara, and the expounding of the Dhamma, the eternal truth by which release from the problems and constraints of mortal existence might be attained. However, although the awakening to this eternal truth, which is characterized by the feeling of absolute freedom, is essentially spiritual or transcendental, for reasons which are mainly mnemonic and pedagogic, much of the recorded Dhamma has come down to us in the shape of stereotyped formulae and lists of doctrinal terms such as the Four Aryan Truths, the Five Aggregates, the Three Characteristics of existence, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, the Ten Perfections, the Twelve links in the Chain of Causation, and many, many more. We have noticed that after the Parinibbāṇa of the Buddha, the drawing up of such lists became almost an obsession with a section of his followers, with the result that almost the whole of the Theravāda and much of the Mahāyāna canonical literature, has come down to us in the artificial and stereotyped form, certain passages of which may even be described as completely devoid of spiritual vitality.\(^3\)

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1. According to the Śvetāmbaras, however, he was a married man before his renunciation, and had a daughter.
3. This is not to say, as Bhikshu Sangharakshita has pointed out, that 'given the conditions under which it had to be transmitted, the Dhamma could have been handed down in any other manner, or that we should not feel profoundly grateful to the compilers and codifiers who gave it such an attractive but durable shape'. The Three Jewels, p.59.
At the same time, the living spirit of Gotama Buddha's teaching is clearly expressed in passages such as *Mahāvagga* I, 11, 1: 'I am delivered, 0 Bhikkhus, from all fetters, human and divine. You, 0 Bhikkhus, are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go now, 0 Bhikkhus, and preach the Dhamma which is noble in the beginning, noble in the middle, noble at the end, in the spirit and in the letter; proclaim a perfect and pure life of holiness, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain and the welfare of gods and men'. It is this detached love and compassion for all mankind, which constitutes the essence of Buddhism, and which brings the enlightened into communication with the unenlightened mind; and it is the formulated Dhamma which is the medium of this communication.

The fact that certain concepts in the Dhamma may be traced in pre-Buddhist teachings, does not justify such sweeping conclusions as 'early Buddhism was fundamentally influenced by the *Upaniṣads*', or, that the Buddha, a child of his time, was 'heir to the Hindu religious tradition'. It must be borne in mind that the relation between Buddhism on the one hand, and the various philosophical speculations and religious practices flourishing in north-eastern India in the 6th-5th cent. BC, on the other, as pointed out by Bhikshu Sangharakshita, may be compared to that existing between a seed and the soil in which it is planted. While the seed is not produced by the soil, it certainly cannot germinate, put forth roots and shoots, or go through the various stages of a plant's development, unless the soil is there to provide it with nutrition. It

is necessary to note that while Buddhism in the sense of the Way to Nibbāna is probably the outcome of the 'high standard of intellectual inquiry and ethical endeavour prevailing at the time',\(^1\) what is generally regarded as the oldest portion of the entire Sutta Piṭaka - the Khaggavisōṇa sutta, the Āṭṭhaka and Pārāyana vaggas of the Suttanipāta, do not reflect any particularly Buddhist teaching, but appear to be common to India's heritage of thought, e.g. the necessity of solitude for the man intent upon salvation, the eradication of anger and other unwholesome states of mind, the uprooting of indolence, the concept of karma, and the desirability of release from rebirth.

Although the teaching of the Upaniṣads starts at a point where the exegesis of the Brahmāṇas ends,\(^2\) it is generally held that these texts reflect the needs of ascetics and anchorites for whom a religion of sacrifices and ceremonial practices was not enough. That Indian thought assumed a composite character at a very early stage, is indicated by the fact that the belief in karma, rebirth, and release from the cycle of rebirth, generally regarded as non-Aryan, finds expression in the oldest Upaniṣads. It is also significant that the culmination of the Upanisadic conception of the Self, i.e. that in the ātman all contradictions are reconciled\(^3\) - that it transcends all empirical existence,\(^4\) all opposites,\(^5\) thought and speech, and that silence alone is its most eloquent expression;\(^6\)

\(^1\) Bhikshu Sangharakshita: loc. cit.
\(^2\) The CU takes brahmanical meditations on melody as its starting point, the BAU develops the theme of the mystical meaning of the Ātavamedāṇa, which is dealt with in the concluding stanzas of the ŚB. Renou goes so far as to conclude that 'there is no more opposition between Upaniṣad and Brahmāṇa, than there is between the first and second Mīmāṃsā, or, between Sākhya and Yoga'. Religions of Ancient India, p. 27.
\(^3\) cf. BAU IV, 3, 22 ff; IV, 4, 5; Ya U I, 2, 21; II, 1, 10; Īśa U 5.
\(^4\) cf. Mu U III, 2, 2; CU VII, 23, 1; VII, 24, 1 (description of Bhuman); Ka U II, 1-2.
\(^5\) cf. BAU III, 8, 8; Ka U II, 14; Īśa U 10 and 13; Mān U 7.
\(^6\) cf. Kena U 1, 5; TU II, 9; Mu U III, 1, 7; Mān U 7; Ka U II, 8; TU II, 9.
that it can only be described negatively,\(^1\) paradoxically,\(^2\) - verges towards the concept of Nibbāna in Buddhism. Furthermore, the idea of the viññānamaya soul which is regarded as the transmigrating individual self in the Upaniṣads, is also met with in Buddhism, although in the latter it is not a permanent entity but a changing one.\(^3\)

It is necessary to bear in mind that in the Pāli canon, whenever the Buddha is represented as disputing the Brahmanical religion, it is only the ritualistic aspect of the Brahmanical tradition that is refuted, coupled with the uncritical acceptance of Vedic authority, of the supremacy of the Brahmins over members of other castes on the basis of birth alone, and the slaughter of animals, practised in sacrifices. Regarding the non-ritualistic aspect of Brahmanical tradition, we noticed that it was the concept of the self that is denied by the Buddha.

Of the Upaniṣads regarded as pre-Buddhistic, it is interesting to note that the Muṇḍaka\(^4\) (literally, the Upaniṣad of the shaven-headed), appears to imply a disapproval of the existing caste system,\(^5\) and rejects the efficacy of the Vedic rituals,\(^6\) but is in accordance with the fundamental theory of Buddhism that the individual is born according to his desires.\(^7\) Even the rationalistic approach of the Buddha in his teaching of the middle path appears to be expressed in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad III, 2, 8-4: 'The Ātman cannot be attained by instruction, nor by

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1. cf. BAU II, 3; 6; IV, 4, 22; Ka U II, 3, 12; Kena U I, 3.
3. BAU IV, 4, Zff. cf.Mu U III, 2, 7; Praśna U IV, 9; Tu III, 5; and SN II, 13; V, 370; I, 37. cf. K.N. Upadhyaya: Early Buddhism and the Bhagavad Gītā, p.84.
5. cf.Mu I, 1, 6, where the significant predicates agotram and avaram, are applied to Brahman.
6. According to Mu I, 2, 7-10, the deluded who delight in sacrificial rites 'undergo old age and death again and again'. cf. I, 2, 8 where they are compared to 'blind men led by one who is blind himself' - an analogy employed by the Buddha in DN I, 239, and MN II, 170; 200.
intellectual power, nor by much hearing ... nor can it be attained by one 
devoid of strength, nor through heedlessness, nor through aimless 
austerity...'.

A survey of the Upaniṣads and the Pāli literature reveals not only 
a similarity of a number of ideas, but also expressions and analogies, 
justifying our conclusion that Buddhism was certainly influenced by the 
non-ritualistic trends in the Upaniṣads, but that the emergence of early 
Buddhism was the result of discerning criticism, acceptance and synthesis 
of various contemporary streams of thought.

In the light of what we have just discussed, the view of Rhys 
Davids that 'Gotama was born and brought up, lived and died a Hindu', 
and that 'Buddhism grew and flourished within the fold of orthodox belief', 
as well as those of Pande and Mookerji referred to above, appear to be 
unwarranted generalizations. On the one hand it is difficult to see how 
the Buddha can be described as an heir to the Brahmanical religious 
tradition, or that he lived and died a Hindu, if he did not believe in 
God or in the theories of creation; on the other hand, the Brāhma 
vagga of the Dhammapada, Suttanipāta 621-650, Majjhima Nikāya I, 344; 386, 
and Aṅguttara Nikāya I, 207-208, clearly indicate that the Buddha was a 
brāhmaṇa in the 'real' sense of the term - one who had become Brahman; and 
having lived the holy life (brahmacariya), had attained Brahman; one who 
dwelt with Brahman. Besides, as Ling has pointed out, it is an

1. cf. Ka U I, 2, 23.
2. For a list of similar expressions and analogies, see K.N Upadhyaya: 
op. cit., pp. 101-103.
5. cf. AN IV, 340: 'Brāhmaṇa is a term for the Tathāgata'. cf. also Ud 
3, where the Buddha declares: 'The Brāhmaṇa who is cleansed of evil 
elements, is free from conceit, is not stained by passions, is self-
controlled, is versed in the Vedāṇa, and lives a holy life, he is 
indeed one who can expound the doctrine of Brahman'; and It 56 
referring to the Buddha says: '... one become Brahman, Tathāgata, 
Buddha ...'.
anachronism to ascribe a Hindu religious tradition to this early period, as the characteristic set of beliefs and practices which came to be known as 'Hindu', was yet to be developed. ¹

We have already noted that the period of the Rg Veda with its wealth of mythology, was followed by the ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas, and the latter by the mystical speculations of the Upaniṣads. We have also noticed that in many respects the description of the life and deeds of the Buddha

¹ T. Ling: The Buddha, p.92. The name for India in the Avesta is Hindū, which, like the Old Persian Hi(n)du, is derived from Sans. Sindhu, the earliest mention of which occurs in the Hamadan, Persepolis and Naksh-i-Rustum inscriptions of the Achaemenid ruler Darius I (c.522 - 486 BC). According to Herodotus, this region, embracing the Indus valley and bounded on the east by the desert of Rajputana, constituted the twentieth and most populous satrapy of the Achaemenid empire. H.C. Raychondhuri: Political History of India, pp. 240-241.

In his account of India, Alberuni [973-1030 AD] appears to apply the name 'Hindu' to all those people inhabiting the country beyond Sind, who did not accept the Muslims or their faith: '... then came Islam; the Persian empire [under the rule of Sassanid Yazdegard III] perished [in 692 AD, at the hands of the Arab ruler Omar I] and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make inroads into their country; for Muhammed Ibn Ilkasim Ibn Elmunabbih entered Sindh [712 AD] from the side of Sijistan (Sakastene) ... he entered India proper, and penetrated even as far as Kanauj ... sometimes fighting with sword in hand, sometimes gaining his ends by treaties ... All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts ... all their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them. They call them mleccha, i.e. impure, and forbid having any connection with them ... They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion. This renders any connection with them quite impossible, and constitutes the widest gulf between us and them'. E. Sachau: Alberuni's India, pp. 19-21.

In the 13th cent. AD, after the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate at Delhi, the term 'Hindu' was specially applied to the people who offered a resistance 'distinctly religious, cultural, and psychological', against the Muslim rulers of India. K.M. Munshi: Forward to The Struggle for Empire, Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, V, p.xvii.
corresponds with the primordial mythology of Agni and Indra, as depicted in the *ṚgVEDA*. As Coomaraswamy has pointed out, Agni and Indra are the priest and king in divinis, and it is significant that it is these two possibilities with which the Buddha is born; it is these possibilities that are realized, for 'although his kingdom is in one sense not of this world, it is equally certain that he is cakravartin, is both priest and king in the same sense that Christ is 'both priest and king'.'

Mention has already been made of the events of the Buddha's recorded life which provide a framework for the various legends later woven around his name. These legends with which the life of Buddha abound, legends relating to his birth and childhood, and numerous stories designed to illustrate his eminence, e.g. the prophetic dreams which herald his birth, and the supernatural birth itself; astrologers and an Himalayan sage prophesying his future fame; his birth, his Enlightenment and his death, all falling on the same day of the year; his death being accompanied by strange terrestrial events; his astonishing capabilities in archery; his knowledge of all the alphabets - are examples of how the pious Buddhist legend-makers sought to emphasize the uniqueness of the Buddha, and surround him with an aura of divinity. The direction taken by these legends is aptly summed by Glasenapp: 'From the still rather simple

1. Coomaraswamy: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p.73.
2. It would be difficult to find one definition that would cover all types and functions of legends. However, the following definition offered by Halliday, appears to be the most embracing: a legend is a 'folk-tale' related to some actual person, place, social or religious phenomenon; its object may be to explain the origin of an institution, place-name, or social custom, or why a particular religious ceremony is performed. The distinction between legend and myth, however, is not clear-cut, as the purpose of legend, like that of myth may be aetiological; and while they often overlap, there are a number of borderline cases which do not clearly fall into one or the other category. W.R. Halliday: *Indo-European Folk-tales and Greek legend*, pp. 5-8. Eliade, however, holds that a myth always narrates something as having really happened, the unveiling of a 'mystery', or revelation of a primordial event; when it is no longer assumed to be a revelation of a 'mystery', he concludes that the myth becomes 'decadent' or obscure, and turns into a legend. *Mythes, dreams, and mysteries*, pp. 15-16.
water miracle (*Dīgha Nikāya* II, 89) to the story of the inexhaustible rice cake\(^1\) and the miracle of the mango tree,\(^2\) from the air journeys to Ceylon (*Dīpavaṃsa* 1-2) to the fantasies of the *Lotus of the Good Law*, the hagiographers overreach themselves, until in the latest texts, they reach the limit of exaggeration.\(^3\)

It has been pointed out that the association of legends and miracles with historical figures, far from being a matter of random accumulation, is like all phenomena of human culture, the result of processes which can be studied and explained.\(^4\)

In the first place, the person with whom the legends are to be associated, must not be too recent, or the true facts of his career will be remembered, nor too remote, or he will have been superseded and forgotten. About fifty years after his death is a probable time for legends to be first associated with a historical character, but the period may be extended if his career has been recorded.\(^5\)

According to Chadwick, 'myth is the last - not the first - stage in the development of a hero'.\(^6\) This confirms the conclusion arrived at by a number of investigators: 'the recollection of a historical event or a real personage survives in popular memory for two or three centuries at the utmost. This is because popular memory finds difficulty in retaining individual events and real figures. The structures by means of which it functions are different: categories instead of events, archetypes instead of historical personages. The historical personage is assimilated to his mythical model (hero, etc.), while the event is identified with the

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\(^1\) Introd. to *Jātaka* 78, *Jātaka*, I, 345-349.  
\(^2\) Introd. to *Jātaka* 483, *Jātaka* IV, 263-265.  
\(^3\) H.V. Glasenapp: *Buddhism: A Non Theistic Religion*, p.69.  
\(^4\) Lord Raglan: *The Hero*, p.218.  
\(^5\) Lord Raglan: *loc. cit.*.  
category of mythical actions (fight with a monster, enemy brothers, etc.).

As such, the memory of historical events is modified, after two or three centuries, in 'such a way that it can enter into the mold of the archaic mentality, which cannot accept what is individual and preserves only what is exemplary'.

The 'extraordinary and wonderful' details regarding the birth of the bodhisattva, related in the Acohariyabhūtadhamma sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, and explicitly described as an absolute law (Dhammatā) in respect of the birth of all Buddhas, coupled with the accounts of all the Buddhas' Awakening while seated at the foot of their respective bodhi trees, their turning the Wheel of the Dhamma, and a stūpa being erected over their mortal remains, in the Nidānakathā and Buddhavamsa, merely reflects the gradual metamorphosis of the historical personage Gotama Buddha, into a legendary 'hero', and the reduction of the major events of his life to an exemplary 'standard', which is in conformity with archaic ontology and mould of mentality. As Conze aptly observes: 'At times it is useful to remember that Buddhism, according to the Buddhists themselves, is not so much a creation of the Buddha Sākyamuni, as a revival of notions which go back to the dim beginnings of history'.

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1. M. Eliade: *Cosmos and History*, p.43.
2. M. Eliade: *op. cit.*, p.44.
3. Translated in Chinese as Fa-hsing, meaning 'the nature of things': The concept refers to an 'eternal spiritual order in cosmic life, to which each incident of a Buddha - manifestation conforms'. S. Dutt: *The Buddha and Five After-Centuries*, p.195.
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