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Physical Aspects of Some Mahāpuruṣas Descent, Foetality, Birth*

For Mr Deven Yashwant and his family
in gratitude of their generous hospitality

Many religions equip their founder or cultural hero with a miraculous conception, gestation and/or birth,¹ whereby mostly the physical father is pushed into the background, as in Christianity and in Indian religions. As to Mahāvīra, the main data in this respect stems from the Āyāraṅga (II 15) and the Kappa Jinacaritra, which hereafter will be compared to that of some other well-known Mahāpuruṣas such as Indra and Gotama Buddha.

MAHĀPURUṢA AND MAHĀVĪRA

The compound *mahāpuruṣa* first occurs in AitĀr 3.2,3 in the sense of the year, that is, time, the essence of which is the sun, which for its part is identified with the incorporeal self (*aśarīrah praññātmā*). *mahāvīra*, however, is in ṚV I 32,6 used of Indra when challenged by Vṛtra, the dragon symbolizing cosmic inert chaos. In the Brāhmaṇas it is found in connection with the Pravargya, a Vedic ritual which can precede certain Soma sacrifices.

According to tradition, the Pravargya arose out of the deity Rudra's head in the same way as, up to the present day, in oral tradition Mahārāṣṭrian heroes must first lose their head before they can be reborn, and just as the primaeval Puruṣa of ṚV 10,90 had to be sacrificed and taken apart before cosmic order could start and sac-

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¹ See, e.g., P. Saintyves (nom de plume of E. Nourry), *Les vierges mères et les naissances miraculeuses*. Paris 1908. In India, a father is not allowed to see his newborn child for many days, varying in different castes from five to twelve, for fear of his evil-eye (Abbott 1932: 123).

rificial utensils, living beings and celestial bodies (in this order) could come into being.

At this ritual, the Ásvins were offered freshly milked cow's milk heated in a pot made of non-precious metal and smeared all around with butter. In the post-Saṃhitā period it underwent a substantial change by being connected with a perhaps non-Vedic rite implying the manufacture, heating, worship and removal of an earthen vessel called *mahāvīra*. This vessel consists of three clay balls one on top of the other which may represent the three worlds of Vedic belief. The heating would then contribute to the sun's heat and thus bring near the monsoon. One is reminded here of the Jina's name *vaddhamāna*, "the prospering one", in the texts, however, interpreted as "the promoter".² Later, the vessel is put on a par with the life-giving sun and the year, because the year is, since the family books of the ṚV, intimately related to Indra and afterwards to Prajāpati, his successor in the Brāhmaṇa period.

So far, scholars have paid little attention to the relation of the name *mahāvīra* to the object, the vessel. Now there is a tradition (Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, etc.) that, at the end of the milk sacrifice, the utensils are laid together near the *mahāvīra* vessel in the shape of a man. These are then sprinkled with the flour left over from the sacrificial cake representing marrow, and with a mixture of sour milk and honey representing blood.³ On the one hand, all this reminds us of the common group of myths in which a primeval giant or cosmic man like the ṛg- and atharvavedic Puruṣa is sacrificed, so that the world can be created from him. On the other hand, though not Mahāpuruṣa or Mahāvīra, we have Mahādeva, the Vrātya, who emerges from a piece of gold, which Prajāpati, the Ṛgvedic creator god and later also called Mahādeva⁴ and *devānāṃ vīryāvattamaḥ*,⁵ sees in himself,⁶ a golden germ (*hiranyagarbhā*), which he generated (*prājanayat*). In the same way Queen Māyā beholds the Bodhisatta in her womb, as we shall see below. Further, the Vrātya appears in the form of a manifestation of the god Rudra,⁷ who is later euphemistically called Śiva and is given the epithet Mahādeva as well. Moreover, the Vrātya

² Schubring 2000: 32. Cf. ĀvN 1091.

³ Hillebrandt 1897: 135.

⁴ ŚB 6,1,3,16.

⁵ ŚB 13,1,2,5.

⁶ AV 15,1,2.

⁷ See, e.g., Shrinivas 1983.

stood a year erect⁸ and has close relations with the Pravargya in other repects.⁹

In what follows we shall have a closer look at some characteristics of Indra and Prajāpati in order to show how, already before the Common Era, they were applied to the Mahāpuruṣas.

CONCEPTION

We shall begin with their exceptional conception of which in the Veda, however, no examples have to my knowledge been handed down.

Among the unusual ways thereof we find that of a woman's navel being touched by a god or an ascetic.¹⁰ This type of conception occurs in Buddhist legends too,¹¹ but not in Jaina hagiography. However, both Vaddhamāṇa Mahāvīra and Gotama Buddha drop into their mother's womb from heaven, where, in a pre-birth, they had divine status.

We do not yet know of a reminiscence of previous existences in the Jain canon, a reminiscence which, still present in the womb, disappears at birth through claustrophobia or pains, as is described, e.g., in the Garbhopaniṣad.¹² This reminiscence does not come back before

⁸ AV 15,3,1. As is well known, the Vrātyas belonged to an older wave of Āryan invaders who had penetrated into eastern India before the Vedic brahmins. We first hear of them in AV 15, but after that only sporadically up to the Mbh. They then disappear from literary, i.e. brahminical tradition, but leave clear traces centuries later in Jinism and Buddhism. Until Sontheimer's discovery in the late 1980s the survival of the Vrātyas with their typically shamanistic costume in Lord Khaṇḍoba's Vāghyas in Mahārāṣṭra was unknown (Sontheimer 1987: 8f. and 1989: 302). They are not only a reaction to post-Vedic sacrificial speculations of the brahmin priests, but also carry on pre-Vedic traditions.

⁹ The *mahāvīra* vessel is covered with a gold plate and stands on a silver plate, between heaven and earth, as it were. The Vrātya wears a couple of such plates as a necklace (see Hauer 1927: 129). Van Buitenen (1968) was apparently not acquainted with Hauer's remarks.

¹⁰ E.g., in the case of Kuntī (Mbh 3,291,23) and Dīrghatamas (Mbh 1,98,31); see also Mil 123,19ff. and Windisch 1908: 20. The navel is a place of origin: Brahmā on a lotus arises from Viṣṇu's navel, etc. Cf., e.g., Fodor 1949: 143ff.

¹¹ E.g., Ja VI 73,25f. and 28f.; Mil 123,19ff.

¹² *UpS* I/150 (§ 4 *in fine*): *atha jantuḥ strīyonīśatam yonidvāri samprāpto yantrenāpīdyamāno mahatā duḥkhena jātamātras tu vaiṣṇavena vāyunā samspṛśya tadā na smarati janmamarāṇam na ca karma śubhāśubham*; further in Triṣ I 3,568, and earlier Tand 25ff. and Mahān 5,10,117.

the Jina reaches transcendental knowledge (*avadhijñāna*).¹³ The future Jina, however, knows that he has to descend into a new existence, and he is conscious of having accomplished the descent. The only thing that he does not know is the exact moment (Āyār 2,15,3 = Jinac 3). In post-canonical Buddhist literature we shall meet with similar phenomena.

Given the importance, already in the Brāhmaṇas, placed on ritual purity, we may add here that the canonical texts of both new religions mention explicitly the purity of the descent of Mahāvīra's and Gotama's princely parents on the maternal as well as the paternal side (in this order!).¹⁴ In the case of the former, both his mothers (on whom more below) see in the Siddhānta¹⁵ fourteen dreams with auspicious images such as are typical of the Jain religion, that is, static images. As well as this, the wealth of the royal family increased,¹⁶ even by the discovery of money-pots that had been hidden in former days and then forgotten.¹⁷ This detail too, I think, may be characteristic of Jains as well as Buddhists,¹⁸ the laity of both mainly belonging to the third, or merchant (*vaiśya*) class.

We now come to the Bodhisatta descending from heaven into the womb of his mother, whom we only know as “mother”, viz. as Māyā,¹⁹

¹³ Implicit in Āyār 2,15,26 corresponding to Jinac 121.

¹⁴ Jinac 18; cf. DN I 115,5.

¹⁵ Jinac 4.

¹⁶ Jinac 91; Triṣ 10,2,6.

¹⁷ Jinac 89, even in hermits' cells (*santi*), if Jacobi's translation is correct, but the passage is a cliché.

¹⁸ Cf. Ja I 54,7 where among the Bodhisatta's co-natals four *nidhikumbhas* are mentioned.

¹⁹ Oldenberg (1881: 105) and Glasenapp (1936: 21) take Māyā to be a proper name meaning “Wundermacht” (miraculous power) and are not bothered by the oddity of such a name. With it Senart (1882: xxvi) associated “des attaches supra-terrestres” (superterrestrial connections; cf. p. 275). In the Tipiṭaka, Māyā occurs only as a nominative: *bhagavato suddhodano rājā pitā māyā devī mātā*, DN II 52,10; Theragāthā 534, etc. “Māyā” and Rāhulamātā may not have played a role as royals anymore and thus their names may have been forgotten. Moreover, Māyā died in the most inauspicious period of the lochia pollution. For *māyā* ~ skt. *mātā* cf. Ambā in Mbh (p.c. Prof. Werba). Moreover, not only women's names, as also Pajāpatī, Māyā's sister, but also those of the men in the family of the Buddha are remarkable: Suddhodana, Sukkodana, etc. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, can be said of the Jain names Tisālā (see below, n. 49) and Vaddhamāṇa. As suggested by PED 387a and

just as his wife is called Rāhulamātā,²⁰ and who, according to Buddhaghosa,²¹ was forty to fifty years old. The Pāli canon does not go into the manner of the descent, but only states that when a Bodhisatta leaves the Tusita heaven there is an infinite and splendid radiance.²² Buddhaghosa elaborates this by mentioning the pleasure grove, Nanda(na)vana, where the gods send the being to be reincarnated on his way with the words: “Have a good journey through life!”²³ The text emphasizes that all the worlds of the gods have such a grove, but it does not deal with the significance of this grove.²⁴ The Nanda pleasure grove seems to function here as a womb, but, as we have seen *supra*, in the Indian view the intrauterine stay is very unpleasant. Hemacandra makes even ignorant heterodox persons say that like a stay in prison, poverty, and dependence on others, it is a hell,²⁵ and for the Jains the hells are much worse because of the violence there.²⁶ Gods “die” in that after a sign of imminent rebirth²⁷ they become depressed and shrink, only to eventually dematerialize. Pleasure gardens may be meant as a kind of relief or the idea may be just a mechanical adoption from Hinduism of a divine, esp. Indra’s garden.

Lüders 1954: 112, n. 1 (p.c. Prof. Werba), *pajāpati* is a hyper-paliation of pkt. *pajāvai* ~ skt. *prajāvatī*, the name also of a deity and various women, to be added in Norman 1994: 31 (§ 39 *sub* 6). Or was the name suppressed because there was something wrong with Māyā, just as with Devānandā, Mahāvīra’s physical mother? See also further below, p. 12. — On the anonymity of women in ancient Greece see, e.g., Dalby 1996: 2ff.

²⁰ Vin I 82,8; see Windisch 1908: 140 and, e.g., Thomas n.d.: 81. Later, Rāhulamātā is given various names, e.g., Bimbā, Bhaddakaccā, etc. The tendency to designate female “Respektspersonen” in a religious context as “mother”, whose devotees then are her children, is found up to the present day, e.g., regarding Śrī Aurobindo’s wife; Jillellamudi Amma in Bapatla (Guntur); Yoginī Ammajī near Trichur (Kerala); Ānandamayī Mā in Bhadaini (Benares); Śītalā Mātā. See also Gupta 1979: 116ff.

²¹ Samm 278.

²² DN II 12,6ff.: *yadā bodhisatto tusitā kāyā cavitvā mātu kucchiṃ okkamati ... tathā pi appamāṇo ulāro obhāso pātubhavati.*

²³ Sv 430,12: *sugatiṃ gaccha.*

²⁴ Cf. Kirfel 1920: 230ff.

²⁵ *garbhavāso guptivāso dāridryaṃ paratantratā | ete hi narakāḥ sākṣād ity ākhyante ’lpa-medhasaḥ ||* (Par VI 118).

²⁶ Chandra – Shah 1975: fig. 88.

²⁷ *cavaṅaliṅga* (Samar 473,12).

Elsewhere²⁸ Buddhaghosa says about the descent which was accompanied with a radiant brightness in the universe:²⁹

Though knowing “I shall fall from the worlds of the gods” yet he was not conscious of the process itself. He was aware of having been reborn, but could not remember entering a new body.³⁰

Apart from the brightness there were many other wonders: all illness disappeared, the fire in the hells went out, wild animals ceased to be afraid, men began to speak kindly, but, as against a central meaning connected with the image of divine childbirth in ancient Egypt and its Christian reinterpretation,³¹ peace on earth is not mentioned, unless the wonders in question are the Indian way of expressing just this.

At the descent of her child the Tipiṭaka tells us only that Māyā did not think of men, not even of her husband,³² yet otherwise indulged in the pleasures of the five senses.³³ In the likewise pre-Common Era Mahāvastu, Brahmā prophesies to Māyā the birth of an elephant among men, and she welcomes this message since she had conceived from her husband. In the Mahāvastu and the Lalitavistara, but not in the later Nidānakathā of the Jātaka or in Aśvaghōṣa, this elephant comes to have six tusks³⁴ – probably an intended advantage over its fellow Airāvata, *devarāja* Indra’s mount, which apparently was a gomphotherium, a mastodont with four tusks. In her dream it touches her right side³⁵ and seems to enter her womb. Before this became tradition it is the left side, because Māyā rests on her right side, as older reliefs in Bhārhut and Sāñchi show.³⁶ In that context Māyā’s husband is again not mentioned, in other words, he is excluded.³⁷ This pregnancy dream motif is apparently a variation of the ascetic’s touching a woman’s navel (see above, n. 10).

²⁸ Sv 430,15ff. and cf. Vism 548.

²⁹ Ja I 51,7 (*appamāṇo obhāso*); Windisch 1908: 111; Eliade 1965: 33.

³⁰ Other monks, however, did not share this opinion, which also involves the moment of death – as is the case with the Jains.

³¹ Assmann 1982: 41.

³² For this detail see Jolly 1901: § 40 and, e.g., Neumann 1962: 52.

³³ DN II 12 (§ 18); MN III 122f.

³⁴ See Lüders 1941: 52.

³⁵ Printz (1925: 125) stresses the fact that the indication “right” only appears in Ja I 50,22 (Māyā’s dream). Cf. Lüders 1941: 45ff.

³⁶ Lüders 1941: 50; Schlingloff 1999: 38 (*sub* 6).

³⁷ Lüders 1941: 95.

FOETALITY

The oldest reference to this state is found in the second millennium before the Common Era, namely in the nucleus, the so-called “family books”, of the ṚV. Here it is Indra’s mother, again not mentioned by name, perhaps Aditi, who, in ṚV 4,18,4, is said to carry her son for a thousand months³⁸ and many autumns beyond full term apparently, like Agni’s mother in ṚV 5,2,1f., in order to protect him against his jealous father (whose name is not mentioned).³⁹ Or does she carry Indra so long because she does not want him to be born?⁴⁰ She knows that he would kill her, as is said in the first stanza in which Indra refuses to go the usual way of the gods, “down the drain”, that is, probably, they did not become heroes.⁴¹ Thus the hymn commences amidst an obscure dialogue with words spoken either by the mother or by the gods (ṚV 4,18,1):⁴²

This is the tried and tested way by which all gods were born. In this way he, too, should be born, fully mature. He should not destroy his mother so badly.

Moreover, it may be noticed that in the ṚV we meet with the first, though mythical, case of intrauterine communication between mother and child. Popular belief,⁴³ especially in India,⁴⁴ was acquainted with this long before western prenatal psychology began taking note of it last century.⁴⁵

³⁸ Hundred times the usual period, that is. The full term of the gods can take millennia, e.g., twenty in Kārttikeya’s case – with several foetus transfers (see Mani 1975: 747).

³⁹ See Rank 1909: 74 and Neumann 1962: 132f. — J. Gonda in his *Fatherhood in the Veda* (Torino 1985), p. 36, does not go into the problem at ṚV 3,31,1.

⁴⁰ In MS 2,1,12 Aditi as Indra’s mother even binds her son in her womb with an iron fetter as an umbilical cord, and in this state he was born.

⁴¹ Cf. Neumann 1962: 154, already indicated by Jung 1976: ch. VI, esp. § 456f. and in other works.

⁴² “Dies ist der erprobte alte Weg, auf dem alle Götter geboren wurden. Auf diesem soll auch er ausgereift geboren werden. Nicht soll er seine Mutter derartig zugrunde gehen lassen” (Geldner 1951: I/441).

⁴³ In the Qur’ān Sūra 19, 27-33; cf. Hagemann – Pulsfort 1992: 104ff.

⁴⁴ Also, e.g., ṚV 4,27,1 (Soma); Mbh 1,98,13; 3,132,8 (Aṣṭāvakra) and 12,328,46 (Dīrghatamas). For modern examples see, e.g., Gupta 1979: 121; Oman 1908: 69; Thompson – Balys 1958: T 575.1. In Babylon intrauterine sounds are only considered omnia (Stol – Wiggermann 2000: 160).

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Janus 1990: esp. 76ff.

The motif of retention of delivery, twenty-four *yugas* long, appears also with Naraka, the son who was begotten by Viṣṇu in his boar *avatāra* with the earth during her menstruation (*malinī*)⁴⁶ and whom the gods therefore were afraid of.

Of Mahāvīra, tradition tells us that for the first eighty-two days, an unexplainable number, he stayed in the womb of Devānandā, a brahmin lady, and was then transplanted by Indra⁴⁷ or by his army commander Hariṇegamesi⁴⁸ into the Kṣatriya queen Tisalā's⁴⁹ womb, for the idea had come to Indra's mind that future Jinas are never born into lower class, poor or Brahmin families.⁵⁰ Later, when Devānandā and Usabhadatta, her husband, happen to call on Mahāvīra in a temple in order to pay their respects to him, the latter designates her as his mother.⁵¹ The Āyāraṅga complicates things in that it gives brahmin family names to Usabhadatta as well as to Siddhattha, Tisalā's consort, namely Koḍāla (skt. Kauṭalya)⁵² and Kāsava (skt. Kāśyapa).⁵³ It was a mis-conception as it were, which the later church leaders did away with by means of the miraculous foetus transfer by the goat-headed god Hariṇegamesi. The Jains, as is well known, adopted and adapted this Vaiṣṇavite mythologeme in which Nidrā, the goddess of sleep, transfers the foetus of Baladeva from the womb of his mother Devakī into that of her sister Rohiṇī, in order to save him from the mortal grip of his jealous father Kaṃsa.⁵⁴ Here, the point of departure for the Jains was the name

⁴⁶ See Kālikā Purāṇa (ed. Bombay 1891) 37,7 with *malinīrati*^o according to Meyer 1937: II/51; B.N. Shastri's edition (Delhi 1991) 38,51 reads *malinīkṣiti*^o.

⁴⁷ Āyār 2,15,4.

⁴⁸ Jinac 30.

⁴⁹ For the rare and, given the preference for boys, interesting name Tisalā, skt. *Trṣalā, cf. Kāmālā, the name of a nymph (*PW* II/225), if this is correct and not wrong for Kamalā, a name of Lakṣmī, and Désirée in French, which, however, is a past participle.

⁵⁰ Jinac 17.

⁵¹ See Glasenapp 1999: 323, Schubring 2000: 32 (§ 17), and Jaini 1985: 232.

⁵² Perhaps the Jain interest in Cāṇakya (for whom see Chandra – Mehta 1970: 257, s.v. Cāṇakka) is connected to Koḍāla.

⁵³ Āyār 2,15,4.

⁵⁴ Hariv 47f.; BhāḡPur 10,2,8. See also, e.g., O'Flaherty 1975: 206-213 and Spratt 1966: 302 (according to whom „the psychoanalytic view [of the embryo transfer] is that it is intended to diminish the hostility between father and son“). Further, Printz (1925: 124) expresses doubt as to a direct borrowing from

Devakī, for Antag 3,8 (§ 41ff.) Devaī, consort of Vasudeva, the king of Bāravaī (skt. Dvāravatī), bore him six sons. Hariṇegamesi, however, seized them in order to transfer them to the rich lady Sulasā's womb. Because the latter had given birth only to still-born babies, she had had an image of the deity made and worshipped it daily, intending to induce him to perform the said operation. As to this, the text does not comment on Karma or destiny, as Hemacandra does now and then.⁵⁵

According to Pt. Becardas and later also to Shah (1953), the embryo transfer is a later addition, because the Digambaras reject it; and the tradition of the Viyāhapannatti does not refer to Mahāvīra specifically, whereas the Kappasutta stresses more the aversion to brahmins than to the embryo transfer itself. The Jains adopted in Mathurā in the first centuries of the Common Era the popular goat-faced Hindu deity Naigameṣa, the son of Skanda, the general of the gods. He was both a seizer and a bestower of children, and under Vaiṣṇavite influence he merged with Hari. Because the meaning of the name was no longer understood, or even in order to neutralize the reminiscence of Vaiṣṇavism, the Jain *ācāryas* connected it with *hariṇa* and gave the deity the head of a deer. The worship of Hariṇegamesi has long since fallen into disuse. Probably the *rāja* Siddhattha had two queens, a *brāhmiṇī* and a *kṣatriyā*, as Jacobi assumed, but the former, Devānandā, was suppressed by the Digambaras.

There remains the question as to the background of the whole motif in Jaina mythology. It is completely different from the Herodes motif in the Mahābhārata story – a motif which, like most tenets and stories in Christian sacred lore, is an adaptation of ancient Egyptian tradition, in this case of the violent Pharaoh Cheops (2650 BCE).⁵⁶ Connected with the embryo transfer may also be the idea that future Jinas and Buddhas must be reborn in *kṣatriya* families

the Kṛṣṇa legend. When Indra himself enters a womb there is much more violence, as when Agastya's son is cut to pieces in Diti's womb (Brahmapurāṇa [ed. Peter Schreiner. Wiesbaden 1987] 124,53ff.).

⁵⁵ Triṣ 9,4,71 and 140 (*daiva*); 10,1,66 (*vidhī*); 10,4,69 (*bhavitavyatā*); 10,9,3 (*daiva*); 10,13,233 (*bhavitavyatā*).

⁵⁶ See Brunner-Traut 1960: 102ff. (holy family; πνεῦμα θεοῦ; birth of a world saviour or divine son of a virgin mother, at which the physical father is a deuteragonist, etc.) and 1973: 256.

only – though this was not always the case, as becomes evident in the Jain legend, and as the Nidānakathā of the Pāli Jātaka explicitly teaches us, where among the five main considerations (*mahāvīlo-kana*) before being reborn, the Bodhisatta Gotama also thinks of his future family as follows:⁵⁷

Buddhas are reborn (...) either in a respected *kṣatriya* or in such a brahmin family. Nowadays a *kṣatriya* family is respected. Into that I shall be reborn.⁵⁸

A further development of this idea in mediaeval Jinism with regard to young Cāṅgadeva, who later became famous under his monastic name Hemaçandra, is recounted by Merutuṅga.⁵⁹

The apparent irrelevance of *karman* – also as regards the choice of the aim in life: whether to become a Buddha or a *cakravartin* – could point to a certain antiquity of this conception. Can it be a reminiscence of pre-Vedic times in Magadha, of fluid dividing lines, exchange, and rivalry between *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya* Vrātyas? Moreover, at the end of the Brāhmaṇa period brahmins appear to have lost on respect.

A characteristic of Jinism is its seemingly static nature, which manifests itself, e.g., in the above dream visions and in the staring statues of saints. It is also found in the womb, where Mahāvīra, who is conscious of his descent from heaven, of his embryonic status and of his transfer,⁶⁰ out of pity for his mother does not move until she thinks him to be dead. Then he moves a little and, unlike the Bodhisatta, resolves not to go forth in his parents' lifetime.⁶¹ The latter detail, which is not found in the Āyāraṅga, seems odd in this context. Later, however, a person destined to become a Jina can only fulfil his mission after the death of his mother. The case of the Bodhisat-

⁵⁷ Ja I 49,21-24.

⁵⁸ Cf. Jaini 1985: 84.

⁵⁹ Prab 83,9-11: *ayaṃ yadi kṣatriyakule jātas tadā sārvaḥḥmacakravartī, yadi vaṇigvīprakule jātas tadā mahāmātyaḥ, ced darśanam pratipadyate tadā yugapradhāna iva kalikāle 'pi kṛtayugam avatārayati sa ācārya iti.*

⁶⁰ Āyār 2,15,5 and Jinac 3 refer to his knowing of his descent, Āyār 2,15,5 and Jinac 29 to his transfer. As to the time of the exchange there is a marked difference between the two canonical texts in that, according to Āyār, Lord Mahāvīra knows the moment, whereas according to Jinac he does not.

⁶¹ Jinac 94.

ta did not require such a vow, as his mother was destined to die much earlier in any case.

BIRTH

As was shown above, Indra would not have been born in the normal way, which perhaps was *uttānāpad*, “whose legs are extended (for conception or birth)” (*PW* I/895) or “with soles upturned” (Geldner 1951: III/251 [ad 3cd]), the epithet of Aditi in *RV* 10,72,3f.⁶² The text does not tell us from which side,⁶³ nor the bearing stance. Not before Gotama the Bodhisatta do we hear of these details. Yet the origin of the lateral birth idea, just as that of the lateral conception in Gotama’s case, has not yet been explained, as far as I know. Perhaps the idea originated in the custom of carrying children on the hip,⁶⁴ but Indra’s lateral birth must be connected with his splitting heaven and earth,⁶⁵ this being a horizontal movement in the middle of the cosmic egg,⁶⁶ and also of his mother’s waist, the middle of her body. Compare also passages like *ŚB* 6,1,1,2 *sá yò ’yám mādhye prāṇāḥ, eṣā evéndraḥ* “This *prāṇa* in the middle, that is Indra” and perhaps *MN* III 231,13 where the Buddha explains his middle way (*majjhimā patipadā*) between sensual enjoyment (*kāma*, Indra) and asceticism (*tapas*, Prajāpati).

⁶² If *uttānāpad* does have the above meaning, the opposite may be to sit “cross-legged” or “crouching”, as the Indians do. Geldner thinks Aditi is represented here as a cow, who, however, at least in the open, may have her young standing as is shown, e.g., on paintings in ancient Egypt. The Kushana period bovid with foetus in Bhimbetka, SE of Bhopal, is unclear (Neumayer 1983: 110, pl. 77h). Principally the animals deliver standing unless weak (p.c. of Dr. med. vet. B. Schmelzekopf). This fact may therefore also affect the translation; see Leumann’s fitting remark on the philologists in his “Aditi” paper of 1928 (Leumann 1998: 437). O’Flaherty (1980: 79) writes of Aditi: “personified as a female who gives birth by crouching with legs spread”. Yet my doubt about the meaning given in *PW* is confirmed by Falk 1994: 10ff.

⁶³ Geldner (1951: I/441) even speaks of sides (“Seiten”), plural that is.

⁶⁴ Par II 372.

⁶⁵ See *RV* 7,23,3cd: *vibādhiṣṭa syá ródaṣī mahivéndro vṛtrāny apratī jaghanvān* // “After destroying the obstacles, which were no match for anyone, Indra pushed both world halves apart through his height”.

⁶⁶ In *RV* 3,49,1 and 8,61,2 both world halves, which were originally united (*RV* 3,38,3 with Geldner’s note [1951: I/379f.]), are said to have created Indra, and in *RV* 4,17,2 heaven and earth tremble at his birth.

As to Mahāvīra, he is eventually, after nine months and seven and a half days,⁶⁷ born in an apparently normal way,⁶⁸ under an auspicious constellation and a great lustre of descending and ascending deities,⁶⁹ at night in the beginning of summer. Then *devas*⁷⁰ and demons in animal form from Vessamaṇa's/Kubera's realm,⁷¹ the auspicious north that is, produce a downpour of money, jewelry, fruits, etc. In Buddhism, as we have seen, the wonders took place after the Bodhisatta's conception. The Āgamas do not elaborate on the bearing posture, but – for instance, on a fresco in the Vardhamāna temple in Tirupparuttikunram near Kāñcipur in the Vijayanagar region, where, as a rule nowadays at least, women apparently stand upright when delivering⁷² – the delivery of the first and the last Jina takes place in a crouching position behind a curtain covering the lower part of their mother's body.⁷³ On the occasion of the birth, not only the usual amnesty of the sympathetic-magical kind⁷⁴ and a grand popular festival take place,⁷⁵ but there is also a family banquet and an exchange of gifts, possibly of potlatching nature.⁷⁶

On Gotama's birth the Tipiṭaka is silent; the monks, reserved as to women anyway, probably were not interested in the polluting matter.⁷⁷ Of Bodhisattas in general, however, the old texts say that their mother bears them in an upright position.⁷⁸

⁶⁷ This is the average with the Jains (Schubring 2000: § 95).

⁶⁸ Laidlaw (1995: 254) says he has “never heard it suggested” that the Jina “is born ‘purely’ through his mother's right side”.

⁶⁹ Āyār 2,15,7.

⁷⁰ Āyār 2,15,8.

⁷¹ Jinac 98.

⁷² Cf. the eighteenth-century wooden sculptures in Rawson 1973: 99, pl. 10 (image of birth, analogue of the creative function of the goddess, South India) and Mookerjee – Khanna 1977: 171.

⁷³ P.c. Professor Anna Dallapiccola. The upright bearing position is attested since the eighteenth century by tantric woodcarvings (Kuntner 1994: 95ff.). The function of the curtain is probably to protect the mother from evil-eye (Abbott 1932: 121).

⁷⁴ Jinac 100.

⁷⁵ Jinac 102.

⁷⁶ Āyār 2,15,11 and, in greater detail, Jinac 103-105; cf. Divy 282ff., paraphrased in Schlingloff 1962: 20.

⁷⁷ *dukkhā jāti punappunam* (Dhammapada 153) in this case would not count, of course.

⁷⁸ DN II 14,13 = MN III 122,14f.: *dharmatā esā bhikkhave yathā aññā it-thikā nisinnā vā nipannā vā vijāyanti ... ʔhitā va bodhisattamātā vijāyati*.

The Jātaka introduction, however, pertains to Gotama and tells us that Queen Māyā saw him sitting⁷⁹ or even standing⁸⁰ in her womb; then on her way to her family she, strange enough in her position, wanted to play in a flowering Śāl wood. Catching a branch she was surprised by labours⁸¹ and gave birth to her son after precisely ten months, not after approximately nine or ten as is the case with other children, which the canonical texts explicitly stress.⁸² Moreover, post-canonically she did so in an upright position after plucking a flower from a tree.⁸³

Yet in the Mahāvastu and Lalitavistara the Bodhisatta comes into being suddenly, in a non-physical way, out of Māyā's right side,⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Ps IV 181,21ff.: ... *nisinnaṃ bodhisattaṃ kucchigataṃ taco paticchādetuṃ na sakkoti. olokontiyā ca bahi thito viya paññāyati ... bodhisatto pana antokucchi-gato mātaraṃ na passati, na hi antokucchiyaṃ cakkhuvīññānaṃ uppajjati*; cf. Sv 436, 27. In art this has never been represented. Embryonic animals, however, are known in Indian art from prehistoric and historical rockshelters in Bhimbetka, Satkunda and Ramchaja south and east of Bhopal (see, e.g., Neumayer 1983: pl. 75d and 77h [bovid with foetus inside body], 77a and 77g [antelope with foetus]).

⁸⁰ Mvu I 144,3ff.; Windisch 1908: 118.

⁸¹ Ja I 52,20ff.: *deviyā ... sālavanakīlaṃ kīlītukāmatā udapādi ... sā hatthaṃ pasāretvā sākhaṃ aggahesi. tāvad eva c' assā kammajavatā calimsu. ath' assā sāñiṃ parikkhipitvā mahājano paṭikkami. sālāsākhaṃ gahetvā tiṭṭhamānāya eva c' assā gabbhavuttihānaṃ ahosi*. For a discussion of the oldest relevant painting in Ajanta see Schlingloff 1981: 185f.; cf. also id. 1999: 38 (*sub* 6).

⁸² DN II 14; MN III 122. Cf. the discussion in Printz 1925: 119ff. and Norden 1924: 61.

⁸³ Usually trees flower when touched by a woman's foot. Here we have the reverse case of a woman delivering after touching a tree with her hand; see, e.g., Bollée 1983a: 238 and Syed 1990: 77ff. The *āsoka* with its small red blossoms is associated in Indian literature with the feminine, eroticism and fecundity (Syed 1990: 63). — Delivery is an abscission of the fruit (Ferenczi 1972: 360) the origin of which, the conception, according to Suśruta (Śārīrasthāna 3,10) is based on a meeting of *sonita* and *retas*, the former of which is also *puṣpa*, German *Monatsblüte*, “menstruation”.

⁸⁴ Mvu II 20,11ff. (≈ I 280,10ff.); cf. Windisch 1908: 121 and Lüders 1941: 61. See also Mvu I 150,6 and Lalit 83,10, whereas Aśvaghōṣa in his *Buddhacarita* (1,9) mentions only the lateral birth as such, not which side. — Hieronymus, a Father of the Christian Church (fourth century CE), mentions this, adding that the mother is a virgin. These days (May 2005) the newspapers tell us that eighteen cardinals in Rome discussed the virginity of Mary for five years in order to reach a formula about it corresponding with the Anglican Church. See also Neumann 1962: 133.

without splitting it open, which may emphasize the miraculous character of the birth of the Bodhisatta. From the point of the psychology of religion, a birth through the (right) side is, on the one hand, a shift from below, from the impure that is, upward, just as the birth of a hero takes place in a clean way, as is stressed in the texts.⁸⁵ On the other hand, it can be considered a degradation of the status of the mother, as higher beings are marked by an out-of-the-way coming into existence. Such an exceptional birth is known, apart from the case of Indra's mother, e.g., in the Matsya Purāṇa 157,39f., when Umā, Śiva's consort, gives birth to the six Kārttikeyas, and when Sūravantī bears Birobā. A still higher upward shift is shown by a Nepalese statuette of the eighteenth century that features the Bodhisatta jumping from his mother's armpit like Kakṣīvat in the Buddhacarita (I 10).⁸⁶

In DN II 14 four gods first receive the child, before humans, for according to Ja I 52,26 Māyā was screened off and apparently left alone, probably, just as nowadays, for fear of pollution.⁸⁷ The later texts, therefore, at once mention the opposite, the birth without blood, etc. As soon as the gods have placed the Bodhisatta on the earth he takes seven strides to the north, reminding us on the one hand of a king's three strides at his *rājasūya*,⁸⁸ thus imitating Viṣṇu's three strides in the ṚV. Viṣṇu clears the way for somaholic Indra's battle against Vṛtra, the primeval dragon devouring its tail, and in this way favours the cosmic order that Indra is about to establish. On the other hand, Gotama was after all a prince who could also have become a ruler. Buddhism adopts this battle, adapting it as the Bodhisatta's battle with Māra; the former by virtue of his final emancipation emerges victorious.⁸⁹

So far the tradition. Now, in 1929 J.Ph. Vogel pointed to the similarity of the birth scene of the Buddha with the *śālabhañjikā*, a spring

⁸⁵ DN II 14; cf. Windisch 1908: 127 and 138.

⁸⁶ Compare the seasons, *ghī*, etc., produced from Prajāpati's armpits in Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2,2,9,7; see Minard 1956: § 874 and 918. In Eastern Turkestan (Dunhuang) the birth from the armpit is found as early as the fifth century CE; see Whitfield 1982: 31 (p.c. Dr Monika Zin).

⁸⁷ "Childbirth pollution is the most severe pollution of all, far greater than menstruation, sexual intercourse, defecation or death" (Jeffery 1989: 106); cf. Samuel – Rozario 2002: 97 and Stanmeyer 2005: 58f.

⁸⁸ TS 1,8,10g.

⁸⁹ See Bollée 1977.

festival in eastern India, at which young women collected the small yellowish flowers of the Śāl trees, and of these women themselves with statuettes on the *toranas* of the *stūpas* in Bhārhut, etc.⁹⁰ When the Buddha became famous, popular belief may have associated the in itself not improbable fact that according to tradition Gotama's mother had given birth erect in a forest of Śāl trees⁹¹ at Lumbinī, with these statuettes which all show an evident bent hip. Our earliest mention of the place does not refer to a forest and the kind of trees there, but it is likely that Māyā did not deliver in the blazing sun and sought a tree's shadow. The branch she is said to have caught cannot belong to a Śāl, for this tree⁹² has none near the ground.⁹³ According to Lüders following the Tibetan Vinaya⁹⁴ the tree here is an *aśoka*, which was apparently still seen by Hstian Tsang ca. 630 CE;⁹⁵ Syed reproduced the Bodhisatta's birth under an Aśoka tree, where his mother picks a flower, that is found in Ajaṅṭā.⁹⁶ Thus it seems clear that in the Jātaka Nidāna the fecundity-related Aśoka tree was substituted by the heroic and glorious Śāl which goes better with a Buddha.

As we have seen above, the idea of a birth from the hip is as old as the RV, and the only information on the birth of the Bodhisatta in the Tipiṭaka is that the Buddha mothers stand erect, which other women do not do.⁹⁷ As a motif this is widespread, even outside India,

⁹⁰ Vogel 1929: 219. I am beholden to Dr Monika Zin for having drawn my attention to this article and the book by Samuel and Rozario.

⁹¹ Such trees also stood at the Buddha's death bed. They can reach a height of fifty metres (see Tewari 1995: 8). In the oldest non-literary testimony of the Buddha's birth, Aśoka's Rummindeī inscription, it only says *lumminigāme* and does not mention a forest, which is a later addition in texts; see Falk 1991: 72ff. and 84.

⁹² The Buddha is said to resemble a flowering Śāl tree in Mvu III 261f., heroes in Bāṇa's Harṣacarita (Syed 1990: 560).

⁹³ Syed 1990: 559.

⁹⁴ Lüders 1941: 62, thus against Ja I 52,24f., where it is a Śāl tree. See also Printz 1925: 126.

⁹⁵ Falk 1991: 73.

⁹⁶ Syed 1990: 114f.

⁹⁷ See Jahn 1980: 94 (concerning Maitreya), Schopen 1996, and the M.A. thesis of Mr Liu, Maitreyavyākaraṇa (in preparation in Munich). Cf. esp. Maitreyavyākaraṇa vs. 31ff.: *daśa māśāṃś ca nikhilān dhārayitvā mahādyutim | supuṣpīte ca udyāne gatvā maitreyamātaraḥ || na nisinnā nipannā ca sthitā sā dharmacārīṇī | drumasya śākhām ālambya maitreyaṃ janayiṣyati || niṣkramiṣyati pārśvena dakṣiṇena narottamaḥ | abhrakūṭād yathā sūryo nirgataś ca prabhāṣate ||*. The text was translated in Lévi 1932: 392 (p.c. Prof. Adelheid Mette).

in, e.g., Persian and Arabic literature.⁹⁸ It could, therefore, according to Adelheid Mette, have originated in Mesopotamia⁹⁹ and been passed on to Homeric Greece on the one hand¹⁰⁰ and to India on the other;¹⁰¹ but, as Lindauer stresses, some important details in Greece are missing: the goddess Leto embraces a palm tree, in front of which she is kneeling, and Apollon is born quite normally, which shows that Homer did not influence the Buddhist story. There the idea of Māyā touching a tree before delivery may have helped the popular association with *śālabhañjikās*, that is, tree nymphs; she becomes a kind of *yakṣiṇī*.¹⁰² As the nymphs stood at *toranas*, one's passing through these towards the *stūpa*, i.e. towards the Buddha,¹⁰³ perhaps later symbolized release from *saṃsāra*.

Originally, the side the mother gave birth from was not paid attention to, for the statuettes are on either side of the *toranas*; later the medical view prevailed in the religion that male foetuses sit to the right in the womb¹⁰⁴ and consequently would emerge from that side of the hip. The tradition of Māyā's unusual standing delivery may very well be a part of the myth, given the importance of the upright posture we have seen so far.

According to tradition, Māyā – as in Christian mythology the mother of St George the dragon slayer – died after seven days, thus appar-

⁹⁸ Cf. the legend of Maryam in Qur'ān Sūra 19,23: "Labour-pains made her go to the trunk of the palm tree"; see Khoury 1998: 292. In a note, Khoury thinks that Maryam may have seized the palm as a hold. Hagemann – Pulsfort (1992: 99), however, do not go into the matter of a possible erect delivering posture nor have answered my relevant question.

⁹⁹ Stol – Wiggermann (2000: 118ff., esp. 123f.) mention only delivery in a crouching or squatting position on bricks. — I thank my Heidelberg colleague Prof. H. Waetzoldt for drawing my attention to this book.

¹⁰⁰ Hymn to Apollon; see Lindauer 1996.

¹⁰¹ Thus Prof. Mette in a p.c. of June 3, 2005.

¹⁰² For the Buddha as a *yakṣa* see Kern 1898: 59, n. 9. In a temple near Aśoka's pillar there is a statue of Māyā as Rummindeī, i.e. Lumbinī Devī, embracing an Aśoka tree while delivering a child from her side in the presence of a woman and two Nāgas. The archaeologist P.C. Mukherji observed in 1899 that she had become a Hindu goddess and that the rural population offered her not only vegetarian food, but also goats and poultry killed in front of the shrine (Falk 1991: 86ff.).

¹⁰³ Zin 2003: 361.

¹⁰⁴ This idea is found also in ancient Greece and Babylon (Stol – Wiggermann 2000: 207).

ently in childbed.¹⁰⁵ This possibly historical fact must have been too ominous to be accepted by the faithful. In the Pāli canon no explanation for it is given, and it seems to contradict a passage speaking of resistance on the part of prince Gotama's mother (!) and father, though they knew of his glorious future:¹⁰⁶

gotamo akāmakānaṃ mātāpitunnaṃ assumukhānaṃ rudantānaṃ ... anagāriyaṃ pabbajjito "Gotama went forth into homelessness though his mother and father did not want him to do so and cried with tears on their face."

If this is not an oversight on the part of the redactor of the text, it could slightly disguise the fact that Māyā was somehow undesired, as was Mahāvīra's physical mother. Similarly, the later emphasis on purity of descent, just as the delivery without the usual polluting matter, represents an attempt to cover up her undesirability.

In Ja I 52,2 and Mvū II 3,9f. the Bodhisattva chooses a mother who is destined to have a short life; on account of her death in childbed, she is not able to indulge in sexual relations after his birth, which would not befit the mother of a Buddha. The Lalitavistara (98,5-9) states that her death in childbed was not the child's fault, but was due to the shortness of her lifespan; otherwise, her heart would have been broken at the departure of the adult Bodhisatta when he left in search of a teacher.

Little Gotama was taken care of by his mother's sister Mahāpajāpatī, just as Tisālā, for different reasons, took care of Vaddhamāṇa. Thus, in a way, both the Jina and the Buddha had two mothers, something which, according to C.G. Jung¹⁰⁷ and Erich Neumann,¹⁰⁸ is an essential item of heroic myth. Ānanda's story in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (ch. 76) is a similar instance of *dvimātṛtva*.

DEIFICATION AND ITS MARKS

Though we meet Vaddhamāṇa Mahāvīra and Gotama Siddhattha, despite the peculiar circumstances of their birth, as human beings in the respective canonical traditions, they were deified very early

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Lalit 98,3.

¹⁰⁶ DN I 115,18ff.

¹⁰⁷ Jung 1976: § 494ff.

¹⁰⁸ Neumann 1962: 132ff.

on a popular sub-doctrinal level.¹⁰⁹ This, too, was the result of the belief that before their present existences they stayed in a heaven, that their descents were accompanied by special phenomena in the sky and that the gods took an active interest in their birth, as when Hemacandra¹¹⁰ tells us that the *dikkumārīs* perform the birth rites and other gods, led by Indra, take the future Jina Mahāvīra to Mount Meru to worship him and give him his first bath. Elsewhere Hemacandra calls Ādināth a god,¹¹¹ Mahāvīra even god of gods (*devādhideva*),¹¹² and defines that *arhat* as a god who is omniscient (...).¹¹³ The Jains, for their part, began to worship statues of the Jinas, for as such “they have a literally cosmic significance”.¹¹⁴ Yet at least the renouncers know the difference between the Tīrthaṅkaras and the mediaeval, “miracle-working” four *gurudevas* in Rājasthān who are all called Jina¹¹⁵ and can be asked for material goods, but who did not attain omniscience;¹¹⁶ but Banarsi Das in 1613 may not have been the only exception when he addressed a Jina statue with a request for help in his failing business.¹¹⁷

In the case of Gotama, the four Mahābrahmās received the future Buddha in a golden net¹¹⁸ and put him before his mother, and at his *parinirvāṇa* gods stood packed together around his deathbed.¹¹⁹ Thus a similar development to that in Jinism¹²⁰ took place in the Mahāsāṅghika school as a precursor of Mahāyāna.¹²¹ Typical of the

¹⁰⁹ “From the moment he [Mahāvīra] attained enlightenment his body was raised above the ground and floated there” (Laidlaw 1995: 259).

¹¹⁰ Triṣ 10,2,52ff.; cf. Humphrey – Laidlaw 1994: 17.

¹¹¹ Triṣ 10,7,209.

¹¹² Triṣ 10,11,385 and 460. Cf. for the Buddha Ja I 69,13, where Sujātā’s maidservant Puṇṇā takes the Bodhisatta under the bodhi tree for a *devatā*; see also Coomaraswamy 1971: 1/15 (from the Tibetan Dulva) and Gombrich 1991: 10f., 121ff., 133 (*devātideva*) and 163.

¹¹³ Yogaś II 4.

¹¹⁴ Humphrey – Laidlaw 1994: 26 (where the corresponding temple ritual, *snātrapūjā*, etc., is depicted).

¹¹⁵ Laidlaw 1995: 51 and 261.

¹¹⁶ Laidlaw 1995: 261.

¹¹⁷ Humphrey – Laidlaw 1994: 170; cf. Lath 1981: 56.

¹¹⁸ Ja I 52,28ff.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Bollée 1984: 177, n. 27 (which should read: “Kalpasūtra § 125f.”).

¹²⁰ For this form, as against the wrong Jainism, see Winternitz 1983: 408, n. 2; for we never say “Bauddhism”.

¹²¹ Glasenapp 1936: 57 *et passim*.

deification process may be also the male proper name *buddhadeva* and the fact that in the lists of the thirty-two bodily marks (*lakṣaṇas*) of a *mahāpuruṣa* the feet are dealt with first, gods as well as great men like kings¹²² being looked up to from below, for the viewer is lying at his feet. This has already begun in AV 10,2. Ordinary humans, however, are looked at from the other direction.

One remark may yet be made in this context. Indian scholastics know of four postures, namely walking, standing, sitting and reclining.¹²³ The latter posture is unheroic, because it is the posture of the besieged,¹²⁴ the dead and of those asleep; thus after his transition into *parinirvāṇa* the Buddha is depicted and worshipped in the reclining position.¹²⁵ Indra, however, in his fight against Vṛtra, is moving¹²⁶ in an upright position – the erect divine hero against the horizontal animal (*tiryak*);¹²⁷ for Vṛtra is lying in ninety-nine coils around the cosmic mountain (RV 5,29,6).

In RV 10,90,1 Puruṣa, the thousand-footed Cosmic Man whom the gods sacrifice, stands ten fingers over the earth without touching it.¹²⁸ His mouth becomes the brahmin (vs. 12), yet out of his mouth emerges Indra (vs. 13). This creation hymn, which stresses sacrifice, brahmin supremacy, and the secondary rank of Indra, and thereby of the warrior class, already shows clear evidence of a transition toward the Brāhmaṇa literature. Furthermore, the cosmic giant reminds one of the sixteenth century Jinist concept of the universe as an erect human – woman or man – as well as of erect Jain ascetics in *kāyotsarga* like Bāhubali in Śravaṇa-Belgoḷa.

Indra's successor, Prajāpati, is standing when the Brahman strikes the Evil off him, which may be represented by the hair on his head.¹²⁹

¹²² Mbh 3,144,20 states also Kṛṣṇā to have *pādau pūjitalakṣaṇau*.

¹²³ E.g., AitBr 7,15,3. See also Bollée 1983b: 112f. and further RE 1912: 1142,10f.

¹²⁴ Triṣ 4,1,301.

¹²⁵ Hildebeitel 1978: 775, n. 27, and 787, n. 64. Filliozat (1967: 75) stresses the meaning of the direction of the head toward the north.

¹²⁶ Indra also “sides with the wanderer” (*indra ic carataḥ sakhā*, AitBr 7,15,1).

¹²⁷ The R̥gveda uses the word *mṛgá* only.

¹²⁸ See Bollée 1977: 376f., where the stanza is discussed.

¹²⁹ Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2,369; see Caland 1919: 205f. In the Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra (17,40) hair is equated to Evil. See also Onians 1954: 108 and Bollée 1988: 92, n. 25.

Thus Hemacandra compares the latter with the roots of the tree of *karman*.¹³⁰ This, then, would be a Vedic justification for the tonsure of the Buddhist monks and for the Jaina renouncers even pulling out their hair, which according to Hemacandra they do in order to subdue their senses.¹³¹ The hair is also a substitute for the head, which the hero has to sacrifice before he can be reborn in a higher state.¹³² The head represents the individual who is changed when he becomes a renouncer and thereby a hero, because for Hemacandra going into homelessness is heroism, as when King Daśārṇabhadrā becomes a monk and Śakra praises his *pauruṣa*.¹³³

The Bodhisatta defends himself in an upright position in meditation against Māra, who wishes to prevent him from reaching final emancipation.¹³⁴ This yogic posture may be seen on Indus valley seal no. 420 in Mackay's list.¹³⁵

The same *padmāsana* also marks the statues of the Jinas, whereas standing Buddhas may be adaptations of Yakṣas – an association aided by the well-known fact that the Buddha, as well as the Mahāvīra, often stayed in or near Yakṣa shrines. Moreover, the Buddha,¹³⁶ as also Indra,¹³⁷ and the Tīrthaṅkara Pāśa¹³⁸ by Hemacandra,¹³⁹ are themselves called Yakṣa; the pipal tree under which the Buddha reached his *bodhi* is also found on seal no. 335 in Mohenjo Daro.

The marks of the body are a product of brahminical speculation on the physical externals of the ideal man and were adopted by Jains and Buddhists alike. Initially, they may go back to Indra and Nārāyaṇa, perhaps even to pre-Vedic concepts. In the course of the

¹³⁰ Triṣ 10,10,51: *karmadrūmūlānīva ... uccakḥāna ... śīrasaḥ pañcabhir muṣṭi-bhīḥ kacān*.

¹³¹ Triṣ 1,6,16: *amī muṇḍāḥ śīraḥkeśaluñcanendriyanirjayaiḥ*.

¹³² Neumann 1962: 159.

¹³³ Triṣ 10,10,54.

¹³⁴ Cf. Bollée 1977: 377.

¹³⁵ See E. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjo-Daro*. Delhi 1938 (repr. 1978).

¹³⁶ Bollée 1977: 377.

¹³⁷ Ja IV 4,11*.

¹³⁸ The Sanskrit form Pāśva is certainly wrong (see Bollée 2002: 273 and 275), as is Śāh's connection with the warrior clan of Parśu in Dundas 2002: 283, n. 26. See also Laidlaw 1995: 247f.

¹³⁹ Triṣ 9,3,362.

Vedic period, prognostic teachings must have developed – probably first in a magical context, in order to enable brahmins to ward off evil from the ritual and recitation. Teachings of this kind may have begun in the fourth Veda, as is shown by the Atharvaveda *Parīśiṣṭa*. As to the number thirty-two of the *lakṣaṇas*, this may have to do with a tradition of thirty-two *ākāras*, i.e. parts of the body, e.g., in the Pāli *Tiṭṭaka*.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, the portents at the Bodhisatta's birth are also thirty-two in number. In the *Mahābhārata*, however, there is a list of sixteen marks of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, seers in the sphere of Viṣṇu. The first scholar to deal with the Buddhist *lakṣaṇas* was Émile Burnouf in 1852. In 1867 Albrecht Weber started to compare those of Mahāvīra which he knew from Malayagiri's mid twelfth-century comment on the *Sūrapannatti*, a representation of the activity of sun and moon in the *Siddhānta*. This list comprises only twenty-two *lakṣaṇas*, whereas the canonical list of the *Aupapātikasūtra* § 16, published by Leumann in 1883, has some sixty of them, but states that Mahāvīra's body bore 1,008 auspicious marks.

In his Proto-Śiva paper Hildebeitel (1978: 775) remarked, in regard to the animals on the Mohenjo Daro seal no. 420 and a figure in yogic posture, that many of the classic yogic postures are named after animals. This reminded him of the Buddha's numerous animal *lakṣaṇas*, which are associated with Mahāvīra as well.

Comparing the Jaina *lakṣaṇas* with the Buddhist ones we first notice – after some general features such as physical constitution, beautiful shape, condition of the flesh, purity and shine of the appendages – that the Jains treat the particulars of the body from top to bottom. There also occur some duplications and variants. Further, the marks are not always identical with those of the Buddha, and their description most often does not contain simple compounds like *dīghaṅgulī* “with long fingers or toes” or *eṇijaṅgha* “with antelope-like legs”, but *varṇakas*, which are in principle endless units of metrical prose. Thus the depiction of the hair on Mahāvīra's head is a compound three and a half lines long in Latin transliteration. Strikingly, neither the compiler of this tradition nor the redactor of the *Aupapātikasūtra*, nor Hemacandra,¹⁴¹ were worried by the fact that in

¹⁴⁰ DN II 293,12ff., etc.; see *CPD* II/6a.

¹⁴¹ *Triṣ* 10,2,197.

Āyār 2,15,23 Mahāvīra at his *pabbajjā* pulled out his hair in five tufts. Nevertheless, Hemacandra speaks of it elsewhere as “twisted like a tree”.¹⁴² In this connection mention may also be made of the long hair (*dīhāiṃ romāiṃ*) of ordinary Jain renouncers in Āyār 2,13, 17 and of the name Kesī (in the Rāyapaseṇaijja Sutta), though they should cut it every fortnight.¹⁴³

A most important *lakṣaṇa* in the Aupapātikasūtra is a wheel on the sole of Mahāvīra’s foot, mentioned also by Hemacandra in his biography,¹⁴⁴ reminiscent of a Ṛgvedic myth (4,28,2) in which Indra rips a wheel from the sun’s chariot and stamps it into the ground, thus possibly causing the arches of the feet, another *lakṣaṇa*. It shows the Jina and the Buddha as Mahāpuruṣas, equivalent to the Vedic gods.

Finally, a symbol peculiar to Tīrthaṃkaras, Buddha, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa and Lakṣmī is the *śrīvatsa* on the chest. The Mahābhārata is aware of it, but does not describe it nor connects it with Śrī,¹⁴⁵ as is done by Hemacandra.¹⁴⁶ Bhattacharya explains it as “a diagram resembling a flower of four petals arranged at right angles one to another or a curl of hair”,¹⁴⁷ whereas Liebert takes it to be “a *maṅgala*, ‘the Beloved of Fortune’, which originates in the Indus Valley culture. (It) is a triangular mark or curl of hair ...”¹⁴⁸ and Sivaramamurti points to a first to second-century CE Amoghabhūti coin showing a cow with a *śrīvatsa* mark, the symbol of Lakṣmī, between her horns.¹⁴⁹ The symbol also resembles, I think, the bird-like stone slabs near the south Indian megalith cemeteries dating from ca. 500 BCE, as in Birpalli near Mottur, Tiruvannamalai district.¹⁵⁰ Thus, given these possibilities, the real meaning still remains open, as Kölver (1996), who derives *śrīvatsa* from *sirivaccha*, admitted. For him, the compound is a Bahuvrīhi, with *vakṣas* as a final member, and means “a person with [the sign] *śrī* on his chest” (Kölver 1996: 159); subse-

¹⁴² Triṣ 10,3,58: *jatāvān iva pādapaḥ*.

¹⁴³ Schubring 2000: § 137.

¹⁴⁴ Triṣ 10,3,347.

¹⁴⁵ Sutton 2000: 153.

¹⁴⁶ Triṣ 9,3,15.

¹⁴⁷ Bhattacharya 1974: 143.

¹⁴⁸ Liebert 1976: 280

¹⁴⁹ Sivaramamurti 1980: 86.

¹⁵⁰ Tillner 2004: 57ff., esp. 61.

quently, it would have become the sign itself, as in the Mahābhārata.¹⁵¹ We do not know, however, what in fact *śrī* is, the letters of which would, according to Kölver, form the *śrīvatsa*; on the chest one expects before all something apotropaeic.

Before concluding my notes on Mahāpuruṣas in ancient India with these short remarks on some *lakṣaṇas*, I should like to return briefly to the name Mahāvīra. In a Hindu context nowadays it usually stands for Hanumān. The earlier occurrences of this use of the word seem to be in the Skanda Purāṇa 3,36,189 and 37,5 (*namo 'stu te mahāvīra ... vāyuputrāya te namaḥ*) and in Bhavabhūti's (eighth century) Mahāvīracarita 5. Later, in Hindī literature, we find the word in the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsīdās (1,33,5). The authors may have conferred this epithet on Rāma's devotee on the strength of enumerations of Hanumān's good qualities in Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa (7,36,43ff.).

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AitĀr	<i>The Aitareya Āraṇyaka</i> , ed. Arthur B. Keith. Oxford 1909 (repr. 1969).
AitBr	<i>Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa</i> . Mit Auszügen aus dem Commentare von Sāyaṇācārya und anderen Beilagen hrsg. von Theodor Aufrecht. Bonn 1879.
Antag	Antagaḍadasāo: <i>Antakṛddasānuttaropapātikadaśāvīpākaśrutāni</i> . Bombay 1920.
Assmann 1982	Jan Assmann, Die Zeugung des Sohnes. In: Jan Assmann et al. (ed.), <i>Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos</i> . Freiburg – Göttingen 1982, p. 13-61.
AV	<i>Atharva Veda Sanhita</i> , ed. Rudolph Roth – William D. Whitney. Zweite verbesserte Auflage besorgt von Max Lindenau. Berlin 1924.
ĀvN	Āvassaya Nijjutti
Āyār	<i>Āyāraṅga Sutta of the Çvetāmbara Jains</i> , ed. Hermann Jacobi. London 1882.
BhāgPur	<i>Śrīmadbhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam</i> . Kāśī 1952.

¹⁵¹ E.g., Mbh 3,187,53: *śrīvatsavakṣā govindah*; cf. *śrīvatsāñcītam vakṣaḥ* in Triṣ 10,3,353.

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