A Note on the Birth of the Hero in ancient India

by W.B. Bollée

in memoriam Otto Rank

The present paper is based on a system of coordinates the vertical line of which features the heroes, viz. Indra, Vṛatya, Prajāpati, Nārāyaṇa, the Jina, and the Buddha, while the horizontal line is divided into conception, gestation, birth, and some bodily marks. As is well-known, there are two words for the concept "hero" as early as the Rgveda, viz. viṇa and śūra which apparently differ very little in meaning. And though we find only compounds with -śūra, like dāna-śūra when we consider the scholastic list of hero types in the Mahābhārata (cr. ed. 13,74,22 sqq.), yet we also meet with dāna-viṇa (MW).

Further, since Indians do not seem to distinguish their heroes anything more by formal designation than by class of beings, neither shall we separate divine and human heroes in the following discussion. The heroic ideal of the Vedic Āryans is particularly represented by the god Indra as a fighter against human as well as demon-enemies, alone¹ or as a leader.² He is born for battle³ and victory;⁴ the complete conqueror, ⁵ who brings about peace ⁶ and escapes the goddesses of death. ⁷ It is this ideal which, modified in the times of the Brāhmaṇas, and in a largely sedentary society, will be transferred to the old creator deity Prajāpati, who is then put on a par with Indra⁸ and the sacrifice.⁹ Later, between the 7th and the 5th century B.C., the idea of religious

¹RV 3,30,4.
²RV 8,46, 13.
³RV 7,20,5.
⁴RV 4,20,6.
⁵RV 3,51,3.
⁶RV 10,30,7.
⁷RV 8,24,24.
⁸TB 1,2,2,5.
⁹ŚB 1,7,4,4.
Prajāpati, who is then put on a par with Indra and the sacrifice. Later, between the 7th and the 5th century B.C., the idea of religious single-handed fighter comes up among the descendants of the non-Vedic Āryans in Magadha, possibly beside the long-haired, perhaps sīvaitic *muni* who overcomes attachment to this world. For this reason, Jains and Buddhists confer on him the title *Mahāvīra* or *Vīra*. To use Hertha Krick's (1982 : 5) definition, a *vīra* originally is a traditionally educated young Āryan who is entitled to the status of a priest and a warrior, has been admitted into the society of the Āhitāṅgīs, is allowed to partake of the Soma drink, is married and has a son. In the following I should like to deal especially with Jaina conceptions, compare them with and supplement them by the approximately synchronous data provided by Pāli literature, and outline their possible historical development. First some remarks about the name Mahāvīra.

According to Viśvabandhu's *Vedic Word-concordance*, *vīra* and *śūra* are mainly epithets of Indra, much less frequently of Agni and Soma. Furthermore, *vīra* is used with regard to groups of deities (sons of Aditi, the Angiras and the Maruts); sometimes it also designates demons. Once Rudra is called a *vīra*. The *karmadhārāya* compound *mahāvīra* is in Vedic literature first used with regard to Indra: *(Vṛtrō) á hi jhuvé mahā-vīrāṃ (Indram)*, in the late *Śrābhōpaniṣat* 6 regarding Rudra and, in *YV* texts like *VS* 19,14 and *KāthS* 21,2,3, as well as in the Brāhmaṇas, in connection with the Pravargya. I shall summarize these references here after Van Buiten's study. According to tradition, the Pravargya arose out of the deity Rudra's crushed head in the same way as, up to the present day, in oral tradition Mahārāṣṭrian heroes must first lose their heads before they can be reborn. Günther Sontheimer referred to this phaenomenon in his introduction to the present series of lectures, and Heidrun Brückner mentioned comparable facts from Tuḷunāḍu last week. The *pravargya* designates a Vedic ritual which can precede certain *Soma* sacrifices. At this ritual, originally in the early morning, later on also in the evening, the Āśvins were offered freshly milked warm cow's milk. In *RV* times, for this purpose the milk was heated in a pot (*gharma*) made of non-precious metal (*ayas*, *RV*

---

8 *TB* 1,2,2,5.
9 *SB* 1,7,4,4.
10 *RV* 1,32,6 and *AVPaipp* 13,6,6.
12 Buiten, Van 1968.
13 Brückner (see earlier in the present volume); Id. 1991, chapter 10, 1b; see also Rognhaír 1982: 297 (I am obliged to Heidrun Brückner for this reference); Krick 1982: 499 et passim and Filliozat 1967: 74 sqq.
5,30,15) and smeared all around with butter.\textsuperscript{14}

In the post-samhitā period this simple sacrifice underwent a substantial change by being connected with a perhaps non-vedic or non-brahmanical rite implying the manufacture, heating, worship, and removal of an earthen vessel called Mahāvīra. This change also implied that the secret knowledge referring to this should be passed on outside the village in the arañya,\textsuperscript{15} and that the execution, which is forbidden at a yajamāna’s first Soma sacrifice, must be screened off against Śūdras and women,\textsuperscript{16} particularly, the yajamāna’s wife. The said vessel, which is addressed as deva puraś-cara\textsuperscript{17} and for which a saṃrād-āsandī “emperor’s throne”\textsuperscript{18} is prepared (this reminds us of the cakravartin), consists of three clay balls one on top of the other. The one at the top has been hollowed out and provided with an opening; the middle one is solid, and the broader lower one, which is flat at the bottom, serves as the basis.\textsuperscript{19} A thin channel, Van Buitenen supposes, runs from the top down to the base of the lower clay ball.\textsuperscript{20} The Mahāvīra vessel, with its height of about twenty centimetres, reminds Van Buitenen of a man sitting tailor-fashion,\textsuperscript{21} also, because in ŚB 14,1,4,16 the vessel is expressly defined as a male:\textsuperscript{22} Viṣā vai Pravargyo, yoṣā patnī; mithunam evāttat prajananam kriyate. This symbolism is no longer clear from the vessel’s present form. \textsuperscript{23} The meaning of the parigrīvam ‘ring around the neck’ or of the rāṣā ‘belt’ surrounding the figure three or four fingers from the top remains obscure.\textsuperscript{24} The manufacture of the Mahāvīra, according to Van Buitenen takes place before the rains begin,\textsuperscript{25} and is done for the invigoration of the sun, which the vessel represents.\textsuperscript{26} It is made out of various kinds of earth, animal hair, and goat’s milk.\textsuperscript{27} Goat’s milk is used instead of cold water, against which the Pravargya must be protected.\textsuperscript{28} Then ghṛ is poured over it; it is set on fire, made red-hot, and is then worshipped.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{14}Van Buitenen, Ibid., 24; 26; 30.\textsuperscript{15}Van Buitenen, Ibid., 38; 137 and 140.\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 40; 58. On the reason for this see Neumann 1962: 143.\textsuperscript{17}TI A 4,3,3[10].\textsuperscript{18}ApŚŚ 15,5,7.\textsuperscript{19}Van Buitenen 1968: 10.\textsuperscript{20}Id., 34; 59.\textsuperscript{21}Id., 11, 23 sqq.; 59.\textsuperscript{22}Id., 11; 22; 31.\textsuperscript{23}Id., 9; plate 3:1.\textsuperscript{24}Id., 11; 59.\textsuperscript{25}Id., 31.\textsuperscript{26}Id., 27 sq.; 31.\textsuperscript{27}Id., 57 sq.\textsuperscript{28}Id., 30 sq. and 58.\textsuperscript{29}Id., 26.
In 1975, Van Buitenen's Mahāvīra vessel theory, particularly its anthropomorphism and the idea of the invigoration of the sun, were rejected by Kashikar, who recurs to Lüders' position. The latter scholar based his interpretation on Baudhāyanas as the oldest source. There, mention is made only of three clay balls from which the parts of the mahāvīra are shaped and then placed one on top of the other. It was also Lüders who had argued that not the sun, but the milkstream of the sky from which the rain falls has to be invigorated before the monsoon starts, as the milk sacrifice is then discontinued. The three parts of the vessel correspond to the tripartite sky and consequently to the trebling of the skystream which in the shape of the heated milk contributes to the sun's heat. Later, the vessel is put on a par with the life-giving sun and the year, i.e. time - the latter being, since the family books of the RV, intimately related to Indra and afterwards to Prajāpati, his successor in the Brāhmaṇa period.

Up to now, scholars have paid little attention to the relation of the name Mahāvīra to the object, the vessel. Van Buitenen rendered Mahāvīra by 'Large Man', Oldenberg by 'der große Held', Renou by 'grand homme' and 'souverain', whereas Caland and Hillebrandt did not translate the word.

Now there is a tradition (TA, 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 by way of marrow and with a mixture of sour milk and honey representing blood. On the one hand, all this reminds us of the common group of myths in which a primordial giant or cosmic man like the rg- and atharvavedic Puruṣa is sacrificed so that the world can be created from him. On the other hand, we have Mahādeva, the Vṛṣṇi, who emerges from a piece of gold (suvarga) that Prajāpati, the ṛgvedic

30 Id., 11 sq.
31 Id., 37 (the latter goes back to Oldenberg 1917: 447).
32 Kashikar 1975: 137 sqq. and 141 sq.
33 Lüders 1951: 359 sqq.
34 E.g., in the Aiulary 3,2,3.
35 Indra is the sun: RV 3.4.4; ŚB 1,6,4,18 etc.; Indra regulates time: RV 3.30,12 sq.
36 Prajāpati is identified with the sun at TB 1,6,4,1; ŚB 12,3,5,1 etc.; with the year: AiB 1,1; 4,25 etc.
37 Ibid., 9.
38 Oldenberg 1917: 86; cf. Macdonell /Keith, II 1912: 142 'great hero.'
39 Renou /Filliozat 1949: §721.
41 Caland 1924: 423, 427.
42 Hillebrandt 1897: 135.
43 Hillebrandt, Ibid.
creator god, sees in himself a golden germ (hīranya-garbha), as it were. Similarly, Queen Māyā beholds the Bodhisatta in her womb. Besides, the Vrātya appears as a form of manifestation of the god Rudra, who is later euphemistically called Śiva and is given the epithet Mahādeva as well. Moreover, the Vrātya has close relations with the Pravargya in other respects.

As is well-known, the Mahādeva worshippers belonged to an older Āryan wave of invaders who had penetrated into eastern India before the vedic brahmins. We first hear of them in AV 15, but after that only sporadically in literature up to the Mbh. Then they disappear from literary, i.e. brahmanical, tradition. But first they leave clear traces in two religions appearing in Magadha centuries later: Jainism and Buddhism, which borrowed from the Vrātyas, e.g. the title arhat for the person liberated and the designation gana for a group of monks. For the fact that the vedic Āryans evidently could communicate with them shows already that the Vrātyas were Āryans—a point which was formerly often denied. Otherwise, the latter would have called the former mlecchas, the special importance of the language in accepting strangers in India having been shown by Romilā Thāpar in a recent lecture in Heidelberg.

Vagrant life as almsmen at times other than the rainy season may also belong to the above traces. gifts of food, etc. to monks, which are rather a kind of dakṣina (i.e., passing on or redeeming the guilt the yajamana had incurred by the killing of the sacrificial victim) than alms. Besides, this notion still lives on in the minds of the Siamese, for, at the Loi Krathong, a festival celebrated especially in Chiang Mai in November, play-boats (krathong) made of banana leaves and holding a light, flowers and money are made to flow downstream. At some distance poor people are allowed to land them and take the money, yet with that also the sender’s/donator’s Evil (pāpmān), represented by the money. Further, just as one is a Vrātya at a particular period of one’s life and sets out on a predatory expedition, Buddhist boys, especially in Siam, go and live for some time in a monastery, following regular

44 AV 15,1,2.
45 See, e.g. Shrinivas 1983: 543-556.
46 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 Buiten is apparently not acquainted with Hauer’s remarks.
47 Hauer, Ibid., 202.
49 For the Vrātyas in ancient literature see Heesterman 1962: 1-37.
monastic practice during the rains.

Until Günther Sontheimer’s recent discovery, the survival of the Vrātyas with their typically shamanistic costume in Lord Khąḍobā’s Vāghyās in Mahārāṣṭra was unknown. Did they emigrate from Magadha to the west and south at some time at some point, together with the Jains and the Buddhists? Now, as we have seen, the Vrātyas on the one hand influenced the two religions mentioned. They represent, therefore, not only a reaction to the post-Vedic sacrificial speculations of the brahmin priests, which were unintelligible for the ordinary warrior, peasant, or herdsman, but also carry on pre-Vedic traditions. On the other hand, popular Buddhism took over features of Indra, the Rgveda’s central hero, and of Prajāpati. In what follows we shall have a closer look at some characteristics of these deities in order to show how, already in pre-Christian times, they were applied to the Mahāpuruṣas, as the Great Men of the Indian religions are called. To that end, we shall begin with their conception, because, as is well-known, exceptional beings do not come into existence in the normal fashion, neither in India nor elsewhere. Among the unusual ways of conception we have that of a woman’s navel being touched by a god or an ascetic. This type of birth occurs in Buddhist legends, too, but not in Jaina hagiography. However, both Vaddhamāṇa Mahāvīra and Gotama Siddhattha drop from heaven, where, in a previous existence, they had divine status, into their mother’s womb.

The Jaina canon does not yet know of a reminiscence of previous existences which, still present in the womb, disappears at birth through claustrophobia or pains, as is described, e.g. in the Garbhōpaniṣad. This reminiscence does not recur before the Jina reaches transcendental knowledge (avadhī-jūna). The future Jina, however, knows that he has to descend into a new existence; he is conscious of having accomplished the descent. All that he does not know is the exact moment (Āyār 2,15,3 = Kappa §3). In post-canonical Buddhist literature we shall meet with similar phaenomena.

Given the importance placed on ritual purity already by the Vrātyas, we may add here that the canonical texts of both new religions mention explicitly the purity of descent of Mahāvīra’s and Gotama’s princely

---

54 E.g. in the case of Kuntī (Mbh cr. ed. 3,291,23) and Dīrghatamas (Mbh 1,98,31), cf. also Windisch 1908: 20. – The navel is a place of origin: Brahmag on a lotus arises from Viṣṇu’s navel, etc. Cf., e.g. Podor 1949: 143 sqq.
56 Implicit at Āyār 2,15,26 corresponding to Kappac Jainac §121.
parents on the maternal as well as the paternal side (in this order!). 57
In the case of the former, both his mothers (on whom more below)
see already in the Siddhânta 58 fourteen dreams with auspicious images,
such as are typical of the Jaina religion, viz. static ones. Besides, the
wealth of the royal family increased, 59 even by the discovery of money-
pots that had been hidden in former days and then forgotten. 60 This
too, I think, may be characteristic of Jains as well as Buddhists, 61 the
laity of both mainly belonging to the third, or merchant (vaiśya) class.
Unlike Buddhist literature, however, Jaina texts mention that Queen
Tisalâ had dohadas, 62 but omit the details usual in narrative texts.
We now come to the Bodhisatta's mother, whom we only know
as such, i.e. as Mâyâ, 63 just as his wife is called Râhula-mâtâ. 64 At
the descent of her child, the Tipiṭaka tells us only that she did not
think of men, not even of her husband, 65 yet otherwise indulged in the
pleasures of the five senses. 66 In the likewise pre-Christian Mahâvastu,
Brahmâ prophesies to Mâyâ the birth of an elephant among men, and
she welcomes this message since she has conceived from her husband.
In the Mahâvastu and the Lalitavistara, but not in the Nidânakâthâ and
in Aśvaghoṣa, this elephant comes to have six tusks 67 — probably an
intended one-upmanship of its fellow Airâvata, deva-râjâ Indra's mount,
who possesses only four tusks. In her dream it touches her right side
and seems to enter her womb. On that occasion, Mâyâ's husband is
not mentioned, in other words, he is excluded. 68 This pregnancy dream

58 Kappa Jinae §4.
59 Kappa §91.
60 Kappa §89.
61 Cf. Ja I 54,7 where among the Bodhisatta's co-natals four nidhi-kumbhas are
mentioned.
62 Kappa §95. According to the Jains dohadas appear in the third month (Caillat
1974:51), yet they are not mentioned of Devânandâ.
63 Oldenberg 1881/1959: 105 and von Glasenapp 1936: 21 take Mâyâ to be a proper
name meaning 'Wundermacht' and are not bothered by the oddity of such a name.
With it, Senart (1881: xxvi) associated "des attaches supra-terrestres" (cf. p. 275).
– In the Tipiṭaka, Mâyâ only occurs as a nominative: Bhagavato Suddh-odano râjâ
pitâ Mâyâ devi mâtâ, DN II 52,10; Th 534 etc.
64 See Windisch, 1908: 140 and, e.g. Thomas n.d.: 81. The tendency to designate
female "Respektpersonen" in a religious context as 'mother', whose devotees then
are her children, is found up to the present day, e.g. regarding Śrî Aurobîno's wife,
Jillêllamudi Amma in Bapatla (Guntur), Yogînî Ammaji near Trichur (Kerala),
Ānandamayî Mâ in Bhadaini (Benares) etc.
65 For this detail see Jolly 1901 §40 and, e.g. Neumann 1962: 52.
66 DN II 12 sq.; MN III 122 sq.
67 See Lüders 1941: 52.
68 Printz 1925: 125 stresses the fact that the indication "right" only appears at Ja I
50,22 (Mâyâ's dream). See also Lüders 1941: 45 sqq.
69 Ibid., 95.
motif is apparently a variation of the ascetic’s touching a woman’s navel (see above). So much for the hero’s conception. We now pass on to his gestation.

The first case of this kind is found already in the 2nd millennium B.C., viz. in the old nucleus, the ‘family books’, of the RV. Here it is Indra’s mother, again not mentioned by name, who, at RV 4,18,4 is said to carry her son for a thousand months and many autumns beyond full term apparently, like Agni’s mother (RV 5,2,1 sq.), in order to protect him against his jealous father (whose name is not mentioned). Or, does she carry Indra so long because she does not want him to be born? 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, viz. “down the drain”, for they did not become heroes. Thus the hymn commences amidst an obscure dialogue with words spoken either by the mother or by the gods: “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). Even as early as Oldenberg it was remarked that births in a way other than the natural way is found in the most different peoples’ ideas with regard to their most powerful gods and heroes.

The text does not tell us which side, nor the bearing stance. Not before Gotama the Bodhisattva 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, but Indra’s lateral birth must be connected with his splitting heaven and earth, this being a horizontal movement in the middle of the cosmic egg, and also of his mother’s waist, which is the middle of her body. Cf. also passages like SB 6,1,1,2 sa yo ‘yam madhye prāṇaḥ, eṣa evāndraḥ

---

70I.e., 100 times the usual period. The full term of the gods takes millennia, e.g. twenty in Kārttikeya’s case – with several foetus transfers (see Mani 1975: 747).
72In MS 2,1,12 Aditi as Indra’s mother even binds her son in her womb with an iron fetter and in this state he was born. – Cf. Neumann 1962: 300.
73Cf. Neumann 1962: 154; 164, but already indicated by Jung, e.g. 1976, ch. VI, esp. §456 sq. and in other works.
74Oldenberg 1917: 132 note 3.
75Geldner, in his introduction to the hymn, even speaks of Seiten, i.e., plural.
76RV 7,23,3 cd: vi bādhīṣṭa svā rōdaśi mahuṇāṇḍro vṛtrāṇy a-pratī jaghān vān ”Indra drängte beide Welthälften durch seine Größe auseinander, als er die Dämonen erschlagen hatte, denen keiner gewachsen war” (Geldner, Id.). – Vṛtrāṇi, however, should here be translated by “obstacles”, I think.
77At RV 3,49,1 and 8,61,2 both worlds, which originally were united (RV 3,38,3 with Geldner’s note), are said to have created Indra and at RV 4,17,2 heaven and earth tremble at his birth.
and perhaps MN III 231,13 where the Buddha explains his *majjhima paṭipada* between *kāma* (Indra) and *tapas* (Prajāpati).

Besides, it may be noticed that in the *RV* we meet with the first, though mythical, case of intra-uterine communication between mother and child. Popular belief, especially in India, was acquainted with this long before western prenatal psychology began taking note of it in this century.

Of Mahāvīra tradition tells us that for the first 82 days he stayed in the womb of Devānandā, a brahmin lady, and was then transplanted by Indra, or, at his command, by his army commander Hariṇegamesī into the Kṣatriya Queen Tisalā’s womb, for the idea had come to Indra’s mind that Jinas are never reborn into lower class, poor, or Brahmin families. 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. The Āyāranga, the oldest Jaina Āgama, complicates things in that it gives brahmin *nomina gentilicia* to Usabhadatta as well as to Siddhattha, Tisalā’s consort, i.e. Koḍālā (Sa. Kuṭalya) resp. to Kāsava (Sa. Kāśyapa). Both Jainism and Buddhism, however, are Kṣatriya religions and therefore Mahāvīra could not be a Brahmin. This was a ”misconception”, which the later church leaders did away with by means of the miraculous foetus exchange by the goat-headed god Hariṇegamesī.

The Jains, as is well-known, adopted and adapted this vaisāṇavite mythologeme in which Nīdrā, the goddess of sleep, exchanges the foetus of Baladeva from the womb of his mother Devakī into that of her sister Rohini, in order to save him from the mortal grip of his Herodes-like father Kāṃsa. Here, the point of departure for the Jains was the name

---

78 Also, e.g. *RV* 4.27.1 (Soma); *Mbh* cr. ed. 1.98,13 and 12.328,46 (Dīrghatamas).
For modern examples see, e.g. Oman 1908: 69; Thompson and Balys 1958: T 575.1.

79 See, e.g. Janus 1990: esp. 76 sqq.

80 I cannot offer an explanation of nor parallels for this number.

81 Āyār 2,15.4.

82 Kappa Jinac §30.

83 Kappa Jinac §17.


85 For this see Bollée ”Notes on Middle Indo-Āryan Vocabulary III” (forthcoming). — Perhaps the Jain interest in Cāṇakya (for whom see Chandra and Mehta 1970 s.v. Cāṇakka) is connected to Koḍālā, Mahāvīra’s brahmin father.

86 Āyār 2,15.4.

87 Harivāṃsa cr. ed. 47 – 48; *Bhāg Pur* 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 the Kṛṣṇa legend.
Devaki, for, in the *Antagadadasāo* 3,8 §41 sqq. Devāi, consort of Vasudeva, the king of Bāravāi (Dvāravati), bore him six sons. Harinagamesë, however, seized them in order to transfer them to the rich lady Sulasā's womb. Because she gave birth only to still-born babies, she had had an image of the deity made and she worshipped it daily, intending to induce him to perform the said operation – everything conditioned by *karman*, of course.

With the inclusivism typical of the Indian way of thinking, Harinagamesë here unites the positive qualities of a bringer of children, as was expressed as early as the *RV Khilāni* ad 10,8488 with negative ones of a demon who seizes children, as he is known to Suśruta.89 In Vedic texts the deity is called Nejamesa, but in the *Mbh* Naigameṣa and Naigamesa, whereas Suśruta only knows of the latter form. Finally, a Mathurā inscription has Nemesa; this means that the form ending in *eya* may be due to a scribal error.

The name itself is nowhere explained, nor is the he-goat's (chagavaktra; Suśruta, *Uttarasthāna* 36,2 ajānana) or ram's face (Id. 37,2 meşānana [cty. edaka-mukha]) the latter, adopted by *PWB*, probably being a later contamination, as the ram belongs to Varuna.90 The he-goat, however, especially belongs to Agni91 whose son is called Skanda or (Sanat)kumāra and his grandson Naigamesa.92 Skanda, said to be Śiva's son,93 is appointed general of the gods by Indra.94 Perhaps in

---

88 See Scheftelowiz 1906: 130. Here a woman says: *Néjamesa, pārā pata sū-purah pūnar ā pata / asya me putrā-kāmāyai gārbbham ā dhehi yāh pāmān // "Nejamesa, fly away and quickly return with an excellent son. Get me with child (...) !"* – As the exposure motif as a symbol of the procedure of birth is known also to Indian stories (see, e.g. Bollée 1967: 138; 140), one can ask if Nejamesa is considered here a bird, like the stork with us. See e.g. Rank 1909: 88 sqq., Fodor 1949: 144, and Neumann 1962: 22.

89 *Śarīrasthāna* 10,52. At *Uttarasthāna* 37,2 Suśruta mentions scholars who assume two Naigamesas since a divine being generated by Agni and Rudra would not cause a dangerous disease. He himself, however, thinks that Naigamesa only shows his ugly side if the child's family is derelict in its religious duties (loc. cit.). – See also Winternitz 1895: 149 sqq.

90 *Mbh* cr. ed. 12,79,6 ajo 'girin, Varuṇo meṣah.

91 *ŚB* 6,4,4, 15; *SkandaP* 6,4 Agneyam Kr̥ttikā-putram Aindram kecid adhiyate, / kecit Paśupatam Rudram; yo 'si so 'si: namo 'stu te.


94 *Mbh* cr. ed. 7,5,37.
Mathurā this already complex figure, which was adopted by the Jains and under the influence of Viṣṇuism, obtained the name Hariṇegamesī, i.e. 'Naigamesa merged with Hari.' Thus it can be explained that Indra, who in Jainism and Buddhism became a devoted servant of the respective Jina, orders his commander – both a seizer and a bestower of children – to perform such a fitting operation as was the foetus exchange for him.

As to the etymology of the name and its consequences for the presentation in pictorial form of Hariṇegamesī, whose fiery character, which is not only destructive, as we have seen, but also positive (erotic and promoting fertility), reach back to Agni, the following observations become relevant. The ancient Jaina theologians of course did not place great value on preserving the memory of the fact of their having come under vaisāpavite influence, and thus the two parts of the name, Hari and Negamesin (as the middle Indo-Āryan form must be) were joined into one compound. Thereupon, commentators (intentionally?) analysed it in the wrong way, viz. in hariṇa ‘deer’ and, apparently, *egamesin, whatever that in their opinion may have meant. Here I must rely on a footnote in Hermann Jacobi’s Kalpasūtra translation, as the Pañjikā is not at my disposal. Thus, in Jaina art Nejamesa’s he-goat face turned into Hariṇegamesī’s deer head. Hariṇegamesī’s Hindu counterpart is Parivartaka (Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 51,14).

There remains the question concerning the background of the whole motif in Jaina mythology. It is completely different from the Herodes motif in the Mahābhārata story. Connected with this I believe is also the idea that future Jinas and Buddhas must be reborn in kṣatriya families only – though this apparently was not always the case, as becomes evident in the Jaina legend, and as the Nidānakathā explicitly teaches us. Among the five main considerations (maḥā-vilokana) before being re-born, the Bodhisatā Gotama also thinks of his future family as follows: Buddhas are reborn neither in a Vaisya family nor in one of Śūdras, but in these two families only, viz. either in a respected kṣatriya or in such

95Liebert 1976: 102 takes the name to mean ‘Hari, i.e. Indra, as Nećamesi.’
96Jacobi 1884: 227.
97Of Jinaprabha 1913 (Jacobi 1879: 25).
98Apparently, demons exchanging foetuses are male, whereas those who take away new-born children (and occasionally devour them) are female, e.g. Jāta-hūrṇī in Mārkaṇḍ Pur 51,106 sq. and 76,9.
99Ja I 49,22 sq. – For a further development of this idea in mediaeval Jainism see Merutunga’s Prabandhacintāmaṇi p. 83,9 with regard to young Čāngadeva, who later became famous by his monastic name Hemacandra: (Śri Devacāryas) tad-aṅga-pratyaṅgānāṁ jagad-vilakṣaṇānāṁ lakṣaṇānī pṛekṣya ’uyam yadi kṣatriya-kule jātā, tadā sārva-bhauma-cakravartī; yadi saṅgī-vipra-kule jātā, tadā mahamātyah; ced dārśanaṁ pratipadyate, tadda ‘uya-pradhaṇa īva Kāli-kule ’pi Kṛta-yugam avatārayati sa ācārya’ iti vicārya (...).
a brahmin family. Nowadays a kṣatriya family is respected. Into that I shall be reborn. 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?

A characteristic of Jainism is its static nature, which manifests itself, e.g. in the above dream visions and in the staring statues of saints. It is found already in the womb, where Mahāvīra, who is conscious of his descent from heaven, of his embryonic status and of his transfer, does not move out of pity for his mother until she thinks he is dead. Then he moves a little and, unlike the Bodhisatta, resolves not to go forth in his parents’ lifetime (Kappa §94). The latter detail, which is not found in the Āyāranga, seems odd in this context. However, a person destined to become a hero can only fulfil his mission after the death of his mother. The case of the Bodhisatta did not require such a vow, as his mother was destined to die much earlier in any case.

Eventually, after nine months and seven and a half days Mahāvīra is born in an apparently normal way under an auspicious constellation and a great lustre of descending and ascending deities (Āyār 2,15,7), at night in the beginning of summer. Then devas and demons in animal form from Vessamaṇa’s/Kubera’s realm, the auspicious north, that is, produce a downpour of money, jewelry, fruits, etc. The Āgama does not elaborate on the bearing posture but – e.g. on a fresco in the Vardhamāna temple in Tirupparuttikunram near Kāñcipur in the Vijayanagar region, where, as a rule, at least nowadays women stand upright when giving birth – the birth of the first and of the last Jina takes place in a crouching position behind a curtain covering the lower part of his mother’s body. On the occasion of the birth, not only the

---

100 Cf. Jaini 1985: 84.
101 Āyār 2,15,5 and Kappa §3 refer to his knowing to descend, Āyār 2,15,5 and Kappa §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 Mahāvīra knows of the moment, whereas according to Kappa he does not.
102 Neumann 1962: 154 where it is stressed that not the hero’s real mother as such, but his mother as the representative of the Great Mother is meant.
103 This is the average with the Jains, see Schubring 1935 §95.
104 See on this light the critical remarks of Eliade 1976: 96.
105 Āyār 2,15,8.
106 Kappa Jinae §98.
107 Cf. the 18th cent. wooden sculpture in Mookerjee and Khanna 1977: 171.
108 I owe this information to the kindness of Anna L. Dallapiccola, who here refers to an incorrect observation made by Thomas in his unpublished thesis (1979: 335, panel 17 [1:17]). Here, he discusses Ramachandran 1943: 82 and plate XI (Ṛṣabhadeva)
usual amnesty of the sympathetic-magical kind, and a grand popular festival take place, but there is also — after ten days of childbed impurity, the purification ritual on the 11th day, and the naming festival — a family banquet and an exchange of gifts, possibly of potlatching nature.

Returning now to Buddhism, we hear of the Bodhisatta descending from heaven into the womb of his 40–50 year old mother accompanied by a radiant brightness in the universe. As to the descent, Buddhaghosa says, "Though knowing 'I shall fall from the world 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." Other monks, however, did not share this opinion, which also involves the moment of death — as is the case with the Jains. Relevant Theravāda and Jain data when collected systematically may be taken into account in our thanatology, along with the discussion on possession going on here in Heidelberg at present, in which only East Asian material, especially from Amida Buddhism, and case studies from India have been evaluated so far.

The Pāli canon does not elaborate on the manner of descent, but since Buddhaghosa there is in Tusita a pleasure grove (Nanda/vana) where the being to be reincarnated is seen off by the gods with the words: "Have a good course!" The text emphasizes, that all the worlds of the gods have such a grove, but it does not deal with its significance. Gods "die" in that they shrink and become sad only to dematerialize eventually. Does the reincarnand retire into this wood in order to save the other gods an unpleasant sight? Why, then, is it called Nanda-vana? Or can it be a state of preparation, perhaps like the Anipiyama mango grove, where the Bodhisatta spent a week enjoying the happiness of his pabbajjā before entering Rājagaha? It can, however, just as well be a mechanical adoption from Hinduism of a divine, esp. Indra’s, garden (PWB).

and XII (Vardhamāna).

109 Kappa §100.
110 Kappa §102.
111 Cf. Jolly 1901 §43.
113 Windisch 1908: 111; Eliade 1965: 33.
114 Sumangala-vilāsini 430,15 sqq. (not Ja I 50) and cf. Vism 548.
115 See M. Schröter, Nahtodeserlebnisse — eine wissenschaftliche Deutung (working title).
116 Sū 430,12 su-gatim gaccha!
Māyā sees her son sitting\textsuperscript{118} or even standing,\textsuperscript{119} then gives birth to him after a full ten months, not after 9 or 10, as is the case with other children. The canonical Pāli texts explicitly stress this.\textsuperscript{120} Besides, she does so in an upright position after plucking a flower from a tree.\textsuperscript{121}

Queen Māyā's erect posture is emphasized already in the canon as something special, something not done by common women.\textsuperscript{122} This is interesting in connection with the fact that in modern gynaecology the delivering posture in general and the standing posture in particular have been much discussed of late. Its outcome was the insight that the specific surroundings and cultural development of primitive tribes also essentially shape childbirth circumstances. The way of living of these tribes and the specific bearing postures they practice are not natural as in the case of animals – quasi instinctive – but they are acquired by their whole mode of life; they represent an expression of a traditional social system that seems to be frozen, as it were, in its development.\textsuperscript{123} Though tradition does not allow us to make a relevant statement as to the Śākya Queen, her standing posture may, nevertheless, not be self-determined. DN II 14, however, tells us that the lords of the quarters receive the child first, before the humans, which can mean that Queen Māyā was delivered without any assistance. Women of the Benin (Africa), as Richard Burghart informed me, consider a birth in a standing position to be particularly heroic. Did the Śākya women share this view? So much for the old tradition in Pāli.

Yet in the Mahāvastu the Bodhisatta suddenly comes into being, in a non-physical way, out of Māyā's right side,\textsuperscript{124} without splitting it

\textsuperscript{118}\textsuperscript{Ps IV 181.21 sqq. (Mātā) nisinnaṁ Bodhisattam kucchi-gataṁ taco paticchādetum na sakkoti. Olokenṭiṣṭa ca bahi ṣṭhito viya paññāyati (30 ...) Bodhisatto pana anto-kucchi-gato mātaraṁ na parasati, na hi anto-kucchiyam cakkha-viññānam uppajjati = Su 436,18 sqq.} In art, this has never been represented, as far as I know, e.g. in the way Marx Reichlich depicted the Christ child in his mother's womb (1502; see, e.g. Lechner 1981: plates 231–234) to which Johann-Michael Fritz (Heidelberg) kindly drew my attention. Embryonic animals, however, are known in Indian art from prehistoric and historical rock shelters in Bhimbetka, Satkunda and Ramchaja south and east of Bhopal (see, e.g. Neumayer 1983: 75d and 77h [bovid with foetus inside body], 77a and 77g [antelope with foetus]).

\textsuperscript{119}\textsuperscript{Mvu I 144,3 sqq.}

\textsuperscript{120}\textsuperscript{DN II 14; M III 122. Cf. the discussion in Printz 1925: 119 sqq.}

\textsuperscript{121}\textsuperscript{Usually, trees like the aśoka here (thus Lüders 1941: 62 against Ja I 52,24 sq., where it is a Śal tree. See also Printz 1925: 126.) flower when touched by a lady's foot; here we have the case of a woman delivering after touching a tree with her hand. See, e.g. Bollée 1983: 238 and now also Syed 1990: 77 sqq. – For the symbolism implied I refer to Eva Tornow's forthcoming study Das Geburtsmotiv in den altindischen Religionen (working title).}

\textsuperscript{122}\textsuperscript{DN II 14; MN III 122.}

\textsuperscript{123}\textsuperscript{See Hauffe/Köster-Schlutz 1987: 395.}

\textsuperscript{124}\textsuperscript{Mvu II 20,14 > Windisch 1908: 121. – Hieronymus, The Christian Father of the}
open, which may emphasize the miraculous character of the birth of the Bodhisatta. From the point of view of psychology of religion, a birth through the (right) side is, on the one hand, a shift from below, i.e. from the impure, upward, just as the birth of a hero takes place in a clean way, as is stressed in the texts.\(^{125}\) 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 MatsyaPur 157,39 sq., when Umā, Śiva’s consort, gives birth to the six Kārttikeyas, and of Sūravanti bearing Birobā (see Sontheimer 1989a: 104). A still higher upward shift is shown by a Nepalese statuette of the 18th century that features the Bodhisatta jumping from his mother’s armpit like Kākśvat in the Buddhacarita I 10\(^{126}\) (cf. already the seasons, ghī, etc. produced from Prajāpati’s armpits).\(^{127}\)

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,\(^{128}\) thus imitating Viṣṇu’s three strides in the RV, for, this god clears the way for somaholic Indra’s battle against Vṛtra, the primaeval Ouroboros, and, in this way, favours the cosmic order that Indra is about to establish. Further, 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 Mara; the former by virtue of his final emancipation emerges victorious.\(^{129}\) At the same time, one cannot help but think of the marriage ritual, though it seems difficult to connect it with the Bodhisatta’s strides. The commentators explain them allegorically and thus, for us, unsatisfactorily. They may, therefore, be taken as a step up of Viṣṇu’s strides,\(^{130}\) rather than of those of Alexander the Great in a Caucasian folk tale.\(^{131}\) Keith (1920: 503) compared the seven steps of the young Gotama to those of the mother-to-be of Christ and holds them to be

---

\(^{125}\) DN II 14; Windisch, Id., 127 and 138.

\(^{126}\) See Bollée 1983: 265 and cf., e.g. Franz, von 1982: 75.

\(^{127}\) TB 2,2,9,7; see Minard 1956 §874; 918.

\(^{128}\) TS 1,8,10g.

\(^{129}\) See Bollée 1977: 371–381.

\(^{130}\) Kirfel 1920: 23* "auf die Idee der Dreizahl folgte die der Siebenzahl."

\(^{131}\) As Ruben 1944: 70 thinks referring to Dirr 1920, No. 259. – Eva Tornow has reminded me of Śakuntala 7,33, where Mārica prophesies that his grandson will be a cakravarta and rathenāuddhāta-stimita-gatina tirṇa-jaladhiḥ/ purā saptadvipam jayati vasudhām a-pratirataḥ.// That would be an interesting counterpart to the Bodhisatta here, also because of tirṇa-jaladhiḥ. Pāli literature, however, to my knowledge, does not know of an earth consisting of seven islands the idea apparently being brahmnic (see Kirfel 1920: 57).
ethnic.

At the seventh stride the Bodhisatta utters the (metrical) words of an "eminent person" (as nowadays Windisch's rendering by "indem er die stiergleiche Rede von sich gehen ließ" is translated),\textsuperscript{132} viz. aggo\mbox{ \^{\textsl{ham}} asmi lokassa (DN II 15 etc.). The expression āsabhā 'eminent person' (CPD) does not only remind us of a melody used at magic rites in order to acquire power and sung to the words of a r̥gvedic Indra-hymn,\textsuperscript{133} but also of the sound of a bull-skin kettledrum in use at the Mahāvrata ritual, where it is said: 'The bull is the highest sound.'\textsuperscript{134} In post-canonical times this becomes, "He sang the song of victory."\textsuperscript{135} As can be seen, e.g. from Jā V 360,28, where siha-nāda is said of a bird, it should not be rendered by 'lion's roar' and even less, of course, by 'halleluia' (PED), but as given in PWB: 'ein Wort, das ich mit Selbstvertrauen ausspreche und auf das man sich verlassen kann.'

The Tipiṭaka uses siha-nāda with regard to the Buddha,\textsuperscript{136} just as he is also called Sakya-siha 'Lion among the Śakyas', his tribe. Yet it is interesting here, that in late Vedic Śimha-nāda-nadin is the epithet of a form of Rudra-Siva,\textsuperscript{137} whereas in the Jaina Siddhānta it is the Asura Camara who expresses himself in this way before his attack on Indra.\textsuperscript{138} More than once, as will be seen below, non-orthodox religions reflect first Śaivite and later Vaiśṇavite influences.

According to tradition, Māyā – as in Christian mythology the mother of St. George the dragon slayer – died after seven days – thus apparently in childbed. 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 stating the resistance on the part of prince Gotama's mother (!) and father though they knew of his glorious future: Gotamo a-kāmakānaṁ mātā-pitunnaṁ assu-mukhānaṁ rudantānāṁ (...) pabbajjito (DN 115,18 sqq.). But this may be an oversight on the part of the redactor of the text. In Jā I 52,2 and Mv II 3,9 sq. the reason is that, after giving birth to a Bodhisatta, sexual intercourse does not befit his mother any longer, whereas the La-

\textsuperscript{132} Windisch 1908: 131.
\textsuperscript{133} PVB 9,2,15 = JB 1,222 "abhī tvā vṛṣabha (sūte) sutām" (RV 8,45,22) ity ārṣabham kṣatra-sāma kṣatram evaṁtena bhavati.
\textsuperscript{134} Paramā vā vṛṣabho vāk, JB 2,404 (Caland 1919 §165 = p. 215 "Der Stier ist der höchste Klang").
\textsuperscript{135} Rhys Davids' (1880: 156) translation of Jā I 53,19 āsabhīṁ vācāṁ nicchārento siha-nādaṁ nadi.
\textsuperscript{136} Hildebietel 1978: 775 note 27 connects the sīhanāda with the Bodhisatta's numerous animal lākṣanas, which remind him of the numerous postures in classical yoga that are named after animals and thus suggesting an affinity between yoga and the assimilation of powers of those animals.
\textsuperscript{137} AVPar 38,1,15.
\textsuperscript{138} Vīy 3,2, p. 147 line 24.
litavistara (98,3) states that her death in childbirth was not the child’s fault, but was due to the shortness of her life span. For otherwise, her heart would have been broken at the departure of the adult Bodhisatta in search of a teacher.

Little Gotama was taken care of by his mother’s sister Mahāpajāpatī, as, for different reasons, Tisalā took care of Vaddhamāṇa. Thus, in a way, both the Jina and the Buddha had two mothers, something, which, according to Jung (1976 §494 sqq.) and Neumann (1962: 132 sqq.) is an essential item of heroic myth. Ānanda’s story in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa ch. 76 is a similar case of dvi-mātrtvā.

Now Nyberg (1938: 7) and Widengren (1965: 102) assume that the Buddha-vita for its part influenced the eastern Zarābuṣṭra legend. Comparing the relevant Persian tradition to the Buddhist Jātakas, as Widengren demands, will not get us much further. Besides, he may mean the birth and life of Gotama Siddhattha in certain Indian texts other than the Jātakas. Moreover, one wonders that he does not mention Windisch’s book Buddha’s Geburt. Furthermore, details such as the statement in the late Dēnkart (7,1,56 sqq.), that Zarābuṣṭra’s native village was quite bright three days before his birth, and the old legend in Yaṣṭ 17,18 sq. that Zarābuṣṭra was the only child who laughed when he was born, at any rate only occurs of the Bodhisatta in the Mahāvastu. On the other hand, a similar phaenomenon to the bodily marks of the Indian Mahāpuruṣa (vide infra) are not found in the culture of ancient Irān. This is all the more striking as they were known of in Sakian-Khotanese and Tokharian.

Though we meet with Vaddhamāṇa Mahāvīra and Gotama Siddhattha, notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances of their births, as human beings in the respective canonical traditions, they were deified very early. This, too, was a result of the belief that before their present existences they stayed in a heaven, and that their descents were accompanied by special phenomena in the sky, and that the gods took an active interest in their passing away — in the case of the Buddha they stood packed together around his deathbed. The Jains, for their part, began to perform pūjā in front of statues for the Jinas as if they were Hindu gods and later to speak of Mahāvīra as Gurudevā.

Something similar developed, as is well-known, in the Buddhist Mahāsāṅghika school as a precursor of Mahāyāna. Typical of the deification process may also be the male proper name Buddhadeva (MW)

\[139\] Widengren, Ibid., p. 101; – Printz 1925: 127 sq.


\[141\] See Couvreur 1946: 577–610.

\[142\] Bollée 1984: 177 note 27 (which should read: Kalpasūtra §125 f.).

\[143\] Glasenapp, von 1936: 57 et passim.
and the fact that in the lists of the 32 bodily marks (lakṣāṇas) of a mahāpuruṣa, which we shall now discuss, the feet are dealt with first, gods as well as great men (like kings) being looked up to from below, for, the viewer is lying at their feet. This begins already in AV 10.2. Ordinary humans, however, are looked at the other way around. The 84 anulakṣāṇas (‘secondary marks’) follow the main bodily characteristics and, as it were, comment upon them.

One remark may yet be made in this context. Indian scholastics know of four postures, viz. walking, standing, sitting and reclining. The latter posture is unheroic, because it is the posture of the dead and of sleeping people, though after his transition into parinirvāṇa the Buddha is depicted and worshipped in the reclining position. Indra, however, in his fight against Vṛtra, is moving in an upright position – the erect divine hero against the horizontal animal (tīryak), for Vṛtra is lying in 99 coils around the cosmic mountain (RV 5.29.6).

In RV 10.90, Puruṣa, the thousand-footed Cosmic Man whom the gods sacrifice, in my opinion stands ten fingers over the earth without touching it. His mouth becomes the brahmin (10,90,12), yet out of his mouth emerges Indra (10, 90,13). This creation hymn, which stresses sacrifice, brahmin primacy, 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 course of the Jainist concept of the universe as an erect human – woman or man – as well as of erect Jain ascetics like Bahubali in Śravanabelgola.

Indra’s successor, Prajāpati, is standing when the Brahman strikes the Evil off him which is perhaps represented by the hair on his head. This, then, would be a Vedic justification for the tonsure of the Buddhist monks and for the Jaina monks’ even pulling out their hair. The hair is also a substitute for the head, which the hero has to sacrifice before he can be reborn in a higher state?

The Bodhisatta defends himself in an upright position in meditation against Māra, who wishes to prevent him from reaching final emancipation. This yogic posture, which is visible already on seal

---

145 Cf. Hiltebeitel 1978: 775 note 27; 783 note 47, and 787 note 64. Filliozat 1967: 75 stresses the meaning of the direction of the head toward the north.
146 The Ṛgveda uses the word merga only.
147 JB 2,369 (Caland 1919 §160). In BaudhŚŚ 17,40 hair is equated to Evil. See also Onians 1954: 108.
148 Neumann 1962: 159; 59 sq.
No. 420 in Mackay’s list\textsuperscript{150} and was formerly ascribed to "Proto-Śiva", is taken by Hildebeitel to belong to "Proto-Mahiśa".\textsuperscript{151} But, perhaps, it is safer to designate it as proto-Indian as does Sontheimer (1987b: 124). The same \textit{padmāśana} also marks the statues of Jinas, whereas standing Buddhas may be adoptions 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. Besides, the Buddha,\textsuperscript{152} as also Indra,\textsuperscript{153} is called Yakṣa himself, and the \textit{pipal} tree under which the Buddha reached his \textit{bodhi} is also found on seal No. 335 in Mohenjo Daro.

The marks of the body are a product of brahmanic speculation on the physical externals of the ideal man and were adopted by Jains and Buddhists alike. Initially, they may go back to Nārāyaṇa and Indra, perhaps even to certain pre-Vedic concepts. In the course of the Vedic period prognostic teachings must have developed – probably first in a magical context, in order to enable brahmans 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 \textit{Atharvanveda-pariśiṣṭa}.

As to the number 32, this, perhaps, has to do with a tradition of 32 \textit{ākāras}, i.e. parts of the body as found, e.g. in the Pāli Pitaka.\textsuperscript{154} The references made by Weber (1878: 334 note 5) are of little help, whereas Jolly does not deal with the topic at all in his \textit{Medicin}. – Besides, the portents at the Bodhisatta’s birth are also 32 in number.\textsuperscript{155} In the \textit{Mahābhārata}, however, there is a list of 16 marks of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, seers in the sphere of Viṣṇu.\textsuperscript{156} Since Burnouf dealt with the \textit{lakṣaṇas} of the \textit{mahā puruṣa} – he was probably the first to do so in the West – in the 8th Appendix to his translation of the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍariko-sūtra}, they have undergone several treatments – complete and partial ones – which, however, with one exception, deal with the Buddha. For, only Weber\textsuperscript{157} compared the person of the Mahāvīra with the Buddhist \textit{lakṣaṇas} described by Burnouf. In doing so he could not but rely on Malayagiri’s Sanskrit commentary on the \textit{Ṣūrapannatti} – a representation of the activity of the sun and the moon in the Jaina Siddhānta – for, Leumann was the first scholar to edit the text containing the canonical list of the Jaina \textit{lakṣaṇas} in his \textit{Aupapāṭika sūtra} (1883). This list

\textsuperscript{150}Mackay 1937–38.
\textsuperscript{151}Hildebeitel 1978: 767–797, esp. 775 sq.
\textsuperscript{152}See Bollée 1977: 377.
\textsuperscript{153}Ja IV 4,11\textsuperscript{a}.
\textsuperscript{154}DN II 293 sqq. etc. (see CPD s.v. \textit{ākāra} 7).
\textsuperscript{155}Ja I 51,3–28 (cf. Lāhīt [L.] 85,11 – 86,17).
\textsuperscript{156}Cr. ed. (Poona, 1974) 12,331, 24 sqq.
\textsuperscript{157}1867: 306 sqq. Later (1883: 377 sqq.) he refers to Leumann, yet in his description of the contents of the \textit{Aupapāṭika} he does not mention the physical description of the Tirthamkara at all.
does not correspond either in its wording or in its order to Malayagiri’s list, which is more than a thousand years later.

Comparing the Jaina with the Buddhist lakṣaṇas, we first notice that — after some general features such as physical constitution, beautiful shape, condition of the flesh, purity and shine of the bodily appendages — the Jains treat the particulars of the body from top to bottom. There also occur some duplications and variants. Further, the lakṣaṇas are not always identical with those of the Buddha, and their description most often does not contain simple compounds like dighānguli ‘having long fingers resp. toes’ or eni-jangho ‘with antelope-like legs’, but varṇakas, i.e. 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, the compiler of this tradition and the redactor of the Aupapātika were not worried by the fact that, according to tradition, Mahāvīra at his pabbajjā pulled out his hair in five tufts — a praxis that may still take place when a novice enters the order, but otherwise seems to have fallen into disuse nowadays. In this connection mention may be made of the name Kesī (in the Rāyapaseṇāijja) which is peculiar for a monk.

The removal of one’s own hair means the renunciation of sexuality, just as baldness or cutting off someone else’s hair means castration as a punishment for adultery. Thus, e.g. Indra branded his son and charioteer bald after the latter’s intimacy with Indra’s wife Śacī.¹⁵⁸ The foregoing is also founded on a concept that the late London Latinist Onians proved, inter alia, in Greek culture in his highly erudite study The Origins of European Thought — sperm was for the Ancients a fluid which, like the soul, originated in the head. Its abundance — says Aristotle in his Problematas 867a 23 sqq. — causes the growth of hair. This would explain that a person about to join a religious order and thus to give up a layman’s sexual activity, cuts off his hair. In this way, and by abstinence, the sperm accumulates, producing a kind of hydrocephalus — a protuberance more or less visible on pictures and statues of the Buddha and the Jina: the uṣṇīṣa. Further, as Hertha Krick (1982: 88 sq.) points out, the ritual haircut connects dedication to the deity by sacrificing the Self and returning vital power with separation from the past in order to be prepared for a new life period.

The fact that, in spite of cutting off or pulling out their hair, both are nevertheless depicted with hair may be taken with Wendy O’Flaherty (1980: 45)¹⁵⁹ to mean that “the rich supply of semen stored in the

¹⁵⁸ JB 3,199.
¹⁵⁹ She apparently refers to articles by E.R. Leach and G. Obeysekere, the former of which is missing in the bibliography (p. 356), whereas the latter is not available to me.
yogi’s head is symbolised by his high-piled hair; his powers, like those of the seduced Samson or the macho Sikh with his topknot, reside at the top of his head, in the ‘snakelocks,’ that characterize the Sadhu.” Rāyaśṛṅga, too, belongs to this category.160

The point of departure of the above two scholars is BĀU 6,4,4 sq., which reads that the man who spills his seed puts it either in the middle of his chest or between his eyes. Later, in Kuṇḍalinī-yoga, these places are the anāhata cakra161 – where Viṣṇu162 and the Jinas have a śrīvatasa (possibly a fertility symbol: frog or woman giving birth),163 statues of the Buddha sometimes have a svastika164 – and the ājñā cakra which appears among Buddhist laksāṇas as ārṇā, a circle of hair between the eyebrows. From the latter the seed rises up to the highest cakra at the crown of the head, the very spot of the cosmic man’s (or woman’s) head, where the Jains believe the liberated souls abide. Related to this topic are such otherwise inexplicable words as ārdhva-reta(s),165 ārdhva-manthīn,166 and ārdhva-liṅga167 all of which mean ’sexually abstinent,’ though etymologically the sense should in fact be ’ithyphallic.’ However, ”the phallos that draws up its seed is symbolic of the perfect man.”168

Before concluding with these brief remarks on two of the laksāṇas on the Mahāpuruṣa’s upper body – elsewhere169 I have dealt with some marks on his feet that go back to Indra and Prajāpati – this note on the birth of the hero in ancient India, I shall 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, e.g. 3,36,189; 37,5 namo ’stu te, Mahā-vīra, (...) Viṣṇu-purāṇa, te namah; 46,23; in the Lāṅgulopaniṣad (Upaniṣat-samgraha II 214, 21) namo Bhagavate caṇḍa-pratāpa-Hanumate mahā-vīrīya; and in Bhavabhitṛī’s (8th cent.) Mahāvīracarita 5. Later, in Hindi literature, we find the word in the Rāmcarītmānas of Tulsīdās.

161 See, e.g. Mookerjee 1982: 11, 13, 43 et passim.
162 Mbh cr. ed. 12,329,42,2.
164 As, e.g. in the Kek Lok Si temple near the village of Ayer Itam on Pulau Pinang. It has been under construction for about a century now in a syncretistic or pan-buddhist style and is the largest pagoda complex in Malaysia.
165 Taṛtā Ṛ 10,12,1; Maitri Up 2,3; Mbh cr. ed. 1,13,10; 13,17,45 (Nilakanṭha: a-viśluta-brahmacaryāḥ); 13,74,35.
166 Taṛtā Ṛ 2,7,4.
167 Mbh 13,17,45 (Nilakanṭha: adho-liṅga hi retaḥ stūcata, na tārdhwa-liṅgaḥ).
168 O’Flaherty 1973: 44.
(1,33,5 and 9). The authors may have conferred this title on Rāma's
devotee on the strength of enumerations of Hanumān's good qualities
in Vālmiki's Rāmāyana 7,36,43 sqq., where sāvīrya is ascribed to him,
and a passage such as Rām 6,128,32 vānarāḥ mānuṣaṁ vigrahāṁ kṛtāṁ
(said of Sugrīva’s elephant corps mounted by monkeys in human shape
proceeding to Laṅkā). Hanumān is also called Langūr Vir.¹⁷⁰ Mahāvīra
is further found as the name of a son of Bṛhadratha (Rām 1,71,7), and,
in the last century, as that of the man who revived Buddhism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations of Sanskrit and Pāli texts follow the system adopted by
Monier Williams² and the Critical Pāli Dictionary.

- Antagadadasā 1974 Ed. by Muni Nathmal. Lāḍnūn: Jain Viśwa
  Bhārati.
- Id. 1977 A Note on Evil and its Conquest from Indra to Buddha.
- Id. 1981 The Indo-European Sodalities in ancient India. ZDMG
- Id. 1983a Notes on Middle Indo-Aryan Vocabulary II. JOIB 33,1–
- Id. 1983b Traditionell-indische Vorstellungen über die Füße in
- Id. 1984 Zur Typologie der Träume und ihrer Deutung in der
- Bolon, C.R. 1983 Problems of the Origin and Identity of a Frog-
  goddess Figure in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Paper read
  at the International Conference on ”Influences and Interaction in
  Ancient Indian Art.” Lucknow.

¹⁷⁰Hiltebeitel 1989: 244 sqq.


• Caland, W. 1919 Das Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa in Auswahl. Amsterdam.

• Id. 1924 Das Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba II. Amsterdam.


• Couvreur, W. 1946 Le caractère Sarvāstivādin – Vaibhāṣika des fragments tochariens A d’après les marques et épithètes du Bouddha. Muséeon 59.


• Diirr, A. 1920 Kaukasische Märchen. Jena.

• Eliade, M. 1965 The Two and the One. London.

• Id. 1976 Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashion. Chicago.


• Id. 1925 Der Jainismus. Berlin.

• Hauer, H.W. 1927 Der Vrātya. Stuttgart.


• Hillebrandt, A. 1897 Ritual-Litteratur. Straßburg.


• Id. (Ed.) 1989 Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees. Albany.


• Jacobi, H. 1879 The Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu. Leipzig.

• Id. 1884 Jaina Sutras. SBE XXII. London.


• Jolly, J. 1901 Indische Medicin. Straßburg.

• Id. 1977 Indian Medicine. Delhi.


• Kirfel, W. 1920 *Die Kosmographie der Indier*. Bonn.

• Krick, Hertha 1982 *Das Ritual der Feuergründung*. Wien.


• Lalitavistara 1902 Ed. by S. Lefmann. Halle.

• Lāṅgulōpaniṣad see Upaniṣat-samgraha.


• Id. 1951 *Varuṇa*. Göttingen.


• Mani, Vettam 1975 *Purānic Encyclopaedia*. Delhi.

• Mette, A. 1974 *Piṇḍ'esaṅā*. Wiesbaden.


• Neumayer, E. 1983 *Prehistoric Indian Rock Paintings*. Delhi.


• Id. 1975 *Hindu Myths*. Hammondsworth.

• Id. 1980 *Women, Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts*. Chicago.

• Id. (Ed.) 1980 *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*. Chicago.


• Id., 1907 *Die Religion des Veda*. Stuttgart.

• Oman, J.C. 1908 *Cults, Customs and Superstitions of India*. London.


• Rāmcaritmānas 1922 of Tulsīdās. Allahabad.

• Rāmāyaṇa 1930 Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. Bombay.


• Ruben, W. 1944 *Krṣṇa*. Istanbul.

• Scheffelowitz, I. 1906 *Die Apokryphen des Ṛgveda*. Breslau.


• *Skandapurāṇa* 1961 Calcutta.


• Id. 1989a *Pastoral Deities in Western India*. New York.


• Syed, Renate 1990 *Die Flora Altindiens in Literatur und Kunst*. München.

• Thāpar, Romilā 1990 Indian views of Europe: Representations of the "Other" in history? Āgneya Commemoration Lecture. Heidelberg.


• Thompson, St. and Balys, J. 1958 *The Oral Tales of India*. Bloomington.


• *Upaniṣatsaṁgraha* 1970 I-II. Delhi (Bombay, 1913).

• Van Buitenen see Buiten, Van.


• Id. 1867 Id., II. *AdW* Berlin, 155–352.

• Id. 1878 Über die Simhāsanadvātrimśikā. *Indische Studien.* 15, 185–455.

• Id. 1883 Über die heiligen Schriften der Jaina. *Indische Studien* 16, 211–480.

• Widengren, G. 1965 *Die Religionen Irans.* Stuttgart.
