

Introduction

In the *Rgveda*, the Five Aryan kindreds are spoken of as immigrants; they have come from another place across the waters, and have settled and filled the lands on the hither shore. This process of land-taking has generally been interpreted as referring to an historical immigration of an Aryan speaking people who, fair in colour and sharply distinguished from the dusky pagan Dasyus, crossed the Sarasvatī in the Panjab and made their home in Bhāratavarsā. That is an euhemeristic interpretation of a traditional literature which is strictly speaking devoid of any historical content whatever. We do not mean to say by this that there may not have taken place historical events analogous to those alluded to in the Vedic 'myths'; on the contrary, we assume that history is always enacted in the pattern of the ultimate reality enunciated in the metaphysical tradition, or in Biblical phraseology, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets' (*ṛszjyāh*). It may therefore be true that the metaphysical tradition itself can be a process of inversion be employed by the historian as source material, just as an icon may be used by the aesthete as a piece of bric-a-brac, or by the anthropologist for his own ends. In this sense, for example, we may be sure that the people who performed the Vedic ritual and chanted the *mantras* in their recorded form, actually possessed horses and chariots, had experience of the crossing of seas and rivers, and tilled the soil. It does not follow that the cosmic myth itself—'originale Geistesschöpfung allerersten Ranges'—had been unknown previous to that late stage of neolithic culture that is reflected in the symbolism of the *mantras* in which it is expressed. Certain of the symbols are by no means 'dated'; the Sun may have been referred to as a bird at any time, nor can it be doubted that a cult of the One Madonna existed already in the Paleolithic age. The symbols that imply a specific cultural niveau may, simultaneously with actual invention, have been developed from earlier prototypes; before the pillar, the tree; before the wheel, the swastika, before the plough, the planting-stick.² It is in this sense that the myth itself, apart from the manner of its formulation (and this will apply even to its late

¹Jeremias, *Der Kosmos von Sumter*, 1932, p. 20.

²Cf. Andrae, *Die Ionische Säule; Bauform oder symbol?* Berlin, 1933, pp. 65, 66: 'When we sound the archetype, the ultimate origin of the form, then we find that it is anchored in the highest, not the lowest. . . . He who marvels that a formal symbol can remain alive not only for millennia, but that, as we shall yet learn, can spring to life again after an interval of thousands of years, should remind himself that the power from the spiritual world, which forms one part of the symbol, is everlasting.' Cf. René Guénon, 'Du prétendu 'empirisme' des anciens', in *Le Voile d'Isis*, No. 175, 1934.

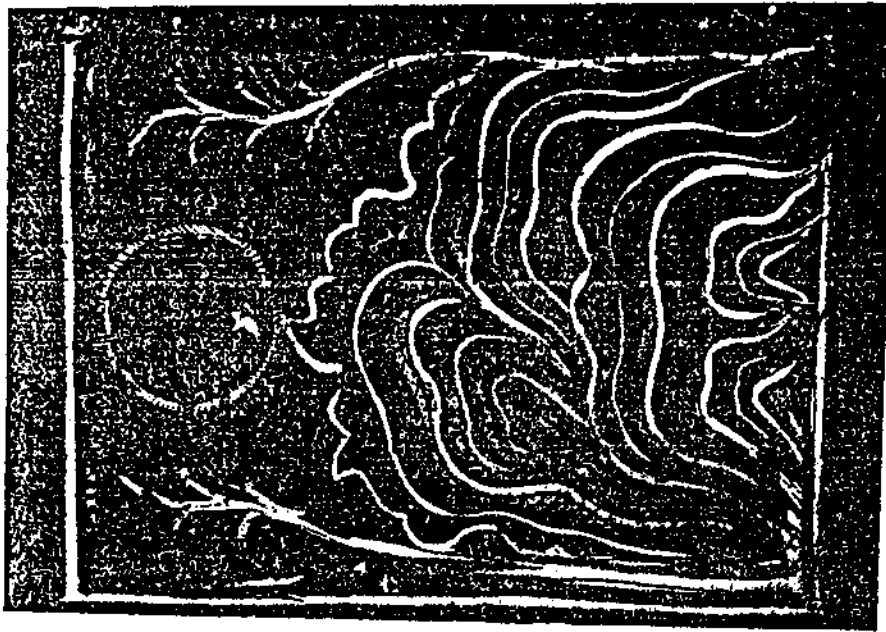


FIG. 1. Śrī Sūryōdaya, the 'Holy Sunrise'. From a sixteenth-century MS. of the *Kaṭha Sūtra*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, see Brown, *Miniature Paintings of the Jaina Kaṭhasūtra*, 1934, Fig. 38.

The Dawn depicted is that of the day following Trisālā's announcement of her pregnancy dreams to Siddhārtha and is therefore that of the day of Mahāvīra's conception. Mahāvīra being, no less than the Buddha, the Solar Messiah, the Sunrise on the morning of his conception is virtually and, if we ignore the pseudo-historical presentation of the 'miraculous' elements in the Jina's life, is actually the Coming Forth of the Hidden Light in the Beginning.

The designation Śrī Sūryōdaya appears as a legend in Nāgarī characters beside the illustration on the manuscript page. The text, §59, describes the rising of the Sun as follows: 'Early in the wane of night the Sun arose. . . intensely red. . . He, the thousand-rayed Day-maker, glowing in fiery-energy, awakened the clusters of lotuses. . . by the blows of his hands the darkness was dispelled.'

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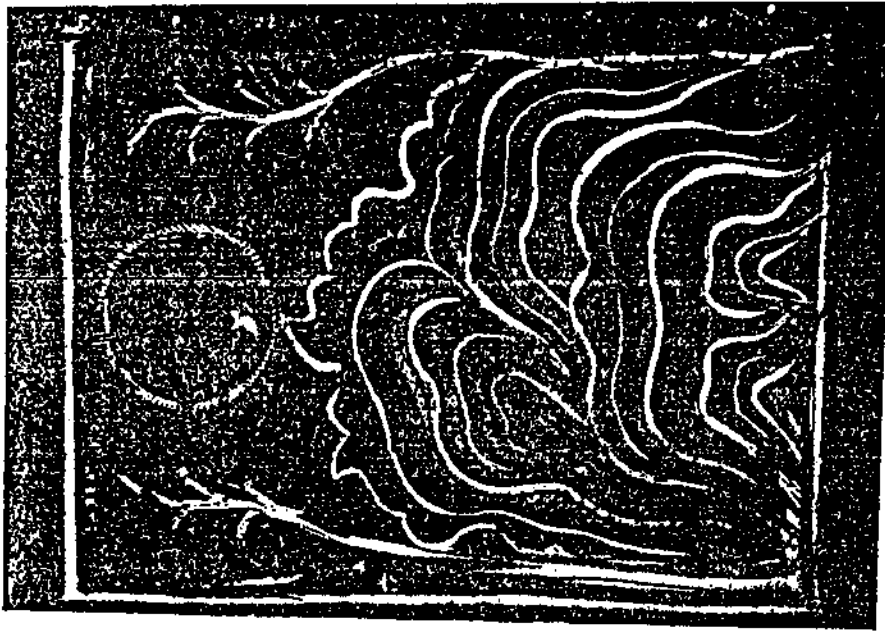


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recension in the two great pseudo-historical epics), may not be properly regarded as an historical relation (*itihāsa*), nor as concerned with events in time, but as a metaphysical formulation in accordance with a logical order of thought. Other versions of the 'single and unanimous tradition', Genesis for example, are to be understood and have been understood in the same way. In like manner, the miraculous elements in the lives of the Messiahs are not to be regarded as later accretions imposed upon an historical nucleus, but much rather as parts of the essential theme to which an aspect of historicity has been superadded by way of accommodation (*upāya*).

To some students, these will seem to be self-evident theses, needing no demonstration. To others, merely a fantastic theory, with the latter in view it is proposed to discuss the matter in greater detail, by an analysis of the meanings and content of certain constantly recurring and characteristic terms, viz., *ārya*, *carṣani* and *hr̥ṣī*, *pañca jana*, *sarasvatī*, *setu*, *vāpa-maṅgala*, *viśā* and *viśpātī*, *yajñā*, and *Yama*. If the proper interpretation of some of these terms is still a matter of controversy, it may nevertheless appear that some further light can be shed on the problems by a choice of valid interpretations of such sort that all the terms can be understood consistently in relation to one another or in one and the same context.³

The Rgveda as Land-Nāma-Bōk

ĀRYA, ARYA

Ārya, 'noble' or 'gentle' (as in 'gentleman') is from *ṛ*; to go, rise up, reach, obtain; cognate forms are *ariya*, *ariya*, Irān, Erin, and Germ. Ehre; for the root, cf. Zend *ir*, Lith *ir-ti* (to row, cf. Skr. *aritra*, 'oar'), Greek *ar-nu-mi*, *arō-o*, etc., and Lat. *arior*, *ar-rens*. Any connection with Lat. *ar*, to plough, may be doubted. The root meanings give the sense of going forward and taking possession. The root meaning of *ārya* is that of 'pioneer', in the American sense, where the first settlers are most highly honoured (one might almost speak of an 'ancestral cult' in this connection), and where it represents the height of social distinction to be descended from these first-comers from the other side. From this point of view there develops the secondary meaning of 'noble' and that of 'right', cf. *ṛta* 'law' and *ari* 'loyal'; the procedure of the first settlers being thought of as an establishment of law and order where savagery (*anṛta*) had previously prevailed.⁴ Thus he, Agni, who *pūruam ārtā*

"The Comprehensors (*vidvānsah*) . . . they of the Law (*ṛtavānah*, here the First Sacrificers) when they had bared to sight what-things-were -theirs-who-knew-no-Law (*anṛtā*) and were returned, they, the shaper-minstrels (*kaṁvayah*, Gk. μουτροι went forth upon their glorious way', *RV*, II.24.6-7; 'The Patriarchs (*pitavah*), on whom as being Angels, the Angels have bestowed their Providence (*krānu*) . . . have overstridden the regions, laying out the ancient measureless abodes . . . pouring out their offspring variously', X.56.4-5; 'The generous (viz., *visvedevāḥ*) have made the Sun to mount the sky, and scattered the Āryan ordinances (*āryā vratā*) o'er the world', X.65.11 (*Sāyana* glosses *ārya* as *śreṣṭhāni* and *kalyāṇāni*, 'best' and 'lovely'). *Per carntva*, 'The Herdsman of the Law (*ṛtasya gopā*), the Comprehensor who surveys the several worlds (viz., the Sun), thrusts into the pit them that are unqualified (*apsuśān*) and uninitiate (*anvratān*). Men of vision (*dhitvāḥ*, here the First Sacrificers) span the yarn of Law (*ṛtasya tanubur vitatvāḥ*) upon the purifying sieve, Varuṇa's tongue-tip, by Magic (*māyayā*); but he that is not able thereunto (*aprabhuh*) falls down into the pit (*karitam aya padātā*). *RV*, IX.73.9; mark the contrast as between the latter and the 'Herdsman moving on the paths, who never falls' (*gopām anīpadyamānam . . . pathibis carantam*, I.164.31; X.177.9, *JUB*, III.37). The Herdsman of the Universe (*bhuvamasya gopāḥ*, I.164.21; II.27.4; VII.70.2, *JUB*, I.1; III.12, etc.) is the 'Good shepherd' of Semitic tradition. Indra is typically designated *vratapā*, Fidei Defensor, which is his natural function as representing the temporal power (*krātra*) in alliance with the spiritual-power (*brahma*) represented by Agni, who lays the bolt in Indra's hands, X.52.5, and appoints him to perform heroic feats, VIII.100.1-2.

³Abbreviations are employed as follows: *RV*, *Rgveda Samhitā*; *AV*, *Atharvaveda Samhitā*; *TS*, *Taittirīya Samhitā*; *VS*, *Vējasaneyi Samhitā*; *TB*, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*; *PB*, *Pañcaviṅśa Brāhmaṇa*; *AB*, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*; *JB*, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*; *JUB*, *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*; *AA*, *Aitareya Aranyaka*; *BU*, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*; *CU*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*; *Ma*, *U*, *Maitrī Upaniṣad*; *MU*, *Mundaka Upaniṣad*; *SN*, *Saṁyutta Nikāya*; *J*, *Jātaka*.

(RV, IV.1.12) is not only *ṛājā* and *ṛāṇyas*, but also *ṛtavān* and *ṛtvij*, or in short and in every sense of the word, *ārya* or *arya*.⁵

It need hardly be pointed out that the term *ārya* is applied by the Aryans themselves to themselves in this laudatory sense, and by way of disjunction from others whose descent and behaviour are relatively abominated, and of whose point of view we hear little.⁶

CARSAṆI AND KRṢṬI

Carṣaṇi 'wanderer' a 'nomad' and *krṣṭi* 'ploughman' and 'ploughing', or 'tilling' and 'tith', are both secondarily 'folk' or 'people', as typically agricultural. In the same way Pāli *kassaka*, 'ploughman', and *kasi* or *kasi*, 'ploughing', 'tith', are secondarily 'farmer' and 'folk'. In many passages *pañca carṣaṇayajā* or *krṣṭayajā* replaces the more usual *pañca janāḥ*, for example RV, V.86.2, VII.15.2, and IX.101.9, the first of these references giving us 'Let us make oblation to Indrāgni for sake of the Five Kindreds' (*pañca carṣaṇir-abhi*). Agni or Indra is *vāja* or *pati krṣṇinām* or *carṣaṇinām*, IV.17.5, and V.39.4, etc., and these expressions amount to the same things as *viśpati* elsewhere; Varuṇa is *vāja carṣaṇi-dhṛta*, king and supporter of the folk, IV.1.2; Agni takes his seat in homes as *grhapatī* 'for the sake of the Five Kindreds', *pañca carṣaṇir-abhi*, VII.15.2. Agni is himself *viśva-carṣaṇi*, V.23.4; the Buddha speaks of himself as *kassaka*, SN, text I, p. 172.

It has often been observed that no trace of a caste system can be recognized in the *R̥gveda*. For example, the Creator *per artem* (Viśvakarmā, Ivaṣṭr) is what would now be called a *śūdra*; and although the four characteristic functions of priest, ruler, farmer, and craftsman are distinguished, one and all of these are 'ploughmen'. What this implies is a state of affairs in which the individual of a given type is still in full possession of all the possibilities of being in the mode of that type. A caste system on the other hand reflects a posterior condition in which the individual realizes in himself only a part of the potentialities that are proper to the type generically; 'priest', 'king', etc., are

⁵In RV, IV.1.7, where Agni is *arya*, Sāyana's gloss is *svāmi vaiśyaḥ*, tantamount to '*viśpati*'.

⁶Cf., however, Namuci's reproaches addressed to Indra, 'Thou betrayer of a friend', TB, I.7.1-7.8. There is indeed plenty of evidence in the *R̥gveda* that the act of taking possession of what was not originally theirs, but belonged to the dusky Asuras — as if to the 'Redskins' in our American analogy — was well understood to have been in some sort a sin requiring expiation and a symbolic restitution, e.g. RV, X.109; the *mithāsāni* are typically Indra's, while the Redeemer, *kiḥśa-sṛṣṭ*, is typically Agni, RV, X.71.10; it may also be noted with respect to RV, I.164.32, where Agni is said to 'take on destruction' (*nirīṣim*), that if we accept Sāyana's designation of Nirīti as *pāpa-devatā*, this also implies an assumption of our guilt. We are not, however, at present concerned with this point of view, but only with that affirmative attitude which naturally prevails in the *karma kāṇḍa*.

⁷In RV, I.177.1, Indra, and in III.62.6, Brhaspati, is *viśabha carṣaṇinām*.

now *specific* determinations, the names alluding to the one and only function which the individual can properly fulfil, and which is his 'vocation'. As the process of contraction and identification into variety proceeds, the capacities of the individual are more and more constricted; and this is outwardly reflected in our contemporary social order (an industrial order representing the notion of 'caste' in its fullest possible development), where none takes all knowledge for his province, and the workman is specifically conformed to the making of small parts of things and can make nothing whole. This excessive division of labour can result in the production only of goods that are useful, not of those that are beautiful; for integration, co-ordination, and lucidity are essential to beauty, and with these the labourer has nothing to do; he who makes only parts of things cannot be an artist (*artifex*) but only a cooly. Only those modern productions can be beautiful in which the products of the work of many men are united. If for example a bridge is beautiful, this is possible inasmuch as all those (engineer, and skilled and unskilled workers), who are collectively its maker, amount to one single proper man, one bridge-builder. Where a 'tradition' has survived (as in 'Campagnonage') it still remains within the power of the initiated individual to rise above the situation in which he finds himself, and by successive apperceptions to achieve a re-possession of the lost powers; but this conception of the meaning of initiation into the mystery of a craft has no longer any place in European consciousness. These considerations lie in part outside the natural limits of the present tract; but the fact that the *R̥gveda* recognizes a state of affairs in which a division of labour is apparent only in act and not in the essence of the individual (the dual Indrāgni, for example, represents the union of spiritual and temporal powers in one person, of which traces have survived in human social order wherever the links of tradition have not been broken) shows that we are here dealing with a 'time' antecedent to 'history'.

NAU.

It will be seen below, (s.v. Sarasvatī) that the floor of the Chariot of Light (*ṣpiti-ratha* applied to Agni, Soma, Viśvedevāḥ, RV, I.140.1; IX.86.44; X.63.4), that is of intellectual substance (*manas-maya*, X.85.12) and drawn by steeds not born of horses (*anāśvo-jāto*, IV.36.1) but intellectually fashioned (*atataksur manasā*, I.20.2), is itself a Ground (*budhna*, X.135.6) resting upon the Waters, and in this respect like any other Earth (*prthivī* = *dyāvā-prthivī* = *dyāvā*) or platform of being. According to another familiar image any Ground may be represented by the lotus, flower of leaf, and it is in this sense (TS, IV.1.4; IV.2.8; V.2.6.5; SB, VII.4.1.7-11) that Agni is said to have been churned from the lotus (*puṣkarāt*, VI.16.13) and Vasiṣṭha, child of Mirāvaruṇau and Urvāśī, is born in the lotus (*jātāḥ* . . . *puṣkare*, VII.33.11) where also the Viśvedevāḥ are revealed.

Any Ground thus supported in and by the primordial ocean of infinite possibility may in the same way be thought of as a ship or ark (*navi*) or swing

or rocking-boat (*prēhka*) of life, cf. *ḥṣamī-nauin* in the invocatory stanzas of the *Daśakumāracarita*. So Vasiṣṭha, in *RV*, VII.88, when he feels himself estranged from Varuṇa—'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'—looks back to the beginning with a fond yearning, as of Adam's for Paradise: 'Where I with Varuṇa embarked (*ā ruhāva*), drove out our ship (*nāvam irayāva*) into mid-ocean, rode on the crests of the waves, would that we yet swung there in the smooth-gliding swing (*prēhka*) for gladness, where- aboard (*nāvā*) Varuṇa set Vasiṣṭha, in the clear-shing of the days, when Heaven and Earth, the Dawns and Dusks were warped' (*atanan*). 'Wise King Varuṇa, indeed, made in Heaven this Golden Swing smooth-gliding for delight', VII.87.5; it is the Sun's reflection in the Sea, the 'sun-boat' of the manifold tradition.

The Ship of Life may equally as well be spoken of as launched and guided by all or any of the premier Angels; thus, X.63.10, 'Let us embark (*ā ruhema*) in the angelic vessel (*datvīm nāvam*) unto weal.' Again, 'The Ships of Truth (*sabyasya nāvāh*) have borne the goodly-made across (*suktam apīparan*, IX.73.1); 'Bear us across the Sea as in a ship, thou Comprehensor' (*nāvā na sindhum aṅi paṣy vidvān*, IX.70.10, addressed to Soma; 'As in a ship convey us o'er the flood' (I.97.8, addressed to Agni, cf. I.99.1, 'through peril as in a boat across a river'); 'May we ascend the vessel of safe passage, whereby we may pass over manifold and grievous dangers' (VIII.42.3, addressed to the Angels collectively); 'Transport us safely o'er manifold perils, ye Charioteers of the Law, as it were in ships across the Waters' (VIII.83.3); and 'As in a ship o'er billows, so through divers states of being (*prāśāh pṛthivyāh*, X.56.7 lit., 'earthly regions', where as usual 'earth' is any ground or platform of being); o'er manifold and grievous perils hath the Mighty Laud (*bṛhadukīha*, i.e. Agni) set (*ā adadhāi*) his children (*prajām*), by these and farther shores' (*avarisyu, paṛṣyu*, X.56.7). In *JB*, I.125 (see *J.A.O.S.*, XXVIII.1, p. 84) the boat is a 'ship-city' (*nan-nagara*), viz., that of the three-headed Gandharva (the Sun, cf. IX.85.12) that swims in the midst of the Waters, or as we should say in modern parlance, a great liner.

Often enough, according to another formulation, it is the Aśvins⁸—twins diversely born (*RV*, I.181.4, and V.73.4), thus representing a principal duality essential to existence, and therefore naturally deliverers of things not yet in act, healers of all imperfect things⁹—who take up from the Waters into

⁸The origin of the Aśvins is to be sought in a pre-Vedic period . . . (they) may originally have been conceived as finding and restoring or rescuing the vanished light of the sun' (Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 49, 51, cf. von Schröder, in *W.Z.K.M.*, IX. 131).

⁹*RV*, X.39.3: 'Ye are the gladness of her that groweth old at home (unwed), furtherers of him that hath no horse and lags behind, healers of the blind, the wasted and the broken.' Cf. *SB*, IV.1.5.16: 'The Aśvins are outwardly (*pratyakṣam*) these two, viz., Heaven and Earth, for it is these that have obtained possession of all things here. They are called the 'lotus-crowned'; Agni is verily the lotus of this earth, the Sun of yonder sky.' The ontological implications are evident; Heaven and Earth are healers of all things in that they provide the necessary basis of operation in one or other of the contrasted modes, terrestrial or celestial. The Aśvins inwardly (*parokṣeṇa*) are, no

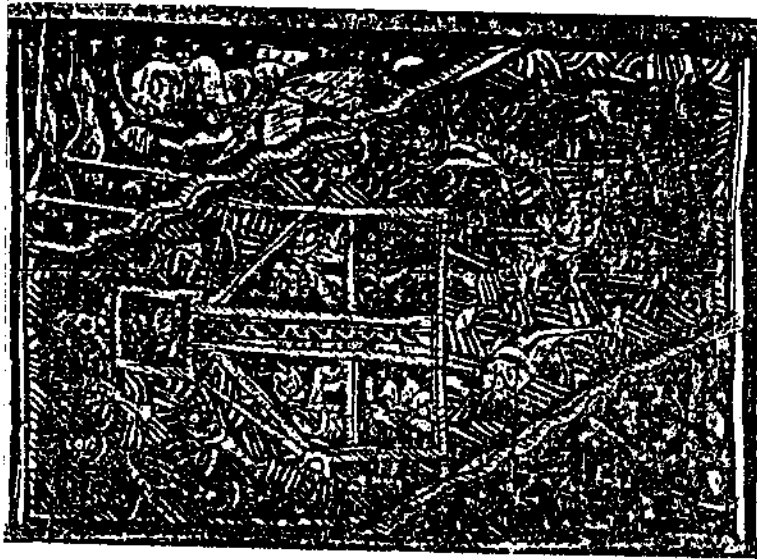


FIG. 2. THE SHIP OF LIFE, OR SUN-BOAT, AND RIVER OF LIFE WITH ITS TWO SHORES. From an MS. of the *Kaṭha Sūtra* belonging to Mr. N.M. Heeramanek, New York, see Brown, *Miniature Paintings of the Jaina Kalpasūtra*, 1934, Fig. 30.

The miniature illustrates one of the Fourteen Dreams of Trisālā, all of which dreams, prefiguring the advent of Mahāvira, are essentially the themes of the Creation as described in the *R̥veda*. 'Every mother (*māyā = mātr*) of a Tīrthamkara sees these Fourteen Dreams in that night in which the most glorious Arhat enters her Womb' (*Kaṭha Sūtra*, §46b). For a description of the River or Sea of Life as here depicted see *Kaṭha Sūtra*, text 43, or translation in *SBE*, XXII, pp. 296-7, where the significant designations *gaṅgāvarta*, *uccalat* and *praś-avanivṛtta*, *ḥṣira-sāgara*, and *saḥlām* are employed.

The 'lookout' at the top of the mast is the Sun as the surveyor of all things (*viśvam abhi caṣṭe*, *RV*, I.164.44, *abhi caṣṭama*, II.40.5, etc.), the mast his 'foot' as Aja Ekapad, and at the same time, the Axis of the Universe, as pointed out explicitly in the *Daśakumāracarita*, invocatory verse, cf. my *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Note 139.