

Ānanda K. Coomaraswamy

# The Doctrine of Sacrifice



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This collection comprises a series of essays written by Ānanda Kentish Coomaraswamy in the 1930s and 1940s, published at the time in various magazines and now almost impossible to find. Gérard Leconte, the editor of this collection of essays, aims to bring to light a perhaps lesser-known part of the vast work of the Anglo-Indian author, famous above all for his studies on art, while his essays on metaphysics and symbolism have remained accessible only to a more limited audience.

The texts published here refer to the same fundamental theme in its various forms and are grouped into four sections: the first two include essays based on the Vedic and Arthurian traditions, while the articles in the next two sections take up the subject in a more general form.

Analysing a symbol that appears in all ancient traditions – the theme of the primordial sacrifice that gives rise to the manifested world – Coomaraswamy explores its main variations. The author naturally begins with the Vedic tradition, in which he explains each of the symbols related to this theme (the *Devas*, the *Asuras*, the heroes, the Serpents, the Sun, the Aurora and many others) in terms of their metaphysical value, before moving on to Western literature, in which the same elements become part of Greek, Celtic and Norse mythology, transforming themselves into the Hero's struggle with the Serpent, or Dragon, which later became a folkloric or fairy-tale theme widespread throughout the world.

In the final part, the author also highlights another interpretation of this fundamental symbol, which forms the core of his study: the deeds of the Hero who finally defeats the Dragon and beheads it, handed down as mythical-literary figures, or even as a fairy-tale motif, actually represent the much deeper and universal concept of the struggle of the Soul against the ego, the sacrifice of oneself to overcome the limits of the individual and reunite with the Absolute. They therefore represent the liberation of the Self from the ego. Thanks to these essays, we can grasp the authentic meaning of countless archetypes of our figurative, religious and literary culture, recovering their original metaphysical meaning. The task may seem arduous, as can be intuited from the author's style, which, while not conceding anything to popularisation and simplification, is nevertheless generous with explanations and clarifications and rewards the reader at every turn with his extraordinary insights.

The son of a Hindu father and an English mother, Ānanda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born in Colombo (Sri Lanka) in 1877 and died in Needham, Massachusetts, in 1947. A geologist and mineralogist of note, he was also

above all, he was a passionate scholar of ancient Indian thought and the artistic expressions of the Hindu world. From 1916 onwards, he was entrusted with important responsibilities at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which he held until his death.

Luni Editrice has also published the following works by Coomaraswamy: *Buddha and the Doctrine of Buddhism*, *Time and Eternity*, and *The Dance of Shiva*.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, known to French readers above all for his *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme*<sup>1</sup>, left behind a considerable body of work, much appreciated in India and in English-speaking countries. It should be noted, however, that his fame is mainly due to his books on art; his studies on metaphysics and symbolism, based primarily on the exegesis of Hindu texts, seem to have had a more limited audience. While this situation can be explained in part by the reticence of Orientalists (particularly French ones), who were confused by metaphysics and reassured by philology,<sup>2</sup> a more general reason must be sought in the fact that, among the countless articles written by Coomaraswamy for various Indian and American journals that are now long out of print, only a relatively small number have been collected in a few volumes, three of which are devoted to art.<sup>3</sup> In order of publication, we mention: *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1943), *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (1946), books that represent a remarkable trilogy on traditional Western and Eastern art; *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society* (1946), a booklet containing three studies on ancient and contemporary Indian society; and finally, *Am I my Brother's Keeper?* (1947), on certain aspects of the relationship between East and West.

Coomaraswamy would certainly have prepared other collections had her death in 1947, shortly after her 70th birthday, not interrupted her extraordinarily fruitful work.

To date, no attempt has been made to fill this gap and update the texts, and we are taking the opportunity of this translation to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Rusconi, Milan 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Coomaraswamy liked to quote this admirable phrase by the Indianist Arthur Berriedale Keith: 'Knowledge that is not empirical is meaningless and should not be called knowledge'.

<sup>3</sup> In a bibliography that is still unpublished and does not claim to be exhaustive, Dr. Rama Coomaraswamy has reviewed 627 published books and articles.

attempt to raise awareness of a little-known part of his highly important work.<sup>4</sup>

The first volume of this project contains eight articles whose main theme is the doctrine of sacrifice. This central theme is explored through topics often addressed by Coomaraswamy: Vedic myths, Hindu cosmology, the metaphysical distinction between the Self and the ego, the exegesis of symbols, studies that determine considerations on iconographic interpretation and the nature of folklore.

We have divided the collection into four parts. The first deals specifically with the Vedic tradition, while the second presents, almost in parallel, the same themes within the Celtic tradition and Arthurian literature. This is followed by three studies that revisit the two main forms of sacrifice examined: decapitation and skin-changing. The collection concludes with a study on the inner meaning of the sacrificial rite.

#### THE VEDIC IMAGE OF SACRIFICE

This first part includes 'Angels and Titans' and 'The Dark Side of Aurora'; both published in 1935, one is the sequel to the other<sup>5</sup>. Based mainly on mythical data contained in the Vedas and Brāh-manas, they illustrate the Vedic conception of Sacrifice by explaining the antagonism between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. "Angels and Titans" presents the "masculine" principles of manifestation, and "The Dark Face of Aurora" their feminine counterpart. In the first text, the origin of manifestation is identified with the primordial sacrifice. As the author writes in *Hindouisme et*

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<sup>4</sup> However, we would like to mention the forthcoming publication by Princeton University of *Selected Papers*: two volumes comprising some fifty articles, some of which are unpublished. The first volume includes most of the articles that the author had collected in *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Angel and Titan', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 55, 1935; 'The Darker Side of the Dawn', *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, vol. 94, 1935.

*Buddhism* (p. 20):<sup>6</sup> 'In this eternal beginning, there exists only the Supreme Identity of 'This One' (*tad ekam*), without distinction between being and non-being, light and darkness, or even separation between heaven and earth. The Whole is then contained in the Principle, which can be referred to by the names of Personality, Ancestor, Mountain, Dragon, or Endless Serpent. Connected to this Principle as a son or younger brother

- as an *alter ego* rather than a distinct principle - appears the Dragon Slayer, born to supplant the Father and take possession of the Kingdom, and who will distribute its treasures to his followers. In fact, if a world is to exist, the prison must be destroyed and its potentialities liberated. This can happen either with the Father's will or against his will. The Father can 'choose death in favour of his children', or the Gods can impose passion on him and make him a sacrificial victim. These are not contradictory doctrines, but different ways of presenting one and the same story. In reality, the Slayer and the Dragon, the sacrificer and the victim are *One* in spirit behind the scenes, where there are no irreconcilable opposites, while they are mortal enemies on the stage where the perpetual war between the Gods and the Titans takes place.

Having become the very name of Sacrifice and the archetypal model of the sacrificer, Prajāpati represents voluntary self-immolation. Alone, at the beginning, he dismembered himself to give rise to the universe. When sacrifice is imposed, Indra enters the scene to fight the Dragon, who is called Namuci, Makha or Vitra. He then dismembers the Titan, who contained hidden potentialities within himself, brings to light the hidden treasure, frees the waters or causes light to gush forth. More often, Indra decapitates his adversary and the latter's head becomes the Sun. The following article, dedicated to 'feminine' principles, illustrates above all the symbolism of skin change. 'Snakes are Suns'; it is by shedding its skin, losing its ophidian character, that the original principle reveals its solar nature. In other words, what was previously 'footless' (*apad* = snake) gains feet, and walking is the very sign of the progression of the principle of

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<sup>6</sup>Italian translation *cited*, p. 20.

manifestation. This transformation of darkness into light is naturally compared to the transition from Night to Day, and the author therefore studies the famous Vedic hymns dedicated to Aurora; Ushas, the Dawn, loses her 'sinister' nature by joining the Sun, just as Apala is purified by Indra to become his bride.

In translating these two articles, we took into account the author's unpublished corrections and, above all, the numerous handwritten notes that we were able to consult thanks to the kindness of his son, Dr. Rama P. Coomaraswamy. We were forced to make some choices in this important documentation, partly because it often consisted of laconic references or quotations in Sanskrit,<sup>7</sup> and the annotations were clearly not written for an immediate re-edition of these articles, but were 'put on paper' with a view to further research and additions - some of which seem to have been the origin of the two articles that constitute the second part of the collection (chapters III and IV). For this reason, in addition to selecting from the '*cf.*' references for the Hindu texts we were able to consult, we have composed or expanded certain notes, without adding anything of our own, based on scattered phrases and quotations that the author had noted opposite the printed text. For these unpublished passages, we have not used quotation marks, reserving them for the notes written by us, which we consider partly justified by the fact that Coomaraswamy generally wrote for Orientalist journals.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> At the risk of increasing the volume of notes, we have already included references to texts and quotations in Sanskrit longer than one line in the original at the bottom of the page; this is so as not to excessively discourage the well-known category of readers 'who do not read introductions' or even notes and who are not accustomed to Coomaraswamy's very particular way of presenting a text for study rather than for browsing.

<sup>8</sup> Coomaraswamy's choice, facilitated in the United States by a certain 'tolerance' of the university spirit, had the effect of influencing certain American Orientalists in a traditional sense.

## ARTHURIAN SOURCES: THE SACRIFICE AND MARRIAGE OF GAUVAIN

Ten years later, Coomaraswamy revisited some Vedic themes, linking them to Celtic mythology and Arthurian literature in articles entitled 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' and 'The Hideous Bride'.

Recalling the struggle between Indra and Namuci and emphasising the symbolic and ritual importance of decapitation, the author presents a strictly Vedic exegesis of a 14th-century English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>10</sup> The Green Knight is the mysterious character who, arriving at King Arthur's court on the first day of the year, 'challenges a knight to behead him, on condition that the latter submits to the same fate a year later'.<sup>11</sup> However, whatever the mythical context, the victim does not die, and it is up to the sacrificer to pay his debt by offering his own head in exchange. In fact, the ultimate purpose of the Sacrifice is to reunite what was separated.

The "honey doctrine" that Dadhyañc<sup>12</sup> secretly teaches to the "medics of the Gods", the Ashvins: it is the Vedic rite of Pravargya. Its hidden meaning, which will later be illustrated by some Sufi texts, can be summarised as follows: 'our head is our self, and cutting off our head is the abandonment of the self, the negation of the self, self-denial; conversely, 'doing everything on one's own' means affirming one's individuality'.

In the following article, dedicated to Gauvain's marriage, Coomaraswamy studies the meaning of this 'horrible bride' whom the hero is forced to kiss, a repulsive woman with a serpentine appearance in whom

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<sup>9</sup> 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci', *Speculum*, vol. 19, 1944; 'On the Loathly Bride', *Speculum*, vol. 20, 1945.

<sup>10</sup> This text was studied and translated into French by Emile Pons, Aubier, 1946.

<sup>11</sup> Gauvain's quest is an Arthurian adaptation of a Celtic tale in which the famous hero Cuchulainn beheaded the giant Uath Mac Imo-main.

<sup>12</sup> Dadhyañc Atharvana, a mythical horse-headed being who was beheaded by Indra; cf. *AV*, I, 116, 12 and *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1,1, 18 ff.

The young virgins described in 'The Dark Face of Aurora' will be recognised. Like Apāla, Sujātā (or Snow White), these dragon women or sirens are freed from the spell on the day they marry the solar hero (= Indra), a union sometimes symbolised in Western narratives by the 'Fierce Kiss'. It is with this kiss that Indra drinks the Soma; the Water of Life that the witch draws from the well to offer to the hero who agrees to kiss her is none other than the 'drink of immortality' obtained after killing the dragon soul. The theme of the salvific union implies that of the original impurity of women, which they relive periodically and from which they are freed each time thanks to the 'mystery' of marriage.

Whether the sources are Greek, Celtic or Indian, the 'horrible bride' equally represents Mother Earth and is the personification of Sovereignty that the hero must conquer despite his repugnance. The study concludes, like the previous one, with some considerations on myth and folklore.

#### **SOLAR TRANSFORMATION: LOSING ONE'S HEAD OR CHANGING ONE'S SKIN.**

The three articles that make up the third part (chapters V - VII) concern the two sacrificial modes we noted earlier: decapitation and change of skin, in other words, the 'denial of the self' ('Whoever wants to save their life will lose it...') and 'stripping off the old man'. In "The Headless Magicians and the Act of Truth,"<sup>13</sup> Coomaraswamy first explains the meaning of the ritual based on the effective power of a true word. The Vedic context includes an example of decapitation, relating here to the case of those beings "who do what they want with their heads", that is, who have acquired freedom of action. The subject of this study is the explanation of an iconographic peculiarity of a Buddhist burial.

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<sup>13</sup> "Headless Magicians and an Act of Truth," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 64, 1944.

Similarly, an artistic motif is the pretext for the subsequent study, 'The Rape of a Nāgī' <sup>(14)</sup> and here again the author emphasises the importance of the symbolic exegesis of iconography, which transcends the impoverished and emotional nature of simple 'aesthetic sense'. Examining a seal from the Gupta period, he returns to the theme of the antagonism between darkness and light, with the symbol of the struggle between the Eagle and the Serpent, or rather the Solar Bird and the creature 'woman and serpent' that it snatches from its dark condition to purify it, that is, to kill its evil by uniting it with itself. In the note entitled 'Sarpabandha',<sup>15</sup> written to explain this uncommon Sanskrit term, Coomaraswamy returns to the symbolism of snakeskin; the notion of 'ophidian bond' (which translates *sarpa-bandha*) has its 'ethical' parallel in the parental bonds that the initiate must break in order to follow the path that leads to liberation.

#### THE INNER MEANING OF SACRIFICE.

We conclude the collection with the translation of 'Atmayajña: the sacrifice of oneself' an article in which 'the main idea is that every sacrifice is in reality a "sacrifice of oneself" through the identification of the sacrificer with the victim or the oblation'.

In this study, the mythical examples seen elsewhere are related to the internalisation of the struggle or offering that presides over sacrifice. 'On the other hand, since sacrifice is the ritual act par excellence, all others participate in its nature and are in some way integrated into it, so that it necessarily determines the entire structure of a traditional society, in which everything can therefore be considered a true and perpetual sacrifice. In this sacrificial interpretation of life, acts,

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<sup>14</sup>'The Rapt of a Nāgī: An Indian Gupta Seal', *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, vol. 35, 1937.

<sup>15</sup>'Sarpabandha', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 62, 1942.

<sup>16</sup>'Atmayajna: Self-Sacrifice', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 6, 1942.

Being essentially symbolic in nature, they must be treated as supports for contemplation (*dhiyālamba*), which presupposes that every practice implies and includes a corresponding theory.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, 'something more than pure and simple acts is required if one wishes to realise the ultimate design of which the acts are but symbols. It is explicitly stated that 'it is neither by action nor by sacrifice that He can be attained', He whose knowledge is our supreme good. At the same time, it is repeatedly stated that Sacrifice is not only performed in a spoken and visible way, but also in an 'intellectual' (*manasa*) way, silently and invisibly, within ourselves. In other words, practice is nothing more than the external support and demonstration of theory. A distinction is made between the authentic self-sacrificer (*sadyaji*, *satishad*, *atmayaji*) and the one who is content simply to be present at the sacrifice (*sattrasad*) and wait for the deity to do all the real work (*devayaji*). It is also often said that 'anyone who understands these things and does the good work, or even if they only understand (without actually performing the ritual), restores the dismembered deity to its wholeness and integrity'; it is through gnosis, not works, that this reality can be attained<sup>18</sup>.

We would like to thank the journals that have authorised us to publish translations of their articles: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston, *Speculum*, *Harvard Journal of Oriental Studies*, as well as Princeton University Press, which republished the articles that form chapters IV, VI and VIII here in *Selected Papers*. We would like to extend our particular thanks to Mr William McGuire and Mrs Margaret Case, who kindly provided us with the final text as established in the author's corrected copy. Finally, we warmly thank Dr Rama

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<sup>17</sup> These two quotations are taken from René Guénon's review, *Etudes sur l'Hindouisme*, p. 263; René Guénon, *Studi sull'induismo*, Luni Editore, Milan 1996, p. 261.

<sup>18</sup> *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme*, pp. 58–59; Italian translation, p. 58.

P. Coomaraswamy for helping us in our task by providing us with the necessary documents and authorisations.

G. L.

### 1. THE VEDIC IMAGE OF SACRIFICE

#### ANGELS AND TITANS

Introduction. Angels and Titans have the same essence:

- I. *Indra and Namuci*, the Angels and Titans were once friends. Disgust at killing one's adversary. Killing of Namuci. Namuci's head becomes the Sun. Meaning of 'rolling'.
- II. *Makha*, Makha's head. The old snake skin. The head of the Sacrifice: the *pravargya*. Assimilation of the defeated hero.
- III. *The Sacrifice of King Soma*, 'Soma was then Vitra'. The theft of Soma.
- IV. *Viśvarūpa and Vṛtra*, Viśvarūpa's death. Indra's nature. His sins as a *kshatriya*. Vitra as Indra's adversary. All things were then contained within Vitra. Prajāpati's sacrifice and the division of the Principle.
- V. *The Boar, Varāha, Emusha*. The guardian of the Titans' treasure.
- VI. *Ahi-Vṛtra*, The dismemberment of the primordial Dragon and the act of creation. The enveloping darkness and Indra's thunderbolt. Danu. Arya and Dāsa. Mutilation of the Deity. Agni and Ahi Budhnya. The 'one-footed' Sun. The symbolism of the Spider. The 'sleeping and reclining' Deity. Unity and multiplicity. The Sacrifice of Puruṣa.
- VII. *The procession is a solar rotation*, the course of the sun to the right. Janus and the opposite directions. Reverse or 'countercurrent' thinking. The 'opposite direction' is forward. The spiral movement.
- VIII. *The shedding of the snake's skin, the change of colour or clothing*, the solar transformation of snakes according to the *Ag-Vêda* and the *Brāhmana*. The divine matrix. Freeing oneself from Varuna. The malevolent aspect of Varuna. Varuna and Vitra.
- IX. *The infinity of Agni*, the snake biting its tail, image of the infinite. The 'head' of Agni. The Year, like the *Sāman*, is 'endless' (*ananta*). The continuity of the divine act.
- X. *The trace of the 'infinite' in art*, Art as imitation of celestial 'forms'. Indian iconography. The spiral motif.

*Conclusion*, The dual divine operation is in reality nothing other than the unique nature of the Supreme Identity.

#### **THE DARK SIDE OF DAWN**

Introduction. The two aspects of God. The Dragon of Darkness and the Powers of Light. - The transformation of snakes. Night and Day, or Dawn, are two sisters. The two aspects of the Sun. Incest and the kinship of manifested principles. Ushas, left-hand power. Dawn as Night: its ophidian character. The marriage of Suryā. Kṛityā. The robe of light. The marriage of Indra and Apālā. The lizard skin and the solar skin: the three purifications. Buddhist version of the story: the marriage of Sujātā. The procession and marriage of Indranī.

#### **2. ARTHURIAN SOURCES: THE SACRIFICE AND MARRIAGE OF GAUVAIN**

**SIR GAUVAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT: INDRA AND NAMUCI.** The Challenge of the Green Knight

. Solar symbolism of the severed head. The forms of The 'constrainer' who fights the solar hero. The dissection of the divine body. The bisection of the Serpent and the separation of Heaven and Earth. The rejection of the skin. Sacrificial death allows the liberation of imprisoned principles. Production and reintegration. The victim is not killed but "freed from the spell" or freed from evil. The return of the Head. The second decapitation. Dadhyañc and the "honey doctrine"

#### **3. SOLAR TRANSFORMATION: LOSING ONE'S HEAD OR CHANGING ONE'S SKIN**

**THE HEADLESS MAGICIANS AND THE ACT OF TRUTH.** The Act of Truth: a ritual and an Act of Faith. The Power of Truth. Direct invocation against the headless magicians. The meaning of decapitation.

**THE BODHISATTVA'S STRUGGLE AGAINST MĀRA.** Application to iconography.

**AN IRISH TALE:** The Son of the King of Ireland and the Giant of Loch Léin

**THE ABDUCTION OF A NĀGĪ.** Description of an Indian seal. The Eagle and the Serpent. Antagonism between light and darkness, and the dual nature of the Nāgī. Purification of the Bride of the Sun. Death inflicted

by God. Iconographic exegesis and 'aesthetic sense'. The universality of symbolism and the problem of art criticism.

**SARPABANDHA.** The 'snake bond'. Karados. The motif of intertwined snakes. Family ties and liberation.

#### 4. THE INNER MEANING OF SACRIFICE

**ATMAYAJNA:** the sacrifice of self

The fruits of sacrifice are for this world and the hereafter.

The sacrificial victim *is* the sacrificer himself. The sacrifice of King Soma. The dual nature of Soma. The killing of Vitra: victory over evil. Exegesis of the term *giri*; man is a mountain in which God is 'buried'. The symbolism of the cave and the hidden treasure. Sacrificial death and the 'reunion' of being. Feudal relationship between the breaths and the Breath. The extinction of Vitra's fire and the purification of the mind. Self-sacrifice. Identification of the 'powers of the soul' with the shoots of Soma. The meaning of inner *Agnihotra*.

The Gods defeated the Titans and became immortal by building the sacrificial Fire within themselves. Knowledge of the ritual act. Indra, first sacrificer and 'Universal Builder' (*viśvakarma*). Internalisation of sacrifice and freedom of action. Dominion over the ego by the Self. Primordial division and final reintegration. Knowing oneself.

**APPENDIX I.** *On peace*, p. 225. The 'pacification' of Soma is his *quietus* as the *varunya* principle. 'Peace' is an imposed right and an agreement: the victim consents to die.

**Appendix II** *Śeṣa, Ananta, Anantaram*, The 'residue' of the Soma sacrifice is inexhaustible: 'When the full is taken from the full, the full remains'. The serpent Ananta, like Brahma, is 'endless'. Identity of the beginning and the end. The story of Karados.

**APPENDIX III.** *Nakula*: 'O(ṗtopà%riq), The snake killer in the Veda and the Bible. Ophiomachus and icneumon. The Indian mongoose (*nakula*). Self-control in Philo of Alexandria and the solar warrior for the Egyptians. Dividing and reuniting: the 'joints' of Prajāpati and the divisions of time.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AV, *Ag-Vêda Samhitâ*. TS., *Taittirîya Samhitâ*. AV, *Atharva-Vêda Samhitâ*. VS., *Vâjasaneyi Samhitâ*. MS., *Maitrâyanî Samhitâ*. Taitt. Br., Ait. Br., PBr., KBr., Sh. Br., JBr., JUB., GBr., the Brahmanas, respectively *Taittirîya*, *Aitarêya*, *Pañcavimsha*, *Kaushîtaki*, *Shatapatha*, *Jaiminîya*, *Jaiminîya Upanishad* and *Gopatha*. Ait. Ar., *Aitarêya Aranyaka*. Sh. Ar., *Shâṅkhâyana Aranyaka*. Taitt. Ar., *Taittirîya Aranyaka*. BD., *Brihad-Dêvatâ*. BUp., CUp., Kaush. Up., KUp., MUp., Mând. Up., Mund. Up., Shvêt. Up., Taitt. Up., the Upanishads, respectively *Brihadâranyaka*, *Chândogya*, *Kaushîtaki*, *Katha*, *Maitri*, *Mândukya*, *Mundaka*, *Shvétâshvata- M* and *Taittirîya*. Manu, *Mânava Dharma Shâstra*, Ap. Sh. S., *Apastamba Shrauta Sutra*. Mbh., *Mahâbhârata*. BG., *Bhagavad-Gitâ*. HJ, *Bhâgavata Purâna*. YS., *Yoga Sutra*. AN., DN., MN. and SN., and Nikâya, respectively *Anguttara*, *Dîgha*, *Majjhima* and *Samyutta*. Dh., *Dhammapada*. J., *Jâtaka*. BC., *Buddhacarita*. SP., *Saddharma Pundarika*. BEFEO., *Bulletin of the French School of the Far East*. BM-LAB., *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston)*. BSOS., *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*. ET., *Traditional Studies*. HJAS., *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. IHQ., *Indian Historical Quarterly*. JAOS., *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. JISOA., *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*. JRAS., *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. PMPLA., *Publication of the Modern Language Association*. QJMS., *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*. SBB., *Sacred Books of Buddhism* SBE., *Sacred Books of the East*.

## 1. ANGELS AND TITANS

*Ekam vā idam vi babhūva sarvam, ṀV, VIII, 58, 2*  
*Bhrātaram varunam agna ā vavritsva, ṀV, IV, 1, 2*  
*Sarpyā vā ādityāh, PBr., XXV, 15, 4*  
*Sarpavidyā vā veda, Sh. Br., XIII, 4, 3, 9<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

The main idea developed in this study is that the Devas, the The 'Angels' and the Asuras, the 'Titans', respectively powers of Light and powers of Darkness in *the Ṁg-Vēda*, although distinct and opposed in their actions, are nevertheless of the same essence, their distinction resting in reality on their orientation, their change or their transformation, as indicated by the statement in *the Pancavimsha Brāhmana*: "The Serpents are the Suns" and the repeated use of *vrit*, "to turn", "to roll", "to be accomplished", in *the Ṁg-Vēda* and in *the Brāhmana*, with regard to the relationship between Angels and Titans. The Titan is an Angel in potential, the Angel is still a Titan by its original nature; Darkness in action is Light, Light in potential is Darkness. These two designations, *Asura* and *Dēva*, can therefore be applied to one and the same entity according to its mode of operation, as in the case of Varuna, just as this dual action can be indicated by different names: 'You (Agni) are Trita because of your inner operation' (*guhyēna vratēna, ṀV, I, 163, 3*).

We will also see that while Angels are usually depicted in human and bird form, Titans are depicted in animal form.

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<sup>1</sup> 'This One becomes the All'; "Turn this way, O Agni, your brother Varuna" (i.e. "Reveal yourself", since Agni is the "face of Varuna", *ṀV, VII, 88, 2*, Surya is the "face" of the Angels, of Mitra, of Varuna and of Agni, *I, 115, 1*); "The Serpents are the Suns"; "The science of the Serpents is the Veda".

The following translations do not vary throughout the text: *dēva*, 'Angel'; *asura*, 'Titan'; *ahi*, 'Serpent' (as well as *sarpa*, 'Serpent', sometimes without a capital letter); *Vṛtra*, 'Dragon'; *māyā*, 'Magic' and *māyin*, 'Magician'.

in particular snakes (*sarpyā*). These considerations are of fundamental importance for understanding iconography and the "cult of the snake". The thesis we have formulated is summarised in the quotations placed in the epigraph as "argument". For the moment, we will only consider the male powers; the argument of *sarpatva* in relation to the corresponding female powers will be dealt with in 'The Dark Face of Aurora'.

## 1. INDRA AND NAMUCI

The story of Indra and the Titan Namuci, 'Hook'\*, has been the subject of considerable study by Bloomfeld.<sup>2</sup> Of this struggle, we will retain only those elements that relate to our topic. Indra and Namuci, the Titan and Magician whose identity with Vitra

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\* According to Panini, Namuci means 'he who does not leave, who holds back'.

<sup>2</sup> The Story of Indra and Namuci, JAOS., 1895, p. 143 ff. I do not agree with Bloomfeld's opinion that the 'foam of the waters' which Indra takes as his weapon necessarily means 'lead'. In Sh. Br., XII, 7, 3, 3, Indra's vajra is truly made of the foam of the waters. It can also be interpreted that Indra cuts off Namuci's head with the foam 'as with a vajra', following Mahidhara in his commentary on VS., X, 33, and by analogy with PBr., XV, 5,20: 'with a cane as a vajra', and Jaim. Br., III, 266: 'a blade of grass into which Indra inserts his vajra'. In X, 61, 8, *phēna* = *rētas*. If we compare *vajrēna* (I, 103, 7) and *vīryēna* (II, 11,2), remembering that *vīrya* is not only 'courage' but also 'seed' (as Buhler translates in his version of the Laws of Manu, I, 8), we can see how - that is, with "seminal virtue" as vajra - Indra decapitates Namuci (and thus produces life). This observation is confirmed by PBr., XV, 5,20, *iśhikām vajram*, if we assume the equivalence of *iśhikā* and *vētasa*, since this term is used significantly in X, 95, 4: *shnathita vaitasēna*, cf. Sh. Br., IX, 1, 2, 22, in which bamboo (*vētasa*) is a kind of 'water' used symbolically to 'extinguish' (*shamayati*) Agni's internal ardour, that is, to 'remove his burning evil' (*shucam asya pāpmanam apahanti*, *ibid.*, 20), which is precisely what Indra does to Namuci.

It is clear that they had been good friends, meaning that *ante principium* they drank together the liquor called *surā*. A pact is made, according to which Indra will not kill Namuci 'with anything dry or wet, neither by day nor by night', therefore apparently under no circumstances.<sup>3</sup> In fact, both sides show a marked reluctance to kill their adversary; thus, in the *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, IV, 3, 4, Namuci asks, 'We are both friends', to which Indra replies, 'I will not kill'. This refusal to harm the Titans, who are in fact related to the Angels, reappears throughout traditional literature; so too does Mitra's profound disgust at the killing of Soma,<sup>4</sup> Arjuna's hesitation in *the Bhagavad-Gītā* 1.26 ff.: "I will not fight" (his adversaries, "ancestors, relatives and friends" are in fact the Vedic Titans) and Indra's withdrawal in *the Jātaka*, text I, p. 202 - in which the 'no to empire' corresponds to the 'no to authority over the three worlds' of *the Bhagavad-Gītā* (I, 35), and in both cases the power in question was that which is overthrown in AV. X, 124, 4, and finally conquered by *the Pāṇdavas* in *the Mahābhārata*.

However, Indra finds a way to kill Namuci, circumventing the terms of the agreement by means of a subterfuge. The severed head of the Titan pursues (*anvavarta*, 'rolls behind') Indra, bitterly reproaching him for having 'betrayed a friend' and for being 'the treacherous murderer of an innocent hero'.\*\* Indra makes amends for his mistake with a sacrifice (undoubtedly the *Pravargya*, during which the 'head of the

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<sup>3</sup> Indra's statement is reported in PBr., XII, 6, 8 and Sh. Br., XII, 7, 3, 1. - The undefined time is located at the conjunction (*samdhī*) of times, symbolically between Day and Night, that is, Dawn (see A.K.C., 'Symplegades', no. 16); similarly, an undefined place will be 'at the meeting place of dry and wet' (TS., VI, 4, 1, 5), 'at the junction of darkness and light' (*ibid.*, 4, 2, 4).

<sup>4</sup> Sh. Br., IV, 1, 4, 8 = TS., VI, 4, 8, 1: 'Not I, for I am the friend (*mitra*) of all'. Cf. F. Cumont, *Mithr. Mysteres*, p. 135: Mithra, whom the Sun ordered to kill the Bull, "received this cruel mission against his will".

\*\* p. 24. Taitt. Br., 1, 7, 1, 7 and PBr., XII, 6, 9, cf. Sh. Br., V, 4, 1, 9, Mbh., IX, 2436.

sacrifice" is symbolically put back in its place) and with a purifying bath in the river Arunā.

According to the *Ag-Vêda*, Indra, 'seeking a broad path for Manu, severed Namuci's head by twisting it (*avartayah*)... he turned (*mathāyan*) Namuci's head, that is, the shining jewel that turns" (*ashmānam cit svaryam vartamānam*, V, 30, 7-8); the "jewel" is the Sun.<sup>5</sup>

Note here the equivalence of  $\sqrt{vrt}$  and  $\sqrt{math}$ , 'to turn'; this root is used in the *Ag-Vêda* in relation to

root is used in *the Ag-Vêda* in relation to

1) of the procreation of Agni by Mātariśvān (= Vāyu, *Spiritus*)<sup>6</sup> at the beginning, or by the sacrificers during a similar ritual, and

2) the theft of Soma by the Eagle (*shyēna* = Agni).

The nature of the movement in question is the same in both cases: it is a rotation, hence our translation with 'to turn', since the meaning of 'to churn' only comes into play when dealing with a liquid, as in *samudra-mathana*. The most important passages concerning the production of Agni by means of a 'turning' are 1.141, 3, in which Mātariśvān 'turns it from its place of origin (*budhnāt*) from the image of Bulalo (*varpasah*), while it is hidden'.

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<sup>5</sup> See V, 47, 3, where Agni is a 'jasper gem', and VII, 104, 19, concerning Indra as the slayer of demons: 'He turned the jewel of Heaven' (pra vartaya divo ashmānam). In AV., X, 4, 5, the Sun is described as 'risen from Vitra'.

<sup>6</sup> The 'wind nature' of Mātariśvān (= Mātali) is studied by Charpentier, *Kleine Beiträge zur indoiranischen Mythologie*, 1911, pp. 68–83. Charpentier concludes (in the sense of Indian commentators): 'Ultimately, I must consider that the wind nature of Mātariśvān-Mātali is secondary to his Promethean nature, and that he is one of the "Fathers"! Mātariśvān is Vāta-Vāyu, the Wind, the auroral Wind (*vasarhā... vātah*, 1,122,3) that awakens Agni; it revives the flame of Life (VI, 6,3, in which Agni is *vātajutāsah*). Cf. the 'Spirit', the 'Wind' and the 'East Wind' in *Genesis*, I, 2 and VIII, 1, and *Exodus*, XIV, 2. The wind that rises is mentioned in almost all nativities, cf. medieval German: 'Do in der Stāl kimt liberall der kalte Wind herein' ['there, in the stable, the cold wind penetrated everywhere'].

(*guhā santam = ab intra*)<sup>7</sup> - he is therefore 'brought by the Heavenly Father' (*pituhparamāt*)-, III, 9,5, in which Mātariśvān brings 'from there to here this Agni who had been hidden (*tirohitam*) from our eyes; he leads from the place of the Angels the one who had been turned around' (*mathitam*); and VI, 16, 13, in which Atharvan "made you turn (*nir amanthat*), Agni, starting from the lotus (*pushkarāt = budhnāt* above),<sup>8</sup> from the head of Viśva (*-rūpa*),

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<sup>7</sup> *Varpas = rūpa* (Sāyana); the manifested Agni is 'the true image of his Father who dwells in him (*cf. PBr.*, VII, 6, 2)... his image, that is, his Son' (Eckhart); *cf. AV.*, X, 8, 28 (= *JUB.*, III, 11): "is he their elder or their younger? Is he their Son or their Father? In truth, it is the same Angel who entered the intellect, who was born once and is still now in the embryo," that is, as in *AV*, III, 55, 7: "Although he advances first, he remains in his origin."

<sup>8</sup> There is no need to demonstrate here (*cf. Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, 1935, pp. 19–21) that Sāyana correctly explains the lotus (*pushkara*) as the origin of existence in all worlds. However, it may be added with regard to the nickname *abja*, 'born of water', equivalent to 'lotus' (*pushkara*), that in VII, 34, 16, this epithet is applied to the Serpent: 'I celebrate with litanies the Serpent born of water (*ahjām... ahim, cf. apām napāt* = Agni), who dwells at the bottom of rivers, in the riverbed" (*budhnē nadinām rajahsu shīdan* - a rather complex expression, which certainly equates to *nadī-vritam*, applied elsewhere to Vitra), a serpent who in the following verse is more specifically identified with Ahi Budhnya. The resulting exegesis is optimal, because we can say that if Ahi is *abja* - not as a lotus, but here equal to the lotus, as it is at the origin of Agni - Agni born from the lotus is *abjaja*. This is consistent with the passage in which Agni is found 'where, from the waters, he crawled onto the lotus leaf (*adbhya upodāsriptom pushkaraparnē, Sh. Br.*, VII, 3, 2, 14), which can also be compared to the narrative of the procession of Arbuda Kādravēya (son of Kadru, i.e. the Serpent Queen, and probably identical to Ahi, in any case an *ahi*); "The Serpent Prophet had cast a spell by which he advanced crawling, and in fact this is called 'the crawling advance of Arbuda'" (*sarparshi mantrakrit yēnopoddsar-pat... arbudodāsarpani nāma, Ait. Br.*, VI, 1, in which Arbuda is also called a poisonous snake or basilisk, *āshvīshah*, the Sanskrit equivalent of the Avestan *azhi-visha* in Azhivishapa; according to *PBr.*, IX, 8, 7-8, *cf. IV*, 9, 4-6, we realise that the *mantra* in question is taken from *AV*, X, 189, since

the priest" (*mūrdhno vishvashya vāghatah*). The passages concerning the production of Soma by churning are

1. I, 93, 6, in which 'the Eagle mixes (or 'stirs', *amathnāt*) the Soma from the Mass' (*pari shyêno adrêh*) and
2. IX, 77, Soma "which the Eagle snatched from Heaven" (*yam divas pari shyêno mathāyat*).

These latter quotations are to be understood in the light of *the leitmotif*

'Soma was Vitra' (*Sh. Br., passim*).

## 2. MAKHA

References to a Titan Makha who was driven out by the Bhigu (*AV, IX, 101, 13*), or whose head was cut off by Indra (*X, 171, 2*), presuppose the versions of *the Brāhmana* in which Makha's head becomes the Sun. In *X, 171, 2*, Indra 'lifts the furious head from Makha's corpse', which precedes the prayer in stanza 4 asking for 'the Sun, Vasha, who had been hidden from the Angels' to return from the west to the east: 'the furious head of Makha' corresponds to 'the furious head of Vitra' cut off by Indra with his hundred-branched thunderbolt (*VIII, 6, 6*); 'Vasha', this 'equine Vasha' who is helped by the Ashvins (*1.112.10*), and in *VIII.46.33*, is clearly the Sun; the 'spoils' correspond to the 'black skin that Indra detests' (*IX, 73, 5*), the 'old skin of the Serpent' of *IX, 86, 44*, in which Soma, 'just like Ahi, crawls away from his old skin' (*ahir najūrñām ati sarpati tvacam*), in accordance with the passage from *the Pancavimsha Brāhmana, XXV, 15.4*, in which the snakes, 'shedding their old skin (*hitvājirnām tvacam*), advance crawling (*atisarpanti*), rejecting the

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It is "by means of the verse *sarparājhyā* that Arbuda withdraws his rotten skin" (*mritām tvacam apāhata*).

On the lotus (= the earth) as the birthplace of Agni, see also *VIII, 72,11*, where the soma is "poured into the lotus" (*nishiktam pushkarē*), and *Sh. Br., VIII, 6,3, 7, yo- nir vaipushkara-parnam. AV, VII, 33,11*, in which Vasistha (Agni) *brah-man... jā- tah pushkarē*, corresponds to *GBr., I, 16, Brahmā ha vai brahmānam pushkarē asrjiè*. The fact that Agni crawls out of the waters to climb onto the lotus corresponds to the Gnostic symbol of the nymph and the image.

Death and become Āditya'. We can already note, in advance, that the bisection of the Serpent can be compared to the separation of Heaven and Earth.

Let us now consider the Brāhmana versions. In *the Pañcavimśa*, VII, 5,6, Agni, Indra, Vāyu and Makha, craving glory (*yashas*), participate in a sacrificial session. Makha obtains glory but, when he leans on his bow, the tip suddenly releases and cuts off his head, 'which becomes the *pravargya*, because Makha is in fact the sacrifice'. This *pravargya* (or *pravarga*) is also called, in the ritual, *mahāvira* or *gharma*,\* and 'the head of the sacrifice'. In the *Taittirīya Aranyaka*, V, 1, 1-5, Makha is called Vaishnava (Saumya in *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1, 2, 17); the bow "throws (the head) making it turn" (*udavartat*) and this then turns around the Sky and the Earth;\*\* "the fact that it 'advanced turning' (*prāvartata*, i.e. 'progressed', cf. *pravritti*) is at the origin of the term *pravargya*; the term *gharma* is related to its burning, and *mahāvira* to its great heroism" <sup>(9)</sup>. This passage from *the Taittirīya Brāhmana*, II, 6,13,1, *sa bibhēda valam magham* (cf. *AV*, III, 34,10) suggests the identity of the personified "Cave", Vala, and Makha; the fact that the *lectio* is *magham* and not *makham* (cf. *AV*, IX, 20, 7) emphasises the union of reckless courage, wealth and generosity in the ideal hero.

The exposition is more complete in *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, XIV, 1, 1; the *Dēvas* present are Indra, Agni, Soma, Makha and Viṣṇu (perhaps it should be read as Soma-Makha or Makha-Viṣṇu). It is the head of Viṣṇu

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\* p. 26 [The terms *mahāvira* (literally 'great hero') and *gharma* ('heat', 'inner fire') refer in the ritual to the cauldron used for the *Pravar-gya* - on this rite, see *infra*, pp. 106-107. Mythically, the three terms are connected to the head of Makha, which, when severed, becomes the Sun].

\*\* p. 26. *Dyāvāprithivīanuprāvartata*, cf. *AV*, V, 30, 8, *vartamānam rodasi*. *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1,3,4-6, identifies the *Mahāvira* vase with Yama, Makha and Sūrya, since each of them 'shines down there'.

<sup>9</sup> In his assimilation to the Sun, Makha (or his head) is therefore identical to *Pravargya*, *gharma* and *mahāvira*; cf. *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 2, 2, 12-13, and the beginning of the following note.

to be cut off by the bow, whose string is pink with ants, and this head becomes 'that Sun there'; the rest of the body remains lying on the ground (*pravrij*).<sup>10</sup> Indra attacks the fallen 'hero' (*mahāvira*), swallows him (*tam paryagrihnāt*, in other words devours him, or rather

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<sup>10</sup> It is from *pravrij* that *Sh. Br.* derives *Pravargya*, an etymology preferable to that provided by *Taitt. Ar.*, cited above. In *R V*, V, 30,15, it is said that the *gharma* is inflamed *pravrijē*, 'for the Pravargya'. Closely related to *appravrij* is the Vedic expression *pari vrij*, 'to throw back', 'to throw away', so often used in connection with Agni (*AV*, II, 13, 12, II, 15, 7, IV, 30, 16, and probably in the same sense in I, 112, 8). In I, 116, 24, Soma is "as Rebha, *pravriktam*", while in X, 8, 9, *para vrij*, in the form *pari vark*, is used in reference to the beheading of Viśvarūpa; from which we can deduce that the expressions *parāvrij* and *parāvrikta*, applied to Agni and Soma, refer to the deposition of the body after beheading. The terms are associated with the expression "to enable the blind to see, the lame to walk" and if, as we suppose, this means "to perform the procession of the Sun", which had been, so to speak, a "blind worm", the connection between the ideas is evident; since the Sun is the "eye" of Varuna, Varuna cannot be considered blind unless the Sun is still in darkness, *tamasā apagālham*, *guhā nihitam* etc. (i.e. before the decapitation of the Serpent), and 'crawling', which is expressed by saying that the Sun was originally 'without feet' (*apad*, often synonymous with 'serpent', cf. *Sh. Br.*, I, 6, 3, 9: 'since he (Soma) was without feet, he was Ahi', and this is so until Varuna 'makes him feet so that he can advance', I, 24, 8). On the same symbolism applied to "feminine" principles, see "The Dark Face of Aurora" [here chap. II]. For a more complete examination of the term *vrij* or *varj* in the *Ag-Vēda*, see Bloomfield, *JAOS.*, 1915, p. 273 ff.; the first meaning is 'to do', hence the expression 'I am done' = 'I am lost'. *Para vrij* also corresponds to *parāsa* in IV, 18, 8 and to *parāsyat* in X, 72, 8.

With regard to the definitions of Agni as *prishnir ashmā* and of the Sun as *vartamvnam ashmānam* (hence the use in the ritual of a 'dia-spro stone', *ashmānamprishnim*, representing the 'Sun', *Sh. Br.*, IX, 2, 3, 14), it can be noted that these formulas, linked to the ophidian character of the deity *ah intra*, explain the origin of what today (insofar as the meaning has been forgotten) is strictly speaking a superstition, namely the idea that there is a gem in the head of snakes.

drinks, since in reality it is Soma), and thus 'became *Makhavat*, since *Makhavat* is the one who, metaphysically (*parokshēna*), is *Maghavat*;\* and moreover, 'Makha is identical to Viṣṇu... the sacrifice' (*ibid.*, 12-13).<sup>11</sup> It is clear that expiation is required [the killing of *Vitra*, comparable to that of *Viśvarūpa*, is in fact one of the sins (*kilbishāni*)

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\* \* p. 27 [*Maghavat*, 'Powerful' or 'Generous', is an epithet of Indra].

<sup>11</sup> By devouring *Makha-Soma*, or rather, depending on the context, by drinking it, Indra takes possession of the enviable qualities of the defeated hero through an incorporation that is both sacrificial and Eucharistic; cf. *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 2, 2, 42: 'We eat you, god *Gharma*'; *John*, VI, 56: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him', and *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry*: 'Man can eat the body of Christ, that is, become the body of Christ'. This was clearly the principle of cannibalism, and it is noteworthy that it survived in the rites of Vedic and Christian communion.

The *Brāhmaṇa* texts on this subject are foreshadowed by more concise Vedic passages. According to IX, 20, 7, it is clear that *Makha* is the sacrifice and the necessary cause of its effectiveness: 'You, *Soma*, go joyfully (*krīluh*) into the filter, just as *Makha*, generous with gifts (*makho na manhayuh*), you bring praise to his heroic virtues' (*suvīryam*); it can also be noted that *krīluh* (cf. the use of *krīl* net *AV*) implies the same as *lilāvatārana*, in other words a voluntary sacrifice [on the use of the terms *lilā* and *krīl*, see the article by A.K.C., '*Lilā*', *JAOS*, 1941, French translation *ET.*, 1975, p. 13] In IX, 17, 6, *Soma*

is the "head of the sacrifice" (*mārdhan yajnasya*). In IX, 5-6, *Soma* is explicitly assimilated to *Indra* and *Prajāpati*, and, based on the expressions used, to *Agni* as in I, 13. In I, 134, 1, VIII, 7, 27 and VIII, 46,25, only *Vāyu*, or the *Dēvas* all together, are invited to 'share *Makha*' (*makhasya* above, or perhaps better: 'to take part in the sacrifice') and to 'be generous' (*dāvanē*) in turn; the fact that everyone actually shares *Makha's* virtue can be deduced from the use of *makha*, 'brave' (in battle, cf. *giganto-machia*) as an epithet not only of *Indra* (III, 34, 2) but also of *Pūshan*, *Sāvitrī*, *Agni*, the *Ashvins* and the *Marats*.

A faint reflection of this doctrine is found incidentally in Pali Buddhism, where it is explained that 'Indra is called *Maghavā* because, in a human state, he had been a *Brāhmaṇa* with this name' (*Dialogues of the Buddha*, 2, p. 297, cit. *SN.*, I, 230 and *J.*, IV, 403 = V, 137). *Mukha*, in Pali, means 'frown', 'ruthless character'.

of Indra, *Ait. Br.*, VII, 28]. But only Dadhyañc Atharvan knows how to replace the head of the sacrifice, and Indra, perfectly satisfied with what has been done, forbids him to reveal it.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dadhyañc himself must undergo decapitation, after which his head is replaced with that of a horse. This decapitation is comparable not only to that which allows the procession of Agni-Surya, and which is followed by a symbolic restitution in the ritual, but also to that of Ganesha - who, in Shivaite mythology, is linked to Skand Kumāra, as Indra is to Agni in *the AV (Brahmā-kshatra relationship)* - and who, having lost his head, receives that of an elephant.

The doctrine of the 'mystery', of 'honey', that is, of 'soma' (*cf.* X, 68, 8, *ashnā-pinaddam madhu*) is that of the authentic meaning of the sacrificial rite; its significance, as an act of expiation and reintegration, is the repair of the work of disintegration with which the world began. This mystery, although represented in the ritual, must be revealed only to those who possess the required qualifications (*Sh. Br.*, *loc. cit.*).

The nature of the "tasty doctrine" is nevertheless sufficiently indicated in *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1,2,18, and even more clearly in *TS.*, VII, 3,1,4: having prepared three Mahāvira pots, one addresses one of them with the formula:

"You are the head of Makha," and to the other silently; it is explained: "Through everything that is done (*karoti*) with the Yajus formulas, this aspect (*rūpam*) of Prajāpati is constituted (*samskaroti*, 'integrated'), which is manifested and finite (*niruktash caparimitash co*), and through everything that is done silently (*tushnīm*), its unmanifested and infinite aspect is constituted," so that by acting in both ways, Prajāpati is constituted in his entirety (*sarvam kristnam*) and thus reintegrated. This explanation applies even more to "silent recitation", for example *manasā stavate* in *TS.*, VII, 3,1, 4, *cf.* *Sh. Br.*, II, 1, 4,29 and III, 9, 4, 6; *cf.* also the *orationes secretae* in Christian sacrifice (the Mass) [see A.K.C., "The Vedic Doctrine of "Silence", *Indian Culture*, 1937]. The distinction, in later practice, between subtle (*sukshma*) and gross (*sthula*) worship is analogous. As for ritual, it should not be forgotten that 'the observance of the rule is to ritual as it was to creation' (*Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1, 2, 26 and 3, 1, 36 etc.); and since 'creation' is, strictly speaking, eternal [*cf. ET.*, 1936, p. 13], we can say about sacrifice as it is considered in *the Brāhmaṇa* what has been said about Christian sacrifice (the Mass): 'It is not constrained or limited by

Despite the prohibition, Dadhyañc confides the secret to the Ashvins (as in *AV*, 1,116,12) and they instruct the *Devas* on the correct use of the Mahāvira vessel, to 'put the head of the sacrifice back in its place, restoring the integrity of the sacrifice'; therefore, the Ashvins were allowed to take part in the sacrifice.<sup>13</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, XIV, 1,2, 17, gives the formulas for making the vessel, whose parts correspond to those of a head, and when it is finished, one addresses it in these terms: 'You are the head of Makha'.<sup>14</sup>In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana*, VI, 5, the Sun is emanated (*asrijyata*) from the head of Prajāpati:

"He<sup>15</sup>cut off his head" and "the latter became the *drona-kalasha*". The identity of Makha-Saumya and Prajāpati is equally clear in *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1, 2, in which both are equally the sacrifice. Apart from the evidence of this comparison, in both cases the reintegration of the creator is always the main purpose of the ritual, when this creator, separated from the manifestation of creatures, has fallen and cannot rise again.

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conditions of time and space' (B. Frost, *The Meaning of Mass*, 1934, p. 63), and its significance, what has been said about the Jewish sacrifice:

"The impulse of sacrifice sustains the worlds," and it is thanks to the impulse of smoke below that "the lamp (i.e., the Sun) is kindled above" (*Zohar*, section Vayehi, II, 374, in the translation by Sperling and Simon). Here, as elsewhere, the Vedic point of view is by no means unique.

<sup>13</sup> In which they did not originally take part, as we know from the story of Cyavāna (P5r., XIV., 6,10, *Sh. Br.*, IV, 1,5, *Jaim. Br.*, III, 120 ff. etc.), whom we identify with Prajāpati.

<sup>14</sup> Formula taken from *VS.*, XXXVII, 8, while *Sh. Br.* adds: 'for in truth it is the head of Makha Saumya', that is, of that Makha who is or was truly Soma, cf. next page 'Soma was Vitra'.

<sup>15</sup> 'He' meaning 'Indra'. In *Sh. Br.*, IV, 4, 3, 4 (Kānva), *dèvāh... vyagrihnata* (Mādhyamdina) *udvavarta*.

\*\* p. 27. For Prajāpati, see *Sh. Br.*, I, 6, 3,35-37, *PBr.*, IV, 10,1, VI, 5, 1 etc.

### 3. THE SACRIFICE OF KING SOMA

In *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, IV, 4, 3, 4, we read: 'Soma was then Vritra.<sup>16</sup>When the Angels struck him, his head rose up turning (*udvavarta*) and became the *drona-kalasha*', that is, the soma vessel.<sup>17</sup> The fact that the head becomes a vessel explains why certain vessels are called *kapāla*,

'cup made from a skull', in rituals and also in other circumstances. The 'vessel of the Angels' would be the Sun, rather than the Moon, which would then be the vessel of the Asuras.

The preparation of soma represented a real sacrifice by King Soma, as shown in *Sh. Br.*, IV, 3, 4, 1, *cf.* IV, 4, 5, 21, in which the pressing of the stems is referred to as the killing of Soma; the dry stems are symbolically regenerated by immersion in water, which is equivalent to sap (*rasa*), which has the function of an expiatory act (*cf.* III, 9, 4, 2 and 7). The real nature of the sacrifice is also indicated by the use of the root *sham* ['to appease' or 'to kill', *cf. infra*, p. 225] in *AV*, V, 43, 4 'these arms that "give the coup de grâce" to Soma' (*somasya yê shamitārā*).

If we recall the equivalence between *vrit* and *math*, it is clear that the crushing of the soma stalks reflects the passion of Makha-Saumya or Vritra. The obtaining of soma is presented as a theft committed by the Eagle (Agni) for the benefit of Indra, or as a theft committed by Indra himself (another of his *kilbishāni*), since Soma, as King or as Tree, was originally in the hands of the Titans (and well guarded by them - *cf.* X, 97, in which Soma is the king of plants), which is explained by the fact that their existence long preceded that of the Angels.<sup>18</sup> As for the sacrifice,

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<sup>16</sup> See *Sh. Br.*, III, 4,3,13, III, 9,4,2, IV, 1,4, 8, IV, 2, 5,15. In *AV*, 1,191, 6, Soma is called the 'brother' of snakes.

<sup>17</sup> See *PBr.*, VI, 5, 7: 'The *drona-kalasha* is the vessel of the Angels' [i.e. the Sun; in this text (*ibid.*, 1) it refers to the head of Prajāpati. See the following section (4) with Viśvarūpa and Vritra].

<sup>18</sup> As is well known, the Titans were the first possessors of Soma, great drinkers of soma before the birth of the Angels; 'the Gandharva protects the dream (of Soma)' (IX, 83.4), which is why the Eagle (Agni) brings it to Indra.

it can also be noted that the terms *soma* and *puruṣa* are precisely assimilated in X, 51, 8, where 'the Person of the herbs' who receives Agni when he accepts the priesthood can be none other than King Soma.

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or Indra takes it for himself (*AV*, *passim*). Soma as a tree is the king of plants, the Tree of Life distinct from the Tree of Death, *cf. Genesis*, III, 22: 'Let him not take from the tree of life, lest he eat of it and live forever'. As a liquid, obtained when the 'tree' is sacrificed, soma is the sap (*rasa*), the blood of the tree, the Water of Life. On the other hand, the libation of soma in earthly rituals is never that wine of life which, thanks to the intoxication it causes, allows Indra to defeat the Titans and bring about universal emanation; it is only a drink of immortality by analogy, *rasa*, *amrita*. Expressions such as *parvatāvriḍh* (IX, 46, 1) or *nābhā prithivyā girishu* (IX, 82, 3, *cf. V*, 43, 4, IX, 72, 7 and Yashna XLII, 5) do not at all indicate a spatial habitat that existed at the beginning, as if this place had subsequently been lost.

Soma is 'lost' in another sense: 'They imagine they are drinking soma itself when the plant is squeezed, but what the Brahmins mean by Soma, no one ever tastes, no one who lives in this world' (X, 85, 3-4, *cf. AV*, XIV, 1, 5). What the Brahmins mean by Soma is certainly not a physical liquid. In this respect, the explicit statement of a doctrine of transubstantiation (in *Ait. Br.*, VII, 31) is significant: 'it is metaphysically (*parokshēna*) that one obtains to drink the soma, one does not literally taste it (*pra-tyaksham*). Nyagrodha is metaphysically King Soma; the *kshatrya* metaphysically obtains the appearance of spiritual power (*Brāhmana rūpam*), in some way thanks to the priest, consecration and invocation." Soma, *amrita*, is *divi... gulham*, *AV*, VI, 44, 23-24. *cf. Sh. Br.*, III, 6, 2, 10-11, in which the approach to Soma is accomplished only through initiation (*dikshā*) and ardour (*tapas*). On transubstantiation, *cf. again KBr.*, XII, 5: 'The *botri* addresses Soma: 'With my mind (*manas*) I eat you...': Thus he eats this supreme food on which the devas feed"; *BUp.*, I, 5,1: "He who knows this indestructibility, he eats food with pre-eminence (*pratīkēna*), reaches the Gods, lives on ambrosia"; *Ait. Br.*, II, 22: 'He must recite: "The divine drink of Soma here, at the sacrifice, on the flowered carpet, on the altar, we all participate in this." Thus his spiritual self is not excluded from the libation of Soma'.

It is "in the manner of Ahi that he (Soma) abandons his old skin, crawling away, and he is like a dark and sturdy steed that runs and plays,"\* which is consistent with "Soma was Vitra" and with the definition of Soma as "Boar" (*varāha*, IX, 97, 7).

#### 4. VIŚVARŪPA AND VṚTRA

Viśvarūpa, 'All-Form', is both the name of a Titan and an epithet applied to his father *Tvaṣṭr*, the creator *par excellence*. In *AV*, II, 11, 19, X, 8, 7-9 and X, 99, 6 (we have combined these data), we see Trita Āptya (i.e. Agni *ab intra*, burning to manifest himself), allied with Indra, who kills Viśvarūpa with three heads,<sup>19</sup> six eyes, seven rays, and then violently tears off (*paravark*) or carries away (*ava... bharat*) his heads and raids his cattle. In II, 11, 19, Indra hands Viśvarūpa over to 'Trita, who is on our side', and we can deduce that he is beheaded, because in the next verse the Sun is set in motion (*avartayat tūryo na cakram*).<sup>20</sup> In X, 99, 6, the

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\* p. 28. *AV*, IX, 86, 44, *ahir na jūrnām ati tarpati tvacam atyo na krilann asarad vṛshà harih*.

<sup>19</sup> The three heads of Viśvarūpa, like those of the Sun, may correspond to the three worlds, cf. *JUB.*, III, 11-12, where it is "with three turns" (*āvṛdhbir*) of the Gay atra (Sāman) that Puruṣa conquers Heaven, the intermediate world and this world, together with all that they contain; the Gāyatra itself is *tryāvrit*. The use of *āvrit* corresponds, here and elsewhere, to the use of the root *vrit*, as does the particular meaning of *āvritta*, equivalent to *pravritta*, which means a coming into the worlds.

<sup>20</sup> The relationship between Indra and the Sun has sometimes been misinterpreted; strictly speaking, his situation is that of Lucifer before the fall. Indra is never at war with his companions, the *devas*. It is for them that he is begged to 'push the wheel of the Sun towards us' (*pra sūrash cakram vrihatàd abhikè*, IV, 16, 12), it is from the Titans - and from Kutsa, then a warrior - that Indra 'takes the solar wheel' (*cakram mushàya... suryam*, IV, 30,4), just as he 'lowers' (*ni khidat*) the wheel and 'withdraws' (*apa dhayi*) Universal Life (*vi-shvāyu*, i.e. Agni) from the Great Demon (*maho druhah*, IV, 28, 2); a similar act by Indra is the theft of the Word (*vācam mushayati*, I, 130, 9), whose restitution is demanded and accomplished (X, 109). In X, 23, 5, if he 'wins'

epithets are very indicative, but the *dāsa* is called Boar (*va-raba*), without any other name.

In the more extensive versions of *the Taittirīya Samhitā*, II, 4, 12, and 5, 1 ff., Viśvarūpa is the son of Tvaṣṭṛ by 'a sister of the Titans'. Viśvarūpa has already been put to death and Tvaṣṭṛ prepares a soma sacrifice from which Indra is excluded. But Indra appropriates the soma by force, as reported in many other texts.<sup>21</sup> Tvaṣṭṛ stirs

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(*jayat*) the Sun as in a game of chance, is to the detriment of the Titans; in any case, he does not defeat the Sun, as Macdonnel claims (*Vedic Mythology*, p. 31). Indra's great revolt against his Father, which causes the overthrow of the kingdom, takes place at the beginning. Nevertheless, in *the Ṛg-Vēda* Indra generally observes the legitimate relations between *kshatra* and *Brahmā*, acts as Faithful Defender (*vratapd*), his courage and loyalty to his companions are not those of a cowardly individual; the double Indrāgni even maintains the primordial union of kingship and priesthood in one and the same person. In later literature (*Bṛihad-Dēvatā*, VII, 54-58), however, particularly in Buddhism, the possibilities inherent in the principle of temporal power are developed; Indra becomes Mammon. Obviously, this Indra, Lucifer and Satan should not be confused with the "malevolent" power of Darkness, Death (*Mṛtyu, mura*), the Deity, the "malevolent Father". The entire universe separates them, just as it separates the "outer darkness" from the Darkness *within*, "inaccessible to all illumination, hidden from all knowledge" (Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ep. ad Caium Monach.*, quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 92, 1), but of which St. Thomas Aquinas says that it is called "Darkness" "because of its extreme splendour", that is, its *blinding* light. Indra, although of titanic birth like every other *deity*, remains an Angel even in his pride, being like Satan "fallen in nature, not in grace". The Father-Dragon, on the other hand, was not and never could be "naturalised": it is he who, by his nature, naturalises all things.

<sup>21</sup> Another of Indra's numerous *kilbishāni*. In *AV*, III, 48, 4, 'When at birth he defeated (his father) Tvaṣṭṛ, Indra seized (*āmushya*) the soma and drank it'; in VI, 44,22, Indu (Indra, as in II, 22) 'takes away the weapons (*ayudhāni*) and magical arts (*māyāh*) from his malevolent father' (*pitur ashivasya* - note the opposite idea in X, 124,2-4, where Agni, although he chose Indra and abandoned his Father, is said to be malevolent and defines

(*avartayat*) the rest of the soma on the sacrificial fire, saying: 'Hail! Increase your growth as Indra's adversary'. He is born and given the name Vitra, both because Tvaṣṭṛ 'turned' him in the fire, and (more correctly) because he 'envelops' these worlds.<sup>22</sup> Vitra casts a spell on Agni and Soma, who thus fall under the power of *asurya*. Indra and also Tvaṣṭṛ (as in *AV*, I, 52, 10, and I, 80, 14) are alarmed. Tvaṣṭṛ entrusts his thunderbolt to Indra<sup>23</sup> and he wields it to kill Vitra, but Agni and Soma cry out that they are 'in him'. Indra makes Vitra yawn, and Agni and Soma flee from his mouth.<sup>24</sup> Heaven and Earth are extracted by making a promise of light to the former and beautiful forms (*rupāni*) to the latter.<sup>25</sup> It is

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benevolent Father). "What does Indra demand of his Mother, of his Progenitor Father who begot him? (Question) that which instantly provokes his fury" (drinking the soma), IV, 17,12. The violent rupture of the pre-existing harmony caused by Indra and the brutal treatment he inflicts on his parents (as in IV, 18), although in accordance with the providence of the spiritual Father [*dhitim pitur... parasya*, X, 8, 7), become grounds for reproach; because of these offences, and many others - and although he acts out of infallible necessity and 'does what must be done' — Indra is sometimes excluded from the sacrifice, for example in *Ait. Br.*, VII, 28, where his wrongdoing towards Bhaspati and Viśvarūpa is recalled, and 'because he stole the soma of Tvaṣṭṛ, even today temporal power (*kshatra*) is devoid of soma'. Agni, on the other hand, is the Redeemer (*kilbhasprit*, X, 71, 10).

<sup>22</sup> It seems preferable to link the names Vitra and Varuna to the root √*vr*, 'to cover', 'to enclose', 'to conceal', rather than to √*vr̥t*.

<sup>23</sup> As is more often stated, for example *AV*, I, 85, 9; but in VI, 44, 22 Hindu (Indra) "steals his weapons and magic from his hostile father".

<sup>24</sup> In X, 90, 13-14, Agni and Indra come from the mouth of Puruṣa; Puruṣa's head is 'converted' (*sam avartata*) into Dyauh, here evidently the Sun <sup>25</sup> Similarly, in *PBr.*, XVIII, 9, 6, it is from Vitra that the Sky obtains its lights (*nakshatrāni*) and the Earth its different aspects (*citrini rūpāni*). The *rūpāni* are therefore the 'things of each kind', the 'works of distinction, the ornaments'; cf. the *pururūpā vapūmshī* of the Earth in *AV*, III, 55,5, *vishvarūpāh-pashuvah* in VIII, 100, 11, *sarvāni rūpāni* in *Ait. Br.*, V, 23, in relation to the Earth as Queen Serpent, and *Jaim. Br.*, I, 160, cf. *TS.*, II, 4, 6, where the Earth is *citrā* ['multicoloured']. The division of Vitra, of Puruṣa, of

Indra's advice to Viṣṇu is very significant: "Come, let us take possession of that by means of which he (Vitra) is these worlds" (*voyēna ayam idam*). In *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, I, 6, 3, the sequence of actions is comparable; the soma is thrown into the fire: 'Because they turned it (*var-tamānah*), it became the Dragon; because it had no feet (*apad*), it became the Serpent'.<sup>26</sup> Everything, the Angels, the sciences, glory, food and beauty come from Vitra, who lay deprived of his contents like an empty sack, "restricted and emptied".<sup>27</sup> Indra is ready to kill him, but the other says to him: "Do not do it, because now you are what I (was before); just share me".<sup>28</sup> Indra cuts him in two (*dvêdhānvabhinnat*), making the part that had contained the soma into the moon, and the other, the titanic part, into the belly of all creatures - which makes men say: 'Vitra is in us'.<sup>29</sup>

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Prajāpati is the act of creation that involves the separation of Heaven and Earth. On the corresponding division of 'lights' and 'beauties', i.e. of uniform light, 'which carries images', and exemplified phenomena, see A.K.C., *The Vedic Doctrine of Exemplarism*, trans. Frane., E.J., 1976, p. 49].

<sup>26</sup> On *apad*, which designates the serpent, as opposed to *ekapad*, *padavi*, see 'The dark face of Aurora'.

<sup>27</sup> The fact that Vitra is 'emptied' corresponds to the expression *aricyata*, used in relation to Prajāpati when he created creatures, for example *PBr.*, IV, 10, *prajā asrijata so 'ricyata*; and to the words of Meister Eckhart:

'The sum of what he knows, the sum of what he can offer', which is evidently his finite and visible aspect, his 'face', since only a 'quarter' of his being is 'in becoming' (*abhavat*, *AV*, X, 90, 3-4), 'three quarters remain hidden' (*trinipadani nihitā guhā*, *AV*, II, 1, 2).

<sup>28</sup> It appears from most texts that the Dragon was not put to death, but seriously wounded and rendered powerless; this is also the case with Prajāpati, the Sacrifice, who 'survived this passion' (*tām va ayushārtim atyajivat*, *PBr.*, VI, 5). [Similarly, Isis refuses to destroy Typhon: 'she gave him his freedom' (*cf. Sh. Br.*, V, 2, 3, 7); Horus 'did not destroy Typhon entirely, but took away his strength and activity', Typhon is castrated (Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 19 and 55)].

<sup>29</sup> Food is the *sine qua non* of all existence in any form, since *anna-maya* is the support of all forms. For this reason, it is said that

In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana*, VII,5,20, Uśanas Kāvya, 'who was the priest of the Titans', is persuaded to switch sides to the Angels, who are thus aided by spiritual power, which explains the allusion: 'when Uśanas came to you' (*AV*, V, 31, 8).<sup>30</sup> In the *Jai-minīya Brāhmana*, I, 125, Bhiaspati (another son of Tvaṣṭṛ, *RV*, II, 23, 17) is the priest of the Angels, Uśanas Kāvya that of the Titans; the victory of the Angels is assured when the latter switches sides.

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says of Puruṣa, the Lord of Life, that 'he rises through food' (X, 90, 2); since food is the first manifestation of the Spirit, 'the vital breath is modified (-*maya*) by food' (*MUp.*, VI, 11).

The fact that Vitra is 'within us', responding to the concept of fire or digestive combustion, suggests an interesting parallel. It is through the 'stomach' that we are encouraged to consume 'food' (as *Sh. Br.*, I, 6, 3, 17), and if the stomach is identified with the Dragon or the Serpent, then it can be said that when the 'bird' eats the sweet fruit of the fig tree (*svādu pippalam alti*, I,164,20), 'the Serpent tempted him' - as in *Genesis*,

"The Serpent deceived me, and I ate." On the contrary, fasting can be considered not as a moral exercise, but as a metaphysical ritual, an imitation of the other "bird" that "does not eat from the tree" but merely looks at it (*abbi cākashīti*, *ibid.*). [According to Ibn 'Arabi, "Hunger brings knowledge of Satan" (*La Parure des Abdāl*, *l'T.*, 1950, p. 302). The concept of "food" clearly has numerous applications, covering all objects of desire, since their acquisition determines the specific behaviour of the individual. Vitra's identification with the belly—the similarity between the intestines and the snake is obvious—corresponds to the widespread conception in antiquity that the 'bowels' are the seat of emotions, i.e. desire, distinct from the 'heart', within which intellectual operations take place.

<sup>30</sup> Here, 'persuasion' – which is often corruption – corresponds to 'conversion' carried out elsewhere in a more violent manner; in *AV*, I.148.1, for example, it is Agni who 'seizes with a strong grip' (*mathīd yad im viṣtah*) to force him to be 'the priest of many aspects, the priest of all Angels' (*hotāram vishvāpsum vishvadēvyam*, where *vi-shvāpsum* - *vaiśhvaraupyam*). Cf. Agni as "Titanic Priest" (VII, 30,3), the Sun as "Titanic Priest of the Angels" (VIII, 101,12). See also *AV*, X, 124.

their part. In the version of *the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, VI, chapters VII-XIII, Vitra behaves with great nobility, but accuses Indra of having committed the murder of a Brahmin by killing his *guru*, Viśvarūpa, here Vitra's brother. Indra takes 360 days to cut off Vitra's head, an act that evidently constitutes a cyclical 'Year', during which Time, so to speak, manifests itself gradually. This effectively echoes the narrative of *the Tait-tirīya Samhitā*, in which Viśvarūpa is a Brahmin and Indra is accused of killing a Brahmin, a mistake for which he bears the consequences for a 'Year', that is, until the end of a cycle, until the «Judgement Day».\*

The version of Tvaṣṭṛ's sacrifice given in the *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, II, 2,4,1-8 is of particular interest, and clarifies very well its importance as a creative act. Here the name of Prajāpati replaces that of Tvaṣṭṛ, and the concept of creation by generation replaces that of *creation by artem*. Prajāpati is alone at the beginning and wishes to multiply; he exhales Agni, the sacrificial fire, as one might expect from the one who is in reality the Dragon. The Earth<sup>31</sup> is 'bald', without vegetation. Fire is devouring. Prajāpati is afraid: then his Omnipotence (*mahimā*), or his Word (*vāc*), abandons him (*apacakrāma*); in other words, the First Principle splits, separating Essence and Nature, Heaven and Earth, which had been united. Prajāpati 'tries to make an offering in himself' (*ātmann ēva ābutim īsbā*); he 'rubs' (*udamṛṣta*), and rubbed his hands together so hard that even today the palms of his hands are hairless (*cf. BUp.*, I, 4, 6). He thus obtains (*vivēda*, 'found') an offering of 'milk' (*payas*), which evidently corresponds to the soma in *TS.*, mentioned above. He throws this 'milk' into the fire and

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\* p. 30 [See A.K.C., 'Mahā-Pralaya and Last Judgement', *The Cultural World*, 1932],

<sup>31</sup> *Prithivi* = *urvarā*, also without hair in *AV*, VIII, 91, 5-6; *cf. PBr.*, XX, 14, 5.

\*\* p. 30. As in *BUp.*, 1.4.3, *cf. 17*, *ātmānam dvēdhāpātayat*; *JUB.*, 1.54, *tē vyadravatām*; *AV*, X, 27.23, *krintatrād eshām* etc.

plants grow from it. He rubs again and obtains another gush. He hesitates to make an offering of this other milk (which corresponds to the 'rest of soma' in *the TS*). Then his Omnipotence speaks: 'Make the offering!' (*juhudhi*). He throws the 'milk' into the fire for the second time;

"Then the Sun appeared (*udiyāya*), the Wind arose (*pra babhūva*), Fire was removed" (*agnih paran paryāvartata*). Thus Prajāpati "spreads himself beyond Fire, Death". Finally, this Resurrection of the dying God<sup>32</sup> is, for those who understand it, the promise of a similar regeneration, "because when he dies, and when they lay him in the fire, then he is (re)born from the fire (*agner adhijāyatê*), the fire consumes only his body" (*Sh. Br., loc. cit.* 8); all this agrees with the data of the funeral hymns of *the Ag-Vêda*, and a doctrine could not be more explicit than this.

Certain characteristics common to Viśvarūpa, Agni, Surya, and other aspects of the principle of manifestation can be identified. Agni *ab intra* (*pitror upasthê*) has, like Viśvarūpa, three heads and seven rays (ĀV, I, 146, 1); Agni (II, 5,2) and the Sun (VIII, 72,16) also have seven rays; and 'where these seven rays are, there is my kinship (*nabhi*, 'navel'); Trita Āptya knows this, he who addresses my family' (I, 105, 9; *cf.* X, 64,13 and III, 5, 5). In III, 38, 4, it is in the form of the Sun that Viśvarūpa manifests himself; 'When (the Sun) rose, it adorned itself with all things, luminous in itself, it advanced full of glory; the mighty form of the Bull, of the Titan, is the Omniform that assumes its eternity'. In *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, Agni is addressed as the 'omniform light' (*jyotir asi viśvarūpam*).\*

## 5. THE BOAR, VARĀHA, EMUṢA

The Boar - in *the Purāṇas* an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu - who, in the beginning, causes the Earth to rise from the Waters, is, in the *Āg-Veda*, a hostile power that

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<sup>32</sup> *Cf.* *PBr.*, XXV, 17, 2-3, in which Prajāpati, 'dulled by age', performs the sacrifice to be active again, as the animating principle of the universe, *sarvasya prasavam agacchat*.

\* p. 31 [For this paragraph, see 'L'Exemplarisme védique', *art. cit.*

denies Angels and men the possibility of life; he is identified with Viśvarūpa and Vritra.<sup>33</sup>

In two passages of *the Ṛg-Vêda*, Viṣṇu is associated with Indra in the killing of the boar. In the first (I, 61, 7), which mentions the theft committed during a soma libation, *Viṣṇu* may be an adjective qualifying Indra; in the second (VIII, 77, 10) it is clearly Viṣṇu who 'brings (the dish) cooked'. In general, the feat is typically that of Indra, although it is to the advantage of Viṣṇu, as in *TS.*, II, 4, 12, already mentioned. For example, in *ĀV*, I, 121, 11, we see:

"You, the great one (Indra), put to sleep with your thunderbolt the Boar, the Dragon (vritram... *varāham*) that lies (*āshayamānam*) in the waterways." In *the Taittirīya Samhitā*, VI, 2, 4, 2-3, it is said that the boar Emuṣa guards the treasure of the Titans, beyond the seven mountains, undoubtedly beyond the seven worlds, in accordance with the fact that in the beginning the Titans possessed all things. Indra, encouraged by Viṣṇu, passes through the mountains (*cf.* *ĀV*, VIII, 77, 6 and 96, 2) and both come into possession of food and riches, that is, as in *ĀV*, VII, 5, 3, the Titans are forced to renounce their "pleasures" (*bho-janāni*). In *the Taittirīya Samhitā*, VII, 1, 5, 1, the Boar, which now lifts the Earth above the Waters, is identified with Prajāpati, the Sacrifice, as well as with Death and the Year (in *Sh. Br.*, X, 4,3,1-3). This should not be surprising, any more than the dual role played by the Boar or Viṣṇu, since such apparent contradictions are the inevitable consequence of opposing operations\* and the dual aspect of the deity who moves in two antithetical directions (*dvivartani*, X, 61, 20 etc.), stands at the crossroads (*panthām visargê... ta-sthau*, X, 5, 6) and changes appearance at will, passing from sterility to generation (VII, 101, 3).

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<sup>33</sup> *ĀV*, X, 99, 6 and I, 61, 6-8,1, 121, 11, *cf.* I, 32, where Vritra is also Vyāmsa and the 'firstborn of serpents', *pratbasajām ahīnam*, IV, 1, 11, where Agni *jāyataprathamah... budhnē... apad ashirshā guhamāno anta*, that is, he is Ahi Budhnya, and X, 90, 7, *Puruṣam jātam agratah*.

\* p. 32. *ĀV*, X, 23, 1, *vivrata*, III, 38, 9, *virūpa kritāni etc.*

## 6. AHI-VṚTRA

We have already presented certain data relating to Vitra, and based on A V, I, 32 and other texts, there can no longer be any doubt about the equivalence between the Dragon, Vitra and Ahi,<sup>34</sup> the Serpent.

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<sup>34</sup> Ahi corresponds to Azhi in the *Avesta* – also known as Vishapa, 'with poisonous saliva' – and to the Sumerian Mūshussu, the seven-headed dragon slain by Ninurta, who became Tiāmat, cut in half by Marduk, who used half of her body to make the Sky. 'It would be strange if this entirely Indian and Iranian legend were not ultimately of Sumerian origin' (Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, p. 130 and fig. 57, which could very well be described as a representation of Indra killing Ahi-Vitra with his *vajra*). The same considerations are set out by Frankfort in his article "Gods and Myths in Sargonid Seals," *Iraq*, 1934, p. 19, with regard to plate III, fig. h, cf. plate I, fig. a, in the same journal, and the same observations could be added with regard to these figures. Frankfort also points out that Sumerian seals prefigure the killing of the Lernaean Hydra by Hercules; we would add that in Greek mythology, Zeus is represented both by a snake and a bull, and that the struggle between Hercules and the Hydra is in reality that of the son against the father, cf. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 495.

There can be no doubt about the correspondence between the Vedic *ahi*, *sarpa* and *pridāku* and the *nāga* of later periods; this is clear both on an ontological basis (the *nāga*'s ability to take on either a 'serpentine' or 'human' form at will, the association between the *nāga* and Varuna, the West and the aquatic realm, and the way in which *nāga*, often depicted with seven heads, are represented in iconography), and in the significant epithet *ahi-nāga* given to the Serpent defeated by Buddha in the temple of fire, *Mahavagga*, 1.15.7 (*Vinaya Pitaka*, I, 25).

As for Varuna, his assimilation to Ahi-Vitra is discussed in the following section (7). Although the *Ag-Vēda* does not explicitly describe him as a serpent, further texts and iconography are unanimous in recognising that this is his true nature. Varuna is a viper (*pridāku*, *AV.*, XII, 3,57), like the rivers *ab intra* (*pridākvah*, *ibid.*, I, 27, 1); Indra defeats the male and female vipers (*ibid.*, X, 4, 17), that is, he purifies them as he does Apālā (*AV*, VIII, 91). There are numerous apotropaic texts concerning Varuna, e.g. *AV*, X, 97, 16, in which Varuna is assimilated to Yama, and *Sh. Br.*, XII, 7,2,17,

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in which Varuna is the 'evil' (*pāpman*), and the purpose of the offering is to 'convert' him into Sāvitri according to *AV*, VII, 101, 3. These last three texts are inextricably linked. The ocean, Varuna's own realm, is the 'abode of the *nāgas*' (*nāgānām ālayam*, *Mbh.*, 1.21.6 and 25.4), and at Bharhut the *nāgas* are represented among the angels of the western part (*JRAS.*, 1928, p. 392). Varuna and Sagara are *nāgarāja* in the *Mahāvīyutpatti*, in the *Nīlamata Purāṇa*, *Varuna-pancami* replaces the more common expression *nāga-pancami*, in Nepal, a Varuna with seven cobra hoods can occupy the centre of a *nāga-mandala*. In Buddhist cosmology, Virūpāksha, who as Regent of the West corresponds to Varuna, is himself a *nāgarāja*. It should be noted that the term *virūpa* could not originally have meant 'deformed', a meaning for which we have *dushkrita* in another order of ideas; in the *AV*, *virūpa* always implies a duality of aspects, or an alternation of aspects for what is in itself essentially identical or consubstantial; e.g., 1.95.1.1.122.2, V.1.4, in which Night and Dawn are *virūpa*, 'of different appearance', VII, 103, in which the Brahmin frogs are designated in the same way, and X, 95, 16, in which Urvaśī dwells among mortals 'in another aspect', *virūpā*. Virūpāksha will therefore mean 'with different eyes', which applies to Varuna, whose 'eyes' are the Sun and the Moon.

The legend of Buddha preserves a double version of Indra's (sometimes Agni's or Bhaspati's) struggle against Ahi-Vitra, who is also Mityu, the principle of Death. Firstly, in Mara Darśana, where we can see that Mari (= Mityu) uses the characteristic weapons of Ahi, who resorts to lightning, thunder and hail (*AV*, I, 32, 13), or of Dāsa Namuci, who 'uses women as his weapons' (*AV*, V, 30, 9) and 'fights the Bull with women' (X, 27, 10), and that the Buddha is abandoned by the frightened Angels, just like Indra in the *Ṛg-Vēda*, e.g. IV, 18, 11, VIII, 93, 14, VIII, 96, 7 ("Fleeing the threatening roars of Vitra, all the Angels, your companions, abandon you") and in *Alt. Br.*, III, 20 and IV, 5. Secondly, in the conversion of the Jatila (who are also Kashyapa, 'Tarta-wrinkles') on the occasion of which the Buddha spends the night in a fire temple, home of the *nāga* Ahi (*ahināgam* in *Mahāvagga*, I, 15, 7) and defeats him, thus fighting fire with fire (*tējasà tējam*). In the Jain tradition, this story is found in the episode of the conflict between Mahāvira (a name that indicates Indra in Vedic formulations) and an unnamed adversary, who appears in the form of a snake (Hemacandra, *Trishashti-shalākā Puruṣacaritra*, *parva* 10); elsewhere, however, this snake is

Decapitation is mentioned in 1.52.10\*\*, and if we recall that *śiras* = *sānu*,<sup>35</sup> we see that the same event occurs in I, 32, 7, where it is a blow to the back of the head, followed by dismemberment. In the texts we will cite, we will note in particular the division of a principle that is 'stretched out' and 'asleep', which is unique at its origin.

Thus IV, 19, 3: 'You (Indra) will dismember the Serpent (*ahim* = *vṛtram*) without parts (*aparvan*), the insatiable one, without awakening (*abudhyam*), asleep (*abudhyamānam*) in a deep sleep (*sushupānam*), spread out (*vīyatam*), lying (*āshayānam*) against the seven slopes" (*sapta prati pravatah*);\* II, 11,5: "You, the Champion (Indra), with your virile strength (*vīryēna*) struck the Serpent, the Magician obscurely

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called Samgana, that is, Yama (for a more complete study, see A.K.C., 'The Conqueror's Life in Jaina *Painting*', *Journ. Ind. Soc. Or. Art.*, 1935). The name Jina, 'Conqueror', applied to Mahāvira, no less than that of Tirthamkara, evokes Vedic terminology.

In Indian tradition, there is in fact no aspect of the principle of manifestation which, at the beginning, is not necessarily engaged in a fierce struggle against Death.

Ultimately, the question of whether *nagas* are Aryan or non-Aryan has been posed in a somewhat incorrect manner, cf. Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore*, pp. 32, 191, 225, 226. Snakes are by definition non-Aryan, becoming Aryan only through 'qualification' (*arhana*) and 'crawling beyond' (*atisarpana*, hence the imitation of this movement in ritual sacrifice); on the other hand, the doctrine concerning snakes is necessarily part of both the Aryan Vedic tradition and the entire non-Aryan tradition, for example the Sumerian tradition. The importance of slaying the dragon in all traditions can be easily understood when one knows that the dismemberment of ophidian power is precisely the act of creation.

\*\* p. 32. He "cut off his head", *abhinac chirah*, cf. II, 11, 2, *ava abhinat*, II, 20, 6, *ava... shiro bharad dāsasya*, VIII, 6, 6, *shiro bibhēda*.

<sup>35</sup> 35 The "head" of the mahāvira vase, respectively in *Sh. Br.*, XIV, 1,2,17 and *Ap. Sb. S.*, XV, 2, 14.

\* p. 33. Cf. 1,67,7, *varaham tiro adrim* and 73, VI, 2,4,3, *saptanam girinam*.

hidden, concealed in the secret of the Waters, he who held back the Waters and the Light of Heaven'.<sup>36</sup>

The sequence of events is explicit in II, 19, 2-3, where 'The mighty Indra, cutting to pieces the Serpent that held back the flood (*arni vritam*)<sup>37</sup> set the flow of water towards the sea (of life) in motion, gave birth to the Sun (*ajanayat sūryam*), discovered cattle and, with the favour of the night, accomplished the work of the days", cf. I, 61, 10. Similarly in II, 11, 18: 'You cut in two the arachnid Vitra, son of Dānu,<sup>38</sup> you revealed the Light for the Aryan (*apa avrinor jyotir āryāya*), you

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<sup>36</sup> *Guhā hitam guhyam gūlham apsv apīvritam māyīnam kshiyantam, apo dyām tastambhvānsam*; as in numerous texts, *dyau* here is equivalent to 'Sun'. As for the root *stabh*, it is used not in the positive sense of 'support', but as in *AV*, VI, 44, 22, where 'Soma nails the miser to the ground' (*panim asthabhāyat*).

<sup>37</sup> *Vritam*, from the root √*vṛ*, 'to wrap', 'to obstruct', 'to hold back', and undoubtedly implying *vritram*, as demonstrated in I, 52, 2 and VIII, 12, 26, *Vritram nadī-vritam*. 'The Dragon that holds back the rivers and does not let them flow'. In this regard, without going into detail about the Kabbalistic exegesis of *Genesis* and the correspondence between, on the one hand, Pharaoh, Moses, the Egyptians and the Israelites, and on the other, Vitra-Namuci, Indra, the Asuras and the Aryans, we can recall the noteworthy text of *Ezekiel* (XXIX, 3): "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, great Dragon (tanim-the Babylonian *tiāmat*), lying in the midst of his rivers, who said: This River belongs to me, I made it for myself" [*Cf. ibid.*, XXXII, 2, 6 and 14: "You were like a dragon in the seas... I will water the earth with your flow, your blood, on the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with you... then I will make the rivers flow like oil"].

<sup>38</sup> *Vritram dānum aurnavābham*, since Vitra is also Dānava in *AV*, I, 32, 9 and *Sh. Br.*, I, 6, 3, 9.1 names lend themselves to confusion. In *Sh. Br.*, *loc. cit.*, Dānu and Danāyū, or Dānavī, receive the wounded Vitra 'as (if they were) his mother and father'. Dānu does not appear in *the Ag-Vēda*. Dānu, in II, 11, 18, is evidently a patronymic, or rather a matronymic, in which case Dānu or Danu could be the name of the mother. In I, 32, 9, Dānu with *Vṛitra-putrā* must be the mother; the fact that Indra drowns them both - 'the mother above and the son below, there lies Dānu like a cow with her calf' (*sahavatsd na dhēnuh*) fits perfectly with the fact that *Dānu* also means 'liquid', 'moisture' or 'mist',

you caused Dasyu to sink";<sup>39</sup> the following verse implies the identification of Viśvarūpa and Vitra, who is elsewhere referred to as his brother. The most complete, and perhaps most interesting, exposition is found in *AV*, I, 32; Indra dismembers Vyamsa "the most Vitra, firstborn of the

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since it is said that the waves flow over Vitra's wounded body. 'The cow with her calf' recalls Aditi-Vāc and Agni (*cf.* I, 164, 17), here this Agni who takes refuge in the Waters (X, 51, 1 etc.). Dānu is in fact of the same type as the Āditya Mitravarunā (*dānunaspati* in I.136.3 and II.41.6) or the Ashvins (VIII.8.16). Ahi is born from the Waters (*abjā* in VII, 34, 16), Śuṣṇa is the son of mist (*miho napāt*, V, 32, 4), Agni is the son of the Waters, *passim*, of the 'sparkling Waters' (*dānucitrāh*, V, 31, 6) of the 'Waters whose abundance' (*rādhasā dānuh*) spreads for Indra (I, 54, 7). The names Dānu and Dānava, which we have examined, are etymologically different from the terms *Dānu* and *dānava*, from the root *dā*, 'to give', whose meaning is 'generous'. These difficulties can only be resolved in the light of the doctrine of dual operation (*vivrata*), clearly stated in the *Ag-Vēda* as in every other traditional teaching.

<sup>39</sup> Arya and Dāsa, or Dasyu, in the *Ag-Vēda* are synonymous respectively with Deva, Manushya or Narya, and Asura, the Aryans being those who overcome the Waters and spread Light, a matter analysed in our *Ag-Vēda as Land- Nāma-Bók* [1935, s.v. *Arya*, p. 1]. It is only by analogy that these terms have been applied to human societies. Incidentally, we note that the inconsistency of social discrimination based on the alleged existence of an Aryan ethnicity becomes apparent when we realise that we are all Aryans on our father's side and non-Aryans on our mother's side, because the feminine principle in the *Ag-Vēda* is always of an asuric nature; we are children of day and night, of fire and water, our very existence comes from an exogamy and a dual generation, and consequently we inherit a bilateral symmetry, *cf.* the correlation between the right eye and Indra, the left eye and Indrānī in *Sh. Br.*, X, 5, 2 and the *Upaniṣads*. Eve, 'the mother of all living beings', is taken from Adam's *side*, *cf.* Parśu, the 'Rib' daughter of Manu (X, 86,23), who is the mother of the sons of men (*Sh. Br.*, I, 8, 1, 8-11); while in the *Shah Nāmah*, which Buckler has defined as 'an epic of the genealogy of God's kingdom on earth', the mother is always Turanian, and more than one Indian dynasty traces its origin back to a Nāgini; in the *Edda*, Aegir's wives are always of Vana or Titanic origin.

Serpents, like a tree sawed into logs, so that it lay castrated (*vrishno vadhrīh*), <sup>40</sup>scattered (*purutrā... vyastah*). In I, 61, 10, Indra tears the burning Vritra to pieces;<sup>41</sup> in VIII, 6,13, he 'cuts him up and leads the Waters to the Sea'; in I, 130, 4, 'he uses the thunderbolt (against Ahi) like a knife to cut', while in VIII, 7, 23, it is Indra's allies, the Maruts, who 'tear him apart' (*vi vritam parvasho yayuh*). The most obvious correspondences and contrasts remain to be noted. It is generally accepted that Agni and Ahi Budhnya are of the same nature; in I, 79, 1, Agni is a 'furious serpent' (*ahir dhunir*).<sup>42</sup> *The Aitarêya Brāhmana*, III, 36, using strictly technical terminology, explains that Ahi Budhnya is invisibly (*paroksbêna*) what Agni Gārhapatya is visibly (*pratyaksha*), as does the *Vāja-sanêyi Samhitā*, V, 33, in which Ahi Budhnya is identified with Aja.

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<sup>40</sup> 'Evirato', which agrees with the descriptions of the god *ab intra*: blind, lame and impotent, and the definition of the feminine principle *ab intra* as Vadhrimati: 'Sometimes sterile, sometimes fertile, she shapes her body as she pleases' (*starīr u tvad bhavati sūta u tvad, yathāvasham tanvam cakra ēshah, AV, VII, 101,3*), which corresponds on the one hand to *AV., VI, 72, 1*: 'By means of its titanic magic, the black (serpent) stretches out, assuming the forms (i.e. 'ophidian' or 'human') it desires' (*yathāsītah prathayatē vashān anu vapūmshi krinvann asurasya māyayā*) - *asita*, the 'black' (serpent, skin or robe) refers to the *ab intra* aspect of Agni or the Sun, as in *AV., XII, 3, 55* and *TS., III, 2, 2, 2* - and on the other hand to *AV, X, 168, 4*, in which 'the Spirit of the Angels moves at will' (*ātmā dēvānām... yathā-vasham carati*). The doctrine of the 'impotence of the Divinity' is common to both the Vedic tradition and Christian exegesis (particularly in Meister Eckhart), but would require a longer and more comprehensive study than that undertaken here.

The assimilation of Vritra's fall to the felling and cutting up of a tree (*cf. X, 89, 7*) is important in relation to the question posed in *X, 31,7 = X, 81,4*: 'What was the wood, what was the tree from which they modelled Heaven and Earth?' and in relation to the usual definition of Agni and Soma as *vanaspati* ['Lord of the Forest'].

<sup>41</sup> *Śuśantam* indicates an identification with Śuśṇa, 'Dryness', as in VIII, 6, 14-15.

<sup>42</sup> *Dhuni* is also the name of a Titan in VIII, 19,4 and X, 113, 9.

Ekapad,<sup>43</sup> the Sun, since the invocation uses an epithet specific to Agni: *adhvapati*, 'Lord of the Way'. The vocabulary of *AV*, II, 11, 5 cited above uses terms specific to the occulted Sun: for example, V, 40, 6 ff., in which, when the Sun is struck by the darkness of the titanic Svarbhānu, Atri 'finds it hidden by darkness and inactive';<sup>44</sup> cf. 1,117,4-3, where Rêbha, needing help, is assimilated to the

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<sup>43</sup> Regarding the Sun as Ekapād, 'The One-Footed One', see Dumont, *JAOS.*, 1933, p. 326 ff. Since the Sun originally had no feet, Varuna gave them to him so that he could walk, *AV*, I, 24, 8; Varuna himself, as the Sun, 'with his shining foot climbs the celestial vault' (*arcināpadā nākam āruhat*, VIII, 41, 8). The feet of the Sun are its rays; its single foot, which is sometimes dark and sometimes bright (*Mbh.*, XII, 362, 7-8), coincides with the axis of the universe (*skambhēna vi rodasiājo nadyām adhārayat*, VIII, 41,10); the fact that it is sometimes dark and sometimes bright (*asita, shucina, Mbh.*, XII, 362, 7-8) corresponds to *AV*, V, 62, 8, in which the pillar on which Varuna and Mitra ascend is golden at dawn and bronze at dusk, and what they see from above when the pillar is golden is the finite (*ditim*), what they see when it is bronze is the infinite (*aditimi*). Of course, the Sun also has

'a thousand feet' (*sahasrapādām*, VIII, 69, 16), that is, an indefinite number of rays, each of which, from the individual's point of view, corresponds to this ray, the "single foot" of the Sun, and at the same time the pillar (*skambha* = *stauros*) or bridge (*sētu* = *cinvad*, *bifröst*, etc.) that simultaneously connects and separates Heaven and Earth, light and darkness.

Another reference to the Sun as *ēkapad* appears in *VS.*, XXIII, 50, *ēkēna an-gina paryēni*. This concept must have been represented visually at some point in time, because it has remained in popular art to this day. See the two representations of the 'Castle of the Sun' reproduced in A. N. Tagore, *Bānglar Vrata*, Calcutta, n.d., plate 99, in which, moreover, the 'single foot' of the Sun is carried by a boat or a swing (*nau* and *prēnkha* in V. VII, 88, 3, cf. VI, 58, 3, golden *prēnkha* in VII, 87, 5, *naunagara* in *Jaim. Br.*, I, 125).

<sup>44</sup> *Gūlham sūryam tamasā apavratēna... avindat*, where *apavrata* = *avrata*, 'faded', a pejorative term often applied to non-Aryan appearance, indicating divine 'bination'; here it means that the Sun does not shine, it is obscured, *apivritam*, as in II, 11, 5.

'hidden horse (*ashvam na gūlham*)... sleeping in the bosom of Destruction,\* the Sun dwelling in Darkness'.<sup>45</sup>

The term *aurnavābha*, a patronymic form or simply an adjective derived from *Urnavābha*, 'spinner', i.e. 'the Spider', is not without interest. In *AV*, VIII, 77, 1-2, the 'strong and famous Aurnavābha and Ahīshuva' are destined to be defeated by Indra, which happens in VIII, 15,16, where *aurnavābham* qualifies *vṛtram*, as in II, 11, 18. In the Brāhmana, *Urñāyu* is a Gandharva. In *AV*, VI, 15, 16, the altar, the birthplace of Agni, is a 'greased and fluffy nest'.<sup>46</sup>

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\* p. 34. *Sushupvansām na nirritēr upasthe*, cf. I, 164, 32.

<sup>45</sup> *Suryam na tamasi ksiyantam*, cf. *tamasi kshēsi*, words addressed to Agni, whose procession is delayed (X, 51, 5) and *kshēti budhnah*, terms applied to Agni as he 'remains in his place of origin' even when he advances, III, 55, 7. All associations of Agni with the term *budhna* in the *Ag-Vēda* imply his *budhnya*, his chthonic character; his earthly origin in the worlds is always equal to his birth within the divine being. Another indication of the consubstantiality of Agni and the Serpent *ab intra* can be cited, based on the identification of *Mitra* with the Titan *Vamacitra* or *Vīpra-citti*, the eldest son of *Danu*, father of *Rahu* or *Namuci*, as demonstrated by Przyłuski, 'Un Dieu iranien dans l'Inde', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*,

VII. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, *Psyche*'s husband, who can be likened to the Indian *Purūravas*, is described in these terms, reported as a horoscope from *Miletus*: 'Not a being of the human race, but the most horrible and ferocious Serpent imaginable, flying with wings... the black rivers, the deadly waves of pain and darkness advance and remain his slaves'.<sup>46</sup> *Urñāvantam yonim kulāyinam ghritavantam*, in which *Arñāvantam* can be considered synonymous with *aurnavābham*, with an additional allusion to the pubic vulva, cf. *Apālā*'s prayer in VIII, 91.5, granted to *Romashā* ["Hairy"] in I, 126.7.

The image of the fluffy nest is implied in V, 5, 4, where the *barhis*, the grass spread like a carpet on the sacrificial site, is described as 'sweet and soft like fluff' (*urnamradāh*); the following stanza adds: 'Open up, angelic doors, be easily accessible' [*dēvīr dvāro vi shrayadhvam su-prāyanāh*], which is similar to X, 18, 10-11, in which the 'young Earth Mother is asked to be soft as fluff for the one who gives the Pre-bend' (*dakshināvatē*, *Dakshinā* being the Dawn, I, 123, 1 and X, 107, mother of Agni, III, 58, 1, as *Indrānī*, II, 11,21 and the Serpent Queen); the text

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continues: 'Be open [*uc chvañcasva*], O Earth, do not be an obstacle to him (*mani bādhatathah*), be easily accessible to him (*sūpāyanā*), cover him with fluff (*abbi... ūrnuhi*, from the root  $\sqrt{vr}$ , as in *urna*) just as a mother covers her child with the edge of her garment', from which we understand that she covers him with the garment of light (*nirñijam*, *drāpim hiranyam* etc.) that he wears on his arrival in the worlds; 'Be open' does not mean 'ready to receive' but "ready to offer." It would take too long to analyse here the idea that a clear distinction must be made between the application of funeral hymns and their formulation, since this relates only to birth and not to burial. The theme of resurrection is not only unsuitable for a requiem, on the contrary, since the language of funeral hymns implies *mors janua vitae*. The fact that *yogis* and *samnyasīs* are generally not cremated, but thrown into water or simply buried, is in accordance with the most rigorous logic, because they did not aim at resurrection, but at death and burial in the deity.

*Urnamradāh* (*barbis*), mentioned above, corresponds exactly to *lomāni barhis* in *Sh. Br.*, I, 3, 37 and *BUp.*, VI, 4, 3. It may be added that there can be no doubt about the identity of *ūmāvāntam yonim kulāyīnam ghritavāntam savitrē*, the birthplace of Agni in *ĀV.* VI, 15,16 (*cf. Ait. Br. I,28, savitrē kulōiyam... itrñāstukāh*) and *vishvambhara kulaya*, the 'nest, universal support' of *BUp.*, I, 4, 7, which Hume translates, not literally but correctly, as 'support of fire', i.e. place of fire or hearth (*Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, P- 82). But this is not (as Hume supposes) the exact origin of the Vedantic comparison 'As fire is latent in wood or in covered embers'; this comparison derives more directly from a familiar Vedic concept, expressed in V, 11.6, in which the Aṅgirā discover Agni 'hiding in every log' (*guhā hitam... shi thriyānam vanēvanē*, *cf. X, 91.2* and numerous similar passages).

The image of the 'Spider' is the source of *the* famous *urn* [a term that indicates the 'spider's web' and] the 'tuft of hair' or 'the lock of hair between the eyebrows', *lakshana* ['distinctive mark'] of the Buddha as Mahāpuruṣa; this *urn*, particularly in Japanese iconography, is often represented as a mole, but also as the source of rays of light. The fact that, in a certain sense, this *urn* is also an 'eye', analogous to Shiva's third eye, further emphasises the solar affinity of the one who is called the 'eye in the world' (*cakḥum lokē*), that is, this 'Eye', the Sun, which in *the Ag-Vēda* 'watches over all things' (*vishvam abhi caṣṭē*).

In the same sense, I, 105, 9, 'Where those seven rays are woven (*ātatāh*), there is my navel' (*nābhih*).<sup>47</sup> The meaning of this passage is to be understood in relation to the word *ūrnanābhi* [literally 'the navel' or the

'centre of the web'], which usually refers to the Spider in the Brāhmanas and Upaniṣads; for example *BUp.*, II, 1, 20, where it is said that all things come from their source "as a spider advances on its thread (*yathornanābhish tantunoccarêt*), as sparks fly from fire", and *Mundaka Up.*, I, 1, 7: 'Just as a spider emits and reabsorbs (*srijatê ghrinatê*, literally 'spreads and drains') [its thread], all this arises from the one who does not flow' (*aksbarāt sambhavati iha vishvam*). [Same comparison regarding the Breath in *Brahmā Up.*, 1]. As we have already seen, the Sun shines with seven rays; or it is the co-creators (*kavayah*), operating in a sacrificial sense as mediate causes, who 'spin their seven threads to form the web' (*sapta tantūn vi tantirê kavaya otavai*, 1,164, 5); these 'seven unravelled rays' (*sapta ra-smayash tatāh*) belong to the Restorer of Sacrifice (Agni or the Sun), who, as the eighth Āditya, 'arouses all things' (*vishvam invati*, II, 5,2); these seven rays are also those of Viśvarūpa.

A sacrificial *gāthā*, quoted in the *Kaushtaki Brāhmana*, XIX, 3, describes the Year, the Sun, as a spider. The 'Spider' is then Agni or (and) the Sun, Titan as long as the rays are hidden in its belly, Angel when it spins its web; each thread - for those who can distinguish the details of the whole - follows, so to speak, the *via analogiae* and, distinguishing itself from the whole, unravels the fabric and provides a path that leads back to the origin. Needless to say, the metaphor of the Spider is based on the famous doctrine of *sutratman*, as can be easily seen by comparing *AV*, X, 168.4, in which the Sun is 'the breath of the Angels' (*ātmā dēvānām*), with *Sh. Br.*, VIII, 7, 3, 10: 'That Sun down there connects (*samāvayātê*) these worlds with a thread (*sūtrê*) which is the Wind' (*vāyuh*), cf. *BG.*, VII, 7: 'This whole universe is bound to Me like pearls strung on a thread'. It may be added that the symbolism of the spider's web, whose threads are rays of light, is but a particular form of the

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<sup>47</sup> The chthonic navel of Agni, *nābhih prithivyāh*, and the navel of eternity, *amrītasya nābhih*.

the most universal symbolism of spinning and weaving, so often used in the *Vedas* and other forms of universal tradition;\* thus Dante:

*"Thus living light surrounded me;  
And left me wrapped in such a veil Of its brightness,  
that nothing appeared to me" (Paradiso, XXX, 49-51).*

The terms *ahudhyam*, *sushupānam* and *āshayānam* in IV, 19.3 (quoted above) are noteworthy. All three imply an idea that is commonly found when it is said that the Sun 'lies down' in the evening - because it actually 'lies down' in the night of time. *Abudhya* means first 'drowsy' and then 'stupid', a well-known characteristic of giants in folklore; *sushupānam* and *āshayānam* 'asleep and lying down' correspond to the equally characteristic idea of

"brooding" over a treasure. It is significant that in 1.103.7, Indra "awakens the inert Serpent with his thunderbolt" (*sasantam vajrēna abodhayo 'him*) because awakening (*budh*, *jāgri*) is a specific act of the Angels, especially Agni, who is *usharbudh*, 'awakened at dawn', awakening being similar to a fire, *cf.* V, 1, 1; and in IV, 23, 7-8: "He strikes the destructive demon, the antithesis of Indra (*druham jighānsan dhvarasam anindram*)... The brilliant cosmic praise<sup>48</sup> pierces the deaf ears of Life, awakening it";\* here Ayus (Life) is properly Agni<sup>49</sup> and we recognise the description of Agni, who is "a deaf viper" *ante*

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\* p. 35. [See R. Guénon, 'Le Symbolisme du tissage' in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, chap. XIV; Italian translation *Il Simbolismo della Croce*, Luni Editrice, Milan 2003).

<sup>48</sup> *Ritasya*, 'cosmic', in the sense that the Greek Kosmos is precisely the 'Order',

\* p. 36. *Ritasya shloko badhirā tatarā karnā budhānā shucamāna ayoh.*

<sup>49</sup> Here the name Ayu is applied to Agni *ab intra*; the Gandharva Ūrnāyu inside is Viśvāyu outside: on the *raison d'être* of the term ūrna- in this context, see above the analysis of the symbolism of the 'Spider', and on that of -*āyu*, 'Life', *cf. John*, I, 3-4: 'All things that have been made were Life (*life = ayus*) in Him', and *Ep. to the Colossians*, I, 16: 'In Him (the Son) all things were created', *cf. AV.*, XII, 3, 47: 'A filial world (*kaumāra*) is born, a son'.

*principium*. On the other hand (I, 113, 4), it is Aurora who awakens the worlds, or all beings (*ajigar bhuvanāni vishvā*). That Ahi is struck and awakened is equivalent to saying that the chthonic Serpent is 'converted' (*samvrit*) or 'externalised' (*pravrit*), Darkness is literally 'turned upside down' (*udvrit*) into Light. *Buddha*, 'awakened', also means 'enlightened'. It is interesting to note that the ancient concept of the awakening of the serpent is taken up in Buddhist thought, as for example when a commentator explains *budh* as 'the emergence from sleep of ophidian beings'.\*\*

*Ashayānam*, 'lying down', is a term that applies to the deity *ab intra*, in opposition to the act of procession signalled by the fact of sitting, standing up and moving.<sup>50</sup> Lying down and sleeping, or standing up and waking up, are concepts that go hand in hand. From the point of view of *karmakānda*, the second condition is clearly superior, although the first precedes it in a logical sense; from the point of view of *jnānakānda*, the opposite is true - the famous Indian saying "It is better to stand than to walk, and it is preferable to sit, but it is even better to lie down" is a good example of what is called "reversed reasoning" or "thinking against the grain".

The divine procession implies an apparent division, *krama* is *dvitva* (*TP.*, XXI, 16). In the Vedic texts describing the killing of the dragon, the importance attributed to the division or subdivision of the ophidian principle, which was originally without parts (*aparvan*), is striking. It is precisely in this sense that the *Ag-Vēda* - while indicating the strictly 'mental' nature of the act - describes the subdivision of This One (*tad ēkam*, X, 129, 2), the Integral Multiplicity (*vishvam ēkam*, III, 54, 8 - a Plotinian formula), the unity of the Person and the Word (*purusha* and *vāc*) division carried out during the First Sacrifice.

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\*\* p. 36. *Bujhatī kilēsa-santāna-niddāya uttahati, Athasālīni*, 464, text p.217.

<sup>50</sup> 'To sit', *sad*, 'to rise', *sthd*, generally with *urdbvā* (cf. *sthitam padārtham jātam*, Sāyana) and 'to move', *car*, hence the fact that the *panca jana* [the 'five births' or 'classes of living beings'] are sometimes considered as *carshanayah* ['beings in activity'].

'Through their words, the co-creator singers (*viprah kavayab*) conceive him as manifold, he who remains One" (X, 114, 5), 'they call him manifold, he who is One' (I, 164, 46),

cf. Makha

'that the multitude could not conquer him while he was one' (*Taitt. Ar.*, V,1, 3).\*

Similarly, with regard to the feminine aspect:

"Thanks to their sacrifice, they followed in the footsteps (*padaviyam = vestigium pedis*) of the Word, found her giving shelter to the Prophets; they led her and divided her into many parts; the Seven Singers sang her praises everywhere" (X, 71, 3),

which says of itself:

"The Angels have divided me into many parts" (*ma diva vy adadhuh purutrā*, X, 125, 3).<sup>51</sup>

It is also significant that in *the Puruṣasūkta* (X, 90, 11–14), Vitra could be substituted for 'Puruṣa' without any essential change in meaning; in a *brahmodya* [sacred dialogue], the question is asked:

'When they divided (*vy adadhuh*) the Person (*Puruṣa*), how many parts did they think they would obtain?' (*katidhā vy akalpayan*).

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\* p. 37. [After creating living beings, Prajāpati wanted to enter them to animate them. 'But as long as he was One, he could not. So he divided himself into five, called Prāna, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna and Vyāna' (*MUp.*, II, 6). On the relationship between the One and the many, see 'L'Exemplarisme védique', *art. cit.*].

<sup>51</sup> *Vy adadhuh* is equivalent to 'contracted and identified in diversity'. [On this image of 'contraction' and 'identification', which is the transition from non-being to being or the determination of the point, followed by the illusory extension of the point in space or the appearance of the name, see A.K.C., *Time and Eternity*, Luni, 2003]. The use of *vad*, *klp* (as in *samkalpa*, 'notion', for example *Rena Up.*, 29-30, in which the notion one has of divinity is opposed to the blind vision of divinity as it is in itself) must be understood in terms of the Vedic doctrine of creation through naming (*nāmadhēyd*), see 'L'Exemplarisme védique', *art. cit.*, and Scharbau, *Der Idee der Schöpfung in der vedischen Literatur*, pp. 123-132.

The answer concludes with these words:

'Thus they conceived the worlds' (*lokān akalpayan*).

Another correspondence is provided in stanza 14:

"From his head was drawn the Sky (*shūrshno dyauh sam avartata*), from his feet, the Earth";<sup>52</sup>

we can conclude that *Puruṣa* has already assumed a human form, *ante principium*, or rather assumes it *in the beginning*:

"He illuminates these worlds as a Person"

(*Puruṣarupēna*, *Ait. Ar.*, II, 2,1)

because Brahman-Yakṣa

'chooses the Person for the procession' (*JUB.*, IV, 23-24),

the Sacrifice is the Universal Man, our Sire (*yajno manuh... nah pila*, X, 100,5), that is, Agni.

(‘Be Manu, beget the family of Angels’, X, 53, 6)

and the Year (*Ait. Br.*, II, 17, *Sh. Br.*, X, 4, 3,1-3 etc.)

The Sacrifice is an eternal *Puruṣa-mêdha*.

The expression "without feet and hands" (*apād-ahastah*) - which characterises

curls the serpent - applied to Ahi-Vitra (1.32.7) and to Kunāru and Vitra (III.30.8),<sup>53</sup> represents the opposite of what is said about the manifested Sun, Surya 'with one foot' (*êkapad*) or Sāvitrī 'with golden hands' (*hiranyahastah*), and the manifested Agni, 'endowed with feet' (*pa-davīh*), par excellence "the wise leader endowed with feet" (*vidvān pathah puraêta*, V, 46, 1), "the sure shepherd who advances on his paths" (1.164.31); but "when he was first born at the origin of space (*budhnê rajasah*, as Ahi Budhnya) [he was] without feet or head

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<sup>52</sup> As in *Edda*, *Grimnismal*, 40: 'The Earth was produced from the flesh of Ymir... and the Sky from his skull'. The account of the earlier existence of the Titan Ymir (*Völuspá*, 3) corresponds exactly to *AV*, I, 129, 1 and 3. Similarly, in the Babylonian legend, Marduk dissects Tiāmat, the female dragon, mother of the gods, and her upper part constitutes Heaven, etc.

<sup>53</sup> In *Sb. Br.*, I, 7, 1, 1, the guardian of soma (i.e. Gandharva, whose consort (*Vāc*) often seduces Indra, for example in *Jaim. Br.*, I, 125) is a 'footless archer' (*apad asta*). The Gandharva is therefore the dragon or serpent that guards the Tree of Life, as in other mythologies.

and hid both ends (*apad ashīrshā guhamāno antā*, cf. X, 79,2) in its womb, in the nest of the Bull" (IV, 1, 11), that is, *ante principium*, immediately before igniting.

## 7. THE PROCESSION IS A SOLAR ROTATION.

With regard to the use of the term  $\sqrt{vrt}$ , it should be noted that the 'rotating' movement always takes place to the right, since, as in other traditions, the powers of darkness are those of the left, while those of light are those of the right.\* Dasyu, abbat-tuto, 'collapses to Indra's left' (*AV*, II, 11, 18), 'Indra holds the giants back with his left hand and performs his great deeds with his right' (*dakshinê sam gribhītā kritāni*).

Since Dakṣa is practically the right hand of God, Dakṣinā is the "lady of the right": in the *Ag-Vêda*, Aurora, the milk cow mother of Agni (I, 123, 1 and III, 58, 1) and in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* (VI, 1, 3, 6) mother of Indra, and it is easy to see the origin of the meaning of *dakṣinā*, the "sacrificial stipend": the First sacrifice is always a *sattra* [sacrificial session] that the officiants perform for their own benefit, and the rich Aurora with her opulent riches is the reward. On the other hand, when the feminine principle is considered in terms of its origin, as Heaven is 'above' and Earth is 'below', 'he' is on the right and 'she' is on the left; thus, in *Sh. Br.*, X, 5,2,9, *BUp.*, IV, 2,2-3 and *MUp.*, VII, 11, in which the 'person' in the right eye is Indra, the 'person' in the left eye is Indranī or Virāj, and their union takes place in the 'heart' or, ritually, in the concealed place (*sadas*) of sacrifice. The sacrificer himself moves like the sun: 'He performs a circumambulation from left to right (*prasalavyāvartati*), in order to turn this Sun to the right, and thus this Sun circles these worlds from left to right' (*Sh. Br.*, VII, 5, 1, 37). Similarly, the hemp belt is woven in a solar manner, in the 'human' way.

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\* p. 38 [On the direction of ritual turns, clockwise or anticlockwise, determined by the 'polar' or 'solar' nature of a tradition, see R. Guénon, *La Grande Triade*, Adelphi, Milan 1980].

and, 'if it were woven in the opposite direction to the Sun,\*\* it would be consecrated to the Fathers' (*ibid.*, III, 2, 1, 13, *cf.* I, 2, 1, 12). The idea of a single principle looking in two opposite directions (Janus in iconography) is extensively developed in *the Ag-Vêda*, for example X, 5, 6, in which Agni stands

'at the crossroads' (*panthām visargê*),

that is, on the threshold of the door of the worlds (*lokadvāra*). The orientation

The opposition between the worlds of light and darkness means that, for example,

'Those who come here (*arvañc*) are said to depart' (*parācah*, I, 164, 19) and

'This spell that the Angels pronounce forwards (*avastāt*), the Titans pronounce backwards' (*parastāt*, *Jaim. Br.*, I, 125).

A similar act is the pulling in opposite directions by the Devas and Asuras during the Churning of the Ocean, and it should not be forgotten that this opposition between antagonistic principles is indispensable for all creation.

From the *karmakānda* and *kṣatriya* point of view, the favourable movement is directed forward in a straight line; on the other hand, From the point of view of *jnānakānda* and *Brāhmana*, the favourable movement is directed not backwards, but – in a way that requires explanation – nevertheless in the opposite direction.

Inevitably opposite, because once steps forward have been taken, one must, so to speak, retrace one's steps; everything that has been affirmed must also be denied, everything that was stolen must be returned, if the Wayfarer wants to reach This One 'who in reality never rises nor lies down'.\*

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\*\* P- 38 [In English, *widdershins*, an expression that means exactly 'against the sun'; *to go widdershins*, 'to go in the wrong direction', and *to go w. to that*, 'to do the opposite of-'].

\* p- 39 [Everything that a being, as an individual, has appropriated in the field of multiplicity must be returned to the One Possessor if it wishes to attain Unity; this idea is implied in spiritual 'poverty' and in the pilgrimage to the Centre of the World. See R. Guénon, 'El-Faqr', in René Guénon, *Writings on Islamic Esotericism and Taoism*, Adelphi,

Consequently, externalised consciousness must be internalised, as alluded to by expressions such as *pratyacêtanā*, 'inverse thought', defined as follows by Manibrabhā in his commentary on the *Yoga Sūtra*, I, 29:

'It is said that thought is reversed (*pratyanc*) when it turns (*ancati*) against the current' (*pratīpam*),

'which occurs in the case of yogis,' adds Bhoja.

The symbolism of the 'upward current' found in the Pali Buddhist term *uddhamsota*,

'he who goes up the stream',

As far as I know, it was first used explicitly in the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, VII, 5, 7, 4, *pratikūla ivavā itah svargo lokah*.

'From here, the celestial world is in a certain sense against the current'.

Another example of 'reversed thinking' can be found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, II, 69:

'What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the truly poor (*sarmyāsi*); when other beings are awake, then it is night for the Wise Man (*muni*) who sees';

*cf.* 'The light that is in you is darkness'.

and the examination of the term *sushupānam* (above, 6); finally, we recall that *sushupta*, 'deep sleep', is opposed, in the *jnānakānda*, to the 'Waking State' of consciousness, as it is superior to it.

In this regard, it should be noted that the 'opposite direction' is not backwards, but forwards (*TS.*, VII, 2, 1, 3, *prān iva hi suvargah*). It is assumed that the Wayfarer, whether advancing towards the *dēvāyana* or lingering in the *pitriyāna*, always follows the circular path of the Year; he does not turn to the left to go back (spells are repeated in reverse, and 'widdershins', <sup>E</sup>only in black magic); such a return to error (*avasarpāna*, the opposite of *atisarpāna*) would imply not the sought-after integration (*samskarana*), but disintegration (*vikarana*, *visranrana*). It should be added that circumambulation

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Milan 1993. Islam also specifies that pilgrims must 'settle their debts' before departure, so that it is understood that they 'will die'.

<sup>And</sup> counterclockwise

of the Year, which corresponds to the individual pilgrimage made at a certain level, in a 'world' (*loka*), can also be considered as a forward movement (*pravṛtti*) that starts from the centre and moves towards the circumference, and in the opposite direction (*nivṛtti*) this movement first follows a descending path and then an ascending one on an open spiral whose centre is the axis of the universe; the points determined by the spiral, crossing successive planes, in particular those representing the 'seven worlds', constitute the different states occupied by the principle of individuation in the course of its transmigration (*paribrahmana*) and its modification (*vṛtti*). When the traveller has travelled halfway around the circle, or the spiral is inverted, he now moves in the opposite direction, 'against the current'. The point of return, so critical for the individual, corresponds, in the field of faith, to repentance or, more significantly, to conversion; in metaphysics, it is the 'reversal of spiritual power' (*Brāhmana āvartah*), whose sign is impassivity (*vairāgya*). The pilgrimage has meaning for the pilgrim until he reaches his destination, until he 'returns home' (*astam ēti*), where no one will ask him where he comes from and where he is going. The pilgrimage begins with a 'creeping advance' (*prasarpāna, upōdāsarpana*) beyond the bonds of Varuna, of Death, which coincides with the rising of the Sun,

"the Light of those who are in darkness" (*tamasi harmyē*), which urges those who sleep to leave their beds and set out on their journey; it ends with a "flight beyond" (*atisarpāna*), a "total liberation" (*utimoksha*) from

'all the evils that follow the procession of the young bride' (X, 85, 31).

This liberation is a return to Varuna, to Death, no longer as a prisoner, but as a friend; here the pilgrim sees once again 'Father and Mother' (I, 24, 1), Varuna and Aditi, Heaven and Earth, united in their common nest (X, 5, 2); Varuna is immortal (I, 164, 38) and "Death does not die" (*Sh. Br.*<sub>t</sub>X, 5, 2, 3),

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\*\* p. 39. Cf. *Jaim. Br.*, III, 150 and *PBr.*, XXV, 10,12-18. [On the concept of 'reversed thinking' or 'countercurrent', see A.K.C., 'Une étude sur la *Katha upanishad* (IV, 1)', *EX*, 1977, p. 76].

The Knower united with Death 'becomes the unique Angel, becomes Death itself; he drives away continuous death, death does not touch him' (*RUp.*, I, 2, 7).

It is essential to understand the ontology and theology formulated in the

*Ag-Vēda* and in subsequent texts, in order to interpret these same texts.\*

## 8. THE REJECTION OF THE SNAKE SKIN, THE CHANGE OF

### COLOUR OR CLOTHING.

The phrase (already quoted by *PBr.*):

"The Serpents are (consustantial with) the Ādityas", the 'Suns' or sons of Aditi, can be corroborated and developed by means of other texts. In *R V*, IX, 86, 44, for example, Soma "like Ahi, crawling out of his old skin"

(*ahir na jurnām ati sarpati*); in IV, 13, 4:

"You advance with the most powerful steeds, rejecting the black robe (*asitam... vasma*): when the Sun spreads its web (*tantum ava-vyayan... rasmayah*, implying the metaphor of the 'spider'), the quivering rays sink the darkness into the Waters, as (if they were) a skin' (*carmēva*), *cf.* VII, 63, 1;

that is to say,

'when man's libation brings me to the white robe' (*nir-mijē*, X, 49, 7), because in truth Varuna 'changes with his works (*anu vrata*) the black robes into white and clean robes'.

(VIII, 41, 10, in which his works are the inner operation, *guhya*, and the outer operation, *āvis*,

'Agni sometimes raises, sometimes lowers his knife (*vāshīm*), like the Titan in his white robe' (VIII, 19, 23, *cf.* X, 20, 6, *agnim... vāshimantam*, 'with the flaming sword?').

In X, 63.4, the Āditya

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\* p. 41. *Kas tam pravēda... so asmin madēta* (*AV.*, IX, 1, 6), without which *yas lari na veda kim ricā karishyati* (*AV.*, I, 164, 39).

"With human eyes, always open, they attained, in the manner of angels and thanks to their *qualification* (*arhanā*), a high eternity; driving chariots of light (*jyotirathah*, the opposite of young rivers that are still 'without feet or chariot', X, 99, 4), possessing the magic of serpents while being innocent (*ahimāyā anāgasah*, the exact equivalent of 'prudent as serpents and simple as doves', *Matthew*, X, 16), they have clothed themselves in a glorious heavenly garment'.

In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmana*, II, 134:

'Just as Ahi sheds his skin, or a blade of grass is pulled from the his sheath, he (Indra) is freed from all evil'.\* In the

*Pañcavimśa Brāhmana*, XXV, 15.4:

"By means of this sacrificial session, the serpents conquered Death; he conquers Death, he who follows the same path. In this way, they shed their old skin and advanced crawling, they drove Death away and conquered it. The serpents are the Ādityas. He who follows the same path will shine with the glory of the Ādityas."

According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, II, 3, 1, 3 and 6, at sunset, the Sun enters like an embryo (*garbha*) into the womb that is Agni (*agnāv ēvayonau*),<sup>54</sup> hidden by the night as embryos are hidden; at sunrise,

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\* p. 42. *Yathāhir ahi-cchavyai nirmucyēta... ēva, sarvasmāt pāpmano nirmucyatē.*

<sup>54</sup> The expression 'the matrix that is Agni' - 'Agni occulted, *ab intra* - perhaps requires explanation. In *PBr.*, XXV, 10,10, 'This Mitra deposits his seed in Varuna' (*rētab varano sincati*), and in *Sh. Br.*, XII, 9, 1, 17, 'Va-runā is the matrix, Indra the seed and Sāvītri the producer of the seed'; in II, 4, 5 and II, 4, 4, 19 (see *supra*, p. 30), Agni, the devouring fire (Vāc being absent) receives the seed of Prajāpati, who reproduces in this way (*cf. Ait. Br.*, II, 3, 7: the seed of man comes from the Sun, the blood of woman comes from Agni, and *Bup.*, VI, 4, 3 in a sacramental interpretation of the sexual act, the place where Agni catches fire is analogically 'at the centre of the testicles', *madbyatas tau mushkau*). The expression is also consistent with *BG.*, XIV, 3: 'My womb (*yoni*) is the Great Brahmā, within which I deposit the embryo' (*garbham dadhāmi, cf. AV.* IX, 74, 5: 'Soma

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places the embryo in Aditī's womb', *dadbāti garbham aditer upasthe*); the "Great Brahmā" corresponds to "transcendent Nature" (*para prakriti*), which is the "matrix of all beings" (*ētaḍ yonīni bhutāni sarvāni*, *BG.*, VII, 5-6), 'this Nature is mine, and when I resort to her, I produce at her will the whole set of beings without independent will' (*ibid.*, IX, 8); cf. Meister Eckhart: "The eternal play (= *līlā*) of the Son comes from the fact that the Father embraces his own nature"; also *Mund. Up.*, III, 1, 3, in which the Most High is at once "Creator, Lord, Person and matrix of Brahmā" (*Brahmā-yoni*), cf. *AV*, X, 29, 14: Agni 'is born from the womb of the Titan' (*asurasya jatharāt ajāyata*) and *Sh. Br.*, VI, 1, 2, 6-9, in which Prajāpati "carries the embryo within itself".

All this is nothing strange, not even for Christian theology, but it is simply unfamiliar: the Supreme Identity, *tad ēkam*, is the unity of a joint principle, and if it were otherwise, the birth of the Son could not be defined as a vital operation (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 27, 2) [see A.K.C., 'La Doctrine tantrique de la bi-unité divine', *ET.*, 1937]. This Supreme Identity can be designated by the names of one or other of its joint principles; it can be referred to as Varuna or Agni (usually masculine, but in the passages in question, semantically feminine), Aditī or Virāj (both feminine, but often also masculine). In other words, it can be conceived as male or female, or both. Thus Virāj ["cosmic Intelligence inasmuch as it governs and unifies the whole of the corporeal world in its entirety" (R. Guénon)] from which all things derive their own quality, "Who knows its procreative duality?" (*mithunatvam*, *AV.*, VIII, 9, 10), cf. *JUB.*, I, 54: the joined principles Sāman and Rik, i.e. Heaven and Earth, 'become Virāj' and - only thus, in inner union' - 'procreate' (*tau virād bhūtvā prājanayatām*) the Sun; after this birth, they are separated again (an indication repeated in *AV*, for example X, 27, 23, *krintatrād ēshām uparā udāyan*, 'from their separation, what comes next appeared'). If the one who at the same time "Generates" and "brings forth" – we find expressions such as "the bringing forth by the Father" in Christian doctrine – is a joint principle, referring to his essence and his nature, which are identical in him, so that we speak indifferently of the "divine essence" and the "divine nature". Cf. Epiphanius, *Haer.* XXXIV, 4: 'The Father was in labour'; see Baynes, *Coptic Gnostic Treatise*, 1933, p. 34, *autogenes* = he who begets himself = *monogenes*, cf. p. 49. He can be called Father.

"Like Ahi, he frees himself from his skin (*yathā ahis tvaco nirmucyēta*),  
he frees himself from the night, from evil" (*pāpmanah*)<sup>55</sup>

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or Mother, as in the expression *Natura naturans, Creatrix, Deus*. The doctrine of the eternal birth of the Son implies not only a temporal mother, but an eternal motherhood in God, precisely that of the "divine nature" "through which the Father begets" (*Summa Theol.*, I, 41, 5, *cf.* St. John Damascene, *De Fid. Orth.*, 1,18 and St. Augustine, *De Trin.*, XIV, 9). The fact that God is therefore the Father-Mother, or simply the 'Geni-' (plural, dual) can be compared to the Vedic usage whereby one speaks of the

"Ancestors" indiscriminately as "Mothers" (*mātāra*) or "Fathers" (*pitārā*) since Sanskrit, having the advantage of being able to use dual grammatical forms, allows the use of the conjunction 'and' to be avoided while specifying the dual aspect of a single substance, for example Mitrāvarunau, Indragñi, where in the first case the relationship is between Son and Father, and in the second between King and Priest. It should be remembered that from the Indian point of view, the 'seed' is consubstantial with the 'sower', and also that the father *is* the embryo, who is reborn *as* a son, as in *AV*, VI, 70, 3: 'He is reborn again in his progeny, such is the law' (*pra prajābhir jāyatē dharmanas pari*). All this must be taken into consideration with regard to the doctrine of reincarnation, which is often misinterpreted, and the habitual confusion between reincarnation and transmigration. The father as an individual entity *transmigrates* and is thus reborn in another mode of being, but as a father he is *reproduced* in his son, and precisely in that mode of being in which the act of fatherhood was brought about by the act of sonship. The father who sooner or later dies – and this applies both to *the* Father and to every principle of individuation, since 'God comes and goes, God disappears' (Eckhart) – is resurrected in the son, who, by giving birth to his father – insofar as filiation implies paternity – is called 'father of his father'. Resurrection and transmigration are Vedic doctrines, but not 'reincarnation' in the theosophical or self-styled 'Buddhist' sense. Even in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II, 22), we must see in the 'occupant of the body' (*dēhi*) who abandons his used bodies (*sharīrāni vihaya jīrnāni*, echoing *PBr.*, XXV, 15, 4, *hitvā jirnām tvacam*) as a living principle in all beings, rather than an individual principle as such [*cf. BUP.*, IV, 4,1-7].

<sup>55</sup> See *Ait. Br.*, V, 25, in which the Sun is described as 'this Angel who is best able  
best at destroying evil'.

This action is imitated in the [*sarpana*] ritual when the officiants 'crawl' (*srip*, with *pra*, *prati*, *nih*, etc.) when going to *the sadas* or coming from *the sadas*. \*\*

'Just as Ahi sheds his skin, they free themselves from all evil'.

Rejecting the snake skin thus corresponds to

'stripping off the old man' (*cf. MUp.*, II, 18).

To ward off Death is equivalent to freeing oneself from Varuna, that is, from his bonds. Most of the difficulties encountered in interpreting Varuna as the 'god of the day' or the 'god of the night' stem from the fact that it has not been realised that he is both at the same time, or sometimes one and sometimes the other 'according to his mode of action' (*anuvratā*, VIII, 41, 10); when he is opposed to Mitra - here the opposition is between Titan and Angel, eternal and mortal, night and day ('Mitra is the Day, Varuna the Night', *PBr.*, XXV, 10,10) - the unmanifested Varuna is the dark power, the father or the elder Brother *ab intra*. <sup>56</sup>

In the same way, Agni –

'Varuna when born, Mitra when inflamed' (*AV*, V, 3, 1),

"Varuna as Jātavedas, <sup>E</sup>Mitra as priest and close friend" (III, 5,4),

"Tanunapat as the titanic embryo, the Glory of men when he comes into the world" (III, 29, 11)

- From one point of view, Agni is a man-eater, a devourer of flesh, a power that must be avoided at all costs (X, 16, 9 etc.) and, from another point of view, he is the herald (*dūta*) of the Angels, the Friend (*mitra*) and Guest (*atithi*) of man, as well as his

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\*\* p. 42. [The hidden place of the sacrificial area]

<sup>56</sup> *Cf.* I, 164,38, X, 85,17-18, X, 132,4, and in particular *TS.*, II, 1, 7-9.

"He who gives order to the seasons and is reborn" (*rītūnr anyo vi dadhāj jāyatēpunah*, X, 85, 18) cannot be, as Sāyana says, the Moon, but Agni or the Sun, as can be seen by comparing with X, 72, 9, *prajāyai mṛityavē tvat punar mārṭādam ābharat*, II, 38.4, in which Sāvitrī says *vi rītūnr adardhah*, and X, 2.1 and 3, in which it is said to Agni *vidvān rītūnr ritupatē... ritūn kalpayāti*.

<sup>And</sup> Epithet of Agni, 'who knows everything', 'who possesses all creatures'.

His Norse equivalent, Loki, is sometimes the adversary, sometimes the ally of Aegir.

In all theologies, these opposing aspects of God are respectively those of Mercy and Justice; in Islamic metaphysics, for example, Heaven is the reflection of His absolute Love, Hell the reflection of His absolute Majesty. Here we deal with the second aspect of Varuna, that of his power, from which herbs are used to ward us off<sup>57</sup>

'Free me from the curse, that of Varuna, from the lameness of Yama'.

In X, 129.1, the question is asked:

'Who covered?' or 'Who enveloped?' (*kim āvarīvar*)

- before any distinction between being and non-being, life and death, day and night. The most obvious answers are found in VIII, 100, 7:

'it was Vitra who enveloped' (*yo vo avdvarīt vritrah*)

and in X, 90, 1, where it is Puruṣa - whose identity with Ahi-Vitra has already been deduced on other grounds - who

'surrounds the Earth on all sides and goes beyond the dashāngulam';\*

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<sup>57</sup> Here, 'the herbs' are implored - whose king is Soma - because by drinking Soma, Indra is inspired and gains the strength to free his friends.

<sup>58</sup> X, 97, 16, in which we can see the assimilation of Varuna to Yama, and the fact of having 'bound feet' or being 'lame' is equivalent to being practically 'footless'. *Padgribhi*, 'Foot-Hooker', is the name of a demon in the *Ag-Vēda* (X,49,5).

As for 'getting rid of Varuna', we can point to the 'backward thought' (*pratyakcētanā*) in VIII, 86.2, *kadā nv untar varane bhuvāni*, 'When will I be in Varuna again?', that is, when will I be 'dead and buried in the Deity' (Eckhart)?, *cf.* VII, 88, in which Varuna is both loved and feared. In fact, it is through Varuna himself, when he shows his face (Agni, VII, 88, 2), when he becomes Sāvitrī (*Sh. Br.*, XII, 2, 7,17) that one is freed from the bonds of Varuna; the Father as Son is the redeemer in the face of the Father's wrath.

\* p. 43. *Sa bhūmin vishvato vritvd aty atishthad dashāngulam* - here it is not necessary to dwell on the meaning of this last term. [Coomaraswamy studied in

or again in the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, II, 4,12:

'Since he surrounds these worlds, he is Vitra' (*yad iman lokdn avri-not tad vritrasya vritratvam*)

- given that the etymology linking Vitra to  $\sqrt{vṛ}$  is preferable to that which traces it back to *vrit*, although from the point of view of *nirukta* or hermeneutics, as well as semantics (since the two operations coincide in a single fact), both etymologies are valid.

In any case, apart from the obvious functional equivalence, the common etymological origin (root  $\sqrt{vṛ}$ ) of 'Varuna' and 'Vitra' suggests that 'This One' in whom and from whom all things are hidden while he 'breathes without breath' (*ānīd avātam*, X, 129, 2) must be both Varuna and Vitra.

In fact, this Varuna is a 'closure' (*varana*), as indicated by several texts: *varano vārayātai* in *AV.*, VI, 85, 1 and X, 3, 5, and *varuno vārayāt* in *Taitt. Ar.*, VI, 9,2; cf. also 'vala' = *vara*, and *varaha*, also from the root  $\sqrt{vṛ}$ . The *Gopatha Brāhmana*, I, 7, repeats the terms of *AV*, X, 90, 1, with a slight modification; the timid waters choose Brahmā as their king and,

'to the extent that he closes them, he is their enclosure'.

(*yac ca vritvātishthans tad varano 'bhavat*);

being such a 'fence', it must also be known as 'Va-runā' (*tam vā ētarn varanam santam varuna ity ācakshatē*), that is, metaphysically. Moreover,

'As he was separated from the sea (*samudrād amucyata*), he became 'Mucyu'<sup>E</sup> and this Mucyu is metaphysically 'Death'... Va-runā, Mityu; while he was suffering and boiling (*srāntasya taptasya*), the dye dripped from his limbs like sweat (*raso 'kshrat, so 'nga-raso 'bhavantam*), and this 'angarasa' is metaphysically 'Angiras'.<sup>E</sup>

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details this verse in his article entitled '*Ag-Vēda*, X, 90, *aty atishthad dashāngulam*', *JAOS.*, 1947].

And 'who liberates', 'who deliberates'.

And Aṅgiras is an epithet of the progenitor, Prajāpati. Aṅgirā 'the Foaming One', manifestation of Agni as a power of illumination,

The last part of this relatively 'late' text corresponds exactly to *BUp.*, 1.2.2, but whether or not it is considered perfectly explicit in *the Ag-Vēda*, the exegesis is absolutely correct. Mucyu is certainly identical to the Buddhist Naga Mucalinda or Mucilinda, *cf.* Mucukunda in *the Mahābhārata*.

In any case, it is impossible to question the identity of Varuna *ab intra* and of the Asura-piti, Ahi-Vitra and Mityu = Mara, any more than his identity with the terrifying forms of Agni and Rudra - *Noster Deus ignis consumens est*.<sup>59</sup>

Nor can it be denied that Mitra, the inflamed Agni, is the 'face' of Varuna and Sūrya his 'eye'.

The dual Mitrāvarunau is their unity in what appears to us to be a dual action, that of activity and inactivity, productivity and impotence, mercy and judgement, duration and eternity, the *vishurupāni savratā* of VI, 70, 3. In this identity, the consubstantial or consanguineous pair, Mitra and Varuna, one made manifest and subject to ageing, the other invisible and eternal (1.164.38 and X.85.17-18) are respectively

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symbolised by the light of lightning; born from the mouth of Brahmā, he married Śraddha, Devotion Personified.

<sup>59</sup> This identity or coincidence was supported by Bergaigne, but questioned by others, including Norman Brown (in *JAOS.*, 1919, p. 108), who nevertheless informs me in a letter that he does not entirely deny this possibility. In fact, only if we omit to add the qualification '*ab intra*' to the statement made above 'it takes a great effort of will to identify two characters as different as Varuna and Vitra in the Vedas' (Brown, *loc. cit.*). It can also be noted that, although he is a scholar who does not define himself as a Christian, a modern Christian heritage and a 'moralistic' concern have prevented him from accepting the point of view of the old teaching - by no means unknown even in medieval Europe - that 'good' and 'evil' only have meaning 'under the sun' and 'in the worlds', but in the Supreme Identity they coincide without opposition or dualism.

the *apara* and *para* Brahmā of the Upanishads, in a similarity and without any similarity (*BUp.*, II, 3).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In this study, we have drawn references, as far as possible, from the *Āg-Vēda* rather than from the 'additional' texts. In this regard, we agree with Bloomfield when he demonstrates that we must abandon "the belief that references to history can be gathered from scattered mantras is the only valid material for reconstructing it" and, like him, we are "increasingly inclined to believe that '*mantra*' and '*Brāhmana*' are nothing more than chronological distinctions, and two modes of expression that are largely contemporary... According to our knowledge, the two forms have existed side by side since the earliest times" (*JAOS.*, 1895, p. 144, cf. Eggeling in *SBE.*, XII, XXIV, and Edgerton in *JAOS.*, 1916, p. 197). However, we do not think, like Brown, that 'the later material tends to follow ideas that are not really contained in the *Āg-Vēda*' (*JAOS.*, 1931, p. 108). Even in the *Upaniṣads*, I do not see the development of new doctrines at all, but only a difference in expression and emphasis. Therefore, regarding the identity of Varuna and Brahmā: initially, as Grassmann noted (*Wörterbuch*, s.v. *brahman*), 'The seeds of further separation are already indicated in the *Āg-Vēda*' (a statement that is certainly erroneous in terms of moderation); later, it would be very difficult to make a distinction between the conception of Mitrāvarunau - the latter [Varuna] being 'immortal, the uterine brother of the mortal; men notice one of the two, but the other escapes them' (*ĀV*, I, 164, 38) - and that of the two aspects of Brahmā, *apara* and *para*, mortal and immortal respectively, in a similarity and without any similarity (*BUp.*, II, 3). In this case, it is the reference that is important, not the name, and in any case the distinction between *Brahmā* and *kshatra*, as well as their coincidence - outwardly in the dual Indrāgni and inwardly in the Supreme Identity - are sufficiently explicit.

This is not, of course, to deny that there has been linguistic development in the *Upanishads*, because if we compare them with the *Āg-Vēda*, such a denial would be absurd. But literary history and the history of metaphysics are two very different things, and one could even say that the *philosophia perennis* has no history and cannot have one, which is also the opinion of St Augustine. How, then, should we interpret the 'two modes of literary expression (belonging to) the same current of thought' (Bloomfield, *loc. cit.*)? Certainly not its 'lyrical' and 'epic-didactic' modes,

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because, in our opinion, the *Ag-Vēda* is no more 'lyrical' than 'satirical', and if the *Brāh-manas* are partly didactic (and we should rather define them as technical and exegetical), they are certainly not 'epic' in the literary sense. The different modes are those of liturgy on the one hand and initiatory teaching on the other: the exegetical parts of *the Brāhmanas*, and of *the Upaniṣads* in general, deal primarily with 'genesis' (*jātavidyā*, *bhāvavritta*); they are attributed to the Brāh-mana (and claimed by him), who, however, does not actively take part in the ritual, but ['teaches the science of genesis'] *jātavidyām vadati* (X, 71,11) and who, on the required occasions - during conversations with other Brahmins or for the instruction of a qualified student - gives answers to the questions posed in the *brahmodya* hymns [in the form of dialogues].

To put it another way, let us say that *karma kānda*, which approves and recommends action, represents the part of *the Vedas* that addresses *kshatra*, or 'temporal power'; *jhanakānda*, 'theoretical' in the etymological sense of the term, is the part that addresses *Brahmā*, or 'spiritual authority'. There is no reason to suppose that the latter was not originally 'published', even in later times, when linguistic development had already taken place. The reasons for its publication at that time may be linked to the *Kshatrya* rebellion against spiritual authority, which first led to the demand for equality, or even intellectual superiority, and later led to a heterodox development in Buddhism and Jainism.

Be that as it may, we cannot expect to find a vast doctrinal exposition in a liturgy, which would be out of place. It is true that the subject matter is so vast and congruent with itself ('Each of its parts seems to be conscious of all the others, and assimilated to them', Bloomfield in *JAOS.*, 1909, p. 288) - and we may also add, consistent with the metaphysical doctrines of non-Indian traditions - that it is by no means impossible to extrapolate from the mantras the doctrines they illustrate, just as it would be possible to expound the doctrines contained in the *Psalms* and medieval Latin hymns. What this internal logic demonstrates is that the composers of mantras, whether men or supernatural beings, were undoubtedly perfectly aware of all their implications; otherwise, it would be like learning extraordinary mathematical formulas

and believe that they were developed blindly, which is equivalent to saying by verbal or theoretical inspiration. Now, it is impossible to suppose that the *Veda*, in its present form, could have preceded, say, the infinite knowledge

## 9. THE INFINITY OF AGNI

The *Āg-Veda* (IV, 1,11-12 already quoted at the end of 6) describes Agni when he is 'born first at the origin' (*budhnē*, i.e. as Ahi Budhnyā): he is 'without feet or head, hiding both ends' (*apād ashīrshā guhamāno antā*).

*Guhamāno antā* is clearly equivalent to *ananta*, 'endless', 'infinite', 'eternal', 'without beginning or end': it is also the name of the seven-headed *nāga*, Shēsha, 'Residue', who serves as a bed for Nārāyana-Viṣṇu when he lies on the bottom of the primordial waters at the dawn of creation, at the beginning of a cycle (*Mbh.*, I, 36, 24 etc.). The expression *guhamāno anta* also implies a conjunction of extremities, the opposite of the separation of Puruṣa's head and feet (*ĀV*, X, 90, 14)<sup>61</sup> at the dawn of creation; in other words, it implies the union of extremities represented by the famous symbol of the snake biting its tail or by certain intertwined shapes, the simplest of which is the famous mathematical symbol of 'infinity': ∞. It is therefore not surprising that in the ritual - whose primary meaning is the symbolic reintegration of the divided principle, and through this, of the officiant himself - such strong emphasis is placed on the reunion of the two extremities, such as those of the Year, or the beginning and end of the Sāman, whose extremities are separated in the worlds, Heaven is separated from

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of carpentry, which means that *the very words of the Vēda*, separated from their references, must be considered in some way to be of human and temporal origin. It is not because of the words that express it that *sanātana dharma* is perpetual; the permanence of a tradition has nothing to do with the presumed 'dating' of a particular text, such as the first millennium BCE.

<sup>61</sup> One cannot take literally the statement in X, 90.1, according to which Puruṣa initially has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet; rather, we must understand that this indefiniteness is latent in him, that he is omniform, that is, as in *VS.*, XIII, 41, in which the solar embryo (the Sun *ab intra*, 'the night', see *Sh. Br.*, II, 3, 1, 3, quoted above, p. 60) is called 'the uniform image of a thousand' (*sahasrasyapratimām vishvarūpamī*, the Sun manifested consequently has 'a thousand feet' (*sahasrapad*, VIII, 69, 16).

Earth or the Sun from the Moon. In this respect, ritual texts are of utmost interest to the doctrine in question, and thus provide an intelligible and legitimate explanation of the meaning of symbols and the content of traditional arts.

Thus *the Aitarêya Brâhmana*, III, 43: '*The Agniṣṭoma* is (outwardly a ritual and) metaphysically Agni... And because they pray to him as he is a Head (*mürdhnam santam*) and because he has become Light (*jyotis*),<sup>62</sup> and

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<sup>62</sup> *Mürdhnam santam jyotir bhütam*; in accordance with everything I have already mentioned about the transformation of the serpent's head into the Sun or the Sky, and more precisely with *AV*, X, 88, 6: "At night, Agni is the Head of being (*mürdhā bhuvō bhavati naktarn agnih*), from here, in the morning, he is born as the rising Sun" (*tatab sūryo jāyatē prātar udyanī*, this text clearly demonstrates that the so-called doctrine of *the Brâhmana* - which is also that of Sāyana (in the commentary on I,103,1) - according to which the Sun enters Agni during the night, is by no means new. See also X, 8, 6: 'You (Agni) raise your radiant head towards the Sky'.

These doctrines concerning the "Head" are found in Gnostic formulations, cf. the Syriac Valentinian hymn included in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, verse 5: "From the Head he proclaimed news of the Father"; in this regard, Newbold (in *JAOS*, 1918, p. 15) makes this observation: "The 'Head' is the first emanation of the Abyss, usually called *Novç* or *Μοβογενής*, but more often *Πατήρ* or *Αρχή*... It was 'from the Head' that the Light proclaimed the news, being an emanation of *the Novç*, who alone knows the Father, and drew from him all that he proclaimed to the Aeons." Similarly, the division of the One, in which we have recognised the sacrificial act of creation - self-sacrificial in the moment in which He lends himself to this division, and 'passion' suffered when, through man, He is symbolically stretched out on the Procrustean bed of time and space, in the cosmic crucifixion - the division of the One is also a Gnostic doctrine, for example in the 'Untitled Apocalypse' (Brace Codex): 'He whose members are innumerable myriads of powers, each of which comes from him'. The Gnostic character of the Indian doctrine of Sacrifice was pointed out by Eggeling in *SBE.*, XLIII, XVII. Scholars have often recognised that it was difficult to separate Plotinus' teachings from those of *the Upanishads*, but this argument has too often been addressed (for example by Keith in *Indian Culture*, II, p. 135 ff.) as if the only alternative were between borrowing or independent origin. However, this is not the case.

Agniṣṭoma is the prayer of light, they call it Jyotishtoma, or metaphysically 'Praise of light'... It is the archetype of sacrifice (*yajñakratuh*) without beginning or end (*apūrvo anaparah*, cf. Dante, *neither before nor after, Paradiso*, XXIX, 20); Agniṣṭoma is like a cartwheel, without end (*ananta*),<sup>63</sup> such is its coming, such is its forward movement\* (*yathēva prāyanam Yathodayanam*). In this regard, a sacrificial verse (*yajñagāthā*) is sung:<sup>64</sup>

'That which is its beginning is also its end (*yad arya pūrvam aparam tad asya*), similarly, that which is its end is also its beginning'.<sup>65</sup>

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that similarities are considered – often consisting of identical writings from civilisations that are very distant from one another – by those who speak of 'Ancient Wisdom', an expression that, although overused, is by no means meaningless. The true meaning lies in the integrity of what has been called 'the universal and unanimous tradition'. Apart from comparing the formulations, all this should be obvious to scholars of symbols, since visual symbols are essentially the language of metaphysics, just as words are the language of philosophy.<sup>63</sup> See *AV*, V, 58, 5 and VIII, 20, 14: 'None of its rays is the last'.

\* p. 45 [This expression could lend itself to some confusion, and Keith's overly simplified translation does not do it justice:

'As is its beginning so is its end'. Entering or 'coming' into the worlds is as much a birth as it is a death, which indicates the remarkable amphibology of the term *prāyana*. And the 'forward run' (*udayanam*) is equally a return, an 'arrival'; or, as we have seen (p. 39-40), it is not by going back, but by following a circular path (circumambulation or spiral movement) that one returns to the origin].

<sup>64</sup> The source of this *gāthā* is unknown, but Sāyana says that it was 'sung everywhere'.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, I, 6: 'Is it possible that if you know the beginning of all things (*ser. jātavidyā*), you do not also know the end?'; similarly in St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 103, 2c; Meister Eckhart (ed. Evans, I, p. 224): '*In the beginning* (*scr. agre*) means at the beginning of all things; this also means the end of all things, since the primordial beginning is in view of the ultimate end... What is the ultimate end? It is the mystery of the darkness of the eternal Divinity that is unknown'.

The movement of the Shākala<sup>66</sup>resembles that of a snake (*ahēr iva sarpanam*), it is not possible to distinguish which of the two (ends) is anterior

(cf. Dante, 'without distinction in beginning', *Paradiso*, XXIX, 30).

In the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmana*, I, 35,

"The Year is in Sāman... The Year is endless (*ananta*), its two ends (*antau*) are Winter and Spring; it is from this (*anu*) that the two ends of a village are joined, that the two ends of a necklace are joined, that the Serpent remains wrapped around its rings; truly, just as a necklace is placed from one end to the other around (*samantam... abhiparyakta*) the neck, so is the endless Song" (*anantam sāma*).

The same text (I, 2) prescribes that the Gāyatra Sāman must be sung 'according to the movement of the Wind and the Waters' (*vāyosh ca apān cānu vartma gēyam*); the movement of the Wind is

'from the four quadrants simultaneously, blowing in such a way as to cause a whirlwind' (*rēshmānañ janamāno nivēṣtamānah*) and the movement of the Waters 'creates meanders, meanders and causes whirlpools' (*ankānsi kurvāna nivēṣtamānā āvartān shrījamānāh*),<sup>67</sup> in which

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(scr. *anirukta* etc.), which has never been known and never will be known"; Jeremias (*Der Anticrist in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1930, p. 4): "Westerners think in a linear and progressive way, therefore mechanically, irreligiously, in a Faustian manner... The East and the Bible do not think in a linear way, but in space and time, and in a rather circular way, as if following spirals. Creation evolves in a spiral towards perfection... The magnificent symbol of the serpent biting its tail represents the Aeon." The circumference of a circle is at once "endless" and made up entirely of beginnings and endings that coincide.

<sup>66</sup> Sāyana says that Shākala is 'a name of Ahi'. This is not at all 'absurd' (as Keith thinks); in the same vein, *shākala* also referred to an 'ophidic' ritual, of the same type, for example, as the Pri-shthya Shadaha, described in *Alt. Br.*, V, 22, in which praises are recited to the Serpent Queen.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *AV*, X, 30,10, *āvarvritatih... dvidhārāh*; *JUB.*, III, 33: when "the breath returns ever higher, resounding" (*prānas svarya upary upari vartatē*),

these two movements consist of entering and exiting simultaneously (cf. *TS.*, III, 2, 2), but 'without going forward (*parāṅ*) for fear of weakening' (*kshayād ēva bibhyāt*, cf. *AV*, VIII, 7, 16).

Similarly, in the *Aitarēya Brāhmana*, V, 2,

'They advance in stages of three days without stopping' and *ibid.*,

III, 44, which prescribes that the Agniṣṭoma must be celebrated "without haste" and following the course of the Sun "which, in reality, never

rise or set" but "turns on itself" (*viparyasyatē*),\*

"in reality, never sets" (*na ha vai nimrocati*)<sup>68</sup> and

"He who understands all this becomes united with Him, attains His likeness, and reaches His own state" (*sāyujyam sārūpatām salokyatām*).

In *AV*, I, 115, 5, it is said that the splendour of the Sun, though sometimes

at times radiant and at times gloomy, is "endless" (*ananta*).<sup>69</sup>

The endless continuity of the divine act, which is the act of being, is often emphasised in *the Ag-Vēda*; here are some examples.

'One and the same causes this Water to ascend and descend as one day follows another" (I, 164, 51);

the Dawns, "one like the other, today, tomorrow, follow the of Varuna";

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he calls "the return of spiritual power" (*Brāhmana āvartah*) and the value attributed to "beneficial volutes" (*nandyāvarta*) in late iconography.

\* p. 46. Cf. *PBr.*, VII, 10, 3 and *ā vavritsva* in *AV*, IV, 1, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Echoing *CUp.*, III, 11, 3: 'In reality, it neither rises nor sets, and for those who understand it, it is always midday; such is the interpretation of the spell' [See A.K.C., *Le Temps et l'Éternité*, p. 23].

<sup>69</sup> See *Vādhulasutra*, trans. Caland, in *Acta Orientalia*, IV, pp. 26–27, day and night are *lokas*: 'Day and night are Mityu (i.e. Kāla): they do not affect the deity Āditya (*Sol invictus*) in any way, since they are only the occasion that allows this deity to appear and depart [*anv astam eti*]. cf. *Sh. Br.*, VIII, 6, 1, 18, the Apsara Pramlocanti and Anumlocanti, Night and Day.

'She follows the cosmic path straight' (*ritasya panthām anvēti sādhu*, I, 124, 3);\*

the Sun "advances according to the Law" (*īyatē dhīrmanā*, I, 160, 1);<sup>70</sup>

The Rivers of Life 'flow according to the cosmic order' (*arshanti ritavarī*, IV, 18, 6) and (IV, 19, 7)

these maidens "have knowledge of the Order" (*ritajnah*, that is, they have foreknowledge of their path).<sup>71</sup>

The paths of Day and Night are "endless" (*adhvā*

*anantah*, I, 113, 3); the movement of Heaven and Earth takes place on

"endless paths (*ananta-sah... panthāh*, V, 47, 2); the web woven by Day and Night "will never be unravelled or finished" (*nāpa vri-njātē na gamāto antam*, AV, X., 7, 42, cf. Dante, "which can never be divined"

(*Paradiso*, XXIX, 36). All this is summed up in the wonderful verses of the *Taittiriya Samhitā*, III, 2, 2. It is not with an uncertain voice, but by means of the Word itself that 'proclaims what brings happiness to Angels as well as to men' X, 125, 5) that the *Ag-Vēda*

affirms: *sicut erat in principio, est mine et semper erit, in saecula saeculorum*.

## 10. THE TRACE OF THE 'INFINITE' IN ART

With regard to a passage, cited above, from the *Jaiminīya UP. Brāhmana* (I, 35), we have pointed out in another study how this passage illustrates the concept of art as imitation of celestial 'forms', as explained, for example,

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\* p. 47. [And in the following verse (4): 'She (the Dawn) arrives first among those who return in indefinite succession'].

<sup>70</sup> See 'the ancient way once discovered', IV, 18, 1, and the same idea expressed in similar terms in the account of the Buddha's birth, *DN.*, XIV, 1, 21 ff., where it is repeated after each detail: *ayam ētha dhammatā*.

<sup>71</sup> The Vedic symbolism of the Fountain of Life (*utsa* etc.) with its inexhaustible streams of water or milk that always flow (*utsam duhanto akshitam*, VIII, 7, 16, *avataṁ akshitam*, VIII, 72, 10) is found in Plotinus: 'Imagine a spring that has no other origin than itself; it offers itself to all rivers without ever being exhausted by what they take, but always remains entirely what it was; the streams that flow from it are united with it before following their paths, although all of them, in a certain sense, know in advance which bed they will fill with their course' (*Enneads*, III, 8, 10).

*the Aitarêya Brāhmana*, VI, 27. We have also shown on several occasions - and once again here (6) with regard to *the ūrnā* - that it is almost always possible to link the symbolism and iconography of Indian art to Vedic formulations and that, without knowledge of these sources, symbolism and iconography cannot be explained, but only described. We can add some illustrative examples in relation to the concept of infinity that we have just examined.

If Vedic chanting was truly what the Brāhmanas indicate, it must be possible to find traces of it in Indian music from later periods. The genre to which Indian music belongs has been preserved in Europe only in Gregorian chant, which in turn represented a 'style' of great antiquity, perhaps of Babylonian origin (see Lachtmann, *Musik des Orients*, 1929, p. 9). It can be noted that European listeners have often remarked on the continuous *suites* of Indian music and the absence of climaxes and finales. Keyserling writes: 'It is not easy to explain in words what Indian music means... neither beginning nor end; it is the undulation and ebb and flow of the incessant course of life' (*Travet Diary*, III, 30); and Fox-Strangways: 'We do not know what to say about music that is enthralling without being sentimental, and that expresses passion without vehemence' (*Music of Hindustan*, p. 2). Not long ago, a five-year-old American boy, listening to a record of Indian music, made this observation in our presence: 'This kind of music goes round and round without stopping, it goes here and there and then comes back'. These are exactly the formal qualities that the Brahmins attribute to the Vedic *sāman*.

If the *philosophia perennis* uses images of spirals, as in the case of the whirlpools of inexhaustible waters, the possibilities of being actualised by the auroral breath of creation and the light of the rising Sun, it can well be said that spirals and meanders, wherever they appear in primitive art—that is, in the 'ideological art' of an era when man thought in much more abstract terms than we are accustomed to today—are the signs and symbols of these waters. The notions of infinity, eternity, and recurrence are implied not only in the famous symbol of the snake biting its tail

tail, in this sense 'infinite', but also in all the ancient motifs representing intertwined snakes and dragons, in which beginning and end merge, and in the well-known designs of 'intertwining' and

'knots'\* whose lines have neither beginning nor end.<sup>72</sup>

## 11. CONCLUSION

We have demonstrated, conclusively we believe, that the Father and the Son, the Dragon and the Solar Hero, although apparently opposed, are secretly united, are one and the same, consubstantial. What outwardly or logically must be considered a dual operation, alternating between sleep and wakefulness, power and action, from an inner and authentic point of view is nothing other than the unique nature of the Supreme Identity (*tad ēkam, sadasat*). For

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\* p. 48. [See A.K.C., 'The Iconography of Durer's "Knots" and Leonardo's "Concatenation"', *Art Quarterly*, 1944].

<sup>72</sup> In Chinese art, it is the motif of the *t'ao t'ie*, which, with or without buffalo horns, seems to represent the jawless head of a dragon (for example, *Eumorfopolos Cat.*, I, plate XX, A, 26); there are examples of dragons biting their tails (*Relics of Han and pre-Han Dynasties*, Tokyo, 1932, plate LXI, fig. 4 and Pelliot, *Jades Archdiques de Chine*, 1925, plate XVII) or a concatenation of dragons arranged in a similar way (*Eumorfopolos Cat.*, I, plate LI, A, 72). If the shape of the dragon is sometimes depicted against a background of spirals or meanders, what else could they represent but the aquatic realm of these children of the mists?

On *t'ao t'ie*, see R. Guénon, 'Kāla-mukha' [*Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*, p. 356 (Italian translation, *Simboli della scienza sacra*, Milan, 1975, p. 309)], C. Hentze, 'Le Culte de l'ours et du tigre et le *t'ao-t'ie*' in *Zalmoxis*, I, 1938. On Chinese dragons, see also de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 1913; Werner, *Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, 1932, s.v. *lung-*, Mac-kenzie, *The Migration of Symbols*, 1928, in which one will also note, in relation to what has been said above about the Pharaoh, numerous Egyptian representations of snakes besieging the waters. On spirals and dragons, see again Mackenzie, and on the importance of the spiral in art, cf. Cook, *The Curves of Life*, 1914 [and J. Puree, *La Spirale mystique*, 1974].

The latter is an identity of joint principles, and the same equivalences can be applied when considering the issue from the female perspective [as we will see in the next chapter]. In the course of this study, we have seen that Vedic ontology and the texts that translate it are by no means peculiar to *the Āg-Vēda*, and that it can also be found outside the Indian forms of the 'universal and unanimous tradition'. We have shown at the same time the uniformity and continuity of transmission in Indian literature and art; this tradition is developed, rather than distorted, by the epic, the Purāṇas and the Tantras; the name 'Vyāsa', the 'author' of *the Mahābhārata*, does not actually mean 'compiler' but 'one who develops', since *vyāsatas* means 'in detail', 'at length', 'at length'. As far as iconography is concerned, we could have elaborated further on the meaning of the Nāgas in art, but the reader can easily make the connections for themselves.\* The famous motif of the two intertwined Nāgas (as seen on the Nāgakals and at Konārak) represents the cohabitation of the joint principles *ab intra*; the motif of the struggle between the Phoenix (*garuda*) and the Nāga reflects the external opposition of the separate principles.<sup>73</sup> We have given some indications of the meaning of the main characteristics of Indian music, the use of spiral forms in 'ornamentation', and of *the ūrnā* as a distinctive sign of the Mahāpuruṣa - and we note, in conclusion, that

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\* p. 49. [See chapter VI].

<sup>73</sup> In this regard, attention should be drawn to the famous Etruscan figure from the Grotta dell'Orco (4th century BC), which depicts a winged 'demon' with a snake, or, to use Indian terminology, a Garuda and a nāga. In this di-pinto, reproduced and studied by Evans (*Palace of Minos*, vol. IV, pp. 188-190), we should not see only two snake heads rising from the bird's head of the A winged 'phoenix', but, as Evans noted, the wing pattern provides 'the same design of spirals interspersed with dots characteristic of the Minoan goddess (serpent)'. The ophidian origin of solar power, which at the same time wields the Serpent as 'immanent justice', could not be more clearly indicated. The two serpent heads recall the *pridāku-sānu* form of Indra depicted in the famous image from Mathurā [which we will discuss in the next chapter], note 30 (we have already pointed out the equivalence of *sānu* and *shirri*). Evans argues that the model originated in Western Asia.

The latter, the spiritual Sun, naturally bears the image of the sun on his back, while Shiva, the power *from within*, as demonstrated by his *nāga* ornaments, bears the Moon.

