

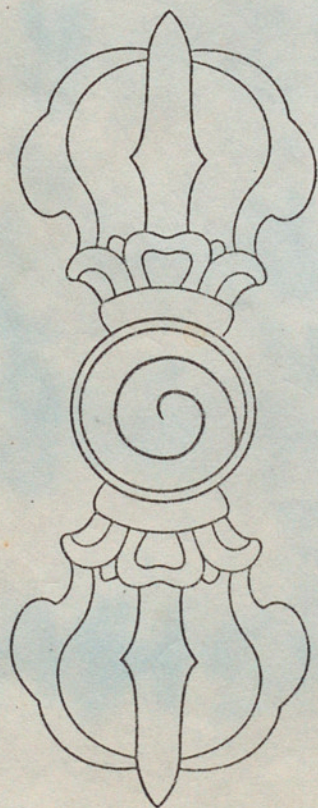
LE MYTHE
COMME
HISTOIRE
SACRÉE
SHUNASHSHEPA

(04)

(28)

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M p l e a e
CORRECTIONS



Myth as Sacred History:

Śunahśepa, a myth of the human condition

~~By [unclear] 1974~~

V Myth as sacred history:

Śunaḥśepa, a myth of the human condition

R. Panikkar 1974

1 I. Myth and history

- 1.1 - Mythic facts and historical facts
- 1.2 - The pluralism of ideologies and myths
- 1.3 - The challenge to philosophy and theology
 - 1.3.1 a) to philosophy
 - 1.3.2 b) to theology

2 II. The sacred history of Śunaḥśepa

- 2.1 - The narrative (the legein of the myth)
- 2.2 - The context (the myth of the legein)
 - 2.2.1 a) Sacrifice (past)
 - 2.2.2 b) Royal consecration (present)
 - 2.2.3 c) Sacrality of the theme (future)
- 2.3 - The commentaries (the logos of the myth)
 - 2.3.1 a) Elements of the sacred history
 - 2.3.2 b) Human sacrifice

3 III. The myth of the human condition

3.1 - The characters

3.1.1 a) The humans

- 3.1.1.1 i) Śunaḥśepa
- 3.1.1.2 ii) Rohita
- 3.1.1.3 iii) Hariścandra
- 3.1.1.4 iv) Ajigarta
- 3.1.1.5 v) Viśvāmitra
- 3.1.1.6 vi) The people

3.1.2 a) The Gods

3.1.2.1 i) Varuṇa

3.1.2.2 ii) Indra

3.1.2.3 iii) The vedic pantheon

3.1.3 c) The cosmos

3.2 - The mythemes

3.2.1 a) The present mythemes

3.2.1.1 i) Presence of death

3.2.1.2 ii) Solidarity of life

3.2.1.3 iii) Transcendental desire

b) The absent mythemes

3.2.2.1 i) Sexuality

3.2.2.2 ii) Political perspective

3.2.2.3 iii) Eschatology

3.3 - Deconditioning the human

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V
5. Myth as sacred history:

Śunahśepa, a myth of the human condition

At the beginning

I. 5.1. Myth and history

1.1 3.1 1- Mythic facts and historical facts

1.2 5.1 2- The pluralism of ideologies and myths

1.3 3- The challenge to philosophy and theology

1.3.1 a) to philosophy

1.3.2 b) to theology

II. The sacred history of Śunahśepa

2.1 1- The narrative (the legein of the myth)

2.2- The context (the myth of the legein)

2.3 2.3.1 a) The sacrifice (past)

2.3.2 b) The royal consecration (present)

c) The sacredness of the theme (future)

2.3.3- The commentaries (the logos of the myth)

a) The elements of the sacred history

b) The human sacrifice

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a) The humans

- i) Śunahśepa
- ii) Rohita
- iii) Hariścandra
- iv) Ajīgarta
- v) Viśvāmītra
- vi) The people

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- ii) Indra
- iii) The vedic pantheon

c) The cosmos

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- ii) Solidarity of life
- iii) Transcendental desire

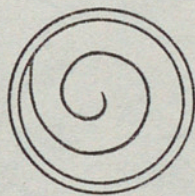
b) The absent mythemes

- i) Sexuality
- ii) Political perspective
- iii) Eschatology

3 - Deconditioning ~~the human~~ man

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I Myth and History

Myth as sacred history:

Śunahṣepa, a myth of the human condition (1)

The Sacrifice is man. (2)

Man is the first to be sacrificed. (3)

I. Myth and history

This study ~~hopes~~ ^{attempts} to elucidate a double function of myth and to illustrate this with a concrete example. Myth first presents itself as primordial differing from the subsoil from which different philosophical systems can draw sustenance. There are no philosophies ^{in a vacuum} ~~invacuo~~; each philosophy is grounded in a given context which is precisely that furnished by myth. Secondly, ^{due to} ~~and because~~ of this very philosophical polyvalence, myth is of irreplaceable value in transcultural encounters and is an indispensable element for cross-cultural fertilization. ^{and the} ~~Now~~ concepts are valid only in the contexts of their conception, ^{where they have been conceived} ~~first~~ ^{but} One cannot purely and simply extrapolate them ~~from~~ without finding the laws which would justify such extrapolation. Myth, on the contrary, stems from a deeper, and so more universal, human stratum than do philosophies.

This first part ^{sets the} ~~hopes~~ to make explicit the setting ^{of our} ~~of~~ the study ^{of} itself.

1. Mythic facts and historical facts

What we currently understand by fact is an incontestable given, a reality which presents itself as such. ^{fact is incontestable} ~~Now~~ the incontestability of any given is not a purely objective character; ^{property} it also includes the subject who considers the fact incontestable. There are no pure facts, facts 'in themselves'; they are always facts for someone. At the very least,

every fact implies someone--^{even} a specific person or human consciousness
in general--for whom that fact is a fact.

A myth seen and lived from within is an ensemble of facts which forms
the basic fabric where ~~of~~ what is given stands out from a particular dom-
ain of reality, ^{serves as} as if against a horizon. Myth then ~~is~~ the ultimate
point of reference, the touchstone of truth. ~~It is by means of myth as~~
~~this basic fabric of referency truth~~ ^{by which} that facts are recognized as truths. ~~Myth~~
Myth, when it is believed and lived from inside, does not ask to be plumbed
more deeply, i.e., to be transcended in the search for some ulterior
ground; it asks only to be made more and more explicit, for it expresses
the very foundation of our conviction of truth. Seen from the outside,
however, the mythic ^{all} appears as a mass of legends, of 'myths' in which
others believe, but which ~~do not correspond to~~ 'factual' truth. Myth
recounts in its ~~own~~ ^{belief} way the ultimate ground of ^a particular belief: either
of others' ^{seen} belief (myth ~~lived~~ from outside), or of our own belief (myth
lived from inside). In the latter case, we believe the myth without
believing in the myth, since it is transparent for us, self-evident,
integrated into that ~~a~~ ensemble of facts in which we believe and which
comprise the real (4).

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History

One of the myths of modern western thought is history (5). History is in fact the landmark to which we refer the incontestability of facts, and upon which we lean in order to criticize other myths (6). Historical facts are considered the hard reality, one can neither escape nor avoid.

constitute the and inescapable hard/reality which one cannot escape.

in terms of by

constitute ~~admittedly subjective~~ which not

For western Man

The modern theological interpretation of Jesus' Resurrection is a striking example of what we are getting at: because history is the modern myth which gives meaning to reality, we transmythicize the physical fact into historical fact. We demythicize the myth of the physical or physiological miracle and substitute in order to accept the myth of the historical miracle. The modern interpretation ~~thus~~ claims to render the fact of the Resurrection comprehensible to us; The Resurrection would thus be only the historical--and therefore real--fact of the transformation occurring among the first christian generation, who believed in this Resurrection. So, the reality of the Resurrection would not be a biological, material or spiritual fact, but an historical fact, and thus real.

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Or why not set one instance after "

Obviously everything depends on the interpretation of these two adjectives: historical and mythic. In the one instance, historical means real, and therefore true; while mythic signifies non-historical, thus fantastic, imaginary, unreal. In the other instance, that is to say from the myth's a-historical point of view, historical facts are only the transitory examples--often deceptive and always partial--of reality which itself is always trans-historical. On the one hand, the true Kṛṣṇa, the living and real Kṛṣṇa, is not an historical fact for most of those who believe in him, but a religious fact. On the other hand, the true Christ, equally living and real, is not the mystical Christ for most christians, but the historical fact of Jesus and

From our contemporary perspective

western

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en-going his continuing presence in history. Christian missionaries who preach ~~this~~ this historical reality of Christ in India, for example, must realize that in so doing they preach a doceticism and relativism which is ~~the contrary~~ ~~exactly opposite~~ to what they intend to proclaim. Except for those who live ~~within~~ the myth of history, historical facts are merely events ~~complete~~ which have not reached their ~~true~~ and full reality.

Man cannot live without myths, without indeed a plurality of myths which intertwine and follow on one another in a way that allows ~~the~~ a continual passage from mythos to logos, and the (constant) 're-sourcing' of the logos in new mythoi. Strictly speaking, ~~an isolated myth does not exist.~~ Each myth lives in a community of myths. Even in the judeo-christian-islamic tradition where the myth of history predominates, especially ~~in~~ ^{during} the last

^{few} centuries, there have always been other myths. But in order for these other myths to be intelligible and acceptable within ~~the mythic world~~ ^{mythic world of} furnished ~~constructed by~~ history, they must assume historical guise. And so sacred history emerges. For those who believe in it, it is ^{advers} true and therefore 'history', but in a very special sense, because it is also sacred, and it is this sacredness which grounds and inspires history, which invests historical facts with their paradigmatic office, and even serves as the key to their deeper intelligibility. The historical character of sacred history constitutes its aspect of truth: it is 'history', so it is true. The sacred character of sacred history is its aspect of mystery, i.e., its trans-historical truth: it is 'sacred', so it transcends history. So the myth becomes a fact, but equally every fact is also a myth: spiritual realities are historical facts, but historical facts are also spiritual realities. So too we discover the myth of history ~~in pursuing~~ ^{when we} ~~furnishes~~ the history of myth. Today the latter provides ~~us with~~ ^{the} a transition from sacred myth to historical myth.

*The mythic world of history
is the myth of us ourselves looking*

To recapitulate our terminology: by mythos, I mean that human organ of apprehension on the same level as the logos and in constant relation intercourse with it. Mythos and logos are two human modes of awareness, irreducible one to the other, but equally inseparable. ~~which are neither reducible, one to the other, nor separable, one from the other.~~

By myth, I understand the horizon of intelligibility, or again, ~~the reality~~ meaning of reality, ~~which is~~ disclosed by a certain mythologumenon. The mythologumenon is the legein of the myth, the living voice, the telling of the myth. If the myth is the truth, ~~the~~ reality, then the mythologumenon is the expression, the speaking, the language.

Finally, a myth expressed by a mythologumenon, i.e., by a mythic narrative, can contain different mythemes, which are the themes (mythic and not necessarily conceptual), which the myth elucidates.

2. The pluralism of ideologies and myths

Modern Man, bombarded ~~as he is~~ by mass-media which supply more examples and more information of human plurality, can no longer believe that a world, a religion, a philosophy, a life-style, is the world, or the exemplar for religion, philosophy or life. He is ~~in~~ less and less inclined to ignore, scorn or consider unenlightened those who do not think as he does; 'primitives' arouse new interest, 'natives' are appreciated, 'non-christians' or 'aliens' are respected, even courted, and, in spite of the ~~pitfalls~~ ^{shortcomings} of grammar, women are no longer considered ~~to be~~ inferior. Minorities of every sort are assured that they too have their place in the sun and their rights in society. But this same openness--even if it is only theoretical--

albeit of dubious universality...
[nice but not here?]

encourages ~~leads more and more~~ to a deceptive belief in ^{my} one's own 'tolerance' and in the superiority of ^{my} one's world-wide and even universal mission. All this ~~cases~~ leads us to want to go beyond ~~the~~ mere awareness of plurality to an acceptance of pluralism. One of the most positive movements of our day is the dynamism, ^{is} visible almost everywhere, which seeks to pass from de facto plurality to de iure pluralism. But true pluralism does not belong ^{to} in the order of the logos; pluralism cannot be accepted within an ideology. On an ideological level, you cannot compromise with error. Just so, two contradictory conceptual systems cannot both be true at the same level, or according to ⁹ single perspective. A pluralistic ideology would always place itself above ~~non-pluralistic~~ ideologies. The result would be merely a super-ideology and the worst of paternalisms... I designate myself know-it-all and even tolerate others, provided they remain in the place ^{stating} I have allotted them. Even if we accept a certain ^{rights} perspectivism and the existence of other levels of life and awareness, we can scarcely evade a hierarchy of perspectives and levels according to some third point of view, which ^{is} would represent yet another super-ideology. But true pluralism ^{outsteps} goes beyond both the conceptual and ideological domains. A purely dialectical solution to the conflict of ideologies cannot call itself pluralist, for it uses only a single criterion ^{and} which does not allow for true pluralist autonomy. Pluralism is not ^{and} a simple respect for plurality, ^{is} as a makeshift solution or a pragmatic necessity. Rather pluralism bears witness that one has transcended the logos as sole and final arbiter of the real, ^{though} yet without belittling its sway. Pluralism testifies that one has passed beyond absolutism, without thereby tumbling into agnostic relativism. Pluralism presupposes only ^a radical relativity underlying all human constructs and at the bottom of reality itself (7).

1002:

1007:

which does not allow
 for pluralist autonomy
 pluralism

and autonomy
 is not a simple respect for
 plurality

1008:
 1009:

1010:
 1011:

In brief, pluralism does not stem from the logos, but from the mythos,
 embraces
 Pluralism is grounded in the belief that no single group can embrace the
 totality of ~~the~~ human experience. It is based on trust in the other, even
 though ~~we~~ ^I may not understand him and, from ~~our~~ ^{my} point of view, he may be
 quite wrong. Pluralism does not absolutize error because it does not absolu-
 tize truth either.

This brings us to a methodic consideration which both introduces
 justifies
~~us to~~ our subject and ~~justifies~~ our enterprise. It is ^{such} this: dialogue between
 cultures, and the mutual fecundation which can result from it, must be
 enacted first of all on a mythic level, rather than in the confrontation
 between logoi. This is not an any way to minimize the importance of dia-
 lectics. The dialectical method is fruitful in discussion within a single
 culture and/or a homogeneous civilization, but it operates differently in
 an encounter between cultures which ^{may} ~~might~~ have arisen from fundamentally
 different presuppositions. To assume a priori that a given conceptual
 form can serve as ^(the) framework for an encounter of cultures, represents, from
 the philosophical point of view, an unacceptable uncritical extrapolation.
 Sociologically speaking, it represents ~~still~~ ^{yet} another vestige of a cultur-
 al colonialism which supposes that a single culture can formulate the
 rules of the game for an ~~an~~ authentic encounter between cultures. If
 the logos has priority in intra-cultural confrontation, the mythos ^{takes} ~~has~~
 the lead primacy in inter-cultural encounters. This implies that a purely phil-
 osophical methodo-logy based on the logos is certainly necessary, but not
 sufficient. We must complete it with a methodic in which the various
methodogumena also have ^{their} ~~a~~ decisive ^{role} ~~function~~ to perform. ^(play)

~~So~~ instead of elaborating a working hypothesis, I would like to present a concrete example.

3 - The challenge to philosophy and theology

To better situate our example let us ~~try~~ briefly ~~to~~ consider the double challenge which confronts humanist and religious thought in the West.

The challenge is the same in both cases, since western thinking, even if ~~it~~ denies its tie with the abrahamic traditions, remains grounded in them. Nevertheless, we ought to distinguish between the philosophical domain and the theological domain, but without separating them.

Should not be from
reception
of (8)
shulke

g) The challenge to philosophy comes down to wondering whether man possesses an horizon of intelligibility other than that formed by the encounter and embrace between rational evidence and historical verification.

The interface between the sky of rational evidence and the earth of historical verification seems to form the horizon under which western humanity has lived its intellectual, and ~~so~~ its human, life, at least for several centuries and even, perhaps, for some millenia (8). Is there some other mode of intelligibility possible outside of this horizon? Can ~~man~~ arrive at profound convictions which are not based on this skyline where reason encounters the exterior-historical-world? Are there no other pillars of truth? Must everything be grounded in historical reasoning, aided only by rationalization? (It is enough for the moment) to pose the problem as a challenge to philosophy.

+ cf. the well-known overstatement: "Wir Abendländer alle sind Christen."
K. Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung
München (R. Piper) 1962, p. 52

as an
ordinary
first note



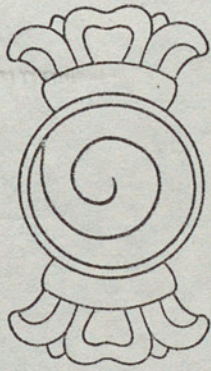
13. ~~Q~~ The challenge to theology could be posed as a question: Must I become, intellectually and ^{spiritually} ~~intellectually~~, a semite if I want ^{to be} religiously, a jew, a christian or a muslim? Must I be converted to the ways of thinking, and consequently ^{to} the life-styles, of these three historical traditions if I recognize and accept Yahweh, Christ or Muhammed as living and valid religious symbols? The problem takes on a keen edge and worrisome dimensions in Islam, the majority of whose adepts are among peoples ^{found} ~~which~~ have no bond with arab culture. It has also been posed for a long time in the christian world, beginning with the efforts ^{of} christianity to distinguish ^{and} even separate itself from christendom. The problem arises even more urgently, and often tragically, for those jews who do not want to identify themselves with the state of Israel. And, if we are not too touchy about names like 'theology' and 'religion', we will see the same problem posed for the fourth branch of western culture called marxism, humanism or simply modernity. Is it necessary to take ^{you} one's categories of intelligibility from the Bible, the Gospel, the ^{Qur'an} ~~Koran~~ or Das Kapital; must ^{you} one enter the weltanschauungen of these great traditions, and even their marxist appendix, in order to ^{call} ~~consider~~ oneself a servant of Yahweh, a brother of Christ, someone who believes in the Seal of the prophets, or a man who works for the temporal happiness of ^{humanity} ~~Humanity~~. Must an african, an indian, ^{be uprooted} ~~achinese~~ uproot himself from the ^{fertile soil} ~~fertility~~ of an age-old culture, its thinking, its myths and its deep human truths, if he or she feels attracted to these three so-called monotheistic religions, or to modern humanist ideology? →

To know whether modernization implies westernization is a burning question for two-thirds of today's world. Must ~~one be~~ converted to marxist thought, must ~~one~~ ^{we} circumsise the african and asiatic spirit with the blade of technology in order not to miss the appointed communion, assembly, church, to which Man today is ~~called~~? Is there only one ~~path~~ ^{the} ~~the helleno-semitic~~ to Christ? These questions are far from rhetorical; they constitute a challenge to theology.

This study does not claim directly to answer questions of such moment. Neither do we ~~wish~~ ^{from out} merely to substitute one myth for another. We would like, first, to introduce to the western world an indian myth quite as fundamental as the more familiar semitic, hellenic and other myths which recount the human condition. For this, ^{it is enough to} telling the story ~~suffices~~. But we would also like to implant it in the open field of occidental myth, ^{today} ~~today~~ undergoing a radical transformation. Next, we would like to make explicit the importance of this myth in the very heart of the ~~indian~~ ^{would} tradition. We wish, finally, to contribute to the modern symbiosis, which is not simply an artificial and superficial eclecticism, and which becomes more and more urgent if we want to step beyond the provincialisms of which we are perhaps aware on a planetary scale for the first time. Human destiny ~~is~~ ^{is} at stake. Either we acquire our global awareness ^{in its place} at the cosmotheandric level ^{of the domain} of this destiny, or we become simple cogs in the wheels of the megamachine. The disparity between a sincere, even deep (but provincial and sectarian) belief, and an ^{universal} ~~all-encompassing~~ technology (which in one sense liberates, but also stupefies and obliterates any variety) is ~~in~~ in the long run unbearable.

universal

?



II The Sacred History of Śunaḥśepa

II. The sacred history of Sunahsepa

The golden rule of all hermeneutic is simply that the interpreted thing ~~is able to~~ ^{can be} recognize ~~itself~~ ^{itself} in the interpretation. This implies that inter-pretation must not be extra-pretation, but a mediation between the self-understanding of the interpreted thing and the hetero-understanding realized by the interpreter (9). ^{the guarantee of a valid} In other words, an interpretation ~~proves~~ ^{is proved} correct ~~itself~~ ^{valid is} ~~in the same way that~~ ^{much as} elementary mathematical operations: ~~check themselves~~ ^{check themselves}: subtraction to prove ^{addition}, multiplication ^{to} checks division. Only if we can retranslate, i.e., reinterpret our interpretation following the original, ^{that} can we be sure ^{we} are interpreting correctly and not allegorizing.

In order to interpret a myth, we must ~~base ourselves~~ ^{consider} ^{first,} what the myth ~~says~~ ^{and second,} literally (the text), ~~or~~ ^{what it wants to say}, i.e., we must know the context of the myth in order to know what it means, and finally we ~~ground ourselves~~ ^{ground ourselves} must also consider what the myth has been made to say over the ages, for ~~past~~ ^{past} interpretations belong equally to the ~~global surround~~ ^{encompassing context} of whatever we interpret.

In short, we must be familiar with 1) the original story, its mythologumenon, its legein; 2) the context of this telling, its myth, and 3) the commentaries, its logos.

1. The narrative (the legein of the myth)

In the myth of Sunahsepa

We are dealing with one of the most complete, and probably most

ancient, sacred histories of the entire sruti or vedic revelation (10).

It is ^{an} exceptional myth (11).

From several points of view, ~~it is~~ The tale alternates simple prose

with verse. The verses consist of original strophes (gāthā) and quota-

tions from the Rg Veda (rc). They have an epic character and are more

grammatically elaborate than ~~are~~ the prose texts, which are in ~~more~~ ele-

mentary, even rudimentary, sanskrit. The legend is found in the Aitareya

Brāhmana, which was edited between 800 and 600 B.C.; ~~but~~ internal evidence

external criticism, ^{however} and scholarly critique indicate that the myth may be very ancient indeed

(12). The legend is inserted into the description of the royal consecra-

tion, ^(the rajasūya) which leads us to suspect an earlier date for it, and if we take

into consideration the reference to human sacrifice, we might even look

for a prehistoric origin (13).

The well-known text has had various publications (14), and complete

(15) or partial (16) translations. After struggling to present a suit-

able version myself, I have found an excellent french ~~revision~~ transla-

tion by Jean Varenne, from which the following is largely adapted (13).

Here then is the sacred history of Sunahsepa:

b.

Food is breath, clothing a protection,
gold is for ornament, cattle for dowry,
a wife is a friend, a daughter a misery,
and a son a light in the highest heaven.

The father enters his wife,
as an embryo he dwells in the mother,
in her is he renewed,
and ~~re~~born in the tenth month.

A wife is called wife
since in her he is born again;
he is seminal, she fruitful,
from here the hidden seed goes forth.

Together Gods and seers
have brought her bright grandeur;
the Gods said to mortals
'This is your mother again.'

'A sonless one cannot attain heaven,'
Even the beasts know this;
therefore among them a son mounts
his mother or his sister.

This is the wide happy path
on which fare men with sons / without sorrow;
the birds and the beasts desire this
enough to unite even with a mother.'

on your like

~~and beasts and birds gaze,
for they unite even with
a mother.~~

So Nārada told Hariścandra. Then he added, 'Have recourse to Varuṇa the king, saying "Let a son be born to me; with him let me sacrifice to you."'

'So be it,' Hariścandra replied. And he went up to Varuṇa the king, saying 'Let a son be born to me; with him let me sacrifice to you.'

'So be it,' Varuṇa replied. And a son was born to him, Rohita by name.

Then Varuṇa said to Hariścandra 'A son has been born to you; sacrifice to me with him.' Hariścandra replied 'Only when a victim is over ten days old is it fit for sacrifice; let my son become over ten days old; then will I sacrifice him to you.'

'So be it,' Varuṇa said. Now when the child was over ten days old, he said to Hariścandra 'He is over ten days old; sacrifice him to me.' Hariścandra replied 'Only when the teeth of a victim appear is it fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth appear; then will I sacrifice him to you.'

'So be it,' Varuṇa said. Now when the child's teeth appeared, he said to Hariścandra 'His teeth have appeared; sacrifice him to me.' Hariścandra replied 'Only when the teeth of a victim fall is it fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth fall; then will I sacrifice him to you.'

'So be it,' Varuṇa said. Now when the child's teeth fell, he said to Hariścandra 'His teeth have fallen; sacrifice him to me.' Hariścandra replied 'Only when the teeth of a victim appear again is it fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth appear again; then will I sacrifice him to you.'

d.

~~Aikvāka~~

'So be it,' Varuṇa said. Now when the boy's teeth appeared again, he said to (Hariścandra) 'His teeth have appeared again; sacrifice him to me.' Hariścandra replied 'Only when the ^ksatriya ~~has~~ ~~won~~ won his arms is he fit for sacrifice. Let him win his arms; then will I sacrifice him to you.'

'So be it,' Varuṇa said. Now when Rohita had won his arms, he said to Hariścandra 'He has won his arms; sacrifice him to me.' 'So be it,' Hariścandra replied and addressed his son, 'It is this one, my dear child, who gave you to me. Now let us go; let me sacrifice you to him.'

'No!' cried Rohita, and taking his bow he went into the wild. For a year ~~he~~ he wandered in the wild and Varuṇa seized (Hariścandra) so that his belly swelled up.

Rohita heard talk of this; he left the forest and returned toward the village. But Indra came to him in human form, saying

'Manifold is the splendor of the ascetic,
So Revelation tells us, Rohita;
who chooses to live among men does wrong,
Indra is friend to the wanderer.

(ṛinti)

if Kṛatiya = caps;
brahman = caps, too?

~~Ne, the~~

'So move on.' And Rohita said to himself, 'This brahman bids me wander,' so he wandered for a second year in the wild. Then he left the forest and returned toward the village. But again Indra came to him in human form, saying

'The wanderer's legs are the stems of flowers,
and his tough body bears fruit.
His difficult journey
delivers him from every sin.

e.

'So move on.' And Rohita said to himself, 'This brahman bids me wander,' so he wandered for a third year in the wild. Then he left the forest and returned toward the village. But Indra again came to him in human form, saying

~~Still~~
'The fortunes of a sitting man also sit;
~~stands still, so will his fate.~~
If he ~~won't budge, neither will his fate.~~
If he lies down ~~on it,~~ his luck will fall asleep,
But if he bestirs himself, his fortunes ~~will awaken with him.~~ *shall move indeed.*

'So move on.' And Rohita said to himself, 'This brahman bids me wander,' so he wandered for a fourth year in the wild. Then he left the forest and returned toward the village. But Indra came again to him in human form, saying

'Who remains reclining becomes ~~the age of~~ Kali,
Who arises becomes ~~the age of~~ Dvāpara.
~~Immobile~~ *Erect* you are ~~the age of~~ Tretā,
Moving, you are ~~the age of~~ Krta. *(19)* *(22)*

'So move on.' And Rohita said to himself, 'This brahman bids me wander,' so he wandered for a fifth year in the wild. Then he left the forest and returned toward the village. But Indra came to him again in human form, saying

'Journeying you find honey,
And the delicious Udumbara fruit.
Consider the sun, happiest of beings,
Who never ceases to journey.

'So move on.' And Rohita said to himself, 'This brahman bids me wander,' so he wandered for a sixth year in the wild. He found in the forest one Ajīgarta Sanyavasi, a seer overcome with hunger.

f.

This Ajīgarta had three sons, Sunapucha, Sunaḥśepa and Sunolāngula. o Ser,

Rohita said to him, 'I will give you a hundred cows, if you let me redeem myself with one of these.' Keeping back the eldest, Ajīgarta said, 'Not this one'; 'Nor this one,' cried the mother, keeping back the youngest. So they ^{settled} on the middle son, Sunaḥśepa.

Rohita gave the hundred cows, took Sunaḥśepa with him, left the forest and returned to the village. He went to his father and said, 'O my father, let me redeem myself with this one.' Then Hari-scandra went to Varuṇa the king, saying 'Let me sacrifice this one to you.' 'So be it,' Varuṇa replied, 'A brahman is ^{better} ~~more~~ than a Kṣatriya.'

Then Hariścandra proclaimed his intention to celebrate the ^{on the day of anointing, choose the man as victim.} ~~Rajāsuya, the Royal Consecration, and to choose a man for the victim on the day of anointing.~~

^{That day,} ~~When the day arrived,~~ Viśvāmītra was the Oblate, Jamadagni the Acolyte, Vasiṣṭha took the role of Brahman, and Ayāsyā that of Cantor.

But when Sunaḥśepa had been brought up they could find no one willing to bind him. Ajīgarta then said, 'Give me another hundred cows and I shall bind him.' They gave him another hundred and he bound his son. When he had been brought up and bound, and the Apri verses had been recited, and the fire readied around him, they could find no one willing to slaughter him.

Then Ajīgarta said, 'Give me another hundred cows and I shall slaughter him.' They gave him another hundred and he, whetting his knife, advanced toward his son.

The ^{by} Sunaḥśepa said to himself, 'They are going to kill me as if I were not a human being. I must have recourse to the Gods!'

g.

He first had recourse to Prajāpati, since he is first among the Gods, with this verse:

'Which God then? Which immortal's
pleasing name shall we invoke?
Who will restore us to majestic Freedom,*²³
That I may see father and mother again?'²⁴(20)

Prajāpati replied, 'Agni is the nearest of the Gods; have recourse to him.' He had recourse to Agni with this verse:

'Agni the God, first of immortals,
let us invoke his pleasing name!
He will restore us to majestic Freedom*²⁵
That I may see father and mother again!'²⁶ (21)

Agni advised him, 'Savitṛ is the great Inciter, have recourse to him.' He had recourse to Savitṛ with this triplet:

'From you, O God Savitr, ever our aid,
Lord of every precious thing,
we beseech good fortune.

Since fortune--good or bad--
is for you free from desire,
it remains friendly in your two hands.

May we attain it! With your help
may we reach the summit of prosperity,
our portion from you, O Bhaga!'²⁴ (22)²⁷

Savitṛ explained, 'It is for Varuṇa the king that you are bound; have recourse to him.' He had recourse to Varuṇa with the following thirty-one verses:

*Aditi

Put it in a post note

Aditi

'Your dominion, your strength and your passion,
 O Varuṇa, no birds have attained in their flight,
 nor waters in their ceaseless flowing,
~~nor hills resisting winds' might.~~
~~no, never, though they outstrip the wind.~~

King Varuṇa of clear understanding
 in bottomless space holds ~~fast~~^{up} the tree's crown,
 branches sunk below, roots on high,
 deep in us may his radiance grow!

A broad path above has Varuṇa cleared
 for the sun without feet to traverse.
 May he that found a way for the sun,
 keep this blade from our heart!

A hundred solaces are yours, O King!
 May your benevolence be equally vast!
 Drive this Destruction out of our world,
 free us from whatever sin we have committed!

These stars we see set overhead at night,
 where do they go by day?
 Nothing can transgress Varuṇa's laws;
 the radiant moon ~~flies~~^{wanders} on, seeing us through the night.

I salute you, I beg with prayer;
 with his offerings, the sacrificer begs:
 Do not be angry, O Varuṇa!
 Do not plunder our lives, O renowned one!

What they tell me night and day,
what my own heart's light reveals to me:
May he^{to}/whom Sunahsepa calls in his bonds,
Varuna, king, set us free!

Tied to the triple pillar he calls,
Sunahsepa calls to the son of Freedom: ²⁸ _{24,1} (+)
Gracious Varuna, king, untie this victim!
Let the unerring sage undo these bonds!

14 - We would appease your wrath, O Varuna,
With homage, with prayer and offerings.
Wise God reigning over us, attentive master,
free us from our sins.

15 Loosen, O Varuna, the bonds that bind us
above and below and from every side.

Make us sinless before your holy law,
~~unbound for bondless~~, O son of Aditi
deliver us to your father Freedom. (23)

Whatever law of yours, O God Varuna,
we men, being mortal,̄,
may violate day after day--
do not consign us, we beg
to be prey to death
or to your own fierce anger,
to be destroyed
by your displeasure.

and put a note
to note it is
your trans?
No -
unt
Aditi = Freedom

24,1
(+) put note on
Aditi

As the charioteer
tethers his steed,
so shall my songs
bind your heart, O Varuṇa.

4 My desires fly away
in search of happiness,
just as birds
fly to their nest.

5 When shall we move
Varuṇa to mercy,
the Lord of glorious might
whose eye is far-reaching?

Common to ^{Mitra &} ~~both~~ Varuṇa
is the might. Their love
forsakes no worshipper
faithful to Law.

2 He knows the path
of birds in the heaven;
as Lord of the sea
he knows each ship.

True to his Law,
he knows the twelve months
(and the extra month too)
with their offspring the days.

9 The path of the wind--
sweeping, high, powerful--
he knows, and the Gods
who reside in the heavens.

Note:
Mitra & Varuṇa
I suppose
yup.
7

k.

10 He sits among his people,
consistent to Law.
Most wise, he presides
and governs all things.

→k,1

k,1

→
1
May the wise Aditya
prepare for us always
fair paths to tread,
prolonging our lives!

13 Varuṇa, wearing
a golden mantle,
is clothed in bright garments.
His watchmen sit round him.

14 No men of ill-will,
nor evildoers,
nor those of wrong intention
^{can} wish to harm this ^{our} God--

15 the One who gives consummate
glory to men,
imparting this glory
to these our bodies.

Yearning for him,
wide-seeing Varuṇa,
my thoughts move onward
as cows to their pasture.

11
K → From there, surveying,
he beholds earth's marvels,
both that which has been
and that which shall be.

→ K

17 Again let us converse!
 The nectar has been brought.
 You eat, as a priest,
 the food that you love.

18 I have ^{seen} ~~eaten~~ the One
 whom all may behold
 and his car passing high!
 My songs are accepted!

→ seen → P.O. OK

19 Hear, O Varuṇa!
 Show us your favor.
 Longing for help,
 I have cried to you.

20 Supreme Lord,
 ruling the spheres,
 hear, O wise God,
 as you pass on your way.

21 Free us from fetters
 of every sort.
 Loosen our bonds
 that we may live! ²⁶ (24)

And Varuṇa said to him, 'Agni is first among the immortals,
 the best friend. Sing his praises, then shall we deliver you.'
 Śunaḥśepa praised Agni with the next twenty-two verses:

1 'Put on your cloak of light,
 Lord of might, worthy of honors,
 O Agni, offer this our sacrifice!

2 Be seated, O chosen one, our priest,
 youngest of the Gods! With hymns
 and luminous words we invoke you, Agni!

3 Father sacrifices for son,
 friend for friend,
 and comrad^e/for chosen comrade.

m, 1 → Agni, first priest,
 rejoice in our friendship!
 Attend well our songs!

6 Whatever we ^{uncessingly} ~~unendingly~~ sacrifice
^{to} ~~for~~ God after God, to you alone^e,
 O Agni, is the offering given.

2 May he be our dear clan lord,
 sweet-voiced, our chosen priest!
 And may we be dear to good Agni!

For the Gods, too, have this bright fire,
 and have given us this treasure.
 And so our trust is in Agni.

9 Let us both, mortals and immortals,
 exchange songs of praise,
 O deathless Agni!

4-

m

→ Let the mighty lords Varuna, Mitra

and Aryaman sit as men

on this our sacred grass.

→ m

With all your fires, O Agni,
 bless this sacrifice and these words,
 O youngest son of Strength! ²⁴ (25)

I, 27,

- 1 I will praise you
 like a costly horse, O Agni,
 Lord of all our sacrifices!
- 2 The far-striding son of Strength,
 benevolent, friendly and mighty Agni;
 may he be with us!
- 3 Protect us, O Agni, both near and far,
 Protect us ever from ruthless mortals,
 Protect us all our days!
- 4 Announce to the Gods, ~~our~~
 our newest gift, O Agni--
 this song of praise!
- 5 Grant us a share in the highest stakes,
 and the lowest, and those in between.
 Award me the nearest good!
- 6 You are the portioner, the silver flame
 on the river's flux, nearest of the near;
 you heap wealth upon the giver!
- 7 The mortal you protect in battle,
 the man you inspire, O Agni,
 his joy will forever be fresh!

note (27,1)

~~You are the portioner, nearest
 of the near,
 flashing on Sindhu's waves,
 you heap wealth upon the giver.~~

the rivers' waves

I make a
 note
 Sundar

- 8 None will overcome him,
No man vanquish him, O conqueror,
the victor's portion shall be his.
- 9 Renowned in all lands, he shall carry off
the victor's prize on his steeds,
and win the day with the singers!
- 10 O early watcher, shape us a song
to the ^{glory} ~~prize~~ of Rudra,
whom every clan adores!
- 11 Majestic without measure,
with smoke for an ensign, brilliant Agni;
may he spur us to inspiration, and victory!
- 12 Like an opulent chieftain,
banner of the divine, brightly gleaming,
may Agni hear our songs! (26) (33)

And Agni said to him, 'Sing the praises of All-the-Gods,
then shall we deliver you.' Śunaḥśepa praised All-the-Gods with
this verse:

'Homage to the great and to the small,
to the young and to the old!
Let us honor All-the-Gods, if we can!' (29)

All-the-Gods answered 'Indra is the mightiest, most powerful,
strongest, most real and most effective of the Gods. Sing his
praises, then shall we deliver you.' Śunaḥśepa praised Indra
with this hymn:

(+) Note

visvedevas

~~All-the-Gods~~
or The-All-Gods

RV I, 29,

1

Since / Peel
~~Since it looks hopeless to us,~~
 though we ~~are~~ without hope,

O soma drinker, truthful Indra,
 give us hope, O generous one,
 hope of handsome cattle and horses by the thousand!

2

You who wear helmet and armor,
 master of stakes, lord of strength,
 give us hope, O generous one,
 hope of handsom^e cattle and horses by the thousand!

3 -

Put to sleep these two evildoers who eye each other
 turn by turn; so that they do not awaken!
 And grant us, O gracious one,
 hope of handsome cattle and horses by the thousand!

4

Put the greedy to sleep, O hero,
 but rouse the generous!
 And grant us, O gracious one,
 hope of handsome cattle and horses by the thousand!

Crush this ass who brays your praises!

But grant us, O generous Indra,
 hope of handsome cattle
 and horses by the thousand!

6

Spare us the cyclone, let it buffet the forest
 far from us, and keep the lizards company!
 But grant us, O generous Indra,
 hope of handsome cattle and horses by the thousand!

as you like

7e

Need a note?
M.W.: 'a kind of
wind spirit'

Strike down the wailers, O Indra!
Strangle the ⁺Kṛkādāsu! (29,7) 36

But grant us, gracious Indra,
hope of handsome cattle and horses by the thousand! (28)

We urge Indra, of
Urge Indra, God ~~over~~ flowing insight,
to come on in glory: course through us,
~~So may I sprinkle soma juice!~~
O ~~sap~~ of the soma!

7e
P. Varenne
etc.
RV I, 20, 1

2 Who drinks draughts of pure soma by the hundred,
and by the thousand mixed with milk;
In whom the soma flows like a river ~~underground!~~

in the abyss!
into the
eliff
in the abyss

When we surge toward him, joy upon us,
in our rapture the vat becomes his belly
and the soma seems to us ocean!

4 This soma is yours! You race to it
as the dove wings to his mate;
and you care equally for our song!

5 Lord of gifts, we give you this song,
this garland of your praises, O hero,
that in return your strong joy may be ours!

6 Gird yourself to help us fight this fight,
O God, ^{rich in} ~~over~~ flowing insight, O Indra,
more than all the others, may we two agree!

OK

O Indra, strongest of the strong,
in every battle, in every way,
we your friends call for your help!

8 If he can but hear our cry,
O Indra, let him come now to our aid,
let him bring the prize of victory!

9 I call on Indra,
hero of our ancient home, irresistible,
the first our fathers would call!

10 You we implore, God, protector,
you who are so often invoked,
friend to those who sing to you!

11 O soma drinker, friend to your friends,
who bears the ~~w~~awakening thunderbolt,
we too drink soma from our helmets!
What each man hopes, O soma-friend,
let it be; bring your thunderbolt
and bring to each his own!

as the
or

~~helmeted we drink soma too!~~
with
the soma helmet. And

ambiguous? friend = soma
or Indra?
both!
cf. army
lit in drinker
but is ok
friend

O Indra, may we your table-mates
win wealth and prizes, so that
rich in cattle we too shall rejoice!

14 O bold God, so honored in song,
it fits such a hero to welcome our ~~avayen~~
like a wheel its axle!

15 And as your singers had hoped,
~~intelligent one, your welcome~~
the axle-tree of your strength
~~matches their zeal in praise!~~
secures their homage to you!

no the word
O God of the belly...
31 (38)
29

whenever

Delighted at heart with Śunaḥśepa's praise, Indra gave to him a chariot of gold. And Śunaḥśepa sang another verse:

16 'Forever has Indra celebrated his trophies
With horses who prance and whinny and snort,
Triumphant horses, barded with his armor;
He has given us the victor's chariot of gold!' (30)

39
32

32,1

41

Then Indra said to him, 'Sing now the praises of the Ásvins, then shall we deliver you.' Śunaḥśepa praised the Ásvins with the following triplet:

17 'Come Ásvins, with your marvel treasure of horses!
Grant us a hoard of cattle and gold,
O you of wondrous deeds!

18 Your immortal chariot
plies the waves without equal,
O Ásvins of wondrous deeds!

19 One of its wheels, O Ásvins,
you have fixed in the sun-bull's eye,
while the other covers heaven!' (31)

33 (41)

33,1 42

+

Then the two Ásvins declared, 'Sing now the praises of Uṣas the dawn, then shall we deliver you.' Śunaḥśepa praised Uṣas with the following triplet:

20 'What mortal can enjoy you, immortal Uṣas?
Who is it your pleasure to love?
Who among us will you choose, O radiance?

33,1
+

Note on Uṣas

32,1

++

Note on Ásvins
The

21 From far, from near,
you brighten our thoughts
like a ruddy mare, O Uṣas!

22 Come to us, O daughter of heaven!
Bring us the prize we seek!
Grant us life! (32)

33 1/2
put in 34 - note (must be razi)
it could stand with a note

And at each verse Śunahṣepa sang, one of his bonds was loosed and the swollen belly of Hariścandra shank a little; at the very last verse, the last bond fell away and Hariscandra was cured.

Then the priests said, 'Devise for us the performance of the day.' Śunahṣepa saw the immediate soma pressing; this he pressed with these four verses:

RVI 128

5 'Although at work in every house,
mortar my friend, her^{e/} you must echo best,
like a drum in the victor's camp!

6 Master of the Forest, mortar,
the wind breathes through your crown;
now press the soma for Indra to drink!

7 yield much Open your treasure, work for the sacrifice,
mortar, devour the high stalks
like Indra's bay steeds!

8 Press now, Forest Master mortars,
upright with your upright helpers,
press for Indra juice sweet as honey!' (33)

35 (44)

~~The~~ he carried it to the wooden receiving vat with the verse:

9 'Take up in bowls whatever remains,
and pour the soma through the seive,
on the cowhide set the dregs!' (34)

Then, taking hold of the Sacrificer from behind, he offered
the four following verses with calls of Svāhā! (Hail!):

RVI, 28, 1 'Where the broad-based mortar sets,
where the pestle rises to press the soma,
come there, O Indra!
Drink what we have crushed! Svāhā!

2 Where mortar and pestle squeeze together
as if to make love,
come there, O Indra!
Drink what we have crushed! Svāhā!

2 Where women pound true,
forwards and back,
come there, O Indra!
Drink what we have crushed! Svāhā!

4 Where they bind up the pestle
as we rein in a horse,
come there, O Indra!
Drink what we have crushed! Svāhā! (35)

Then he led the Sacrificer to the final bath with the ^{two}verse: ^{S/}

RV 12.1.4 'O Agni, knowing one, we pray you
 Ward off the wrath of Varuṇa!
~~↳~~ shining one, best of priest^s and guides;
 Drive far from us every evildoer!

5 Draw close, O Agni, and help us,
 Be very near to us as this day dawns!
 Sacrifice for us, make offering to Varuṇa, ⁽⁴¹⁾
 gain us his favor and we shall bless you!' ₃₈ (36)

Next he made the Sacrificer pay reverence to the hearth
 with the verse:

RV 12.1.7 'Sunahṣepa was bound, from these thousand stakes
 You have freed him when he was in pain!
 We also will you free from our bonds,
 O ^{wise} shrewd Agni who put us here!' ₃₇ ⁽⁴⁸⁾ (37)

Then, the sacrifice concluded, Sunahṣepa sat on Viśvāmitra's
 lap. Ajīgarta Sauyavasi demanded, 'O seer, give back to me my son!'
 'No,' said Viśvāmitra, 'The Gods have given him again to life, and
 to me.' And so Sunahṣepa was called Devarāta Viśvā^mitrasuta, and ⁽⁺⁾ ^{39.4} ⁽⁴⁹⁾
 his descendants are the Kāpileya and the Bā^hhrava. ⁽⁺⁾ ⁵⁰ ^{39.2}

Ajīgarta Sauyavasi tried again, 'Come now, let us both
 invite him,' he said:

'You ~~are~~ an Āngiras by birth,
 famed as a sage, son of Ajīgarta;
 O seer, do not abandon your ancestors;
 return to me!'

39.2
 (+) note - dual
 father & mother (?)
 re 2 father? ← ←

Ⓣ Note:
 God-given,
 'Deodatus', none of
 V.

To which Śunaḥśepa replied:

'They have seen you knife in hand,
a thing not found even among Śūdras.
Three hundred cattle, O Āṅgiras,
You preferred to my life!'

And Ajīgarta Sauyavasi answered:

'This evil deed I have done, ~~which~~
causes me no end of remorse, dear one.
I would obliterate it in your eyes;
The three hundred cattle are yours!'

great

But Śunaḥśepa said:

'He who once does evil
will do that evil again;
you have not abandoned your Śūdra ways;
what you have done is irreparable!'

At the word 'irreparable' Viśvāmītra joined in, saying:

'Dread indeed was Sauyavasi
when he stood knife in hand,
ready to ~~kill~~ ^{kill} do not be his son
become a son of mine, Śunaḥśepa!'

not too clear
or connecting
OK

Give him up!

~~But~~
Sunahsepa asked:

~~I~~ ^{to wish what you have said}
'I favor the suggestion,
O king's son, but say how,
being an Āṅgiras,
I can become a son of yours.'

x I too wish...

36/

Viśvāmitra replied:

'You would be the eldest of my sons,
your children would hold the highest place,
Accept my divine inheritance,
to this I invite you!'

And Śunaḥśepa said:

'Bid your sons agree
to friendship and prosperity for me,
then may I become your son,
O bull of the Bharatas!'

So Viśvāmitra addressed his sons:

'Listen Madhuchandas,
Ṛsabha, Reṇu, Aṣṭaka
and all your brothers;
do you accept his precedence superiority?'
precedence

being the eldest
precedence
first rank
The right of the
first-born

Viśvāmitra had ~~in~~ a hundred ~~sons~~ and one sons, fifty older than Madhuchandas, fifty younger. The older ones did not think this right. These Viśvāmitra cursed, saying 'Your offspring shall inherit the outlands of the earth.' These are the Andhra, the Pundra, the Sabara, the Pulinda and the Mūṭiba who live in large numbers beyond the borders; most of the Dasyu are descendants of Viśvāmitra.

¶ [Madhuchandas with the other fifty said: [

'What our father has decided, we accept;
We place you at our head
and we all will follow you.'

At which the delighted Viśvāmitra praised his sons:

'O my children, who by your obedience
have given me ^aheros for ^asons,
you shall be rich in cattle
and in your turn have heros for sons!'

With Devarāta, a hero,
to lead you, O Gāthina,
you shall all prosper, my sons;
he shall see truth for you!

Here is your chief, O Kuśika!
Follow Devarāta!
You yourselves shall be his patrimony,
and all the knowledge we know!'

And for this it is said:

'Thus the sons of Viśvāmitra, the Gāthina,
all together with pleasure
accepted Devarāta
as their chief and eldest.

So Devarāta, the ~~prophet~~ ^{sage seer},

had two patrimonies:

~~the lordship of the Jahnus,
he reigned over the Jahnus,
and the sacred love of the Gāthina.
and instructed the Gāthina.~~

✓
[think he receives
the love,
rather than
imparting it.]

Yes

of the ?
 This is the tale of Śunaḥśepa, with a hundred Rc verses as well as Gāthās. This the Oblate tells to the king after the ritual Anointing. He tells it seated on a golden cushion and his Acolyte, also seated on a golden cushion, responds; gold is glory, thus the Oblate makes the king prosper by glory.

'Om' is the response to a Rc, 'So be it' to a Gāthā.
 'Om' is divine, 'So be it' human. Thus with what is divine and what is human we are freed from all evil and every sin. 39,3

Therefore a victorious king, even when not sacrificing, should have this tale of Śunaḥśepa narrated; not the faintest shadow of sin will remain in him.

A thousand should he give to the narrator, a hundred to the respondant; the golden cushion and a white mule chariot should also be given to the Oblate who tells the tale.

Those who wish sons can also ask for this legend to be recited. They will have sons. (35)

///

39,3.

(+) Note on - to the cf. Śaṅkara - Commentaries on the

2 The context (the myth of the kegin)

g?
*a milieu
surrounds by
def, nicht wahr?*

To situate the context of Sunahsepa, we will mention a) the myth's immediate past, that is, its ~~(surrounding)~~ milieu, which revolves ^{around} around the notion of sacrifice; b) its present state, its Sitz im Leben; and c) its future, its continuation within the tradition, its vectorial tension, ~~as it were~~ ^{so to speak}. We shall not, however, pursue the details, interesting as they may be, ^{which} since this belongs to a more specialized investigation (41).

The study of a myth's context is important from a double point of view. First, it is only by situating the myth in its proper context that we can interpret it correctly. Secondly, knowing the context also makes it possible to justify extrapolation, i.e., to apply the myth to situations which differ from the original. We do not transplant a plant with its roots awash in potassium permanganate, we transplant it with an optimum of native soil, so that it can take root together with its own ground in a new milieu.

(III) La India. Centro de Estudios Históricos. Madrid (España). 1950. (Awarded the National Prize of Literature in Spain, 1951).

Letter sur l'Inde. Journal (Oesterman), 1953.

L'Inde. Brésil (Mocelliana) 1954.

(IV) Partholoma v. Opatovská. Madrid (España), 1951.

(V) Grammaire de la langue de la tribu de la Ganga v. ses relations avec la langue de la tribu de la Ganga. Madrid (Gredal), 1951.

a) Sacrifice

One of the central intuitions of the entire vedic tradition consists in seeing all life, divine ^{as well as} and cosmic, in terms of a dynamism ^{rooted in} which stems from the sacrificial character of reality itself. Sacrifice is ^{the} primordial energy, prior to everything. It was by sacrificing himself, by offering himself as victim, that Prajāpati created the world (42) ^{drained} And, when exhausted by his creative act, it is again through sacrifice (this ^{in turn} time) (offered by his creatures) that he regains his power (43). By sacrifice the Gods win ^{SS} their immortality (44). From the sacrifice of the cosmic man (purusa) by the Gods, men, animals and the cosmos are born (45). By sacrifice men obtain heaven (46). Sacrifice is the fundamental law which regulates absolutely everything: cosmic, divine, human life. 'The sacrifice is man' (47). Sacrifice is the total oblation of all ^{we have} ~~one has and~~ ^{and are ;} ~~is~~ by this offering, life unfolds and we are redeemed from death (48). ⁶⁰

Although the notion of sacrifice may have been modified, refined and interiorized down the ages, the underlying ^{as} vedic intuition remains vital. We might express ~~it thus~~ the essence of sacrifice ^{which} that action which effectively creates, i.e., which is effective, potent, attains the end it sets itself. Sacrifice is that action which directly links the activity and ^{its} ~~the~~ result ~~of the~~ in the selfsame act. It is not merely a transitory action which, once accomplished, would disappear as if no longer needed; it is rather an action which is an integral element in every activity. It is the act sustaining the action of whatever acts. →

Sacrifice then is communication, and communication constitutes the very structure of the universe. Reality is neither self-subsistent nor purely contingent. It is not necessary that beings, or even Being, exists; beings because they are certainly contingent, Being because nothing guarantees its existence except itself and if it so pleases, it can destroy itself, commit suicide, so to speak. But we know nothing about this. Nothing can prevent another fall into pure nothingness. We have no guarantee, no certainty, that time will always continue, that the world will not destroy itself one day, or even that Being will not cease to be (48,1). The whole of reality is self-sustaining, it does not lean for support on something else. It is, so to speak, a divine contingency, a contingency of the second degree. There is no other, ulterior reason for existence, the motive lies in being itself. Hence it is for no reason other than itself that this Being continues to be. This rationale suffices for an immutable and static notion of Being, but for a dynamic conception, the problem of the continuity of Being becomes crucial. Not: why is there being rather than nothing, since there is being, but why will there always be being, why must Being endure being? We must realize that time and freedom are the twin roots of Being. Now this universe has its own unique structure, and it is here that we discover the place and the function of sacrifice. Sacrifice is what conserves and perpetuates life, what gives life and gives it hope. It is what lets Being be. Sacrifice is that act which makes and sustains the universe, not via an external intermediary, because there is nothing outside the universe, but rather by the ontological cooperation of the universe with its own subsistence, that is, by the energy and the love upholding the Being that is (249).

we know nothing about it
Still trip
Full
Suppose
else about
*4*1*
20

is 'ontological' necessary?
The fundamental question is not:

At the root of being is freedom

This is out of our hands
a slip here
Assumes
61
maintains itself
it is its own reason d'être
continuity
fundamental
is it
is there
continue to be?
on the one hand, and on the other of its own
to be?
than its own
no other

Man alone cannot accomplish this, and the Gods left to themselves are equally impotent. Alone, the Supreme Being is also incapable of accomplishing this act, since it is not God for itself, but for the 'creatures'. To offer ~~the~~ sacrifice is not to take part in a profitable activity, or to please the Gods, or humanity, or oneself; to sacrifice means to live, ^{continued} and to contribute to one's own ~~continuing/on-going existence~~ ^{survival} and to that of the entire universe. It is the act par excellence by which the universe continues to exist.

Our myth does not stop for ^{such} these considerations, but ~~the~~ sacrifice plays a central role in it. The God Varuna demands a sacrifice, Sunah-sepa is about to be sacrificed, afterwards the priests offer a ^{the same} vedic sacrifice, and the myth is realized in the setting of the rājasūya, another ritual based on sacrifice. Although these sacrifices are more concrete and of lesser scope than the primordial sacrifice we have ^{discussed} just ~~depleted~~ ^{been discussing}, they actualize it and celebrate it in part.

b) The royal consecration

This mythologemenon is found in the part of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa dedicated to the royal consecration (rājasūya). It introduces the consecration (50) and thus plays an integral ^{role} part in a vedic ceremony, even perhaps in one of mankind's most ancient rites (51). In any case, the rājasūya is the rite of Varuna, who is also the God of our myth (52).

Within the Indian tradition, this sacred history has a paradigmatic value: it must be recited during the royal consecration so that all the world might hear. It thus fits thematically into the very heart of human life (53). The setting of the rājasūya gives the myth its social significance. ^{Although it's} Not only ~~is it~~ recited before →

^{general}
 the ~~priestly~~ assembly, ~~but~~ it ~~also~~ underscores the superiority of the priest--the brahmins--over the royalty--the ksatriyas--by the fact that the hero is a brahman who, by being offered as a substitute, saves the ^{eminently} life of the king's son. So the context is ~~positively~~ sacerdotal. On the other hand, the ^V priestly group is not blameless: the unpardonable sin of betraying one's own son is committed by a brahman.

In short, the solemn ~~and~~ ambience in which this sacred history unfolds seems to justify speaking of it as a central myth in classical Indian culture. We are thus led to wonder whether this sacred history is not a myth which reveals an important awakening of human consciousness.

We have here a very striking example of the old dispute ^{of} between myth and rite. We need not take sides for or against the 'Myth and Ritual Theory' (54), but only ^{note} emphasize the interesting contribution this sacred history could bring to the question (55). ^{Our} The myth clearly shows the interdependence of rite and myth; but ~~the~~ interdependence does not mean subordination. From one angle, myth and rite seem autonomous. In fact, the rite of the rājasūya has no need of our myth; it could very well take place without it (56). Moreover, even if the myth may have been a later interpolation--simply added by the compiler of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa with a view to setting the rājasūya in further relief--the sacred history of Sunahsepa is complete in itself and has ~~no~~ need of the rājasūya (57).

about the priority of myth over rite, or vice-versa.

of the priority of myth over rite or of rite over myth.

belong
~~go together.~~
~~on a par.~~

From another angle, myth and rite are partners. The rājasūya, as

a rite unfolding within the cosmic order of history (it is the consecra-
 tion of a man, the king, ^{with} ~~who~~ has historical duties and cosmic repercuss-
 ions) cannot content itself with the asvamedha celebration, i.e., the
 horse sacrifice (58). It must, in one way or another, integrate the

purusamedha, the human sacrifice (59). Without the cosmic sacrifice of
 man, the royal consecration is not complete and the king cannot attain

the summits of cosmic and universal sovereignty, for 'the human sacri-
 fice is everything' (60). But if man kills and eats man, it is no longer
 the cosmic sacrifice of the purusa, but a debauch. This is why one text

tells us that a voice cried out not to kill the man, but to free the
 victim (61). Here is a link with our myth. On the one hand, we ^{ought to} ~~must~~ offer

a sacrifice worthy of man, and therefore ~~it ought to be human~~. On the
 other, we feel we ^{must} ~~ought not to~~ do it. Sunahsepa is the ideal solution.
 Man recognizes his total dependence, he ~~immolates~~ ^{there is a complete} immolation,
 without compromise, but also without homicide or suicide.

Without the purusamedha solemnly celebrated in the rājasūya, our
 story could quickly degenerate into pious legend. A myth without its
 rite is only a cold orthodoxy, But a rite without its myth is pure super-
 stition.

There is therefore a radical interdependence between myth and rite.
~~has a relation with a rite,~~
 Every myth is related to a rite, and vice-versa, but often in an existen-
 tial and extrinsic fashion. The myth need not narrate the rite, nor the
 rite enact the myth. There is between the two a sui generis ontology.

Myth and rite are both constitutives of human culture.

There is no subordination of action to contemplation, of orthopraxis to orthodoxy, of rite to myth. This would be mythology. Neither is there subordination of practice to theory, of life to principles, of mythos to logos. This would be rationalism.

But there is even more: ~~excluding all mention of the rājasūya~~, our myth still centers on sacrifice, and contains in itself all the elements of a rite. Here an interesting tension comes to light. Everything revolves around the theme of human sacrifice, but events unfold in such a way that each one ~~in its own fashion~~ shows why the human sacrifice does not finally take place. The rite is essential to our myth, but it is the myth which leads to an interiorization and spiritualization of the rite. And when all is said and done, no one is sacrificed.

This leads us to consider this myth as the vestige of a primordial initiation rite, probably pre-vedic and tribal, as we will yet have occasion to see. Here we need only stress the myth-rite unity that our story reveals.

c) The sacredness of the theme

Subsequent tradition has not forgotten this sacred history, and we find there an almost uninterrupted series of tales about the different characters of our mythologumen. Already in the Rāmāyana we have another version of the myth (62): Ambarīṣa, the king of Ayodhya was in the midst of offering the royal sacrifice of the asvamedha when, there too, Indra interposed and carried off the victim. ~~Now you cannot~~ ^{Now such} a crucial sacrifice cannot be left unfinished; ~~leave such a crucial sacrifice unfinished,~~ this would entail a major catastrophe.

The celebrant priest declared that only a human victim would save the situation. They began searching and finally discovered a brahman who had three sons. The father wanted to preserve the eldest and the mother wanted the youngest; the one in the middle, Śunahsepa, agreed to serve as the victim for a great sum of gold, jewels and cows (63). Then he went off to find his maternal uncle Visvāmītra, to whom he said: 'I have neither father nor mother. ~~(64)~~ Arrange it so that the king may be able to offer the sacrifice, but save my life' (64). So the great sage taught him two verses which Śunahsepa uttered when the occasion arrived, and was delivered (65).

Here ~~we~~ one should underscore the fact that Śunahsepa offers himself as victim voluntarily; the sin of paternal betrayal is thereby evaded. *on the other hand,* But Śunahsepa allows himself to be led to the sacrifice knowing he will be spared. ~~The sacrificial mytheme here presented is but a feeble copy of the original.~~ The entire sacrificial mytheme is thus enfeebled. 79

The Purānas and the Mahābhārata also give us different versions (66). In Chapters VII and VIII of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna (one of the oldest and most important purānas (67)), we read the savory and quixotic narrative of ~~king~~ Hariścandra, the famous king lauded in the Mahābhārata for the generosity with which he celebrated the royal consecration, and for which he ~~must~~ *afterwards* pay dearly. His rival is the brahman, Visvāmītra, whose supremacy ~~detrimental to~~ Hariścandra bemoans as being the downfall of the 'sciences' (sāstras). The priest is victorious however, and after reducing Hariścandra to a honorariums poverty bordering on misery, still requires from him the ritual honoraria due a brahman at the rājasūya. Hariścandra must sell his kingdom and dispose of all his riches in order to satisfy the debt. Then, with the queen Saibyā and their son, he leaves for Varanasi. But Visvāmītra

46

?

rather freely rendered
is it accurate?

(I like it)

avenged himself?

has preceded the family to the city and now demands that Hariscandra pay the remainder of his debt at once. The king must seal his wife and child, and then himself to a candala who assigns him to the most humiliating tasks, even to the point of making him steal the garments of the dead which people bring to be burned. One night, after a year of this abject work, he recognizes a child brought to be cremated, and the woman who brings him, as his son and his wife. And the king, a model of patience and non-violence, decides to die with his wife on the pyre of their only son. But he is not free, he must first ask the permission of his master the outcaste. Having obtained this permission, he places his son on the pyre and, before ~~stretching~~ ^{lying} ~~out~~ ^{xxxxx himself} there together with his queen, he collects his thoughts by meditating on the Supreme ~~Atman~~ Atman, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahman, and Kṛṣṇa. At this point, the assembled celestial court intervenes and declares him a truly righteous man who has won ~~over~~ heaven by his good works. Then, too, the candāla reveals himself to be none other than the God, Dharma. But Hariscandra, the perfect king, refuses to go to heaven unless all his subjects can accompany him. Because of his poverty he had ~~left~~ ^{deserted} them in suffering; but he cannot abandon them now. He wishes them to share his happiness. So Indra descends from heaven ~~with~~ ^{wants} with ten thousand celestial chariots to transport all the king's people. And Hariscandra, having made the necessary arrangements for his resurrected son to succeed him; ascends to heaven with the queen and all his servants and people.

The Mārkaṇḍeya Pūrāṇa ends the story by ~~singing the praises of~~ ^{xxxxxxx praising the} ~~of Hariscandra, his patience and his generosity,~~ ^{striking but one} with ~~but~~ ^{an} ~~one~~ ⁸¹ melancholy note ~~striking~~ ^{ast} by alluding to the catastrophic results of the rajasūya (68). Subsequent legends introduce more ~~complex~~ ^{complicated} elements into the narrative, as if to emphasize the ~~humanity~~ ^{human character} of our hero (69). 82 →

striking but one
melancholy note by
alluding

Thus, for example, the literature paints for us a Hariścandra who is induced by the brahman Nārada to vaunt his virtues. As a result, he and his subjects fall from the ^{celestial} ~~cestral~~ paradise. ^{however} But mid-way he repents and the Gods check ^{his} the fall and create for the king and his subjects saubhā, the aerial city between heaven and earth which, following popular belief, can still be seen on ^{occasions} ~~special days~~ (70). Even today, this story is a ^(living) part of north indian culture (71).

3 - The commentaries (the logos of the myth)

Our concern here is not to study the numerous commentaries of indian and occidental authors on this text. Besides the classical commentary of Sāyana ⁽⁸⁵⁾ ~~included in most manuscripts~~ there are other, earlier commentaries (72). To the extent I was able to consult these, I noticed that they supply precious hints on details and allegorical interpretation ⁽⁸⁶⁾ (73), but offer no general interpretation. There is no need: for these commentators, the meaning of the myth goes without saying, it is self-evident. The majority of commentaries made by indologists, on the other hand, are preoccupied with ~~the~~ technical questions or historical problems like human sacrifice, but I have found no study along the line of the present interpretation ⁽⁸⁷⁾ (74). This silence bears me out in believing that this is living myth and so, for some, it has never been interpreted as a myth, while, for other^s, it has been offered as a simple legend. To the former, you give the straightforward account, i.e., the legein, not the logos, of the myth (you tell the story, but make no hermeneutic of it). For the latter group, you analyze the logos of the story and not the legein of the myth (you reduce it to its literary content, but again make ~~myth by its logos, by its interp.~~ no hermeneutic of it; you substitute the logos, the interpretation, for the myth.)

Is it possible to ^{make} bring forth a hermeneutic of ^a myth as myth? Do we not condemn our own effort, since we are trying precisely to interpret this myth? Do we kill ^{the myth} ^{interpreting} it by making a hermeneutic of it? My reply here must be as carefully nuanced as it is sincere. The moment someone feels the need to interpret a myth he cannot, by this very fact, accept it without his interpretation. But then the myth has crossed over from the invisible horizon to the visible object, from the background canvas to the figure in relief, ^{from} the context to the text. When we cease to believe the myth, when it no longer goes 'without saying', we try to believe in it by means of our interpretation. But in so doing, we distance ourselves from it, the myth is no longer connatural to us, transparent. Its interpretation inter-poses itself between the myth and us. Was not Socrates condemned to death for daring to interpret myth (75)?

^{clearly} There is a whole methodic latent here, quite different from ^{any} traditional methodology. ^I We have already hinted at it but, as ^I we have said, ^I we prefer giving an example to elaborating a theory.

Therefore I shall only mention ^{a few} several of the problems raised by indologists, in order to round out the setting ^{of} in which our myth belongs.

I like singular

a) The Elements of the sacred history

An analysis of this sacred history leads us to think that it ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~arises~~ ^{arises} ~~formed~~ ^{formed} from the conjunction of three motifs and three stories (76).

The first motif, probably ~~is~~ ^{is} the oldest, goes back to the Rg Vedic texts which recount Sunahsepa's liberation from affliction and death due to the bounty and generosity of the Gods. There is here an element of piety, of bhakti, and trust in God--one of the rare vedic examples of ~~such~~ ^{such} devotion tinged with love. ~~It is~~ ^{From this angle it appears to be} a purely religious text, ripe for any spiritual or spiritualist interpretation: it is divine grace which frees men from anguish and danger. The sacred history becomes a theology ~~that~~ ^{which} recounts the relations between man and the Gods. The hero is Sunahsepa: man in distress, or simply homo religiosus (the brahman).

The second element centers on the story of Hariscandra and his son Rohita (77). Sunahsepa appears only as ^{the} substitute. The theme here is ~~is~~ ^{concerns} ~~the confrontation with one's destiny and flight from it.~~ ^{the} confronting one's destiny, and ~~the flight from this destiny.~~ ^{the} The sacred history becomes a cosmology which underscores the solidarity of the entire universe. The hero is Rohita: man in the world, or simply homo saecularis (the ksatriya).

The latest text furnishes the third element: here the accent is on Sunahsepa (78), above all on his relationship with Visvamitra, since this affects the whole skein of relations between the gotra (clans) of different families. The theme is more ritualistic and sociologically ^{important} meaningful for India. The sacred history becomes ^{an} anthropology--~~er~~ ^{and} sociology--~~and~~ ^{which} shows the ethico-historical dimension of these human ties. The hero is Devaratra: man in his historical role, or simply homo politicus.

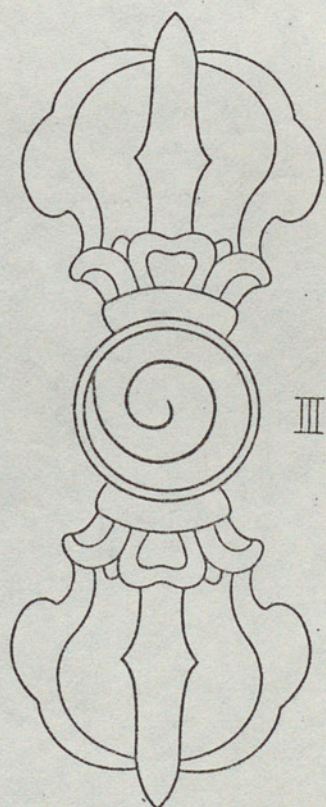
One thing seems clear: this sacred history, conveyed to us over nearly three millenia, reveals older and in a sense deeper strata of human awareness than we find in the historical era of the written document. It has been composed with extreme care, placed in an appropriate setting, and worded in such a detailed way that it seems written for posterity-- for us.

Whatever our mythologumenon's gestation ^(period) may have been, we ought to stress the myth's functional unity. A myth is not a ~~history~~ ^{story}. We must see it whole ^{in order} to understand it. Besides his importance in the brāhmanic tradition, Sunahsepa is also a seer, a vedic rsi (79). In the Rg Veda we find the hymns which he ~~composes~~ ^{composed} at the sacrificial stake together with others attributed to him as well (80).

b) The human sacrifice

Our story is a locus classicus of discussion on human sacrifice in vedic India (81), a required study among indologists of the last century (82). Those who subscribed to an interpretation favoring human sacrifice alleged, above all, that such a story would not have been told if human sacrifice has not been current, or at least familiar to that epoch (83). Others, in our century as well, lean heavily on parallels ~~with the~~ overall indian tradition (84).

On the other hand, some authors, probably the most numerous, tell us that human sacrifice is certainly not vedic (85). Indeed, studying ~~the~~ ^{in general} ~~our~~ text seems overall to hold human sacrifice in disfavor: the general narrative tone, the denouement of the plot, the four priests who refuse to sacrifice a human victim, the fact that Ajigarta, Sunahsepa's father is punished to the point of losing his paternity for having consented to bind his son for the sacrifice, Sunahsepa's cry of surprise →



III The Myth of the Human Condition

III. The myth of the human condition

Can we present this myth in such a way as to express its original ^{the legend} ~~original~~ ^{circumstances, the horizon, of the culture which gave it birth,} cultural horizon and at the same time discover it as a sacred history able to offer other cultures a guidepost to where they may find a thinking deeper, or even fresher, than their own? Has this myth a trans-cultural value, and consequently a role to play in the encounter and eventual enrichment of human traditions?

It is not only, nor principally, a question of an appropriate ^{to} ~~transposing~~ ^{transposing} one system translation into another idiom, i.e., it is not a ~~transposition~~ ^{transposition} of one system of signs into another system of signs in order to express ^{in a} ~~in a~~ different way what one already knows. Here it is a question of language, not only of idiom.

Our problem is not translation. We can only translate what can be transposed into another system. All true translation presupposes, first, that the elements we are going to transpose retain their identity in the transaction, and secondly, that there are meaningful signs for these elements already present in the idiom into which we are translating.

Here we see the fundamental difference in method between translating concepts and interpreting myths. The hermeneutic of myths resembles a liturgical act, a sacred action; ^{it is} the true office of Hermes--not an intermediary or a go-between, but a priest, ~~an~~ a mediator between two worlds.

Our function is consequently that of priest, celebrant, even prophet. What concerns us is whether this myth can be celebrated on soil ~~which is~~ ^{whether} not its own, if it can realize in another culture a function similar to the one it has fulfilled in its original culture. Can we sing the psalm of Sunahsepa on foreign soil? (87,1) Our question is: Can this mythogumenon be truly revealing, as every genuine myth is? ^{any} Every myth, in ^{fact} indeed, offers us an horizon which explains whatever we may discover; but at the same time, every myth sets us a course, opens certain doors, unveils dimensions of the real which without this contact ^{might} ~~remain~~ ^{not be} ~~undiscovered~~ (thus the function of myth as revelation) or ~~unheard~~ (thus the function of the sruti). ^{with a} It goes without saying that no revelation manifests something utterly new, ^{which} ~~for in that case we could not understand it at all.~~ ^{and} Every revelation unveils what we have already glimpsed, ~~foreseen~~ and even ^{in a} ~~some way~~ believed.

The thrust of our interpretation comes down to what I could call an anthropological theory of myth. This theory does not deny any other approach to myth: psychological, morphological, structuralist, historical or theological. The contributions of contemporary scholarship are too abundant to ignore ¹⁰² (88). Rather it

emphasizes a trait common to most of these theories: In myth man discovers himself, myth ^{bespeaks} expresses what man is.

Myth entices, ^{and} ~~it~~ intimates, ^{just} gives pause and 'food' for thought, it excites and fascinates, because in myth man discovers his roots, his origins, as integral parts of his own being. He discovers in myth his true memory, which is not only the conscious reminiscence of events in his individual lifetime, but a memory that extends over thousands of years, back at least to the origins of the ^{own} ~~type of~~ language of one's own particular human phylum. Whatever the question, man's psychological, personal or social dimension, his historical agency, his reflection on being human, or his response to the sacred, in ^{every} ~~each~~ case, we discover in myth what man is. ~~what man is in myth.~~ ^{It is from this perspective that we will examine} ~~It is from this perspective that we will examine~~ ^{the myth perspective we will examine ourselves.}

Sunahsepa.

The method we will use is not directly comparative; i.e., we shall not compare the indian myth of Sunahsepa with, say, the ^{he} ~~biblical~~ myth of Adam or Abraham or even Job. We will pursue a more simple, although more difficult, course: to clarify the myth by itself, to place it in a larger context which will render it intelligible given the horizon of understanding provided by contemporary western language. In obliquo, we will find here points of contact as well as disparities, but these depend on our own personal contexts. Strictly speaking, the mythologumenon needs a rsi, a bard, in order to be sung, recited, and ~~of~~ a hotr, a priest, ^{consummated.} in order to be performed, ~~accomplished.~~

We have called this sacred-history a myth of the human condition for ^{describes} two reasons. First, from the phenomenological point of view, it depicts the factual situation of man on earth. We hope to show this by analyzing respectively 1) the characters of the mythologumenon, and 2) several ~~mythemes~~ mythemes, present and absent. Secondly, from the philosophical point of view, the myth presents our human condition ^{the} ~~our~~ ^{by human utopia} ~~climaxing~~ in the deconditioning ^{of} ~~brought about~~ by human liberation itself, i.e., by really freeing ^{freedom from the compulsion to be.} ~~freedom from the compulsion to be.~~

1 - The character

Before us parade the representatives of the three worlds: Gods, men and cosmos. It is worth recalling that the cosmotheandric vision of reality is an almost universal cultural invariant. I know of no culture where heaven-earth-hell; past-present-future; gods-men-world; the three pronouns I-you-it; and even the intellectual triad of yes, no and their embrace, is not found in one form or another.

The central theme is the human condition, not the divine situation or the destiny of cosmos. But it depicts an all-embracing human condition. The human here occupy the foreground, but they are not alone. The myth is centered on a complete Man, and not close in on an abstraction 'man' without relation to the entire reality.

any constitutive

Here I can only
I can only
capsulize

summarize the cosmotheandric principle by saying simply that the divine, the human & the earthly - however we prefer to call them - are three real & different dimensions which constitute the real, i.e., any reality as much as of as real. we can, we sometimes even must, make distinctions but we cannot close ourselves between spheres of the real. what this principle emphasizes is that the three dimensions of reality are inseparable reality, nor are they three elements of a pluralistic system. They are rather one, through in fundamentally threefold relation (fatherhood) which expresses the ultimate constitution of reality.

Ch. C. O.
Owen
Symp. on Plato

a) The humans

1) Sunahsepa is without doubt the central figure, the hero of our myth. He is flanked by two pairs of characters whose roles change according to circumstances. First, on his right are king Hariscandra and his son Rohita, the dual cause of his trial; on his left are Ajigarta and the priest Visvāmita, the two fathers who claim him. Next, at his right are ^{the ailing} Hariscandra and Visvāmītra who refuses to sacrifice Sunahsepa, both together being the secondary cause of his deliverance; and at his left, Rohita, egoist or anguished son, and Ajigarta, miser or coward, both being the secondary cause of his ordeal. Throughout the drama we find this ambivalence of roles.

56 # His name is just revolting: Sunahsepa, 'the penis of a dog' (89), the most shameful part of a ^{thing} cursed animal. (His brothers have similar names (90).) But neither the name nor the form (which, as nāmarūpa, generally go together in Indian literature) represents the thing or its function, even less its essence. The notion is mid-way between realism and nominalism: the nāma is exterior, but it must be interiorized until it is completely transformed. But change cannot come before initiation, conversion, purification. And the process must be total. The name will not change until the very end, until ^{trial-by-fire} the victory in the ~~confrontation~~ encounter with death. Sunahsepa only changes his name when Visvāmītra explains what has happened: the Gods have given him back to life, and to Visvāmītra-- Devarāta, God-given (Deodatus, Theodorus). Man must live his life with ^{even} a humble, humiliating name until he is free.

All India recalls the teaching of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (91) that name and form are not the essence, not the being, and of no importance in arriving at wisdom, which is not to know all things, →

but to understand that by which all things are known (92).¹⁰⁷

Sunahsepa is a brahman, son of a brahman of the Āṅgiras line (93).¹⁰⁸
 It ~~suits~~^{befits} a brahman to be poor, but not to be miserable in this poverty or
 harried by hunger. Sunahsepa's only worth¹⁰⁹ his wealth, is his life, most
 of which is still to be lived (94). ~~And~~^{it is} this life they would strip from
 him in the most inhuman way. He is not the hero who fights, who risks
~~his~~ life and limb for a noble cause, nor the one who abandons this world's
 goods ~~to~~ seek better.. He is not an exceptional, extraordinary, fea-
 low. On the contrary, he incarnates the most banal, the most common, hu-
 man condition: the son of a poor family who yet retains the dignity of
 a person.
 knowing himself to be ~~someone~~

Sunahsepa is alone, without ties: ~~the~~ pure victim. His father looks
 out for the eldest son, and his mother watches over the youngest; but he
 belongs to no one. He has neither father nor mother nor possessions (95).
 He has only himself (95,1).¹¹⁰

to the triple stake?
 Sunahsepa himself does nothing; bad luck finds him. He approaches
 the ~~stake~~^{stake} and allows himself to be tied to ~~three~~^{the} logs of wood (96).¹¹² Is
 this not the human destiny of the common man; Sunahsepa, the man whose
 life is controlled by circumstance, the man brought to bay at death's
 door? Sunahsepa is seized unawares. Nothing has prepared him for the
 role he is to play. Only at the last moment, when he realises they are
 about to sacrifice him like an animal, when there is no other way out,
 does he have recourse to prayer as a final entreaty.

~~The~~ mission of Sunahsepa is not the fruit of a choice or an option:
 it is a given, or rather an unexpected and seemingly paradoxical gift,
 which ~~protegn~~^{protegn} ~~the~~ takes ~~the~~ form, now as a menace, now as a curse. In any
 case, it is not a mission he ~~chooses~~^{chosen} or a conflict he ~~seeks~~^{sought}. There is
 no willfulness here.

The ordinary man does not choose his own vocation, ~~nor~~ ^{neither} has he the luxury, nor the occasion, to torment himself by asking whether he could not be more useful elsewhere or whether ~~there is still~~ ^{he can do} something else ~~to be done~~ ^{to do}. Destiny hits us like a thunderbolt, it corners us and leaves no door open, no alternative but a leap into transcendence. But the moment of salto mortale comes only when existence is menaced, when life itself is at stake. Here is where prayer is most authentic.

The prayer of Sunahsepa is not primarily an intellectual elucubration, nor is it an outpouring of the heart. It is sincere, but neither directly willed nor reflexively reasoned out. ^{the final attempt} It is a ~~last effort~~, the supreme request, ^{by} groping, search^{ing}-. He knows neither whom to address nor how. He tries again and again, ^{but he and is not} he perseveres without being discouraged. His patience, his endurance will save him.

Sunahsepa's prayer is not a ~~superfluous~~ ^{superfluous} luxury. It is neither the effusion of a loving heart, nor the profusion of a spirit in quest of supreme knowledge. It is much more elementary, terrestrial, urgent. It is the simple cry of a man who is 'without hope', as Sunahsepa himself puts it (97). ⁽¹¹³⁾ This ~~is~~ prayer is the cry of a man in misery, the human spirit's spontaneous impulse toward something more powerful than itself or the whims of men. When you have recourse to other, more direct means for obtaining what you want, prayer is not authentic, above all if you ^{using these other means.} make it an excuse for not putting those other means to work. ^{you} One only prays in a 'limit situation' or 'boundary situation'. Prayer is ~~at~~ ^{at} the very frontier of life, ~~It is not~~ a simple human activity alongside all the others, but the final
 ← and most fundamental human act, by which Man recovers ~~his~~ ^{his} life when all else fails. →

Prayer wells up spontaneously from the very fount of our beings, almost
 us:
 in spite of ~~ourselves~~ it hollows us out through and through, as if
 issuing from a hidden immanence we did not suspect and flowing into an
 infinite transcendence we cannot even imagine.

We tend to forget that the very word 'prayer' does not mean ~~just~~ ^{only}
 a request, but a precarious supplication, uncertain, unassured, impover-
 ished, lacking any basis or support other than that which it invokes (97,1).
 Magic, not prayer, claims to be effective by itself.

Once free, Sunahsepa remains within the ritual world. He re-enters
 his
 the realm of the sacred and must perform a new office. The true high-priest
 is always ^{also} the victim (97,2). Since the sacrifice cannot remain unfinished,
 he must complete it. He becomes the rsi, the seer, the poet, the priest.
 Now he is the whole sacrifice, 'Man is the sacrifice' (98).

Sunahsepa is Man, ~~the~~ the victim of destiny--of the Gods, of society,
 of human privilege and power. He is the average man, the man of this
 exploited, starving, enslaved, alienated majority present since the world
 began, the victim of the sacrifice. He is the poor man with ^{called the name of} 'a dog's
 penis'... But he is also--and we find here all the ambivalence of the
 sacred--the victim who by his sacrifice gives life ^{He is} the savior, the
 pure one, the one who pays, because he is the only one who has the
 wherewithal, something to pay with--namely his life. Sunahsepa is the
 one who atones for and redeems the powerful, the nobles, warriors, rich
 men, men of action, and all the Rohitas of the world. He is the true
 brahman, the real priest--the 'royal' priest, not a class or a caste, but
 the common human being with ^{an unpayable} a humanness without privileges which ~~is the~~
 true mediation between the Gods and the rest of the world.

117. Some have wanted to see in Śunahśepa a fettered solar divinity. He would ~~then~~ ^{then become} be a cosmic figure fastened to the triple-rooted cosmic tree (101). It is not for us ~~to~~ to interpret Śunahśepa by way of a full-blown hypothesis on vedic divinities. Our human interpretation is valuable for the myth in itself, even if the cosmic and solar hypothesis ^{should} ~~prove~~ accurate.

ii) Rohita, after Śunahśepa, is the richest character in the myth.

His name, too, is significant. It means: the reddish one, a double reference to the sun (often called by this name) and to the earth (the red) ~~earth~~. Rohita, like adamah, means the reddish inhabitant of earth; the active man. ^{par excellence (102) (103)} He incarnates historical man, the one who makes history, homo activus.

*60 If Śunahśepa is the man marked by destiny, who ~~carries~~ ^{bears his} the world's burden by sacred calling, Rohita is preeminently the secular man, the one who chooses, who finds himself confronted with life-or-death options. He is the man of will, ^{of a will to life.} above all. The passivity and non-violence of the brahman Śunahśepa contrasts with the activity and aggression of the kṣatriya Rohita.

Rohita is born of an impossibility. ① He is exceptional.

③ Just so, Human life is ^{the} an exception in nature, it realizes the minimum probability. ② Even a hundred wives could not engender him. ④ Life is a gift, but we hoard it, we resist giving it back; it is too precious, too exceptional. There is a Rohita in every ^{some} man.

OK
70th
order

The life of Rohita

~~Rohita's life~~ is an obstacle course run around death. He flees death, he runs in the opposite direction. In childhood, his father ~~chooses and~~ decides for him; later, he himself says no: ~~he~~ ^{and} leaves for the forest. He cannot live among men because he fears they may recognize him, trap him. But his fear does not paralyze him, he is ready to take up his bow and assume his responsibilities; he slinks only from death. When he hears talk of his father's affliction, he is prepared to go to him; but each time he seems about to yield to filial piety, Indra appears in the form of a brahman and counsels him ^{ought to} not to bury himself in his kingdom, not to go home ^I to his village. He must wander like the sun: Homo viator. Has he succumbed to temptation or followed good advice? We cannot answer this question without denying its validity (as we shall see a little later).

Rohita's first act once he reaches the age of reason is to say no, and leave for the forest. This no is not a mere figure of ~~speech~~ ^{speech}. Rohita does not justify himself, he argues ~~it~~ against nobody. He says no, picks up his bow and escapes. This no is repeated successively throughout his wandering life: the five times he seems ^{ready} about to give in, his no is reinforced by Indra's arguments. What is man? The ascetic of life, the animal who says no (103)? Is he the ~~rebel~~ ^{rebel} in the universe, the one who collapses under the burden of his humanity (104)? Is he the itinerant, not yet mature ^{enough} or wise enough to accept human contingency? (105) 123

In any case, Rohita's life gravitates around this no. It is a no to death, but also to obedience and submission. ~~It is~~ ^{It is} also a denial of dharma and ultimately of rta, or the repudiation of the burden of tradition, and ultimately of injustice? Does he say no to dharma and ultimately to rta? Or does he repudiate tradition's burden and ultimately injustice?

In the first instance Rohita would ^{be a} blaspheme: in order to save his ~~skin~~ ^{ultimately} skin, he defies the cosmic order, ~~and~~ ^{and} tries to avoid it, ~~finally~~ ^{and} coercing ~~forcing~~ ^{forcing} Ajigarta to sell his son. But the narrative gives no clue that would permit this interpretation. Not a single line ^q pronounces judgment against Rohita. His actions appear irreproachable. Such a hermeneutic is also impossible given the Indian context of our story. The ksatriya (as we read in the Gītā) must save his own life to protect others (106).

In the second instance he would be the hero of our myth, he would represent man, the reddish one, the earthly, the secular one who, bow in hand, confronts the fixed, petrified tradition and tries to free himself from the Gods' crushing grip. It ^{is} hardly surprising that he should ~~choose~~ ^{choose} as his substitute. ~~a brahman, the living incarnation of tradition, in order to free himself.~~ ^{represents} Rohita ~~then incarnates~~ ^{represents} a mankind come of age which, freed from paternal tutelage, seeks to protect itself by taking in hand its own destiny.

But it is important to keep from seeing Rohita's attempts at emancipation as a revolution in the modern sense of the word. Rohita does not revolt against his father, nor does he rebel against the Gods. He ~~reproaches~~ ^{reproaches} is not a Prometheus struggling against Zeus. Rohita denounces nothing and nobody. Throughout the narrative there is an atmosphere of serenity which keeps Rohita from being ~~turned into~~ ^{turned into} a western ~~prophetic~~ ^{style} figure like Jonah, for instance. He says no, and afterwards keeps silent, ~~frees~~ ^{frees} and tries to defend himself.

Rohita is spared death, but ^{he} also misses true life. The silence of the text is freighted with meaning. There is nothing more to say about Rohita; he lived to escape death and in this he succeeded, but →

and the
 is this evasion true life? In any case, emancipation remains a central consideration to which we shall return.

iii) Hariscandra, of whom later legend will speak so abundantly, is in this myth a peculiar, rather eclipsed character. Here we shall only note the essential traits which characterize his role. Hariscandra has but a single desire: to have a son and keep him alive. He symbolizes the wish for immortality, represented in this instance by the desire for a male descendant. He ~~was~~^{wants} to live on, he know^s he himself cannot exhaust all the vitality he possesses. He still has projects to realize, dreams to dream, pleasures to try, powers to exercise. Hariscandra is the man for whom life is too short, or too full. He cannot live by halves, ~~cannot~~^{may} leave any desire unsated. He needs to prolong his life. It is the son who continues the life of the father, and so saves him. Hariscandra has feelings common to every one. He embarks on an affair without knowing if how he will ever get out of it; ~~he can get out of it; and~~ when he finds himself driven into a corner, he continually puts off any decision. He wants only to avoid the humiliation of not having an heir.

(He falls ill)
 Hariscandra cannot escape the destiny he has forged for himself. ~~Be-~~
~~cause, when he does not keep his promise to offer his son in sacrifice to~~
 cause, ~~when he does not keep his promise to offer his son in sacrifice to~~ to Varuna, he falls ill, ~~he falls ill, he falls ill, he falls ill~~
 He has power, but not freedom; he is a king, possesses a kingdom, but he is sick and impotent.

8* (XIII) ~~DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY~~

8* (XVII) ~~DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY~~

8* (AI) ~~DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY~~

It is significant that later tradition has focussed the myth more and more on Hariscandra, nearly forgetting the other characters. Does this indicate merely a change in ^{the} social climate ^{ing} in favor of the monarchy, to for which the court scribes as witness? which the court scribes bear witness? We might instead venture two hypoth-

eses. The first is the tendency to convert tragedy into drama. Although the myth may not have the literary form of a tragedy, it presents certain tragic elements. Sunahsepa and Rohita are seized by destiny, they represent man, they incarnate us, each in his fashion. On the other hand, the legends of Hariscandra are dramas. Hariscandra is a king, we can look at him, even take pity on him, but from a distance. He is not us, we cannot identify with him.

Our second hypothesis would be that while the mythic strength of Sunahsepa and Rohita has remained buried over the centuries, only to flower in our own day, the evocative strength of the drama surrounding Hariscandra, the nobleman with his faith in men and the Gods, harmonized more readily with the atmosphere of times past. Hariscandra would then be the hero of a bygone social order.

iv) Ajigarta, so the text tells us, was starving. Hunger is a poor counsellor, but also a valid excuse. He should nevertheless have been content with selling his son, but he seems to have caught a taste for silver. He comes forward a second, then a third time, to bind and to sacrifice Sunahsepa, in return for which he adds to his riches. →

If Hariścandra wants a son at any price, Ajigarta is hardly anxious to ~~keep~~ preserve his. ~~¶~~ Certainly, he has two other sons, but, as Sunahsepa himself reproaches him, to prefer three hundred cows to the life of his son Ajigarta is unthinkable, even among people of the lowest class. ~~Amongst~~ the brahman behaves worse than a sudra. The value of the person is measured here by his acts, ~~and~~ not by his birth. Rather a revolutionary vision for a society on the way to petrifying its caste system.

It is noteworthy that the myth speaks of the sin of Ajigarta, and even of ~~an~~ unforgiveable act. His own son ~~idicts~~ ^{condemns} him. But in later tradition the great code of Manu justifies acts committed in order to save life which is menaced by ~~hunger~~ ^{starvation} and even cites Ajigarta as a pertinent example:

'Ajigarta, suffering from hunger, comes close to sacrificing his son, but he committed no sin, since he sought to cure hunger' (107). ⁽¹²⁵⁾

We note here the radical change of valuation when passing from the ontological regime we have been considering, to the juridical regime of the ~~sāstras~~ ^{sāstras}. In this latter world Ajigarta's action is not considered sinful--and many a court of justice would probably agree with Manu (at least regarding the first hundred cows). In the realm of ontological sacrifice, on the other hand, which is the context of our myth, Ajigarta is the villain indispensable for the sacrifice, the traitor necessary to ~~realize~~ ^{complete} the sacrifice; he is in a way the true high-priest ~~of the sacrifice~~ ^{sacrificer} the 'hangman'. And, in another sense, he is the 'victim' who makes it possible. Sunahsepa is the victim immolated for men, which is why he is spared and does not die. Rohita is in a certain sense the victim chosen by the Gods and the victim of circumstance, who is also saved by Sunahsepa. But Ajigarta is the true victim, the one who is →

not spared. He is the victim of cosmic destiny ^{Arta-3} and is condemned without pardon. And yet it is Ajigarta who, as Sunahsepa's father, but above all by his ^{TRIPLE ACCEPTANCE} triple acceptance, renders the sacrifice possible. Is there not in every sacrifice an irreducible, unpardonable element, which cannot be integrated into the sacrifice and which is precisely what makes the sacrifice possible? It seems there must be a sin, hence a sinner, a fall, a disorder at the origin of any sacrifice. Even more, ^{of} there is an originating fault at the origin of the universe itself ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. Unhappy the one through whom the scandal comes, ^{accursed} he who commits the crime, or causes it, but through his sin, by his crime, deliverance comes and the sacrifice is effective. Ajigarta represents the ontological condition for sacrifice, that act for which no ^{any} reparation is possible. He is both the stumbling block, and the starting block. Thanks to his sin, virtue triumphs.

v) Visvāmitra is among the most famous ṛsis of the Vedas, and the author of the Gāyatrī; this ksatriya (or even, according to some, this sudra) who merits the rank of brahman ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ by his ^S authorities and by his ⁽¹²⁷⁾ plays here a double role. life, has here a double office. On the one hand, he represents the liturgical and sacred elements, the complete sacerdotal order in its dimension of charisma and institution. He is the man of rite, of sacred history. Despite the abomination of the human sacrifice, he and his ~~three~~ fellow priests cannot ignore the vitality of sacrifice and implore Sunahsepa to continue the ceremony after he is no longer its victim. One can neither interrupt the sacrifice, nor leave ^{it} unfinished, as the 'rubrics' of practically all religious traditions tell us ⁽¹²⁸⁾ (110).

It seems

On the other hand, Visvāmitra is the man of the Establishment, of History. He not only adopts Sunahṣepa, but installs him as the eldest of his sons, as the chief of the gotras, of the clans which make up the elite of the aryan race. We can speak of the unity between sacred and profane, or of the ^{continuum} ~~continuity~~ between sacred history and secular history, or of the institutional and charismatic character of the priesthood; in any case, Visvāmitra stands for sacred and historical continuity, as the whole tradition surrounding this vedic seer confirms.

vi) The people

Although these five characters may be the myth's central figures, all of humanity is represented as well.

The women have a role best described as subdued: The hundred wives of Hariscandra and the mother of Sunahṣepa are mentioned, but ~~the~~ Rohita's mother is not named (111).

^{two} The ~~two~~ brahmans Parvata and Nārada are the voice of purest orthodoxy. It is Nārada who expounds the ^{traditional} doctrine of immortality (through one's ~~son~~) and who advises the king to have recourse to Varuṇa by promising to offer his son in sacrifice. It is Nārada who tells us of the incest between animals in order to obtain descendants and of the traditional notion of human debts.

The names of the three other priests officiating at the sacrifice are also mentioned. Visvāmitra is the Oblate, and Vasistha, his traditional enemy, plays the role of brahman (112). The liturgical, sacramental and sacred setting is thus complete. and Jamadagni, the Acolyte.

L.C.
 Śunah̥śepa's two brothers are mentioned as well. Their presence
 underscores ~~(at once)~~ ^{both} Śunah̥śepa's solitude and his ties with the community.
 Solitude, because he is alone, he is not the favorite, saved by his
 parents like his brothers; his ~~community~~ ^{al} ties, since he is a ~~child~~ ^{one} among
 the sons of Ajīgarta, a 'young man of good family.'

→ 42



Finally, history is represented by the hundred and one sons of Visvāmitra. Here, ~~as in most historical~~ and throughout history, they are divided into two groups, the elder ^{group who are} ones, cursed by their father for not accepting Sunahśepa, and the young ^{er} ones who are blessed and from whom the pure clans of the aryan race will descend. It is very clear here that the origin of castes 'beyond the pale' lies in a disobedience and a curse; the dasyu, slaves, or non-aryans are also descendants of Visvāmitra. ^{Here,} The myth seems to want ~~also~~ to justify history and sociology, ^{so it} ~~Thus~~ the myth emphasizes the fact that both ~~these beyond the pale and the arians themselves~~ ^{and non-aryans} are ~~all~~ sons of the same father. ^{vindicate} ~~So~~ here is myth seeking to justify history.

b) The Gods

The human condition is ^{not} ~~in~~complete if it does not include the mysterious forces which envelop human life. ^{In this myth, we find} ~~We have here~~ three very significant patterns of divine intervention.

as in any historical realm, we have a division

group of the

Or?

i) Varuna, the great God of the Rg Veda, is the supreme Lord of life and death. He watches over all that lives. ~~Now~~ every human birth modifies the universal status quo; man must re-establish the equilibrium which his existence has disrupted. In vedic terms: human life carries with it a four-fold obligation on the part of the new being toward all reality, a debt which accompanies ~~a man~~ ^{one} throughout ~~his~~ ^{his} life (113). These obligations are not the result of chance, but ~~are~~ ^{are} constitutive of human life: the debt to the Gods, to the rsis, to the ancestors and to ~~men~~ ^{humanity}. Accordingly, ~~man~~ ^{one} ~~must~~ offers sacrifice (to cooperate with the Gods in sustaining the world), studies the Vedas (to acquire wisdom and so live a full life), prolongs the life he has received, i.e., has children ~~he~~ ^{he} himself is the link between ~~his~~ ^{our} ancestors and ~~his~~ ^{our} descendents), and finally welcomes his contemporaries, practices hospitality and the other civic virtues (without which ~~his~~ life would be a failure) (114).

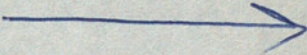
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each of us is (becoming)

It is within this context that we must understand the role of Varuna. Rohita's birth, like any human birth, is the fruit of a longing and a natural improbability. Man does not belong to the Gods like some sort of private property of which they may dispose at will. Rta, cosmic order, governs the dynamism of all reality (115). Man belongs to the entire universe. The Gods also have their role--a divine role--to play here. Varuna, the guardian of rta, enters our tale not as a capricious and powerful sovereign; he does not take the initiative, he simply agrees to Hariścandra's proposition. He does not accept Hariścandra's promise in order to test him, tempt him, or toy with him by putting him in an impossible situation. Varuna is not an anthropomorphic God.

MVIA 133

132



In spite of Sunahsepa's prayer, it is not Varuna who delivers him. He need not justify himself before men, nor ~~apologists~~ explain to them death ^{and} or evil. As Lord of the cosmic order, he knows well that human life is transitory and that one must offer it in sacrifice. The ^{SK}mystery of life is the mystery of solidarity, the law of karman stands always in the background. Each of us has to face his own karman. Rohita must die like any man. So must Sunahsepa. Only the manner of death differs. In this common destiny, the real state of things, which is normally unseen, ⁽¹⁾ becomes visible. Varuna is but its living symbol.

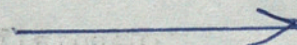
ii) Indra is always a God who strikes; ~~but~~ this time he does not strike with his vajra, his thunderbolt, but by his unexpected intervention, ^{is same point aspect} which represents an important ~~fact~~ of this sacred history. Rohita refuses five consecutive times to return home so that Hariscandra might keep his promise to Varuna and be cured. The temptation, if we can call it that, does not come from demons, but from God. ^{never} ~~But~~ Rohita does not feel ^{precisely} compelled by Indra, ~~who~~ takes human form in order to let Rohita choose for himself. He puts him to the test without letting him become aware of it. Rohita does not have to decide between filial duty and divine command. He must decide by virtue of his own convictions. Nevertheless, Indra ^{opposed} seems to ~~threat~~ the justice which is due to Varuna. ~~Now~~ a monolithic conception of divinity would have temptation come only from the devil; but ^{then} where does the devil come from? In a pluralistic conception of divinity ^{confused} (not to be confounded with ~~the~~ so-called polytheistic plurality), temptation comes from the very core of the divinity. →

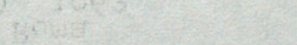
notion of temptation rather alien to the western mentality.

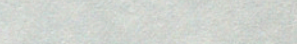
But temptation is certainly not an evil ~~persu~~ ^{perse}, and man must recognize in it an immense potential which ~~is to be~~ ^{possibility (to be)} developed. Temptation is not a trap, neither is it a sort of low blow from an enemy. Temptation is intrinsic to life, it belongs to the very nature of things and to the divinity; it is at once the test and the ~~proof~~ ^{proof}, it proffers different courses of action and confronts us with ~~the~~ ^{the} full constitutive ambivalence of the human situation. It thus creates a space where human will can unfold. This is not the function of an evil spirit, but of God himself. Such is Indra's role in our story.

(IX) The temptation instigated by Indra is the ordeal all adults must undergo in making decisions. Death lurks everywhere. Can we escape it? In the village, at home, death is certain; but in the forest, life is not a human life. ~~Certainly~~ ^{Clearly}, the true sannyasa must forsake the village, even if his father is dying, and even if he, the son, ~~is the cause of~~ ^{has} it. The exigency of the absolute is absolute. Indra offers Rohita the opportunity to convert his evasion into a sublimation. Let us examine this more closely.

(XII) Although the Sūtra narrative, which postdates the ~~main~~ ^{later} version of the Brāhmaṇa, speaks of yet a sixth encounter with Indra, the five temptations of our text offer an interesting typology of human ordeals, and consequently of what man is (116).

The key theme is always pilgrimage, movement: 'Move on, move on!'
 (XIII) The leitmotif of ^{all} Indra's interventions is to emphasize 

(XVII) 

(AI) 

that action, the life of wandering, of continual pilgrimage, in a word, dynamism, is superior to all static conformity. We should recall the situation: Rohita has pangs of conscience and decides to return to his father and face his destiny. Indra, disguised as a brahman, goes to meet him and convinces him otherwise: he must continue to live, to wander, to follow his path (117).

are drawn from different depths;

The reasons comprising the five temptations ^{different} are on differing levels of profundity: the first is grounded in the superiority of the dsamnyasa, of asceticism over the townsman's life, since 'who chooses to live among men does wrong'. This is the traditional rationale and Indra mentions sruti, Revelation, in order to lend weight to his argument. He does not ~~promise~~ ^{propose} disobedience, but fidelity to tradition.

The second temptation goes a step further. Deliverance is not easy, man is a sinner and must be redeemed. All his efforts must be directed to this end. Personal salvation is the supreme law.

The third temptation alleges a reason which appears more egoistic, but at bottom may also be deeper. Life is not merely a struggle to purify ourselves of sin, but ^{is} a matter of realizing oneself fully, of making one's fortune, of not letting one's talents go to waste without bringing them to fruition. For this it is necessary to 'traffic' with them, by 'pressing on'. Human plenitude does not come to us without effort, ~~by sitting still.~~ ^{move along, we must} while we remain seated. We must go to meet it ^{our salvation} by moving along.

The fourth temptation may be explained by giving either a cosmic or a social rationale (118). ¹³⁶ From the former point of view, there are four cosmic ages. ~~ages of the world.~~

live by sitting down on it.



Our conduct can reflect each of these ages or ^{it can} condition them. If Rohita wants to model himself on the age of kāli, the worst of them all, he can ^{relax} ~~take it easy~~, do just as he likes; if, on the contrary, he wants to express the best of times, he must keep active. In other words, the reason here is that in order to collaborate with cosmic history, each of us must step beyond individualistic problems and take up our cosmic ~~evocation~~. If, on the other hand, ^{it is all} ~~i.e., from the perspective of society,~~ ~~the scene represents~~ merely a game of dice, this reason ^{seems} ~~is~~ much like the preceding one, and could be interpreted as symbolizing the different qualities of human life.

The fifth temptation seems to combine human, personal, even egoistical, elements with the dynamism of the universe, represented by the sun, ever active, ever journeying, the happiest of beings. Man ~~has~~ goes on his way together with ~~to go his way along with~~ the seasons and the stars.

Must we call these temptations? Has Rohita done well to listen to them? Has he acted according to dharma or not? Should he not have gone back to the village immediately to keep the promise made to Varuna and save his father from affliction?

Here again the myth is original and, indeed, scarcely intelligible outside the Indian context.

In order to understand, we must consider the symbolism underlying the Gods Varuna and Indra. They stand for two poles of the divine. Varuna is called the ethical God, the one who sees, scrutinizes, judges and pardons the actions of men, the one whom nothing escapes. Varuna represents justice and truth, the internal correlation of things (rta) and at the same time forgiveness, i.e., the power of ~~redress~~ redressing the broken order. Indra, on the contrary,

stands for power, warlike strength and victorious force, the one who liberates and delivers from enemies. If Varuna is the moral God par excellence, Indra is the prototype of one 'beyond good and evil'. Varuna is King by virtue of his intimate relation with the cosmic order (~~he is guardian of it~~) and because of his fidelity and his pardon. Indra is King because he is the victor in celestial and earthly battles.

~~Varuna is King~~
 (13)

What is man? The nexus, the ksetra or battlefield between the two most powerful symbols of the divine in the Rg Veda: Indra and Varuna. Without going into indological details, we can sum up this way: there is in man a constitutive tension between the development of his personality, his own life, and his integration with the cosmos, with society. Man is made from the tension between fidelity to the social and cosmic order, and authenticity toward himself. Which must he obey? What must

Rohita? ^{dox} The conflict takes place within him: the Gods are interiorized in this case, since he sees only his father's life in danger and his own menaced. So Rohita ~~proceeds~~ ^{moves on / along} until he finds a substitute. Has he done well? Can we reconcile Indra with Varuna? Rohita is powerless, but there is Sunahsepa, the mediator, and there is prayer, the transhuman dimension in life. It is the ensemble of characters ^{but the web of love or spurs} which constitutes the course of life.

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II' ...

179

iii.) The vedic pantheon plays an important role in this myth. ^{agreed to} Varuna has ~~accepted~~ Sunahsepa as the substitute for Rohita. ^{and} The boy is to be sacrificed ^I during the rājasūya. But now, as the rite is being celebrated, the victim cries out for deliverance. Who can save him? Should he not resign himself to a higher order ^{of things}? Should ^{not} someone die in order to save the king, the kingdom and the world? Is there any ^{justifiable} ~~legitimate~~ escape? Here too our myth is revealing. Sunahsepa's ~~prayer~~ ^{oratio} is neither a prayer of resignation, nor an acceptance of a superior divine will. He is unaware of his redemptive ^{mission}, he does not consciously reflect ~~* He is stretched taut, and steers toward salvation~~ on the value of his act. ~~His hands are bound; only prayer with the only rudder in reach; prayer can save him.~~ The accent here is not on Sunahsepa's personal power as savior, but on the supra-human power of prayer. Prayer presents itself as the art of the impossible. ^{why bother to} If you pray for what is possible in some other way, then there is no need for prayer and we should strive to attain our ~~aims~~ ^{ends} without prayer. Nor is it a matter of projecting a psychological super-human world; anthropomorphism into the world of the super-human; having recourse to one particular God, or one saint in order to thwart the influence of another 'super-natural' being. Sunahsepa does not dream of winning the favor of one God against another. True ^{prayer} ~~order~~ is not an instrument of power, a weapon ~~for~~ battle. It does not even ask ~~for~~ that justice be done, as if it were unjust to die for others or ~~for~~ to be sacrificed; prayer does not judge. Rather, the whole situation is ^{placed} on another level: it concerns freedom. True freedom does not mean a choice

the metaphor is + I think not quite right... - ^{seems across as some sort of sail} Tristan and Isolde perhaps 1111?

why bother to pray for something if it is possible to obtain it? If it is possible, you obtain it w/o prayer

why bother praying for something if it is possible to obtain it? when you can't be certain of the possibility?

why bother praying for something if it is possible to obtain it?

why bother praying for something if it is possible to obtain?

would wipe out
 between alternatives which, ~~once made,~~ will deprive us of every other
 freedom. The realm of choice is the world of karma. Karma is subject
 to human decision, but once this decision is exercised, it is inexorable
 and follows its own law of causality (120). The sphere of true freedom
 lies outside the causal, rational or karmic structure of the world; it
 does not contradict these earthly structures, but it oversteps them. The
 sphere of freedom is the sphere of hope against all hope, the sphere of
 impossibility, of the incomprehensible and non-manipulatable. Sunahsepa
 wants to know if he has a chance to be freed, because freedom is the
 supreme value. His liberation is from every point of view impossible.
 Only then does prayer intervene. Here is its unique place.

We see now why Sunahsepa has recourse to the Gods one after the
 other. He begins by invoking Prajapati, Lord of all the Gods. He asks
 to be delivered to Aditi, the personification of freedom, the limitless;
 he prays for release from his bonds, and to see ~~once more~~ again heaven and
 earth, father and mother (121). Prajapati sends him to Agni, the nearest
 God to the celestial inhabitants and to mortals, the high priest of
 sacrifice, and the boy repeats his prayer for freedom. The entire cele-
 stial world hears Sunahsepa's oration, but there is no favoritism here.

Prayer is not a privilege, but a higher activity of the spirit which
 unlocks a new degree of freedom, and which makes possible what is ordinarily
 not possible. It goes without saying it is not an ontological impossibil-
 ity which prayer surpasses. Prayer is not a power hidden in the man of
 prayer which he can utilize like a weapon, when the moment comes. This
 would be magic or at least some other power which has nothing to do
 with prayer.

Karma?

any chance of
being freed.

True prayer is uncertain, and unaware of its power. We don't know, the Gods themselves don't know. Nothing is fixed, there is no law in the world of prayer. Its reality is always new; the mandate of prayer is pure spontaneity, to congeal it leads to idolatry. Śunaḥśepa is, so to speak, carried away by the spirit of prayer, he tirelessly implores the Gods one after another, each time according to the directions he receives. Agni quite naturally redirects him to Savitr, the great inciter, who alone might impart him the necessary inspiration. And Savitr counsels him to address Varuṇa, since it is Varuṇa who bound him (something which Śunaḥśepa did not know). A first circle closes. Śunaḥśepa sings one of the most beautiful prayers of the Ṛg Veda to Varuṇa, who sends him again to the God of sacrifice, Agni. But Agni can do nothing ~~about~~ it all alone (we are ^{beyond} ~~any~~ voluntarist ^{my} ~~action~~), and must this time induce Śunaḥśepa to call on The-All-Gods, viśve-devāh.
 Now One ^(particular deity) ~~divinity~~ has been ^{involved in} ~~embarked on~~ the adventure all along, and has not yet been specially invoked as he ought to be. This is why The-All-Gods tell Śunaḥśepa to address himself to Indra. Indra offers a chariot full of gold to poor Śunaḥśepa, but he wants ^I his freedom. So he entreats Indra once more, who answers by telling him to sing the praises of the ^{twin} ~~two~~ precursors of light, the ^{two} ~~two~~ Asvins. Indra ~~is~~ ^{is} to direct him to where cosmic novelty sees daylight: Uṣas, ^(Aurora) the dawn, ever new, unforeseeable, ^{which is} an innovation ^{one} never repeated, for today is never the simple repetition of yesterday... God is not sheer inactivity. Every day the creation is new, and runs the absolutely incalculable risk of whatever will come of it. And so each time ^{Śunaḥśepa} ~~he~~ sings a strophe to the breaking day, to Uṣas, ~~Aurora~~, one of ^{his} ~~Śunaḥśepa's~~ three bonds falls away. The new day's new light sets him free.

viśve-devāh?
 want this in n.pl?

Creation is new
 every day,

c) The cosmos

Hariscandra is a king, and consequently ~~he~~ has a kingdom. He is not an isolated individual, but a point of convergence, so to speak, the summit of a whole order. His entire kingdom is engaged in the adventure, as we learn in subsequent tradition which speaks of the aerial city of saubha. But the cosmos of the original myth is not a fantastic world, it is neither anthropomorphized nor divinized. There are just as they are. Nature is neither spiritualized nor allegorized. The forest is the forest, and hunger is hunger. The cows are real and have their full value; one hundred cows are well worth a human life (122). The cosmos here does not overwhelm the other domains of reality. The cosmotheandric equilibrium is carefully maintained. Things are in their proper place; there is no need

to make them play an unfamiliar role, which would in any case be secondary. As we have said, this myth of the human condition focuses first, and above all, on man. And so it quite properly presents the cosmos as seen by man.

It tells us of honey and the delicious Udumbara fruit; it also speaks of the village whose rich human intercourse attracts all men. The vision of the cosmos is also detailed: human gestation is described with care--even the ten lunar months of gestation are mentioned--as well as food, dress and wealth. The sacrificial altar, and fire are also noted, each in its place and its role.

The stanzas abound in the pictorial richness typical of the Rg Veda: the Soma with mortar, sieve and pestle, the containers and the cowhide, the abundance of livestock, the golden chariot given to Sunahsepa, the golden cloak of Varuna, as well as the descriptions of the songs, the stars, the moon and the sun. The cosmos is real, it shares in the human adventure.

is Udumbara to be capitalized?
 Udumbara

* of the same kind as the...

Plat# Things

140

is contained

Government

house

has well as

contacts

even the purest

samnyasin

This

section

generation

riches

Knife

the

It is interesting to note in passing that tension between nature and

culture, symbolized by the pair forest-village. Contrary to what ~~one~~
might think at first glance, neither of them is unequivocal; the village
represents culture, but it also contains the danger of death; the forest
represents nature, but it also contains the only hope of life. As far as

For Rohita, is concerned, the village means men, civic duties and death, where-
as the forest is continual pilgrimage, adventure, the unknown, flight
from men and flight from death.

In this section

I have sought to describe the characters of the myth by trying to
render them comprehensible without uprooting them from their context.

It remains for us now to penetrate the myth itself.

2 - The mythemes

To analyze a myth means to reduce it to its basic mythic elements, just as in chemical analysis we seek the simplest elements which make up a substance. The process ~~as regards~~ ^{my} ~~myth~~ ^{to} is difficult, since we do not know the appropriate reagents, nor how the myth will react to different reagents. We do not yet have a critical method for mythical research. The process is also delicate, for we risk being unable to reconstruct the myth once it is analyzed. The living elements of a myth are not merely ~~substance~~ the concepts it may contain, just as ~~in~~ a compound is more than the simple juxtaposition of its elements. Any mythologumenon is composed of symbols which combine to form more or less complex mythemes. Each mytheme, although complete in itself insofar as it expresses ⁴ a definite problematic, is also a fragment of the larger horizon illuminated by the myth.

To better understand the meaning and also the limits of this myth, we shall mention three mythemes ^I which are not found ^I in the myth in addition to discussing three fundamental mythemes which are present.

59 #

a) The (mythemes present)

The mythemes we may discover in a mythologumenon must always be understood ~~in~~ terms of the myth's context. The three we shall point out represent what the myth had to say to men of its times ^{and moreover,} ~~in addition,~~ ~~convey~~ ~~what it may~~ however, they ~~also represent~~ ^{convey} what the myth may yet ~~in~~ say to us today, for they ~~concern~~ ^{concern} three invariants of human existence.

3.2.11

1) Presence of Death

We have said that the mytheme is not a thesis. Consequently, this first mytheme does not speculate on the nature of death. ~~It contents it describe~~ ^{It is content to} ~~self with describing~~ how life on earth is a constant confrontation with death, and this at every level: the biological, where Ajigarta wants to elude death ^{from} ~~by~~ starvation; the social, where Hariscandra ^{is} ~~wants~~ to continue his life ~~in a lineage~~ ^{through his son}; the psychological, where Rohita wants to escape death at any cost; and at the personal level of Sunahsepa, ^{from whom} ~~from whom~~ life is about to be snatched prematurely (123).

To face death ^{is} ~~inheres~~ ⁱⁿ the human condition. Death is on all sides, ^{to be} ~~it~~ lies in wait for man wherever he is, whatever he does. But ~~does this a man mean to face death, or only to seek escape from it?~~ ^{mean that man must face death, or merely to seek escape from it?} Our mytheme does more than simply state the problematic: it suggests a certain ~~of~~ ^{typology} for death. We have already hinted at this. The presence of death is a universal fact in nature as in culture. Is ~~not~~ ^{as a} culture in general ~~a sort of sophisticated version of natural law, i.e., the law of the jungle?~~ ^{a sort of sophisticated version of natural law, i.e., the law of the jungle?} Cultural ^{dictates} ~~dictates~~ how man ought to face death, and yet these rules ~~are always in accordance to~~ ^{are always in accordance to} the law of the strongest. Culture ~~only~~ ^{only complete} suppresses total anarchy and the tyranny of naked force, so that the survival of the strongest ~~is achieved~~ ^{comes about} ~~accomplished~~ a little less brutally.

This mytheme shows us the different ways in which men seek to escape death. Each ~~one~~ ^{in his own way} wants to evade death; ^{here} ~~the~~ difference lies in the price ~~he~~ ^{is} willing to pay. Ajigarta sells his son; Hariscandra ~~pays~~ ^{is willing to pay} with the life of his son; Rohita seeks another's life to save his own. And finally there is Sunahsepa: he also wants to live, but he is cornered, despite himself, ^{at} ~~in~~ a dead end. →

'he' here because they are all men (or boys)

do you think
(?) might be
never described
O belongs to

He cannot retreat or look for a substitute. Samsāra, the cycle of inauthentic lives, ^{we live here} ends here. ^{large} Real life is victory over death, not merely a reprieve.

So we ^{are confronted w/} discover here two types of ^{life!} living: a horizontal life which can be ^{solo} fully lived ^{only} by passing it on, so to speak, to another; and a vertical life which leaps over the first and ^{re-engages itself afresh in} re-engages itself in the temporal flow. ^{confront death} Both types are confronted with death and both ~~try~~ wish to overcome it.

The first type is dominated by competition, another form of the law of the jungle; the survival of the strongest is paid for by the elimination ^{of} everyone else. ^{is} ~~of the less strong and the weak.~~ This is samsāra, existence which occurs exclusively in time and space (124).

The second type of life is no longer conditioned by flight or substitution, nor obtained at the expense of others (although it may become ^{have} a sign of ^{contradiction} contradiction, as the revolt of Visvamitra's elder sons emphasizes). It is ^{are} life which in ^{one} sense recapitulates the life of ^{all} all men ^{others} and that of the world. It is not an 'other' life beside, or above, or ~~is~~ even after, this temporal life. On the contrary, it dwells in the very heart of the temporal and the material realms, but without ^{confining} confounding itself ^{by s-t ods.} with spatio-temporal coordinates. ^{identifying itself with one} (or: ~~confusing itself with its~~ set of space-time coordinates. ^{own s-t coordinates} own s-t coordinates).

Strictly speaking, ^{the issue here} it is not a question of two discrete types, but of two dimensions of human life in tension and constant exchange. But our mytheme does not speculate; it ^{only} recounts the complexity and richness of human life.

confining itself to spatio-temporal coordinates.

I have no family, my mind is free.

ii) Solidarity of Life

Following this, a second mytheme emerges. ^{at once} The death one flees is nothing but the danger ~~which is~~ inherent to life. ~~Human life per se is~~ precarious, it can end at any time. Now this life is not ~~the~~ ^{Individual's} private property of any individual, but rather ^{of us} a bond between the living, a link stronger than they are by themselves. stronger than the individuals it connects. We live only because we bear and express this supra-individual life. Life take primacy over any living individual. What matters is the quality of life, not the quantity, because life as such is a qualitative value and ~~is~~ consequently unquantifiable, ontologically in solidum, ^{* 'one for all'} 'for the whole', interdependent.

It is precisely this solidarity which ~~permits an inauthentic life~~ ^{enables an individual to} substitute his life for the inauthentic life of another. ~~to be replaced by the life of another individual.~~ We can become unworthy bearers of life when we do not live it, i.e, when at bottom we do not bear it. So then we get rid of it by giving it to others. On the otherhand, authentic life is neither conserved nor passed ^{to} on ~~to~~ others, but burned off, living ^{ed} out, which means constantly renewed, ~~a~~ ^{at the} continually risk death and new birth.

Now the solidarity of life makes itself known at different levels. The father's life is continued in the son; the brahman Sunahsepa's life is well worth that of the ksatriya Rohita, ^(x) Hariscandra's health (and so, ^{keeping} his life) depends on his son's fidelity to the promise made to Varuna.

The sacrifice of ^{Rohita} the son to Varuna rests on substitution, a law which corresponds to the most intimate nature of reality and must not be understood in quantitative ~~terms~~ ^{categories}. The solidarity of life which permits substitution for an inauthentic life does not mean that all life is interchangeable, or that the important thing is to conserve the quantity of life on earth, whoever its bearer might be.

* one for D'Artaignan (or however it's spelt...)

permits substitution, which allows an inauthentic life to be replaced by another's.

I think it's a bit odd... (xxx)

TR (xxx)

(xi)

(xxa)

IS (iii)



'I will offer ~~it~~ ^{him} in sacrifice', Hariscandra said, meaning that in pledging his son's life, he offers his own. ^{When the son flees, the father becomes ill} And for this he falls ill (probably dropsy). Life is the bond which unites us, but this bond is placed in our hands. We can hold it back, release it, or even break it.

With Sunahsepa this mytheme attains its apex. ^{goodly} He is sold for a certain sum and derives no advantage from ~~it~~ ^{this}. On the contrary, the transaction is supposed to cost ^{ought nearly} him his life, ^{the beneficiary is his father} Varuna accepts Sunahsepa as the substitute and ^{he} redeems Rohita, who was not ready to give up his life (125). And he is ^{it} genuinely ^{redemption} redeemed, since once Sunahsepa is saved, Varuna does not demand that Rohita be sacrificed. ~~Rather~~, Sunahsepa continued ^{s/} the traditional vedic sacrifice ^{but} without ^a human victim. Rohita ~~has~~ ^{so this} consequently been saved from a premature death.

Here the originality of this mytheme appears most clearly. The solidarity of life is not a physical, ^{not} ~~indeed~~ a material, ^{notion} conception of ^{life} ~~as if it were~~ life like some sort of energy conservation. It is ^{not a question of} neither an eye for an eye, ^{skt} nor jiva for jiva (soul for soul).

In contrast to other heroes and saviors, Sunahsepa does not die biologically, he ^{avoids} ~~consequently~~ does not pay a physical debt. In fact, nobody dies ^{as it were} in this mytheme which is remarkable. The solidarity of life is of a ^{higher} ~~higher~~ order, irreducible to quantitative ^{standards} evaluation. There is something above the realm of causality and necessity. ^{That} Our second mytheme, then, does not ^{just that} ~~only~~ say all life is equal; You do not play with life. Ajigarta is charged with having committed a hideous crime. ^{can} ~~The~~ mytheme affirms that this law of solidarity is vital, governed by ~~the sphere of freedom~~ and not by determinism. ^{the} ~~We are far~~ ^{Here} from ^{the} juridical notion of compensation and material substitution. To be sure,

goodly
100 cm. in
lot, medals.
448
* Sunahsepa, the substitute victim, redeems Rohita,

like the law of the conservation of energy.

an order which is higher than and irreducible to

* we've said Varuna accepts the substitution plenty of times - p 49

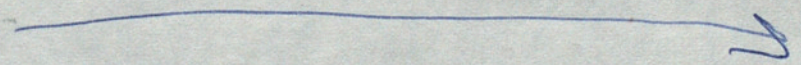
of other haft -
I bh...
P...
M...
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leaf

Sunahsepa has been legally purchased, but his redemptive action is ~~not~~ ^{not} effective because he has been sacrifice, or because of any decision on his part. The relation is neither juridical, nor material; nor, moreover, does the redemptive ~~the~~ ^{embracing} value of his act stem from the individual will. The relation is sui generis, and ~~embraces~~ ^{embraces} all humanity and the Gods as well (12-6). Sunahsepa is neither a chosen hero, nor a man of superior will-bound power; he is but an ordinary man grappling with existence and almost forced to play his last card in the game of human interdependence. Sunahsepa is ~~any man~~ ^{one} who finds his back to the wall because ~~of~~ ^{of} this solidarity of ~~like~~ ^{like} life has made him the last link in the chain of human lives. ~~He~~ ^{Basically} cannot, after all, do like the others and postpone the true confrontation of human existence with reality by leaving the responsibility to another and so let ~~the~~ ^{the} circle of shasara revolve again. He must face death by accepting the solidarity of life and by preparing ~~for a~~ ^{to} leap into transcendence.

thus letting

This mytheme tells us that the real human condition is one of such dependence upon other ^{s/} that we can be completely cornered and have ~~no~~ ^{state sphere} other recourse but to leap into a brand new situation which transcends the spatio-temporal individual. In more popular language: the just must pay for the sinners, since they are the only ones who can pay. They are called just precisely because ~~of~~ ^{for} this, ~~and~~ ^{that} because they do not mutter out of a misplaced ~~sense~~ ^{sense} of individualist ^{ic/} propriety, and so do not find their fate unjust (or else they would no longer be just).

This solidarity of life--which was self-evident for the myth's contemporaries, but which we need to recall--is a solidarity of all life, involving even the Gods.



Man is not a solitary in ^{the} universe, not an individual cut from his roots and stripped of his purest fruits. Man could perhaps be defined ^{the nexus, as} as the visibility ^{be} of this intersection where ~~all~~ the domains of reality cross one another. ^{he} is the crossroads of a reality ^{which} traversing ^{is} every being, ~~and~~ embracing Gods as well as material things. ^{Overgrown} ~~We would do well to remember that this is~~ ^{we will} ~~it is worth taking this into account. We do not have a~~ ^{a strictly} ~~monodimensional myth, narrowly 'humanist', but a myth in three~~ ^{dimension} ~~sions, for the purusa is not only what we call 'man', and still less the individual, but the total~~ ^{the anthropocosmic} ~~cosmotheandric person reflected to~~ ^{being & (127) 145} ~~different degrees in each human person.~~

iii) Transcendental Desire

^{to love us} ~~Hariścandra desires a son; Rohita desires to preserve his~~ ^{life} ~~life; Ajigarta desires not to die of hunger; Sunahsepa desires his~~ ^{liberation!} ~~liberation; Visvāmītra desires to be able to continue the sacrifice~~ ^{place Devarāta (Sunahsepa)} ~~and to see Sunahsepa at the head of his descendants. Desire is~~ ^{present} ~~present throughout. In every case it appears not as a superficial~~ ^{whom} ~~whom~~ ^{OR} ~~autonomous~~ ^{will} ~~will~~, but rather as the manifestation of each being's deepest dynamism. Desire in these cases is neither caprice nor the ^{consequence} ~~fruit~~ of a reasoning intellect, but the result of an integral situation. Each one desires that ^{toward} ~~to~~ ^{which engages his entire being} ~~which his whole being reaches out.~~ It would be perhaps more proper to speak of the ontological tendency of every being. ^{We might even} ~~Let us~~ recall Sunahsepa's hard words to his father: 'Who once does evil, will do that evil again!' This is not true of an action born of covetousness, of psychological desire, but only of an action ^{ing} ~~which~~ ^{(128) 146} ~~which~~ ^{think} ~~expresses~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ very core of our being.

first two
 Where the ~~transcendent~~ mythemes in ~~one~~ sense go beyond the individual man, where they attune him to what limits him from below (death), and from on high (life), this third mytheme places us at the very heart of the human situation; man is not described here as intelligence or will, but as this desire to be, as the desire ^{for} of being ~~itself~~. Clearly this ^{is} ~~not~~ a matter of mere appetite, but a deep-seated desire for existence. I can conquer my appetite for possession or for vengeance by mastering it with a deeper conviction; e.g., that ^{app} possession will not enrich me, perhaps, or vengeance give me peace. I can purify my appetites, sublimate them, but I cannot eliminate the constitutive desire of my being which enables me to overcome ^{have} ~~a specific~~ appetite. Every sublimation depends on a deeper desire which ^{envelopes} ~~assumes~~ individual appetites. (129) In this realm of transcendental desire there can be no ontological pretense. The myth situates us at a depth where we cannot be deceived by acts ~~one~~ ^{that} can retract, by more or less superficial appetites, or by ^{whatever} notions we might have of ourselves. Here we cannot pretend ^{simplicity} ~~simplicity will not~~ countenance a two-faced attitude.

which takes up and transforms

True human freedom dwells ^{in the} ~~here~~ at this depth of ontological desire,

and not merely in the psychological domain of possible choice. What good ^{us} is it for ~~someone~~ to put on a mask, which ^{upheld by the} will or reason, ^{have made,} preserve, and which ^{lets} ~~enables~~ him to act contrary to his ^{our} own nature? Either freedom ^{is} ~~takes~~ rooted in ^{our} man's very being, or it is just superstructure. Freedom comes to light in ^{she to} a being which can free itself from exterior ^{sp} constraint. This is why one must be aware, be oneself, master oneself in order to be free.

an

Human
 P ~~Human~~ being, this mytheme ~~seems to~~ tell^s us, has a profound desire which belongs to its very constitution, and which is always a desire for transcendence. (In a sense this is a tautology--but a qualified tautology, like any true principle--since every desire is for the transcendent.) But ~~the~~ ^{the} transcendence of this ontological desire goes beyond the death of the individual.

We should properly call ~~it~~ ^{they} a transcendental desire, constitutive of being and, if we concentrate on human being as the myth does, we should see in it an expression of desire as a fundamental existenzial, since ~~by this~~ ^{it} we express^s the ontological structure of human existence.

Whatever our philosophical categories may be, this mytheme seems to voice a deep-seated invariant ~~we find~~ ^{found} in practically every ~~human~~ religious tradition: the desire to open oneself to a more authentic life, a life which escapes the banal, a ~~life~~ life, where we go beyond the limits of space and time that seem (so) to imprison human existence. This desire is generally linked with the conviction that we need a sacred act, a sacrifice, in order to realize it. We are thinking here of what historians of religion are accustomed to call initiation, a rite by which one passes from appearance to reality, from illusion to truth, from adolescent life to life in its fullness; initiation as the true or the second birth. (150) (148)

In fact we find in this sacred history all the elements of an initiatory rite, which may incidentally be its ~~historical~~ ^{likeliest} origin. The myth presents ~~the following~~ ^{several} characteristics ~~appropriate~~ ^{appropriate} to initiation.

As we have ~~already~~ ^{known - earlier} observed, this is first of all a myth centered on man. It is a ~~story about~~ ^{tale of} man's life on earth, not a ~~history of~~ ^{about} the Gods or a cosmic narrative. Initiation is ~~an~~ ^{experience} human existence par excellence.

The myth is also ~~centered~~ ^{focused} on overcoming death and entering ~~into~~ ^{into} a higher life. For this one has to vanquish ~~desire~~ death, to be sacrificed and reborn to new life. Sunahsepa has earned a new life. It is symbolized in his new name, his new ~~new~~ father, his new role, and above all by his second ~~birth~~ ^{birth} on the altar. The myth ~~does not theorize on~~ ^{does not theorize on} ~~the~~ dvi-jātva, the state of being re-born, it tells us ~~the~~ ^{the} facts.

This new birth, in the third place, does not come about automatically. It is not a physical birth but an ~~anthropological~~ ^{ritual} one. For this some act is needed, the sacred action of a rite, ~~It is this that the myth~~ ^{which} unfolds ~~before our eyes~~ ^{before us}.

The myth, in the fourth place, recounts a rite which runs the risks ^{of} of life and death, and where substitution take place only after a withdrawal to the wild--traits we find in most ~~initiation~~ ^{atony} rites.

But this is clearly not an initiation ^c practised in the epoch when the myth was composed. The myth does not deal with traditional ^{besides,} indian initiation; both the brahman and the ksatriya are already initiates, dvi-jas. ~~There is~~ Nor is it a matter of explicating or justifying the social situation of the time. The castes are admissible here; in fact, the caste system is taken for granted. Even sudras are talked about in the most conventional manner.

We are not concerned with a social initiation ^{which has} already crystallized in ^{a particular} ritual structure, but with a third birth if you will ⁽¹⁾; the true personal birth, ^{which is} unlike either biological or sociological birth, and ^{located} found on another plane altogether. We would like to emphasize this important nuance. True life is only what is mortal dies, only immortal; ~~what dies is the mortal~~ the husk ^{as it were} of life, like the skin shed by a ^{serpent} snake ⁽¹⁾. This means ^{that} the tension here is not so much between death and resurrection as between ⁱⁿ authentic life and ~~material~~ ^{real} life. Thus the victim need not really be killed, since death is never real. Sunahšepa is not resuscitated, he is suscitated to a new life. This means, further, that we must not ^{wait for} ~~await~~ an 'other' life or a 'beyond' to this life, but that we can realize it ^{now} once we have been liberated like Sunahšepa on the altar of sacrifice. We awaken to true life.

So this myth ^{we} means ~~for~~ that there is a life hidden in man, a new life which we can awaken by a rite centered on prayer, on the existential cry of man ^{Man} ~~faces~~ with death. ⁽¹⁾ He is then raised up, awakened, suscitated to a new life which will not be in another existence, but which is in this very life, once we have crossed the threshold of our egocentrism.

b) The absent mythemes

A myth is a living myth if it still depicts an horizon where we can ^{90% of reality} place our ^{experience} awareness of reality. No doubt, our myth describes an essential part of the human condition as it is still lived and suffered by contemporary ^{we moderns} humanity. Nevertheless, our ~~modern mentality~~ find important absences in it which might lead us to consider that our sacred history is perhaps too limited to serve as a myth for today. In this case, it might serve to accentuate several aspects of human life and then integrate them into a new myth which has yet to unfold. In studying these absent mythemes, ^{we feel ourselves} we may perhaps find a deeper meaning in this absence. ^{which are lacking}

Our course, ^{here is set} our enterprise, delicate as any argument ^{is} ex silentio, ^{must} be, seems justified in that we are trying to understand this sacred history over against the background of contemporary mythic thought. Three mythemes are symptomatically missing, ^{absent.} but ^{once} again, we should try to understand them before criticising or drawing conclusions for our era.

based on the socio-anthropological argument of the law of karma. Only the sainyasi, the monk who has already burned ~~up~~ all his karmas, who has nothing ~~left~~ ^{left} to continue, to achieve, to undergo, is celebrate. Because he has lived his life totally, because he has used up the quantity of temporal life inherited, because he does not desire 'horizontal' immortality (and therefore has no need ~~of descendants~~ of sons to continue his unfinished life and his unrealized dreams) -- only such a ~~man~~ ^{one}, ~~a saint~~ ^{the only} ~~one~~ who has lived his final life on this spatio-temporal earth, is celebrate (137).

But our myth does not talk about saints. So why this silence where sex is concerned? Can we speak of death, life and desire without including sexuality? We would like to suggest an hypothesis which is ^{rather} subtle from the exegetical point of view, but plausible ^{given} in the indian context, and ~~which~~ will perhaps enrich the western perspective.

Hariscandra has a hundred wives and we can suppose that Visvamitra's situation is similar since he had a hundred and one sons. We might say that their sexual needs were filled to overflowing. Consequently, ~~there~~ ^{sex is not} a problem, at least not an urgent one. ~~Now~~ ^{But} sex is not only an elementary genital desire. The indian context would retort here that a hundred wives are not solely for the pleasure of the body and that to confound the sexual impulse with ontological desire is ^{simply} an ~~(anthropological)~~ ^(anthropological) error. The great human problems, the three we have disclosed in our myth, are only sexual problems for those who have not yet quietened or sublimated their primary instincts and so let them overrun all other domains. Our hypothesis suggests that sex does not belong to the human order in its ultimacy.

think anthro.
doesn't add much--

Sex is an element, and even a condition, but not the substance of human being in its plenitude. We could cite ^{any} ~~the~~ analogy with hunger. Unless it is mastered, one becomes Ajigarta; if one is starving, everything is tainted by this problem, ~~everything~~ is food. We cannot minimize the anguishing problems of hunger, nor ignore the driving force it has in the lives of men and civilization; ~~but~~ ^{but} to suppose everything can or should be reduced to satisfying the fundamental need for food, ~~would over~~ ^{hardly} simplify the question. If ^{you} one has not sublimated sexuality, ^{you} one finds it everywhere. To be sure, we neither can nor should ignore the importance of the sexual impulse, but from there to ~~sexual~~ ^{asexual} reductionism is a considerable distance.

There is then in this myth an element of novelty even for India, a culture ~~which is still so~~ ^{which is} exuberant in conceiving sexuality. The exceptional character of our myth comes through once again.

In sum
~~Here we can~~ ^{we} can ~~so~~ only seek to understand this notion within the horizon of contemporary experience and ^{so} note the cathartic effect it could have for our era. What this negative mytheme in fact tells us is that the great problems of human existence and the meaning of man's life on earth are not necessarily connected with sexuality. Could we even say that our myth demythicizes the modern sexual myth?

ii) Political perspective

In our myth Man hardly seems engrossed in establishing ^a better or more equitable society. Rather, society seems to be an unalterable given, like a fact of nature we do not care to change. We find no rebellion. Hariscandra does not question Varuna's decree, Rohita does not revolt against his father ~~father~~, he simply flees, and always with some remorse, Ajigarta does not appear a ~~non-conformist~~, and even Sunahsepa seems unconscious of any injustice. It is true we are dealing with a situation in which the Gods play a part, but divine mandate does not mean immutability, as many ¹⁵⁶ other myths demonstrate (138).

This absence should not be interpreted in the modern terms of class struggle or a revolutionary ~~esp~~ ^{Geist} ~~esp~~. We must veto any such catachronic ^{in order} interpretation, i.e., projecting today's categories of understanding to ~~arose in another order of things~~ grasp facts which ~~arose~~ in another time, another culture, another world. Just as the problematic of sexuality was not unknown in the ~~India~~ ^{given} India of that time, there could also be a certain social consciousness within the ~~context~~ cultural milieu of our myth. Still, it does not deal with war, political ~~The social is absent from it,~~ struggles or economic problems. ~~Society as such is absent,~~ and surprisingly ⁹² so. Excepting the final reference to Visvamisra's descendents, there is in fact no reference to a consciousness of man in the world; of man who, by the very fact of being human, is susceptible to change, growth, improvement. The myth seems to imply that the purpose of life lies in each one ⁱⁿ playing his or her role, but not ~~changing~~ either society or the people who compose it.

'do not care to
or 'cannot' ??

Why not??
but
think...
let more aspects.

why not??

We could say that ^{let} given the social order of the time, one could not do otherwise than conform ^{to it} or escape. Now although this may not be totally accurate (139), we find no indication of social concern or internal rebellion against the establish^{ed} social order. Further, Indrah^{himself} in counseling Rohita, seems almost to scorn everything social. And Rohita takes the god's advice to live his life spiting every divine and human convention.

Nevertheless, the myth is not a social, it does not focus ^{only} ^{obely} on the isolated individual. All society is in a way reflected in it: the kingdom, the castes, the poor, commerce, patrimonies... So we cannot say it pertains to another species. And yet not a word betrays historical perspective.

Here, as for the mytheme of sexuality, we must try to understand before we criticize.

This myth deals with salvation, the salvation of the man who escapes death, who lives his life and who seeks above ^{surpass} all to go beyond it. Not surprisingly, ^{them, some} this salvation is depicted in the sociological terms common to that time, while at the same time remaining utterly indifferent to them. The fact of salvation, the presence of death, the reality of life, the possibility of authentic life, seem to be autonomous values with respect to the social situation in which man finds himself immersed.

¹⁹⁷ Along with the modern bent toward ^{sexual reductionism,} pansexuality, we could cite here the trend of other contemporary currents of ^{thoughts} toward politicization and socialization. Man is reduced to a sociological animal ^{who has} having no other substance; his salvation is political liberation, his felicity economic independence, his good fortune to participate in the democratic process.

But the myth does not say whether the social order of its day is just or unjust. It tells us only that human salvation is to some extent independent, autonomous ~~001~~ I prefer ontonomous and consequently that human plenitude, the initiation to authentic life, is not reducible to its socio-political status. ~~It is not a matter of ignoring the dangers of social escapism, the abuse of established religions, the inertia of history and human exploitation; it is just a question of bearing in mind that human liberation also has a dimension which is more fundamentally constitutive than the social factors involved (140).~~

parameters
Comments

We have here then another absence full of meaning, and another challenge to the ~~contemporary mentality~~ ^{mind}, contemporary man.

iii) Eschatology

Our third absent mytheme, all the more astonishing in an indian myth, is a double one: that of man's beginning and final end. In this myth we ~~encounter~~ no attempt to elucidate the escholotigical problem, neither from the temporal nor the metaphysical points of view (141). It looks like a fragment of ~~xxxxx~~ ^{human} film, clipped in mid-reel, ~~not allowed to finish~~ ^{not fully unavailably be the outcome}

Do want to say that

whatever man's origins may be, and independent of his end, human life ~~unfolds according to a desire in which eschatological opinions seem to be irrelevant.~~ ^{on the matter}

A very intriguing silence, which once again ~~reveals~~ ^{marks} this myth to be exceptional and strikingly original. It recounts a human situation and even how to go beyond it without, however, having recourse to a cosmology of origins or a metaphysics of ends. Doubtless we can always retrace the cosmogonic and metaphysical presuppositions in any human narrative. But ~~what~~ ^{it} is remarkable.

is that our myth does not depend on these presuppositions to say what it has to say.

Death, life and authentic existence can be faced ^{So here} independently of our particular cosmological and metaphysical persuasions. ~~This is~~ a myth of man ~~which of man~~ which does not philosophize (although philosophy may underpin it ^{as it does} like any other human construct).

~~Here~~ Here again, this absence is meaningful especially ~~for~~ today when we tend to couch everything in ^{ideological} ideological terms. This sacred history seems to make the extraordinary claim to speak to us of human deliverance without being bound to a formal doctrinal system. This is the advantage of myth, to be sure, but in this case we have ^{something, something, feature, fact} the additional ~~fact~~ ^{definite} that the very language of the story does not rely on any preconceived philosophical notions.

It deals with the Gods and with sacrifice; ^{who he} we find the ~~characteris-~~ ^{itself} ~~tic~~ vedic ambience reflected in it. But ~~the~~ sacred history can easily be disengaged from these concrete images on which it rests or by which it expresses itself. The interpretation we have suggested is valuable for an atheist, as well as for a theist or a pantheist (and equally valid whether one acknowledges or rejects the notions of creation and a heaven 'to come').

It may perhaps be said that if one refutes transcendence and invocation, for example, the myth loses all meaning. Far be it from me to be non-critically irenic ^{or} ~~adopt a non-critical irenicism~~, or even to claim to have a myth of universal value, ~~which is~~ free from any presupposition. We should not analyze a myth ~~me~~, and still less an absent mytheme, as we do philosophical theses or ^{concepts} ~~conceptual~~ themes. Nor am I asserting that our mytheme is free ^{any} from all conceptual baggage; I ⁱⁿ may simply point out that the absence of eschatology entitles the myth to claim to be acceptable to several metaphysics and cosmologies; the absence itself symbolizes this possibility.

3) Deconditioning Manthis point

Until now, our interpretation has been primarily phenomenological and follows the line of the history and science of religions. It has disclosed three mythemes present and three absent which have enabled us to propose a hermeneutic of the myth for our epoch. We have seen the present mythemes like colors, ^{we have seen} over against the backdrop which is formed ^{that our sphere of myth is itself} by the myth itself. Being accustomed to see other colors as well as these 'primary tints', ^{as we are} we have remarked on their absence and ^{sought} to explain it. We have presented the absent mythemes as a default and a challenge. A default, since their absence makes it difficult to consider this as a myth of today's human condition. A challenge since the myth situates man on a plane which seems able to dispense with the mythemes modern man considers so important. We must in any case admit that a myth which does not speak to man qua man, is not a myth but only a peculiar, perhaps pedagogical, legend.

In

Voicing the absent themes, I have tried to represent certain contemporary mentality. ^{This should be kept in mind} We should keep this in mind, and I should apologize for my role of devil's advocate in stressing the absence of certain mythemes. If this absence were total and these themes were central to the human being as such, our myth would not qualify as a real myth.

⁹⁶ The fact is, however, that what is absent in our myth is a certain--modern--interpretation of the topic represented in the three supposedly absent mythemes. As to a more contextual interpretation, we could say that the three absent mythemes are not ^{really} totally absent; ^{on quite} on the contrary, they are clearly present in the three mythemes we have discussed. ^{What is} What is sexuality if not an expression of transcendental desire? ^{substructure} Is not death the underpinning of all eschatology? And again, does the soli-

darity of life ^{not} represent social and political awareness in its deepest stratum? Modern man may have a different understanding of sex, politics and eschatology, and he may be right or wrong. ^{Rx} In any case, ^{these} ~~the~~ three ~~expious~~ topics, together with another--perhaps deeper, though undifferentiated--understanding are also present in the story of Sunahsepa.
^{Let us say simply that} ~~Be this as it may~~, a ^{profound} deepened meditation on the myth reveals still another fundamental trait which permits us to list it among the myths of mankind which have not yet lost their validity. →

hedge

(101)

(102)

(103)

(104)

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(107)

(108)

(109)

(110)

In seeking the meaning of the human condition depicted in ^{this} the myth we ~~father in this sacred history~~ have tried to see ~~here~~ the depths of its simplicity. It seems that this myth describes the human condition in order to present the deconditioning of Man as its quintessential message.

This puts our myth in rather a special light. Man is the being who knows himself ~~as~~ ^{to be} conditioned by birth, by habit, by circumstances, ^{by and} position; in short, by nature and culture. Precisely because he is conscious of this, he must learn to live in the gaps left by his conditioning. Is education, modern education in particular, not centered mainly on this effort to teach the new generation how to manage within the conditionings we call society, civilization, technology, scientific knowledge, etc.? I am tempted to quote from another tradition and cite Tsze Sze's first thesis in his Commentary I, 1 to the Chung Yung, the second of the Four Classics of Chinese wisdom, which Ezra Pound rendered as The Unwobbling Pivot (and whose version I reproduce):

What heaven has disposed and sealed is called the inborn nature. The realization of this nature is called the process. The classification of this process (the understanding or making intelligible of this process) is called education.

The chief trait of the human condition is certainly the fact of being conditioned. Hariscandra is conditioned by his desire and his promise, Rohita is conditioned by his fate (Indra, it is true, tries to decondition him--and the temptation he instigates rescues Rohita, but this deconditioning succeeds only partially). Ajigarta is so conditioned by his famished predicament that he is hardly free to choose. Sunahsepa is the very expression of conditioning carried to the extreme, since this condi-

tioning is not due to limitations of his own making, ~~and~~ from which he could free himself; ^{no} ~~on the contrary~~, he is conditioned by external agencies, and in the most brutal manner. He no longer has any freedom of choice or movement, and he finds himself in ⁱⁿ imminent danger of losing his life.

So here we are at the center of the myth: the deconditioning of man, his liberation, his freedom. Our hermeneutic ^{now} will ^{attempt to be a} attempt ~~now~~ a second approach, more philosophical and anthropological than the first. →

not a place

res? ✓

allow ~~which~~ ^{to find} us to find the core of the myth in the protomytheme of deconditioning. For this it suffices to read the hundred rc Sunahsepa recites (142), to hear his other prayers and to listen to the myth in its entirety. We often leave ^{aside} the central aspect of a myth in the rush to decipher the threads of the sacred history, the rubrics, so to speak, thus neglecting the content, the prayers, the nigrics as I have called them (143). ^{all kinds of hymns,} Now, the central prayers of the myth are hymns of liberation, ^{carved on the theme of the} of deconditioning the human condition which the existence of men ^{imposed on us by} and Gods, ^{the} or even our own life, impose on us. ^{the very}

From this angle, our myth is complete ^{and} simple; it is necessary to decondition Man from ^{every} ~~all~~ conditionings. It matters little whether what binds ^{us} him is life, or death. Man is conditioned by fear of death, by attachment to life, and by his desires, which bind rather than release ^{him}. This myth reveals the essence of religion as an unbinding rather than a 'religatio' (143,1).

Or?

By deconditioning, we mean ^{of us to} freedom from every condition ^{which} enabling each man to acquire the liberty to realize ^{whatever we are} without bound or limit, ^{whatever} Now this liberation is at once a freedom from ^{our} (his bonds) and a freedom to ^{ourselves} (realize himself in his plenitude). The example of Sunahsepa is clear. He is freed from death to realize his being (symbolized here by the performance of the vedic sacrifice, and his engagement in ^a the new life as Visvámētra's son).

Here, again we discover a human invariant found with different names ^{descriptions} and bearings in every human culture: moksa, or ^{liberation} liberation following the entire Indian tradition. Soteria, salus, liberty, emancipation, deliverance, independence, ^{etc.} are other terms for it, ^{words} ^(143,2) ¹⁶⁴ and so many words for it in different cultures + substitutes

Man finds himself conditioned, mediated, exploited, abused by the Gods, fate, nature, society, others, ^{and} himself. He feels in himself the desire, even the capacity to be free, but he suffers from his lack of freedom, he desires liberation. This is the protomyth of our sacred history. It tells us that the desire for liberation is the fundamental human impulse. It adds that this liberation is possible in any circumstance, since Sunahsepa realizes it in the most desperate predicament. It emphasizes that this emancipation belongs to the deepest stratum of ^{the} human person, ~~much more~~ ^{It is certainly} ~~more~~ ^{pleas} basic than sexual desires, political ideas, economic situations ^{or} and human ideologies. ^{Our myth protomyth} It further reveals that the price of this true freedom is ~~one's own life~~ ^{our}, which must be redeemed, re-conquered ^{after} ~~once death has been vanquished.~~ ^{vanguishing death}

Modern man, ~~is~~ ^{the} the man of the moment, of the modus, ~~the~~ man of the current and so fugitive instant, does he not live more conditioned than ever by the forces of alienation? Civilized life, and above all modern 'developed' life, still obsessed by development, does it not mean conditioned life? ^{conditioned} ~~conditioned~~ by others, by ^{society} ~~society~~, by the innumerable webs we weave, which bind us not only to others, but also to the megamachine of man has constructed and without which, or outside ^{of} which, he can no longer live? Contemporary man does not know how to live without his technological ^{diving} ~~suit~~, and very soon he will no longer know how to breathe without it.

Every myth does more than offer a ^{horizon} ~~backdrop~~ where we may insert our thoughts by giving them a backdrop and furnishing a context; it also ^{incites} ~~orients~~ our thinking and ^{it incites} ~~encourages~~ us to follow one approach instead of another; ^{it invites} ~~invites~~ us to think in a certain direction.

Thus also,

Here ~~is~~ our mythologumenon offers an invitation to modern man.

A double invitation: not to allow himself to be crushed by culture and nature, by men, society and the Gods, and also not to dream of a denouement in a horizontal future that nobody will ever see, but to envision a transhistorical present which neither denies the temporal nor drowns in it. Our sacred history is clearly a challenge to the myth of history.

Human freedom is possible and real, not merely for our successors, or in ~~an~~ some other life; but now, in the tempiternal present, the deepest core of the human being.

~~the human being,~~

the humanum

###

the core of human existence

the deepest core of the humanum

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Le mythe comme histoire sacrée:

Shunahshepa, un mythe de la condition humaine

Le sacrifice, c'est l'homme (1)

L'homme est le premier à être sacrifié (2)

I - Le mythe et l'histoire

Cette étude voudrait montrer dans un cas concret, une double et importante fonction du mythe: d'un côté, le mythe, en effet se présente comme le sous-sol d'où les différents systèmes philosophiques puisent leur sève. Il n'y a pas de philosophies in vacuo: chaque philosophie repose sur un contexte donné, celui-là précisément fourni par le mythe. De l'autre côté, le mythe, par le fait même de sa polyvalence philosophique possède une valeur irremplaçable dans la rencontre, et aussi la fécondation transculturelle. Les concepts sont valables dans les contextes où ils ont été conçus, et on ne peut les extrapoler purement et simplement (voire sans trouver les lois qui justifieraient l'extrapolation). Les mythes relèvent au contraire, d'une couche humaine plus profonde, et donc plus universelle que celle des philosophies.

Les trois sections de cette première partie voudraient préciser le cadre concret où s'insère cette étude.

(1) SB I, 3, 2, 1: puruso vai yajñah. Cf. aussi CU III, 16, 1: puruso vava yajñah, l'homme est vraiment le sacrifice.

(2) SB VI, 2, 1, 18: purusam prathamam ālabhate.

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correcte est comme la preuve des opérations mathématiques élémentaires: la soustraction pour l'addition, la multiplication pour la division. Si nous pouvons réussir à retraduire, voire réinterpréter notre interprétation selon l'original, cela veut dire, que nous n'allégorisons pas, mais interprétons correctement.

Ceci veut dire, que pour interpréter un mythe, on doit se baser sur ce que le mythe dit littéralement (le texte), sur ce qu'il veut dire, c.à.dire, qu'il faut connaître le contexte du mythe, et finalement, il faut aussi se baser sur ce qu'on lui a fait dire au cours des âges, car les interprétations passées appartiennent également à la donnée à interpréter.

Cela nous amène à connaître: 1) le récit original, le mythologomène, son legein; 2) le contexte du mythe, son mythe et 3) les commentaires, son logos.

1) Le récit (le legein du mythe):

Nous avons à faire à l'une des histoires sacrées les plus complètes, et probablement des plus anciennes de toute la śruti ou révélation védique (1). A plusieurs points de vue, elle est exceptionnelle (2).

(1) Le texte en question de l'AB VII, 13-18 (XXXIII, 1-6) qui est pratiquement le même que SSS XV, 17-27. Le ASS IX, 3 répète la fin de l'AB VII, 18 en ce qui concerne les instructions rituelles.

(2) "La seule exception" dit VARENNE (op.cit. p. 11) se référant à son récit complet. "Là encore, l'histoire de Sunahsepa, déjà insolite quant à sa forme, fait figure d'exception" (op. cit.p. 13), ajoute-t-il quant à la spiritualité bhakti, presque complètement absente des Brâhmanas.

Cette histoire est à la fois en prose et en vers. Les vers se composent soit des strophes originales (gāthā), soit des citations du R̥g Veda (ṛc). Ils ont un caractère épique, et présentent une élaboration grammaticale beaucoup plus riche que le texte en prose, d'un sanscrit plus élémentaire, et même rudimentaire. La légende recueillie dans l'Aitareya Brahmana, rédigé entre les années 800 ou 600 avant le Christ, s'avère, d'après la critique interne et externe, très ancienne (1). Le fait que cette légende fasse partie de la consécration royale fait penser à une date antérieure, et si l'on considère la référence au sacrifice humain, on peut même y chercher une origine préhistorique (2).

(1) Cf. A.B. KEITH, Rigveda Brahmanas, -Harvard Oriental Series- Cambridge, Massachusetts (Harvard University Press), 1920. Réimpression: Delhi & Varanasi (Motilal Barnasidas), 1971; pp. 42-50.

(2) Cf. M. WINTERNITZ, A History of Indian Literature (University of Calcutta) -édition anglaise révisée, vol. I, part 1, pp.184-187-1962.

Le texte bien connu a eu différentes éditions (1) et des traductions complètes (2) ou partielles (3). Après avoir peiné pour en donner un résumé convenable, j'ai trouvé une excellente traduction française, bien supérieure à ce que j'aurais pu faire(4).

Telle est, donc, l'histoire sacrée de Shunahshepa dans la traduction de Varenne:

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- (1) Les éditions de HAUGH, Bombay (1863), de KĀSTNĀTHA SĀSTRY ĀGĀSE, Poona (Anāndaśrama Series) 1896, de VĀSUDE VĀSARMAN PANSĪKARA et KR̥SNĀMBHĀTTA GORE, Bombay (Nirṇaya Sāgara Press) 1911; celle de SATYAVRATA SĀMAŚRAMI dans la Bibliotheca Indica; celle d'AUPRECHT, etc. La deuxième édition de la Chrestomatie de BŌHTLINGK donne aussi le texte original révisé; on la trouve de même en appendice dans l'œuvre classique de MAX MÜLLER, A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, Varanasi (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office), 1968 -nouvelle édition révisée par S.N. SĀSTRĪ- qui incorpore au texte les variations du SSS.
- (2) La première traduction anglaise de tout l'AB est celle de HAUGH (à laquelle devraient s'ajouter les importantes remarques critiques d'A. WEBER, IS IX (1865). Cf. aussi celle de HL WILSON dans JRAS, 1851, XIII, pp. 96 sq., op. cit. Il y a une traduction allemande par R. ROTH, IS I, p.457 sq. et II, p.111 sq., etc.
- (3) Par exemple, MAX MÜLLER, op. cit., pp. 370-376; J. MUIR, Original Sanskrit Texts, London (Trubner & Co.) 1868-74 -5 vols-; Nouvelle édition révisée, Amsterdam (Oriental Press), 1967, vol.I, pp.355-360. S. LEVI, La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmanas, Paris (E.Leroux), 1898; deuxième édition (Presses Universitaires de France), 1966. pp. 134-136, etc.

(4) → pag. 12,2

(4) Le texte de l'AB que je reproduis ici avec sa permission, ce dont je lui suis très reconnaissant, est traduit du sanskrit par JEAN VARENNE -et approuvé par L. RENOÜ- dans son livre Mythes et légendes extraits des Brâhmana, Paris (Gallimard) 1967, pp. 112-130 -Connaissance de l'Orient. Collection UNESCO d'oeuvres représentatives. Série indienne. JEAN VARENNE a eu l'excellente idée de traduire aussi les cents vers du RV auxquels le texte original fait seulement référence. Le lecteur peut ainsi suivre le récit complet.

A fin de situer le contexte du mythe, nous mentionnerons, a) son passé immédiat, à savoir son milieu englobant qu'on trouve dans la notion de sacrifice; b) son état présent, à savoir son 'Sitz im Leben', et c) son futur, sa continuation dans la tradition, sa tension vectorielle, sans toutefois entrer dans les détails si intéressants soient-ils, pour une recherche spécialisée (1).

(1) Les références des notes peuvent servir d'introduction à une approche indologique plus poussée.

sacrifice y joue un rôle central. Le Dieu Varuṇa exige un sacrifice, Shunahshepa va être sacrifié, on offre ensuite un sacrifice védique, et tout se réalise dans le cadre du rājasūya, un autre rituel basé sur un sacrifice. Bien que tous ces sacrifices soient beaucoup plus concrets et de moindre envergure que le sacrifice primordial que nous venons de décrire, ils l'actualisent et le célèbrent en partie.

b - La consécration royale.

Ce mythologème se trouve inséré dans la partie de l'Aitareya Brāhmaṇa dédiée à la consécration royale, et en est son introduction (1). Il fait partie intégrante d'une cérémonie

(1) Toute la fin de l'AB (VII et VIII) est consacrée au rajasuya. On commence par une explication sur la distribution des parties de la victime, suivi d'une longue liste d'expiations pour les fautes commises au cours des oblations sacrificielles (VII, 1-12). L'histoire de Shunahshepa (VII, 13-18) suit immédiatement; celle-ci achevée, on donne la description des préparations de la consécration royale (VII, 19-26), suivi à son tout de la description de la boisson et nourriture royales (au lieu du soma) (VII, 27-34). C'est dans VIII que les différents rites d'onction sont décrits. La fin de l'AB est dédiée au sacerdoce ("les Dieux ne mangent pas les aliments du roi sans un prêtre", VIII, 24) et à ses fonctions.

védique et peut être d'un des rites les plus anciens de l'humanité (1). En tout cas c'est le rite de Varuṇa, le Dieu aussi de notre mythe (2).

Cette histoire sacrée est considérée avoir une valeur paradigmatique, elle doit être récitée pendant la consécration royale de façon que tout le monde puisse l'entendre; elle s'insère donc thématiquement au cœur même de la vie humaine (3). Le cadre de la consécration royale donne à ce mythe toute sa signification sociale. Non seulement il est récitée devant l'assemblée, mais il souligne aussi la supériorité du prêtre -des brahmanes- sur la royauté -les ksatriyas- par le fait que le héros offert en sacrifice est le brahma qui sauve le fils du roi. Le contexte est donc, éminemment sacerdotal. D'autre part, le prêtre n'est pas non plus sans blame ni sans humiliation. Le péché impardonnable de trahir son propre fils, est commis par un brahmane.

(1) Il est probablement l'expression concrète d'un rite annuel de régénération cosmique. Cf. A. WEBER, Über die Königsweihe, den Rājasūya APAW, Berlin 1893; J.C. HEESTERMAN, The ancient Indian royal consecration, -the rājasūya described according to the Yajus texts and annotated-, S-Gravenhage (Mouton) 1957.

(2) Cf. SB V, 4, 3, 2 et l'importance de cette idée pour rapprocher notre mythe avec le rājasūya.

(3) Bien que ce mythe soit complet en lui-même il est difficile à concevoir n'ayant rien à voir avec le rājasūya comme pensent par exemple J. GONDA, Die Religionen Indiens, Stuttgart (Kohlhammer) 1960, vol. I, I, p. 167, et F. WELLER, "Die Legende von Sunahṣepa VSAW, (Phil. Hist. Klare) Berlin, 1956.

En un mot, l'ambiance solennelle dans laquelle se déroule cette histoire sacrée semble nous autoriser à en parler comme d'un mythe central et important de la culture indienne classique. Nous sommes donc, amenés à nous demander si cette histoire sacrée n'est pas un mythe révélateur d'une importante prise de conscience de l'humanité.

Nous avons là un exemple très frappant du vieux problème de la priorité du mythe sur le rite, ou du rite sur le mythe. Nous n'avons pas à prendre partie pour ou contre la 'Myth and Ritual Theory' (1), mais nous tenons seulement à souligner la contribution intéressante que cette histoire sacrée pourrait apporter à l'approfondissement de la question (2).

Ce mythe, en effet, montre clairement l'interdépendance du rite et du mythe; mais interdépendance ne veut pas dire subordination. D'un côté, le mythe et le rite semblent autonomes. En effet, le rite du rājasūya n'a nullement besoin de notre mythe; il pourrait fort bien se dérouler sans lui (3), même du point de vue de la rédaction du texte, on peut avancer, que si le mythe a probablement été une interpolation tardive, simplement ajoutée par le compilateur de l'Aitareya Brāhmana en vue de donner davantage de relief

(1) Cf. un bon recueil de textes dans Reader in Comparative Religion-An Anthropological Approach publié par W.A. LESSA et E.Z. VOGT, New York (Harper & Row), 2nd ed. 1965, pp. 142-202.

(2) Ce mythe, que je sache, n'a jamais été étudié sous cette perspective.

(3) YV IX et X contiennent aussi des formules et prières pour le rājasūya ou consécration royale, mais sans aucune référence au mythe de Shunahshepa.

au rājasūya, l'histoire sacrée de Shunahshepa est complète et n'a pas besoin du rājasūya (1).

De l'autre côté, mythe et rite vont de pair. Le rājasūya comme mythe rite dans l'ordre cosmique de l'histoire (il s'agit de la consécration d'un homme, le roi, avec fonctions historiques et répercussions cosmiques) ne peut pas se contenter du célèbre aśvamedha ou sacrifice du cheval (2). Il doit, sous une forme ou l'autre, intégrer le purusamedha, le sacrifice humain (3). Sans le sacrifice cosmique de l'homme, la consécration royale ne peut pas atteindre les cimes de la royauté cosmique et universelle, car "le sacrifice humain c'est tout" (4). Mais, si l'homme tue et mange l'homme, ce n'est plus le sacrifice cosmique du purusa mais de la débauche. C'est pourquoi un texte nous dit qu'une voix crie de ne pas tuer l'homme et de laisser la victime libre (5). Voilà la ~~connexion~~ connexion avec notre mythe. D'une part, on doit offrir un sacrifice digne de l'homme, et donc humain. D'autre part, on sent qu'on ne doit pas le faire. Shunahshepa est la solution idéale. L'homme reconnaît sa dépendance

(1) Aujourd'hui encore, elle fait partie du rite vivant accompli en vue d'obtenir une descendance.

(2) Cf. AB VIII, 21-23. Pour l'aśvamedha, cf. SB XIII, 1-5.

(3) Cf. YV XXX-XXXI -avec toutes références de ce texte au purusasukta: RV X, 90 et AV XIX, 6-; SB XIII, 6.

(4) SB XIII, 6, 2, 20 -cf. XIII, 6, 1; 11-.

(5) Cf. SB XIII, 6, 2, 13.

(1) Cf. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna traduit par F. EDEN PARGITER. Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta (1904); nouvelle réimpression: Varanasi (Indological Book House) 1969.

dans le récit des éléments plus complexes, comme pour souligner le caractère humain de notre héros (1). Ainsi, par exemple, la littérature postérieure nous peint Hariścandra, comme tout de même, induit par le brahmane Mārada à se vanter de ses vertus. Il tomba alors du paradis avec ses sujets. Mais, à mi-chemin il se repent et les Dieux l'arretent, et il s'établit dans saubha la cité aérienne entre ciel et la terre, laquelle, suivant une croyance populaire serait visible à certains jours (2). En tout cas, cette histoire fait encore partie de la culture actuelle du Nord de l'Inde (3).

3 - Les commentaires (le logos du mythe).

Il ne s'agit pas pour nous ici de faire l'étude des nombreux commentaires de ce texte par des auteurs indiens et occidentaux. A part le commentaire classique de Sāyana inclus dans la

(1) Cf. vgr. Bhag. P. IX, 7 et aussi 116; Vien P. IV, 7 (seulement mentionnés comme connus).

(2) Au sujet de l'histoire de Hariścandra, cf. aussi; E. PARGITER, JRAS (1917) pp. 37 sq.; J. MUIR, op. cit., p. 379; B.H. WORTHAM, JRAS (1881) pp. 355 sq. On a souvent comparé Hariścandra à Job dans la Bible.

(3) BHĀRTENDU HARIŚCANDRA, écrivain de langue hindi, de Varanasi - celui qui au début du siècle lutta pour le renouveau et l'indépendance de la littérature hindi - a écrit une pièce du théâtre populaire - à partir de l'histoire pouranique - qu'on joue encore à Varanasi: Satya Hariścandra où les descriptions du ghat où les morts sont incinérés est extrêmement réaliste. Cette pièce est devenue un classique dans la littérature hindi.

plupart des manuscrits, il existe encore d'autres commentaires antérieures (1). Dans la mesure où j'ai pu consulter ces commentaires, j'ai remarqué que ceux-ci donnent de précieuses indications de détail et d'interprétation allégorique (2), mais, n'en donnent aucune interprétation globale, celle-ci comme allant de soi. La majorité des commentaires faits par des indologues se préoccupent plutôt de questions techniques ou de problèmes historiques, comme celui du sacrifice humain, mais je n'ai pas trouvé aucune étude dans la ligne de notre interprétation (3). Ce silence me confirme dans l'opinion qu'il s'agit d'un mythe vivant, et que pour cette raison, pour les uns il n'a jamais été interprété comme tel, et pour les autres il a été donné comme une simple légende. Pour les uns on le donne en version directe, c.à.d. suivant le sens du legein du mythe et non pas dans celui du logos (on le raconte, on n'en fait pas l'herméneutique)

(1) Cf. l'introduction à la traduction d'A.B. KEITH, op. cit., pp. 101 et sq.

(2) Cf., par exemple celle de Sāyana sur les quatre yugas dans la quatrième strophe récitée par Indra dans AB, VII, 15.

(3) Cf. entre autres les études classiques de F. STREITER, Dissertatio de Sunahsepo, Berlin (1861). A. WEBER, SBAW (1891), pp. 776 sq. Id. ZDMG, 18 pp. 262 sq.; W.H. ROBINSON, The golden legend of India London, 1911; A.B. KEITH, JRAS, pp. 988 sq.; G. DUMEZIL, Flamen-Brahman, Paris 1935, pp. 13-42; 97-112; R. ROTH, IS I, p. 457 sq., II, pp. 112 sq.

pour les autres on l'analyse dans le sens du logos de l'histoire, et non pas dans celui du legein du mythe (on le réduit à son contenu littéraire, on n'en fait pas l'herméneutique).

Est-ce possible de faire l'herméneutique d'un mythe en tant que tel? Nous condamnerions-nous, nous memes, lorsque nous cherchons à faire l'interprétation de ce mythe? Est-ce que nous le tuons en en faisant l'herméneutique? Ma réponse ici, doit être aussi nuancés que sincère. Du moment que quelqu'un sent le besoin d'interpréter un mythe il ne peut pas, de ce fait, l'accepter sans son interprétation. Mais alors, il le fait passer d'horizon invisible à objet visible, de toile de fond à figure de relief, de contexte à texte. Quand on cesse de croire le mythe, comme allant de soi, on cherche à croire en lui, au moyen d'une interprétation adéquate. Mais en faisant ainsi, on se tient à distance, le mythe ne nous est plus connaturel, transparent. Son inter-prétation s'inter-pose entre le mythe et nous. Socrate, ne l'a-t-on pas condamné à mort pour avoir voulu interpréter le mythe? (1)

Il y a ici toute une méthodique latente, différente de la méthodologie traditionnelle. Nous l'avons déjà insinué, et nous avons dit que nous préfèrions donner un exemple plutôt qu'élaborer une théorie.

Je vais donc me limiter à citer quelques-uns des problèmes soulevés par les indologues, a fin de compléter le cadre dans lequel s'insère notre mythe.

a - Les éléments de l'histoire sacrée.

Une analyse de cette histoire sacrée nous fait penser qu'elle est faite de la conjonction de trois motifs, et de la conjonction de trois histoires (2). Le premier

(1) Cf. Socrate disant qu'il voit aux Dieux dans un sens supérieur

de p. 52:

que celui de ses accusateurs. PLAT. Apolog. 35

(2) Cf. A.B. KEITH, op. cit. pp. 63-67, qui décrit cette triple couche. J'ai dans cette présente étude inversé l'ordre entre le second et le troisième élément en suivant le texte de l'AB et cherché un leitmotiv dans chaque cas. Cf. aussi l'étude de R.ROTH dans IS II, 112-123, loc. cit., commenté par J. MUIR, Original Sanskrit texts, op. cit. I, p. 359, sq.

motif, probablement le plus ancien, est formé de l'argument autour des textes du Rg Veda. Il s'agit ici, de la libération de Shunahshepa des dangers de la mort et d'autres angoisses, grâce à la bonté et libéralité des Dieux. Il y aurait là un élément de piété, de bhakti, et de confiance en Dieu qui est un des rares exemples de dévotion empreinte d'amour dans les Vedas. On aurait ainsi un texte purement religieux capable de n'importe quelle interprétation spirituelle et spiritualiste. C'est la grace de Dieu qui libère l'homme des angoisses et dangers. L'histoire sacrée est celle d'une théologie qui raconte les rapports entre l'homme et les Dieux. Le héros est ici Shunahshepa qui représente l'homme en détresse, ou simplement l'homo religiosus (le brahmane).

Le deuxième élément serait centré sur l'histoire d'Hariścandra et de son fils Rohita (1). Shunahshepa est alors seulement le substitut. Le thème est celui de l'affrontement du destin, et de la fuite de ce même destin. L'histoire sacrée est celle d'une cosmologie qui souligne la solidarité de tout l'univers. Le héros est ici Rohita qui représente l'homme dans le monde, ou simplement l'homo saecularis (le ksatriya)

(1) Il correspond à l'AB VII, 13-16.

On a tendance à oublier que le mot même de prière (de precaris, cf. precarius) ne signifie pas une demande quelconque, mais bien une supplication précaire, incertaine, non-assurée, car elle est apuvre, sans autre fondement ni appui que celui que l'on prie. C'est la magie, et non pas la prière qui est efficace par elle-même.

Une fois libéré, Shunahshepa demeure dans le monde du rite. Il doit accomplir dès lors sa nouvelle fonction. Il rentre dans la domaine du sacré. Le vrai sacrificant est toujours la victime. Le sacrifice ne peut pas rester inachevé. Il doit, lui, le compléter. Il devient le rsi, le poète, le prêtre.

Nous devons considérer le symbolisme sous-jacent aux Dieux Varuṇa et Indra. Ils représentent deux aspects polaires du divin. Varuṇa est appelé le Dieu éthique, celui qui voit, scrute, juge et pardonne les actions des hommes, celui auquel rien n'échappe. Si Varuṇa représente la justice, la vérité et la corrélation interne des choses (ṛta), en même temps que le pardon, Indra, au contraire, représente le pouvoir, la force guerrière et la puissance victorieuse, celle qui libère, délivre des ennemis. Si Varuṇa est le Dieu moral par excellence, Indra est le prototype de celui qui est 'au-delà du bien et du mal'. Varuṇa est Roi (1) à cause de sa relation étroite avec ṛta, dont il est le gardien, à cause de sa fidélité et de son pardon; Indra lui, est Roi parce qu'il est vainqueur dans les batailles célestes et terrestres.

Qu'est-ce qu l'homme? de point de rencontre, le ksetra ou champ de combat entre les deux symboles plus puissants du divin dans le Rg Veda: Indra et Varuṇa. Sans entrer maintenant dans détails indologiques nous pouvons nous resumer ainsi: Il y a dans l'homme un conflit constitutif entre le development de sa personnalité, voire sa vie propre et son intégration au cosmos, voire dans la société. L'homme est fait de la tension entre une fidélité à l'ordre sociale et cosmique et une ~~authenticité~~ authenticité avec soi même. Faut-il obéir l'une ou l'autre? Qu'est-ce que Rohita doit faire? Le conflit se passe dans son intérieur. Les Dieux y sont intériorisés car il ne voit que la vie de son père en danger, et sa propre vie menacée. Rohita marche jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve un substitut. A-t-il bien fait? Peut-on mettre d'accord Indra avec Varuṇa? Rohita est impuissant, mais il y a Shunahshepa, le médiateur, il y a la prière ou dimension transhumaine dans la vie. C'est l'ensemble de personnages qui constitue la trame de la vie.

de p/ 78:

(1) Sui generis car il ne faudrait réduire trop vite le processus karmique à une conception aristotélicienne, et moins encore scientifico-moderne, de la causalité.

(2) Cf. RV I,24, 1. Aditi qu'on a traduit par Liberté, est aussi l'infini sans frontières ni limites, l'intégralité de tout l'être. Dans le RV elle est généralement personnifiée et divinisée.

sur la façon de faire face à la mort en suivant toujours la loi du plus puissant. Elle supprime seulement une certaine anarchie et la prédominance de la force brute. La survivance du plus fort se fait d'une façon moins brutale, grâce à une certaine réglementation.

Ce mytheme, en effet, nous parle des différentes manières dont les hommes cherchent à échapper à la mort. Chacun à sa façon veut éviter la mort; la différence réside dans le prix qu'on est disposé à payer. Ajigarta vend son fils; Hariscandra paie avec la vie de son fils; Rohita cherche une autre vie pour sauver la sienne. Il y a finalement le cas de Shunahshepa; lui aussi veut vivre, mais il se trouve acculé, malgré lui, dans une impasse sans issue. Il ne peut plus reculer ou chercher un substitut. C'est la fin du samsāra, du cycle des existences inauthentiques. La vie est ici la victoire sur la mort, et non seulement son délai.

Nous nous trouvons donc devant deux types de vie: une vie horizontale qui peut être vécue seulement au prix de la passer, pour ainsi dire, à un autre; et une vie verticale qui saute par-dessus la première et s'engage à nouveau dans le temporel. Mais les deux types veulent dépasser la mort.

Le premier type est dominé par la loi de la concurrence, une autre forme de la loi de la jungle: la survie des plus forts se payant par le sacrifice des autres. C'est le samsāra, l'existence exclusivement dans le temps et l'espace (1).

Le deuxième type de vie n'est plus conditionné par la fuite ou la substitution, elle ne s'obtient pas aux dépens des autres, bien qu'elle devienne un signe de contradiction, comme le souligne la révolte des fils aînés de Viśvāmitra.

peut-être la traduire par exo-sistence, c.à.d., non plus par la tension entre la plénitude et le néant; la tension pour dessus du rien et se maintenir au-dessous de l'infini; mais l'antérieur, la 'sistence' à deux dimensions d'un espace corporel et

-de pag. 83:

d'un temps qui emprisonne par son même mouvement. "Quid est enim
existere, nisi ex aliquo sistere" dit RICHARD DE ST.VICTOR,
De Trinitate, IV, 12 (PL 196, 938).

nous situe au coeur même de la ~~ixix~~ position humaine; l'homme n'est pas ici décrit comme intelligence ou volonté, mais comme ce désir d'être comme désir même de l'être. Il s'agit, évidemment, d'un désir foncier de l'existence et non pas des appetits partiels. Je peux vaincre mon appetit de possession ou de vengeance en le dominant par une conviction plus profonde, à savoir, que la possession ne m'enrichit pas, ni la vengeance ne va ~~ix~~ m'apaiser. Je peux purifier mes appetits, les sublimer mais je ne peux pas éliminer le désir constitutif de mon être qui me porte à dépasser tout appetit particulier. Toute sublimation repose sur un désir plus profond, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ qui assume les appetits particuliers (1). Dans cet ordre du désir transcendantal il ne peut pas y avoir de simulation ontologique. C'est à cette profondeur que nous situe le mythe; là où il n'est pas possible d'être trompé par des actes qu'on peut rétracter, par des appetits plus ou moins superficiels, par des idées que nous avons de nous-mêmes, là où il est impossible de simuler, car la simplicité ne permet pas la double attitude caractéristique de toute simulation.

C'est à cette profondeur du désir ontologique que se situe la vraie liberté humaine, et non seulement dans le domaine psychologique en vertu d'une possibilité de choix. Cela ne sert pas à grand-chose que la personne mette un masque, maintenu par la volonté ou par la raison qui lui permette d'agir contre ou à côté de sa nature. Ou la liberté est enracinée dans l'être même de l'homme, ou elle est une superstructure. La liberté se manifeste dans l'être qui a su se libérer des contraintes extérieures. C'est pourquoi on doit

(1) Il est significatif que les langues européennes modernes aient perdu la forme désidérative du verbe (et l'anglais même le futur). Futur et désidératif ne sont pas des formes extrinsèques ou composées de l'esprit humain qui doivent s'exprimer par des formes ou verbes auxiliaires; ils appartiennent à ~~ix~~ la structure même de notre être.

prière, comme le ~~xxix~~ cri existentiel de l'homme face à la mort. Il est alors élevé, éveillé, suscité à une vraie vie qui ne sera pas dans une autre existence, mais qui est dans cette vie même, une fois que nous avons dépassé le seuil de notre égocentrisme.

b - Les mythèmes absents

Un mythe est un mythe vivant si on peut encore le considérer comme décrivant un horizon où l'homme peut insérer sa conscience de la réalité. Notre mythe décrit sans doute une partie essentielle de la condition humaine telle qu'elle est encore vécue et soufferte par l'humanité contemporaine. Cependant notre mentalité contemporaine y trouve des absences importantes qui nous portent à penser que notre histoire sacrée est peut-être trop limitée pour nous servir de mythe pour nos jours. Sa fonction pourrait être, alors, celle d'accentuer quelques aspects de l'existence humaine et de les intégrer dans un mythe nouveau encore en voie de développement. Mais en étudiant ces mythèmes absents nous y trouvons, peut-être, un sens plus profond.

Notre démarche, délicate comme tout argument ex silentio, nous semble justifié en tant que ce que nous faisons est de chercher à comprendre cette histoire sacrée vis-à-vis l'arrière-fond de notre pensée mythique contemporaine. Trois mythèmes nous semblent, en effet, symptomatiquement manquer. Il nous faut souligner encore que nous devons chercher à comprendre avant de faire la critique ou tirer des conclusions pour notre époque.

i - La sexualité

L'histoire nous parle des cent épouses d'Hariścandra, et les versets d'introduction, de la procréation (1), mais, le mythe comme tel, reste étranger en ce qui concerne une conception anthropologique du sexe. L'homme est présenté comme complet, en son

(1) Cf. Manu IX, 8 qui semble se référer aux versets d'introduction de Nārada dans AB VII, 13.

Nous avons voulu représenter une certaine mentalité contemporaine. Quand à une interprétation plus contextuelle il faudrait dire que les trois mythes absents ne le sont pas, car, au contraire, ils sont bien présents dans les trois mythes que nous avons décèlé. Qu'est ~~ce~~ que la sexualité sinon une expression du désir transcendante? N'est pas la mort la base de toute eschatologie? Et encore la solidarité de la vie ne représente-elle pas la conscience sociale et politique dans sa couche la plus profonde?

Quoi qu'il en soit, une méditation plus approfondie du mythe nous révèle encore un trait fondamental qui nous permet de le cataloguer parmi les mythes de l'humanité qui n'ont pas encore perdu leur validité. En creusant le sens de la condition humaine dans ce mythe nous voudrions dégager de cette histoire sacrée toute la profondeur de sa simplicité. Il nous semble, en effet que ce mythe nous décrit la condition humaine pour ensuite nous en présenter son déconditionnement comme la quintessence de ce qu'il veut nous dire.

C'est sous cet aspect que notre mythe s'éclaire d'une lumière toute spéciale.

L'homme est cet être qui se sait conditionné, par naissance, par habitude,

Abbréviations

AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
ASS	Āsvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra
BG	Bhagavad Gītā
<u>Bhag P</u>	Bhāgavata Purāṇa
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
Mait S	Maitrāyani Saṁhitā
<u>Manu</u>	Mānava Dharmaśāstra
<u>Mark P</u>	Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa
<u>Matth.</u>	L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu
MB	Mahābhārata
<u>Ram</u>	Rāmayaṇa
RV	R̥g Veda
SB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SSS	Śankhayana Śrauta Sutra
<u>TB</u>	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
<u>Viṣṇ P</u>	Viṣṇu Purāṇa
VSS	Vaitana Śrauta Sutra
YV	Yajur Veda

* * *

APAW	<u>Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,</u> Berlin.
ERE	<u>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,</u> edited by J. HASTINGS, Edinburgh (T. & T. Clark), 1913, dernière impression, 1964.
IS	<u>Indische Studien</u>
JAOS	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society,</u> New Haven.

- JASB Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
- JRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London.
- RGG Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, publié
par K. GALLING et alia, 3ème. édition,
Tübingen (mohr), 6 vols. 1957-1962.
- ZDMG Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
Leipzig, Wiesbaden.

Ortographie

Pour des raison techniques la typografie a simplifié
l'écriture des noms indiens suivant les normes suivantes:

a, i, u, n	au lieu de	ā, ī, ū, ñ
<u>n</u> , <u>m</u> , <u>h</u> , <u>ḍ</u>	" " "	<u>n</u> , <u>m</u> , <u>h</u> , <u>ḍ</u>
<u>ri</u>	" " "	ṛ
<u>sh</u>	" " "	ṣ
<u>sch</u>	" " "	ṣ̣

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de mythe comme)
l'histoire sacrée : le Sunahsépa
un mythe de la condition humaine

R. Panikkar

I - Le mythe et l'histoire

- 1 - Faits mythiques et faits historiques
- 2 - Le pluralisme des idéologies et des mythes
- 3 - Le défi à la philosophie et à la théologie
 - a) à la philosophie
 - b) à la théologie

II - L'histoire sacrée de Sunahsépa

_____ 10

- 1 - Le récit (le logos du mythe)
- 2 - Son contexte (le mythe du logos)
 - a) Le sacrifice (passé)
 - b) La consécration royale (présent)
 - c) La sacralité du thème (futur)
- 3 - Les commentaires (le logos du mythe)
 - a) Les éléments de l'histoire sacrée
 - b) Le sacrifice humain

_____ 40

_____ 52

III - Le mythe de la condition humaine

_____ 55

- 1 - Les personnages
 - a) Les hommes

- 21 _____ i) Sunahsépa
- 8 _____ ii) Rohita
- _____ iii) Hariścandra
- _____ iv) Ajigarta
- _____ v) Viévâmitra
- _____ vi) Le peuple

	b) Les Dieux	<u>71</u>	
	i) Varuna	71	
	ii) Indra	<u>73</u>	
	iii) Le panthéon védique	<u>77</u>	
	c) Le cosmos		
2	- Les mythèmes	<u>81</u>	
	a) Les mythèmes présents	<u>82</u>	
4	i) La présence de la mort	<u>82</u>	
6	ii) La solidarité de la vie	<u>84</u>	2
7	iii) Le désir transcendantal	<u>88</u>	4
	b) Les mythèmes absents	<u>93</u>	5
6	i) La sexualité	<u>93</u>	
4	ii) La perspective politique	<u>97</u>	4
4	iii) L'eschatologie	<u>100</u>	3
9	3. Le déconditionnement de l'homme	<u>102</u>	2

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Le mythe comme histoire sacrée:

Shunahshepa, un mythe de la condition humaine

Le sacrifice, c'est l'homme (1)

L'homme est le premier à être sacrifié (2)

I - Le mythe et l'histoire

Cette étude voudrait montrer dans un cas concret, une double et importante fonction du mythe: d'un côté, le mythe, en effet se présente comme le sous-sol d'où les différents systèmes philosophiques puisent leur sève. Il n'y a pas de philosophies in vacuo: chaque philosophie repose sur un contexte donné, celui-là précisément fourni par le mythe. De l'autre côté, le mythe, par le fait même de sa polyvalence philosophique possède une valeur irremplaçable dans la rencontre, et aussi la fécondation transculturelle. Les concepts sont valables dans les contextes où ils ont été conçus, et on ne peut les extrapoler purement et simplement (voire sans trouver les lois qui justifieraient l'extrapolation). Les mythes relèvent, au contraire, d'une couche humaine plus profonde, et donc plus universelle que celle des philosophies.

Les trois sections de cette première partie voudraient préciser le cadre concret où s'insère cette étude.

(1) SB I, 3, 2, 1: puruso vai yajñah. Cf. aussi CU III, 16, 1: puruso vâva yajñah, l'homme est vraiment le sacrifice.

(2) SB VI, 2, 1, 18: purusam prathamam âlabhate.

1) Faits mythiques et faits historiques

Ce qu'on entend couramment par fait, est une donnée incontestable, voire une réalité qui se présente comme telle. Or, l'incontestabilité d'une donnée n'appartient pas à l'ordre de l'objectivité pure; elle inclut déjà le sujet qui considère le fait comme incontestable. Il n'y a pas de faits à l'état pur, de faits en soi; ils sont toujours des faits pour quelqu'un. Tout fait implique au moins celui pour qui le fait est tel, soit la conscience en général ou l'homme concret.

Un mythe vu et vécu du dedans se présente comme un ensemble de faits qui forme ~~comme~~ la toile de fond où s'insère, comme dans un horizon, les données du réel d'un domaine déterminé de la réalité. Le mythe est alors le dernier point de référence, il est la pierre de touche de la vérité. C'est dans le mythe comme toile de fond, que les faits sont reconnus comme vérités. Le mythe, en effet, quand il est cru et vécu du dedans ne demande plus à être creusé davantage, il demande seulement à être de plus en plus explicité, car, il est l'expression du dernier fondement de notre conviction de vérité. Vu du dehors, au contraire, il apparaît comme l'ensemble de légendes, des 'mythes' auxquels les autres croient, mais qui ne correspondent pas à la vérité des 'faits'. Le mythe nous raconte à sa manière, le dernier fondement d'une croyance déterminée: ou bien de la croyance des autres (mythes vécus du dehors), ou de notre propre croyance (mythe vécu du dedans). Dans ce dernier cas, nous croyons le mythe, sans croire au mythe, car il est transparent pour nous: nous ne croyons pas que nous y croyons, car il est accepté comme allant de soi, intégré dans l'ensemble des faits que nous croyons et qui constituent le réel(1).

Un des mythes de la pensée occidentale moderne est celui de l'histoire. (2)

(1) Cf. la distinction patristique et scholastique chrétienne entre credere in Deum, Deum et Deo.

(2) Cf. T. STEVENSON, History as Myth, New York (Seabury Press) 1969 et son article dans Cross Currents, XX, 1 (1970) comme exemple de l'éclosion de cette idée en Occident.

L'histoire est en effet le point de ^{re-père} référence auquel on réfère l'incontes-
tabilité des faits, et sur lequel on s'appuie pour la critique des autres
mythes (1). Les faits historiques sont considérés comme la dure réalité à
laquelle on n'échappe pas.

L'interprétation théologique moderne de la Résurrection de Jésus
est un exemple frappant de ce que nous voulons dire: nous avons en effet, un
cas concret de transmythisation du fait physique au fait historique, car, le
mythe moderne qui donne le sens de la réalité est l'histoire. On démythise
le mythe du miracle physique ou physiologique pour accepter le mythe du
miracle historique. L'interprétation moderne voudra, en effet, nous rendre
compréhensible le fait de la Résurrection. La Résurrection ne serait donc que
le fait historique - et donc réel - de la transformation qui se produisit
parmi les premières générations chrétiennes qui croyaient en cette Résurrection.
Ainsi, la réalité de la Résurrection ne serait pas un fait biologique, matériel
ou spirituel, mais un fait historique.

Tout dépend, évidemment, de l'interprétation de ces deux adjectifs:
historique et mythique. Dans un cas, historique veut dire: réel, et donc vrai;
et mythique signifie: non-historique, donc, fantastique, imaginaire, non-réel.

(1) Cf. les affirmations de C. LEVI-STRAUSS dans son dernier chapitre de
La pensée sauvage, Paris (Plon) 1962: "... dans la système de Sartre,
l'histoire joue très précisément le rôle du mythe" (336). "Peut-être cet
âge d'or de la conscience historique est-il déjà révolu" (337). "Par conséquent
le fait historique n'est pas plus donné que les autres" (340). "L'histoire
n'est donc jamais l'histoire, mais l'histoire-pour" (341) - et de nous parler,
ennote, "d'une sorte de cannibalisme intellectuel de la "raison historique".

Dans l'autre cas, c.à.d., du point de vue du mythe ^{a-}non-historique, les faits historiques ne sont que des exemples transitoires, souvent trompeurs, et toujours partiels de la réalité, qui elle, est toujours transhistorique. ^{D'une part} Le vrai Kṛṣṇa, ~~par exemple~~, donc le Kṛṣṇa vivant et réel, n'est pas, ^{la plupart de} pour tous ceux qui croient en lui, le fait historique, mais le fait religieux. ^{D'une autre part} Le vrai Christ, donc le Christ vivant et réel, n'est pas, pour la plupart des chrétiens, le fait mystique de ce Christ, mais le fait historique de Jésus et sa continuation dans l'histoire. Les missionnaires chrétiens qui prêchent la réalité historique du Christ, en Inde par exemple, devraient réaliser que par ce fait même, ils prêchent un docétisme et relativisme qui est exactement l'opposé de ce qu'ils voudraient proclamer. Excepté pour ceux qui vivent dans le mythe de l'histoire, les faits historiques sont de simples événements qui n'ont pas atteint leur vraie et pleine réalité.

L'homme ne peut pas vivre sans mythes, et même sans une pluralité de mythes qui se succèdent et s'enchevêtrent de façon à permettre le passage continu du mythes au logos et le resourcement du logos dans de nouveaux mythoi. En rigueur de termes, il n'y a pas de mythe isolé. Chaque mythe est ^{à son} une communauté de mythes. Ainsi, même dans la tradition judéo-chrétienne-musulmane, où le mythe de l'histoire est prédominant, surtout ces derniers siècles, il y a toujours eu d'autres mythes. Or, ces mythes pour être intelligibles, et donc acceptables à l'intérieur du monde mythique de l'histoire, devraient assumer eux aussi des vêtements historiques. Voilà l'histoire sacrée! Pour ceux qui croient en elle, elle est vraie, et donc 'histoire', mais dans un sens ^{très spécial} non-historique, car elle est sacrée, ~~elle exprime un contenu de vérité qui dépasse l'histoire mais ne la contredit pas, au contraire,~~ ^{et} c'est cette sacralité qui fonde et inspire l'histoire. ^{caractère} Le ~~xxxx~~/historique de l'histoire sacrée est son aspect de vérité: elle est 'histoire', donc elle est vérité. Le caractère sacré de l'histoire sacrée est son contenu de mystère, voire de ~~xxxxxx~~ vérité trans-historique: elle est 'sacrée', donc

elle transcende l'histoire. C'est cette sacralité qui lui confère la fonction de paradigme des faits historiques, et sert même de clef pour aider à découvrir leur intelligibilité profonde. Le mythe donc, est aussi un fait, mais tout fait est aussi un mythe: les faits historiques sont aussi des réalités spirituelles, et les réalités spirituelles sont elles aussi des faits historiques. Le mythe de l'histoire se découvre ainsi dans l'histoire du mythe. Celle-ci nous montre aujourd'hui le passage du mythe sacré au mythe historique.

Résumons notre terminologie. Par mythos, j'entends cet organe d'appréhension du réel ^{au niveau} à côté du logos, et en relation constante avec lui. Mythos et logos sont deux modes humains de conscience, irréductibles l'un à l'autre, mais également inséparables.

Par mythe, je voudrais exprimer l'horizon d'intelligibilité, et le sens de réalité dévoilée par un certain mythologomène (mythologomenon), c.à.d. par un certain récit mythique. Le mythologomène est le logos du mythe, l'expression concrète, le récit du mythe en question. Le mythe est la ^{vérité} réalité, ou l'état de conscience dont le mythologomène est l'expression, le langage.

Enfin, un mythe exprimé par un mythologomène peut contenir différents mythèmes qui sont les thèmes (mythiques et non ^{nécessairement} conceptuels) que le mythe éclaire.

2) Le pluralisme des idéologies et des mythes

L'homme moderne bombardé comme il l'est par les mass-media ne peut ^{qui lui portent information sur la pluralité humaine} plus croire que son monde, sa religion, sa philosophie, son mode de vivre, est le monde, ou au moins le modèle. ^{unique} Il est de moins en moins porté à ignorer, à mépriser, ou à considérer comme encore insuffisamment éclairés, ceux qui ne pensent pas comme lui: les 'primitifs' ^{de religion, philosophie ou art} sont remis en valeur, les 'natifs' sont appréciés, les 'non-chrétiens' ou les 'non-nationaux' sont respectés, sinon recherchés. Les minorités de tout genre sont théoriquement réassurées qu'elles ont aussi leur place au soleil, et leurs droits dans la société humaine. Mais cette même conscience d'ouverture, au moins théorique, le porte de plus en plus à croire en sa 'tolérance' et dans la supériorité de sa mission mondiale et ^{elle} universalisée. Tout cela ^{nous} mène à vouloir dépasser l'étape de conscience de la pluralité, par une acceptation du pluralisme. Un des mouvements les plus positifs

de notre ^{époque} temps, est le dynamisme presque ^{partout univale} toujours actif qui cherche le passage de la pluralité de facto au pluralisme de iure. Or, le vrai pluralisme n'est pas de l'ordre du logos; le pluralisme ne peut pas être accepté idéologiquement.

L'idéologie ne peut pas transiger dans le plan de l'idéologie avec ce qu'elle croit être une erreur. Une idéologie pluraliste par le fait même, se situe⁽¹⁾ sur un plan supérieur par rapport aux idéologies non-pluralistes. Nous aurions alors simplement une super-idéologie. Ceci représenterait le pire des paternalismes, celui de s'assigner le rôle de tout comprendre, et même de tolérer les autres, pourvu qu'ils restent à la place que je leur ai assignée. Deux systèmes conceptuels contradictoires ne peuvent pas tous deux être vrais à un même niveau, et selon une même perspective. ^{1'} Même si/ on accepte un certain perspectivisme, et l'existence de différents niveaux de vie et de conscience, on ne peut pas éviter une ordination des perspectives et niveaux selon un troisième point de vue, lequel représenterait une troisième super-idéologie. Or, le vrai pluralisme dépasse l'ordre conceptuel et celui de l'idéologie. Une solution purement dialectique du conflit des idéologies ne peut pas se dire pluraliste, car elle introduit un critère unique qui ne respecte pas la vraie autonomie pluraliste. Le pluralisme n'est pas un simple respect pour la pluralité, comme un pis-aller, ou comme une nécessité pragmatique, mais il témoigne qu'on a transcendé le logos comme dernier ^{et unique} juge du réel, sans pour autant méconnaître ses droits. ^{de pluralisme} Il témoigne qu'on a dépassé tout absolutisme, sans toutefois tomber dans le relativisme agnostique. Le pluralisme présuppose plutôt la relativité radicale de toute construction humaine, et au fond de toute la réalité(1).

En bref, le locus du pluralisme ~~n'est pas le concept ni l'idée. On ne peut pas le justifier intrinsèquement par la raison. Il~~ ne relève pas du logos, mais du mythos. Le pluralisme se base sur la croyance qu'aucun groupe humain ne peut embrasser la totalité de l'expérience humaine, il se base sur la confiance en l'autre, en tant que tel, bien qu'on ne le comprenne pas, et que jugé de notre point de vue, on le considère dans l'erreur. Le pluralisme n'absolutise pas l'erreur parce

(1) Cf. R. PANIKKAR, "Tolérance, idéologie et mythe" dans Démythisation et idéologie publié par E. CASTELLI, Paris (Aubier) 1973, pp. 191-206.

qu'il n'absolutise pas la vérité non plus.

Cela nous entraîne à une considération méthodologique ^{ique} qui nous introduit dans notre sujet et justifie notre entreprise, à savoir, que le dialogue entre les cultures et la fécondation mutuelle qui peut en résulter, doit se jouer avant tout dans le domaine du ~~mythos~~^e, plutôt que dans la confrontation entre logos, ~~(sans vouloir pour cela minimiser l'importance de la dialectique)~~^{autant} ~~à~~

~~Ce que je voudrais suggérer ici, c'est que le lieu et l'organe pour la confrontation entre les cultures est le mythos, autant, et même plus que le logos, ~~à~~ ~~ce~~ ~~que~~ ~~la~~ méthode dialectique est féconde dans les discussions à l'intérieur des mêmes cultures et civilisations, mais elle ~~maxxaxx~~ opère différemment dans une rencontre entre cultures qui relèvent de présupposés fondamentalement différents. Assumer a priori qu'une ~~certaine~~^{donnée puisse servir de} forme conceptuelle ~~peut offrir de~~ ^à cadre pour une rencontre des cultures, représenterait, d'un point de vue philosophique, une extrapolation non critique inacceptable. Du point de vue sociologique, ce serait encore un reste de colonialisme culturel que de penser qu'une culture déterminée ~~peut~~^{peut puisse} formuler les règles du jeu pour une rencontre authentique entre cultures. Si le logos a la primauté dans la confrontation intra-culturelle, c'est le mythos qui a la primauté dans les rencontres interculturelles. Ce que je veux dire, c'est qu'une méthode-logie purement philosophique centrée sur le logos est certainement nécessaire, ~~à~~ mais non pas suffisante. Il faut la compléter par une méthode, où les mythologèmes aient aussi leur fonction décisive à remplir.~~

~~à~~ → Au lieu maintenant d'élaborer une hypothèse de travail, je voudrais présenter un exemple concret. ~~à~~

3) Le défi à la philosophie et à la théologie

~~à~~ Pour mieux situer notre exemple, essayons de considérer brièvement le double défi auquel est confronté la pensée occidentale, humaniste et religieuse. Le défi est le même dans les deux cas, car la pensée occidentale, même celle qui renierait son lien avec les religions abrahamiques ^a ne relève pas d'un autre ordre de pensée.

Nous devons toutefois faire la distinction entre l'ordre philosophique, et l'ordre théologique sans en opérer la séparation.

a) Le défi à la philosophie, revient à se demander, si l'homme possède un autre horizon d'intelligibilité que celui formé par la rencontre et l'embrassement entre l'évidence rationnelle et la constatation historique.

La ligne d'intersection entre le ciel de l'évidence rationnelle, et la terre de la constatation historique semble former l'horizon sous lequel l'humanité occidentale a vécu sa vie intellectuelle et donc humaine, au moins depuis plusieurs siècles et même, peut-être, depuis quelques millénaires (1). Y a-t-il ^{que}quelque autre forme d'intelligibilité possible en dehors de cet horizon? L'homme, peut-il arriver à des convictions profondes qui ne soient pas basées sur cet horizon où notre intellect rencontre le monde extérieur? N'y a-t-il pas d'autres piliers de la vérité? Est-ce que tout doit être fondé sur la raison historique, aidée seulement de la raison raisonnante? Contentons-nous pour le moment de poser le problème; un ~~véritable~~ défi à la philosophie.

b) Le défi à la théologie pourrait se formuler ainsi: faut-il être intellectuellement et spirituellement sémite, si l'on veut être juif, chrétien ou musulman de religion? Faut-il se convertir aux voies de pensée, et donc de vie, de ces trois traditions historiques si l'on reconnaît et accepte Yahweh, le Christ ou Muhammed comme des symboles religieux vivants? Le problème

P. Ricoeur

(1) Est-ce là ce que P. Ricoeur nomme 'le geste philosophique de base' - quand il en décrit 'le geste herméneutique' comme 'l'aveu des conditions historiques auxquelles toute compréhension humaine est soumise sous le régime de la finitude' et 'le geste de la critique des idéologies' comme "un geste critique indéfiniment repris et indéfiniment tourné contre la 'fausse conscience' contre les déformations de la communication humaine derrière lesquelles se dissimule l'exercice permanent de la domination et de la violence?". "Herméneutique et critique des idéologies", dans Démythisation et Idéologie publié par E. Castelli, Paris (Aubier) 1973, p.25 (& 46). Ricoeur relève justement que le problème ne saurait se poser en termes d'alternative conscience-herméneutique, conscience-critique, bien qu'il ne veuille pas laisser le terrain de l'herméneutique (tout en l'enrichissant). Nous voudrions situer le problème que nous allons étudier, dans la même ligne, mais un pas en avant, c.à.d.: peut-on étudier les conditions universelles de compréhension humaine? cf. aussi J. HABERMAS,

"Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik" dans Hermeneutik und Dialektik, ~~est~~ publié par R. BUBNER, K. CRAMER, R. WIEHL, Tübingen (J.C.B. Mohr) 1970, vol. I, pp. 73-103.

sans se limiter par la compréhension de la demande même?

maximement se demander

CASTELLI

commence à se poser avec acuité, et prend des dimensions inquiétantes dans
 l'Islam, qui compte la plupart de ses adeptes parmi les peuples n'ayant aucun
 lien avec le monde arabe; et il se pose depuis longtemps en régime chrétien,
 depuis que le christianisme a voulu se distinguer, et même se séparer de la
 chrétienté. Il se pose dans l'immédiat, et avec un caractère tragique, pour les
 juifs qui ne veulent pas s'identifier avec l'état d'Israël. Et si nous ne
 sommes pas trop susceptibles, en ce qui concerne un certain monopole des noms
 comme théologie et religion, on ~~verra~~^r que le même problème se pose pour cette
 quatrième lignée de la culture occidentale qu'on peut appeler marxisme, humanisme,
 ou simplement modernité. Faut-il accepter les catégories d'intelligibilité de
 la Bible, de l'Évangile, du Coran ou du Capital; faut-il entrer dans les formes
 de pensée de ces trois grandes traditions, et même de son appendice marxiste,
 si l'on se dit, et se veut, un serviteur de Yahweh, un frère du Christ, quelqu'un
 qui croit au dernier des prophètes, ou un homme qui travaille au bonheur
 temporel de l'humanité? Est-ce qu'un africain, un indien, un chinois doit cesser
 de se laisser imprégner par sa culture millénaire et ses formes de pensée, ses
 mythes et ses plausibilités, ses structures anthropologiques profondes, s'il
 sent l'attrait des trois grandes religions soi-disant monothéistes, ou de
 l'idéologie humaniste moderne? La voie sémitique est-elle la seule qui conduise au
 Christ? Savoir si modernisation implique occidentalisation, est un problème
 brûlant pour les deux tiers du monde actuel. Faut-il se convertir à la pensée
 marxiste, faut-il circoncrire l'esprit africain et asiatique avec le glaive de la
 technologie, afin de ne pas manquer le rendez-vous à la communion, à l'assemblée,
 à l'église des hommes de notre siècle? On voit que la question va bien au-delà
 d'une interrogation de pure rhétorique. (~~Mais nous devons nous contenter de
 poser le problème~~) Un ~~est~~ défi à la théologie.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Cette étude ne prétend pas répondre directement à des questions
 d'un tel momentum. Elle ne voudrait pas non plus, substituer un mythe à un autre
 en ~~changeant les concepts~~. Elle voudrait, en premier lieu, informer au niveau
 d'intelligibilité profonde sur l'existence d'un mythe ^{indien} aussi fondamental que
 les mythes sémites, helléniques, ou autres sur l'homme. Pour cela, il s'agit
 simplement de réussir à raconter le mythe. Elle voudrait aussi pouvoir ensemen-
 cer dans le champ du mythe occidental, actuellement en voie de transformation.
 Elle voudrait encore, expliciter l'importance de ce mythe au sein même de la
 tradition indienne. Elle désirerait, enfin, contribuer à cette symbiose qui
 n'est pas une simple combinaison artificielle et superficielle, et qui devient
 de plus en plus urgente si l'homme veut dépasser les provincialismes dont nous
 sommes peut-être conscients pour la première fois / à l'échelle ^{planétaire} ~~humaine et~~ ^{la}
~~profondeur divine~~. C'est le destin de l'homme qui est en jeu. Ou l'homme
 acquiert sa conscience ^{globale} ~~planétaire~~ au niveau des profondeurs cosmothéandriques
 de sa destinée, ou il devient un simple rouage dans l'engrenage inhumain de la
 mégamachine. La schizophrénie entre une croyance sincère, même profonde, mais
 provinciale et sectaire, et une technologie universelle, ^{en un sens} même libératrice, mais ~~ab~~
 abêtissante et nivelatrice de toute multiformité n'est pas viable longtemps.

II - L'histoire sacrée de Sunahšepa

La règle d'or de toute interprétation ~~me semble~~ consiste en ce que la
 chose interprétée puisse se reconnaître comme telle dans l'interprétation. Cela
 veut dire, que l'interprétation ne doit pas être une extra-prétation, mais une
 médiation entre l'auto-compréhension de la chose interprétée et l'hétéro-compré-
 hension réalisée par l'interprète (1). (En d'autres mots, la ^{garantie} ~~preuve~~ de l'interpréta-
 tion

(1) Il est intéressant de noter que le pres, pretis de l'inter-prétation appar-
 tient à la racine sanskrite prath (verbe prathati, ou prathate), étendre,
 répandre, propager, prolonger, augmenter, accroître (Cf. prthvi, l'étendue, la
~~surface~~, c.à.d., la terre). L'interprétation serait donc, l'acte d'étendre, de
 répandre, prolonger, dilater, et d'agrandir la signification d'une donnée entre
 sujets non seulement diachroniques, mais aussi diatopiques. Notre ^{étude} ~~exemple~~ voudrait
 présenter un cas d'interprétation diatopique.

correcte est comme la preuve des opérations mathématiques élémentaires; la soustraction pour l'addition, la multiplication pour la division. Si nous pouvons réussir à retraduire, voire réinterpréter notre interprétation selon l'original, cela veut dire, que nous n'allégorisons pas, mais interprétons correctement.

Ceci veut dire, que pour interpréter un mythe, on doit se baser sur ce que le mythe dit littéralement (le texte), sur ce qu'il veut dire, c.à.dire, qu'il faut connaître le contexte du mythe, et finalement, il faut aussi se baser sur ce qu'on lui a fait dire au cours des âges, car les interprétations passées appartiennent également à la donnée à interpréter.

Cela nous amène à connaître; 1) le récit original, le mythologomène, son legein; 2) le contexte du mythe, son mythe et 3) les commentaires, son logos.

1) Le récit (le legein du mythe):

Nous avons à faire à l'une des histoires sacrées les plus complètes, et probablement des plus anciennes de toute la śruti ou révélation védique (1). A plusieurs points de vue, elle est exceptionnelle (2).

(1) Le texte en question de l'AB VII, 13-18 (XXXIII, 1-6) qui est pratiquement le même que SSS XV, 17-27. Le ASS IX, 3 répète la fin de l'AB VII, 18 en ce qui concerne les instructions rituelles.

(2) "La seule exception" dit VARENNE (op.cit. p. 11) se référant à son récit complet. "Là encore, l'histoire de Sunahsepa, déjà insolite quant à sa forme, fait figure d'exception" (op. cit.p. 13), ajoute-t-il quant à la spiritualité bhakti, presque complètement absente des Brâhmanas.

Cette histoire est à la fois en prose et en vers. Les vers se composent soit des strophes originales (gâthâ), soit des citations du Rg Veda (rc). Ils ont un caractère épique, et présentent une élaboration grammaticale beaucoup plus riche que le texte en prose, d'un sanscrit plus élémentaire, et même rudimentaire. La légende recueillie dans l'Aitareya Brâhmana, rédigé entre les années 800 ou 600 avant le Christ, s'avère, d'après la critique interne et externe, très ancienne (1). Le fait que cette légende fasse partie de la consécration royale fait penser à une date antérieure, et si l'on considère la référence au sacrifice humain, on peut même y chercher une origine préhistorique (2).

(1) Cf. A.B. KEITH, Rigveda Brahmanas, -Harvard Oriental Series- Cambridge, Massachusetts (Harvard University Press), 1920. Réimpression; Delhi & Varanasi (Motilal Barnasidas), 1971; pp. 42-50.

(2) Cf. M. WINTERNITZ, A History of Indian Literature (University of Calcutta) -édition anglaise révisée, vol. I, part 1, pp.184-187-1962.

Le texte bien connu a eu différentes éditions (1) et des traductions complètes (2) ou partielles (3). Après avoir peiné pour en donner un résumé convenable, j'ai trouvé une excellente traduction française, bien supérieure à ce que j'aurais pu faire(4).

Telle est, donc, l'histoire sacrée de Shunahshepa dans la traduction de Varenne;

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- (1) Les éditions de HAUGH, Bombay (1863), de KÂSTNÂTHA SÂSTRY ÂGÂSE, Poona (Anandaśrama Series) 1896, de VÂSUDE VAŚARMAN PANSĪKARA et KR̥ṢṆÂMBHATTA GORE, Bombay (Nirṇaya Sâgara Press) 1911; celle de SATYAVRATA SÂMAŚRAMI dans la Bibliotheca Indica; celle d'AUFRECHT, etc. La deuxième édition de la Chrestomatie de BÔHTLINGK donne aussi le texte original révisé; on la trouve de même en appendice dans l'oeuvre classique de MAX MULLER, A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, Varanasi (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office), 1968 -nouvelle édition révisée par S.N. SÂSTRĪ- qui incorpore au texte les variations du SSS.
- (2) La première traduction anglaise de tout l'AB est celle de HAUGH (à laquelle devraient s'ajouter les importantes remarques critiques d'A. WEBER, IS IX (1865). Cf. aussi celle de HH. WILSON dans JRAS, 1851, XIII, pp. 96 sq., op. cit. Il y a une traduction allemande par R. ROTH, IS I, p.457 sq. et II, p.111 sq., etc.
- (3) Par exemple, MAX MULLER, op. cit., pp. 370-376; J. MUIR, Original Sanskrit Texts, London (Trubner & Co.) 1868-74 -5 vols-; Nouvelle édition révisée, Amsterdam (Oriental Press), 1967, vol.I, pp.355-360. S. LEVI, La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brâhmanas, Paris (E.Leroux), 1898; deuxième édition (Presses Universitaires de France), 1966. pp. 134-136, etc.

(4) → pag. 12,2

(4) Le texte de l'AB que je reproduis ici avec sa permission, ce dont je lui suis très reconnaissant, est traduit du sanskrit par JEAN VARENNE -et approuvé par L. RENOÜ- dans son livre Mythes et légendes extraits des Brahmana, Paris (Gallimard) 1967, pp. 112-130 -Connaissance de l'Orient. Collection UNESCO d'oeuvres représentatives. Série indienne. JEAN VARENNE a eu l'excellente idée de traduire aussi les cents vers du RV auxquels le texte original fait seulement référence. Le lecteur peut aussi suivre le récit complet.

Corrected

SAH

t

Hariścandra Vaidhasa Aikṣvāka était fils de roi. Il avait cent épouses, mais point de fils. Les brahmanes Parvata et Nārada vivaient chez lui; s'adressant à Nārada, il lui demanda:

s'
n'

"Ignorant ou sage, tout homme,
n'est-il pas vrai? désire avoir un fils. ①
Dis-moi donc, Nārada,
que gagne-t-on à en avoir?"

X a

Ainsi l'interrogea-t-il en lui adressant une strophe. Nārada^{a)} cependant y répondit par dix:

n'

d'

"Il a payé sa dette,
il a trouvé l'immortalité,
celui qui a vu le visage
d'un fils né de lui!

qu"

Les plaisirs de la terre, et du feu,
et des eaux! chez les vivants
la plus haute est la joie
qu'un père trouve dans son fils!

l'

Par leurs fils, les Mânes
ont traversé l'épaisse ténèbre.
L'âme naît de l'âme: ②
le fils est la nef pour la traversée!

c'

A quoi bon la crasse? la peau d'antilope?
les cheveux longs? l'Ardeur?
Désirez des fils, vous les brahmanes!
c'est là l'universelle loi!

① putram iṣṅanti
② littéralement: l'ātman est né de l'ātman, ou bien aussi, lui lui-même (le père) est né à nouveau. cf. Keith, Winternitz, etc. loc. cit.

Souffle est la nourriture, et protection l'habit;
l'or est pour la parure, le bétail pour la dot:
l'épouse est la compagne; la fille, une misère!
mais le fils est lumière au plus haut des cieux!

Le père a pénétré sa femme;
embryon, il s'est installé dans la mère:
en elle, il est un être nouveau
qui naît au dixième mois!

L'épouse n'est épouse
que lorsqu'en elle il naît à nouveau
il apporte la vie, elle apporte la vie
lorsque le germe a été déposé en elle.

Les Dieux et les Prophètes, ensemble,
lui ont donné l'éclat et la grandeur.
Les Dieux ont dit aux hommes:
voici celle qui vous engendre à nouveau!

Qui n'a point de fils ne va pas au Ciel!
cela, même les animaux le savent:
c'est pourquoi chez eux le fils monte
sa propre mère, ou bien sa soeur.

Il est large, il est précieux, le chemin
où vont, sans danger, ceux qui ont des fils!
Bêtes et ciseaux le convoitent:
pour l'avoir ils font l'amour avec leur mère!"

C'est ainsi que Nârada lui répondit. Il ajouta: "aie recours à Varuṇa, le Roi! dis-lui que si un fils t'échoit, tu le lui offriras en sacrifice!"

"Soit!" répondit Aikṣvâka, et il s'approcha de Varuṇa, le Roi, disant: "Puisse un fils m'échoir! je te l'offrirai en sacrifice!"

Varuṇa acquiesça et un fils naquit qu'il appela Rohita.

Alors Varuṇa dit à Aikṣvâka: "Un fils t'est né; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" Il répondit: "C'est seulement dix jours après sa naissance qu'une victime est prête pour le sacrifice. Laisse mon fils atteindre dix jours d'âge; je te l'offrirai alors en sacrifice!"

"Soit!" dit Varuṇa, et, lorsque l'enfant eut plus de dix jours, il dit à Aikṣvâka: "Ton fils a plus de dix jours; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" Il répondit: "C'est seulement lorsque ses dents apparaissent qu'une victime est prête pour le sacrifice. Laisse mon fils avoir ses dents; je te l'offrirai alors en sacrifice!"

"Soit!" dit Varuṇa, et, lorsque l'enfant eut ses dents, il dit à Aikṣvâka: "Ton fils a ses dents; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" Il répondit: "C'est seulement lorsque tombent ses dents qu'une victime est prête pour le sacrifice. Laisse donc mon fils perdre ses dents de lait; je te l'offrirai alors en sacrifice!"

"Soit!" dit Varuṇa, et lorsque l'enfant eut perdu ses dents de lait, il dit à Aikṣvâka: "Ton fils a perdu ses dents de lait; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" Il répondit: "C'est seulement lorsque ses dents apparaissent à nouveau qu'une victime est prête pour le sacrifice. Laisse donc mon fils avoir ses dents d'homme; je te l'offrirai alors en sacrifice!"

"Soit!" dit Varuṇa, et, lorsque l'enfant eut à nouveau des dents, il dit à Aikṣvāka: "Ton fils a ses dents d'homme; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" Il répondit: "C'est seulement lorsqu'un noble est en âge de porter les armes qu'il est prêt pour le sacrifice. Laisse mon fils gagner le droit de porter les armes; je te l'offrirai alors en sacrifice!"

one Varu
missing
(type)

"Soit!" dit Varuṇa, et, lorsque le jeune homme eut gagné le droit de porter les armes, il dit à Aikṣvāka: "Ton fils a gagné le droit de porter les armes; offre-le moi en sacrifice!" - "Soit!"
 X " dut-~~il~~ répondre et, s'adressant à son fils, il lui expliqua: "C'est lui, mon cher enfant, qui te donna à moi. Allons, laisse-moi t'offrir à lui en sacrifice!"

"Non!" s'écria Rohita et, prenant son arc il s'en alla dans la forêt. Un an durant il erra dans la forêt et Varuṇa s'empara d'Aikṣvāka dont le ventre se mit à enfler.

Rohita en entendit parler; quittant la forêt, il retourna vers le village. Mais Indra vint à lui, sous une forme humaine, disant:

"Multiple est la splendeur de l'ascète!
 ainsi parle la Révélation, Rohita!
 Qui choisit de vivre chez les hommes agit mal!
 Indra est l'ami du vagant.

X " Va donc!" Rohita se dit "ce brahmane m'a conseillé de vaguer". Il erra donc dans la forêt durant une deuxième année. Puis, quittant la forêt, il retourna vers le village. Mais Indra vint à lui, sous une forme humaine, disant:

"Elles sont des fleurs, les jambes du vagant!
 et son corps solidé porte du fruit.
 Il est délivré de tout péché
 grâce à son état d'ascète vagant.

Va donc!" Rohita se dit: "ce brahmane m'a conseillé de vaguer". Il erra donc dans la forêt durant une troisième année. Puis, quittant la forêt, il retourna vers le village. Mais Indra vint à lui, sous une forme humaine, disant:

"De qui reste assis, la fortune reste assise;
elle ne bouge pas, celle de qui reste immobile!
De qui reste couché, la fortune reste endormie.
Mais elle s'active, la fortune de qui s'active!

Va donc!" Rohita se dit: "ce brahmane m'a conseillé de vaguer". Il erra donc dans la forêt durant une quatrième année. Puis, quittant la forêt, il retourna vers le village. Mais Indra vint à lui, sous une forme humaine, disant:

"Il est l'Age-Kali, celui qui reste couché!
l'Age-Dvapara, celui qui se lève!
Immobile, on est l'Age-Treta!
Et l'Age-Krita, si l'on s'active! ①

Va donc!" Rohita se dit: "ce brahmane m'a conseillé de vaguer". Il erra donc dans la forêt durant une cinquième année. Puis, quittant la forêt, il retourna vers le village. Mais Indra vint à lui, sous une forme humaine, disant:

"En s'activant, l'on trouve le miel
et l'Udumbara délicieux!
Vois! le Soleil est le meilleur des êtres
lui qui ne cesse jamais de s'activer!

① cf. Keith, h. l. sur l'interprétation de ce passage.

Va donc!" Rohita se dit: "ce brahmane m'a conseillé de vaguer". Il erra donc dans la forêt durant une sixième année. Dans la forêt, il trouva le Sage Ajigarta Sauyavasi, affamé. Ce personnage avait trois fils: Sunahpucha, Sunahsépa, et Sunolângûla.

Xt
Xa
X!
Rohita lui dit: "Je te donnerai cent vaches si tu me permets de me racheter grâce à l'un de ceux-ci." Ecartant l'aîné, Ajigarta dit "Pas celui-ci!" et la mère, écartant le plus jeune: "Pas celui-là non plus!" Ils s'accordèrent sur Sunahsépa.

Rohita donna les cent vaches, prit Sunahsépa avec lui, puis, quittant la forêt, retourna au village. S'en venant chez son père, il dit: "Ah! mon père! laissez-moi me racheter grâce à celui-ci!" Alors Aikṣvâka, s'adressant à Varuṇa, le Roi, lui déclara: "C'est celui-ci que je veux t'offrir en sacrifice." - "Soit!" dit Varuṇa, "car un brahmane est plus qu'un kṣatriya!"

Alors Aikṣvâka proclama son intention de célébrer une Consécration Royale et de choisir pour victime un homme, au jour de l'Onction.

Viśvâmitra était Oblateur, Jamadagni Acolyte, Vasiṣṭha tenait le rôle du brahman, et Ayâsya celui du Chantre.

Cependant, quand Sunahsépa eut été amené, il ne se trouva personne pour vouloir le lier. Ajigarta dit alors: "Donnez-moi cent vaches de plus et je le lierai!" On lui donna cent vaches de plus et il lia son fils. On l'amena donc, on le lia, on récita les formules Apri et l'on promena le feu autour de lui. Mais il ne se trouva personne pour vouloir le tuer.

Ajigarta dit encore: "Donnez-moi cent vaches de plus et je le tuerai!" On lui donna cent vaches de plus et lui, assurant le couteau dans sa main, s'avança vers son fils.

Alors Sunahsépa se dit: "Ils vont me tuer! exactement comme si je n'étais pas un être humain! Ah! il faut que je recoure aux Dieux!"

Il eut d'abord recours à Prajâpati, en tant qu'il est le premier parmi les Dieux, lui dédiant cette strophe:

"Quel est le Dieu, quel l'immortel,
dont nous allons évoquer le nom plaisant?
Qui nous rendra à la Liberté majestueuse?
Et moi, puissé-je voir, et le Père, et la Mère!" ①

Prajâpati, cependant, lui répondit: "Agni est le plus proche parmi les Dieux; aie donc recours à lui!" Il s'adressa alors à Agni, lui dédiant cette strophe:

"D'Agni, le Dieu, le premier des immortels,
nous allons évoquer le nom plaisant!
Il nous rendra à la Liberté majestueuse!
Ainsi verrai-je, moi, le Père et la Mère!" ②

Agni lui conseilla d'avoir recours à Savitar qui est le Dieu incitateur. Sunahsépa, donc, eut recours à Savitar, lui dédiant ces trois strophes:

- ① RV I, 24, 1. Père et Mère: ciel et terre.
② RV I, 24, 2.

"De toi, Dieu Savitar, qui toujours nous aides,
qui règues sur ce qui est digne d'élection,
nous implorons l'heureuse fortune!

Car la fortune, quelle qu'elle soit, pour toi
se repose à l'abri de l'envie: amicale,
celle a été déposée entre tes deux mains.

Puissions-nous hausser jusqu'à elle;
Aidés par toi, puissions-nous atteindre le sommet
de la richesse que tu répartis pour nous, ô Fortune!" ⁽¹⁾

X c
Savitar lui expliqua: "c'est pour Varuṇa, le Roi, que tu es
lié; c'est donc à lui que tu dois avoir recours". Il eut donc
recours à Varuṇa, le Roi, lui ~~m~~ dédiant les trente et une stances
que voici:

X 07
"Ton règne, ô Varuṇa, ta force, ta fureur, jamais
ces oiseaux ne les ont atteints de leur vol,
non plus que ces eaux qui s'activent sans trêve;
non, jamais! bien qu'allant plus vite que le vent!

Varuṇa, le roi, à l'intelligence claire,
en l'espace sans fond, tient la cime de l'arbre,
branches tournées vers le bas, racines en haut.
Puissent les Signes être déposés au-dedans de nous-mêmes!

① RV I, 24, 3-5.

C'est Varuṇa, le roi, qui fit la large voie
 pour que le Soleil là-haut la parcoure!
 Au Soleil sans-pied, il en fit deux pour qu'il s'étale.
 Puisse-t-il exorciser qui nous voudrait frapper au cœur!

Ils sont cent, ô roi, ils sont mille, tes médecins!
 Qu'elle soit large, profonde, ta bienveillance, ô Varuṇa!
 Repousse au loin la Néantise, au-delà de notre monde!
 Libère-nous de ce péché que nous avons commis!

Ces étoiles si bien disposées là-haut,
 on les voit la nuit, mais le jour où sont-elles allées?
 Nul ne peut enfreindre les lois de Varuṇa:
 la Lune s'avance, nous observant durant la nuit.

Voici ce que je te demande, te louant de ma prière,
 voici ce que désire le Sacrifiant avec ses oblations:
 "Sois ici sans courroux, ô Varuṇa!
 Ne nous ravis point notre vie, ô Renommé!"

Voici ce que l'on m'a dit, et de jour, et de nuit,
 ce que m'a révélé cette lumière qui vient du cœur:
 "Celui qu'appela Sunahśepa alors qu'il était enchainé,
 Varuṇa, le roi, puisse-t-il nous libérer!"

Qui, lié au poteau, Sunahśepa appela l'Aditya;
 enchainé au triple pilori, il appela Varuṇa:
 "Daigne Varuṇa, le roi, délier cette victime!
 Sage que l'on ne peut tromper, qu'il défasse ces liens!"

Nous voulons apaiser ton courroux, ô Varuṇa,
venant à toi, avec hommages, sacrifices, oblations!
Asura qui règnes sur nous, maître attentif,
Libère-nous, ô roi, des péchés que nous avons commis!

Relâche en haut le lacet supérieur, ô Varuṇa,
en bas le lacet d'en bas, de côté le lacet médian.
Ainsi, ô Aditya, serons-nous en ton obédience,
sans péché, et voués à la Liberté! ①

RV I, 25 1
S'il advient que nous enfreignons la loi
qui nous lie à toi, ô Varuṇa, notre Dieu,
comme les gens, jour après jour, désobéissent,

ne lance pas sur nous ton arme de mort!
Irrité, ne lance pas l'arme qui tue!
Pussions-nous échapper à ta fureur!

Pussions-nous délier ta pensée,
comme le cocher délie le cheval attelé,
pour obtenir ta pitié, grâce à nos chants!

Mes chants détournent ton courroux
et volent au loin vers le bonheur,
tels des oiseaux gagnant leurs nids!

Quand ferons-nous venir à nous le Seigneur
Varuṇa, Splendeur du règne,
pour qu'il nous donne sa pitié, le Vigilant!

① RV I, 24, 6-15.

Ce règne appartient à Mitra, Varuṇa
ensemble, les deux vigilants se penchent
sur le fidèle qui les vénère.

7 Varuṇa sait le chemin que suit l'oiseau,
volant là-haut dans l'espace,
il sait la voie du navire sur la mer.

Il sait les douze mois, le Fidèle!
avec leur descendance:
le mois intercalaire.

9 Il sait la voie du vent
vaste, large, puissante
et qui sont ceux qui la gouvernent.

Le fidèle Varuṇa a fait sa demeure
dans le tréfonds des eaux
pour y régner, l'Intelligent!

11 De là, il observe tous les secrets;
de là, il les comprend,
xj ceux déjà faits, ceux projetés.

x X L'Aditya, l'Intelligent, puisse-t-il ^{toujours} ~~prolonger nos vies~~
faire pour nous les chemins favorables!
Puisse-t-il prolonger nos vies!
Vêtu d'un manteau d'or, Varuṇa,
enveloppé d'une étoffe brillante,
x t il a disposé partout ses espions.

Lui que ne peuvent tromper les trompeurs,
ni les méchants d'entre les hommes,
ni les fourbes: Varuṇa, notre Dieu!

15 L'ont choisi, entre tous,
les humains quels qu'ils soient,
à commencer par nous-mêmes!

Et mon inspiration vagabonde,
comme la vache cherchant pâture,
en quête du Vigilant!

Parle-moi encore, ô mon Dieu,
du Pays d'où le miel m'a été apporté
pour que je le goûte, comme fait l'Oblateur!

18 Ah! je voudrais voir celui que tous ont vu!
je voudrais voir son char descendre ici!
Puisse-t-il, Varuṇa, exaucer mon désir!

19 Entends mon cri, Varuṇa!
Entends, et prends pitié!
X 2 J'ai besoin de ton aide, et te désire!

20 Toi, le Sage, Varuṇa!
qui régis Ciel et Terre,
Agrée ma prière!

Délie le lacet d'en haut!
délie le lacet médian!
Et ceux d'en bas, pour que nous vivions!" ①

① RV I, 25, 1-21.

XO
 Varuṇa, cependant, lui conseilla: "Agni est le premier parmi les Dieux, et le meilleur ami. Chante ses louanges et, lui et moi, nous te délivrons!" Alors Sunahšepa chanta les louanges d'Agni en lui dédiant les vingt-deux strophes ~~xxx~~ que voici:

"Pare-toi de ton manteau de lumière,
 digne d'honneurs, Seigneur de la force,
 célèbre, ô Agni, ce sacrifice à notre égard!

Viens, tu seras notre Oblateur,
 toi qu'il faut choisir, ô le plus jeune des Dieux!
 nous t'appelons de notre parole lumineuse!

Xa
 Père, il sacrifie pour le fils,
 ami pour l'ami, camarade pour le camarade,
 cet Agni qu'il faut choisir!

Viennent ici sur la jonchée
 Varuṇa, Mitra, les Vigilants,
 et Aryaman, comme ils firent chez Manu!

Agni, premier des oblateurs,
 réjouis-toi de cette alliance avec nous,
 entends les chants que nous te dédions!

Lors même que nous sacrifions sans cesse
 à tel ou tel Dieu, c'est à toi seul,
 Agni que l'offrande est donnée!

7
 Qu'il nous soit cher le seigneur de nos clans,
 l'Oblateur qu'il faut choisir!
 soyons-lui chers, nous qui l'avons, ce bon Agni!

8 Les Dieux l'ont aussi, ce bon Agni,
 et donc nous donnent le ~~xx~~ trésor!
 sachons que nous l'avons, ce bon Agni!

Échangeons donc les chants de gloire,
 nous les mortels, avec les immortels,
 ô Agni, qui ne meurs jamais!

De tous tes feux, bénis
 ce sacrifice et ces chants,
 Agni, Fils de la force! (1)

Comme on chante un cheval fortuné,
 je vais te chanter des louanges, ô Agni
 qui règues sur tous non sacrifices!

Le Fils de la force, à la large avancée,
 à la grande bienveillance, le Généreux,
 qu'il soit avec nous, Agni, avec sa force!

Garde-nous, Agni, et de près et de loin,
 garde-nous de l'ennemi cruel,
 garde-nous toujours, toute la vie!

Ce chant tout nouveau,
 trésor que nous te dédions,
 annonce-le, ô Agni, chez les Dieux!

5 Partage pour nous les enjeux,
 les plus grands comme les moyens.
 Accorde-moi le bien le plus proche!

(1) RV I, 26, 1-10.

6 Tu es le Répartiteur, tu es l'étincelant
sur le flux de la rivière, tout près de nous,
tu combles de biens le donateur.

7 Le mortel que tu aideras au combat,
celui que tu exciteras aux enjeux,
celui-là aura des bonheurs toujours neufs!

Celui-là personne ne le vaincra,
non personne, Ô Dieu vainqueur!
L'enjeu glorieux sera sien!

Qu'il emporte l'enjeu grâce à ses chevaux,
Cet Agni que tous les peuples ont en commun!
Oui, qu'il l'emporte grâce aux inspirés!

10 Toi qui prends ^{grade} à l'éveil de ce Dieu,
compose une cantate à Rudra dédiée
au Dieu qu'adore chaque clan!

En sa grandeur, il passe toute mesure,
la fumée est son drapeau; Agni, l'éclatant,
qu'il nous conduise à l'inspiration, à la victoire!

Pareil à un chef ~~est~~ opulent,
à un signe céleste, puisse-t-il entendre
nos chants, cet Agni à la haute lumière!" (1)

x De Agni lui dit: "Chante aussi les louanges des Tous-Dieux; avec
eux, nous te délivrerons!" Sunahsépa donc dédia aux Tous-Dieux la
stance que voici:

(1) RV I, 27, 1-12.

"Hommage aux grands et aux petits
aux jeunes et aux vieux!

Honorons les Dieux, si nous le pouvons!" ①

Les Tous-Dieux lui expliquèrent alors: "Indra est de tous
les Dieux le plus fort, le plus grand! il est le plus réel et le
plus efficace: chante ses louanges et, avec lui, nous te délivrerons!"
Sunahšepa dédia donc à Indra les vingtdeux stances que voici:

"Lorsqu'il nous semble être sans espérance,
ô buveur de Soma, ô véridique Indra,
donne-nous, généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

Porteur du casque et de l'armure,
Maître des enjeux, Seigneur de la force,
donne-nous, généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

Endors pour nous ces deux malfaisants
qui se montrent tour à tour! qu'ils ne s'éveillent pas!
donne-nous, Généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

Qui, que s'endorment les avarés, ô Héros,
Et que s'éveillent ceux qui nous dotent!
donne-nous, Généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

① RV I, 27, 13.

Écrase cet âne, ô Indra,
 qui chante si mal tes louanges!
 donne-nous, Généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
 nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

En compagnie de la Kuṇḍrināci
 le vent vole au loin, venant du bois,
 donne-nous, Généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
 nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches!

Écrase, ô Indra, le Kṛkadāśu!
 Frappe à mort celui qui se lamente!
 donne-nous, Généreux, l'espérance d'avoir,
 nombreux et beaux, des chevaux et des vaches! ①

Incitant le Dieu à la riche intelligence
 à venir vers nous, tel un coursier,
 j'arrose de succe de soma Indra, le Glorifié!

Il boit par centaines les puisées de Soma pur,
 par milliers les puisées de soma mêlé à du lait:
 le soma coule en lui comme l'eau dans un trou!

X 2
 Quand on se rue vers lui, pour la fière ivresse,
 voici que, grâce à elle, le soma dans la cuve
 devient pour nous une immensité pareille à l'océan!

Il est à toi, ce soma! tu cours vers lui,
 pareil à un pigeon volant vers sa femelle!
 Et tu aimes ce chant que nous te dédions.

Seigneur des dons, nous te donnons cette louange,
cette offrande faite de chants à toi dédiés, ô héros!
Qu'en retour ta puissance nous pourvoie généreusement!

Dresse-toi pour nous aider dans ce tournoi
ô Dieu à la riche intelligence, ô Indra!
mieux que tous autres nous voulons parler!

X
Indra, plus fort que quiconque, nous l'appelons
de toutes les manières, dans tous les tournois;
nous, ses amis, nous l'appelons pour qu'il nous aide!

Qu'il vienne donc à notre appel,
s'il l'entend, avec ses assistants,
avec ses prix de victoire, Indra!

Je l'appelle ce Héros du séjour ancien,
cet Indra qui s'avance avec sa puissance!
c'est lui que ton père appelait le premier!

Nous t'implorons, Dieu protecteur,
toi qui es si souvent invoqué,
toi le bon Ami de ceux qui te chantent!

11 Casqués, nous buvons le soma:
toi qui le bois aussi, tu es notre compère:
~~xxxxx~~ porteur de foudre, tu es l'Ami de tes amis!

Fais donc en sorte, ô notre Ami,
ô Porte-foudre, que tout soit
comme nous l'attendons de toi, ô Buveur de Soma!

Puissions-nous, nous tes commensaux, ô Indra,
acquérir des richesses, des prix importants,
grâce auxquels, pourvus de bétail, nous nous réjouirons!

X é
O Dieu hardi, lorsqu'un Héros tel que toi
honoré par les poètes entend leur prière
c'est comme si tu fixais l'essieu sur la roue!

Oui, selon le désir de ceux qui te chantent,
ô Dieu intelligent, tu fixes à la roue, fortement,
un essieu pareil à l'hommage qu'ils te dédient." ①

X é
Le cœur réjoui de cette ~~xxxxx~~ louange que Sunahšepa lui avait
dédiée, Indra lui donna un char plein d'or. Mais Sunahšepa le pria
encore avec une autre stances:

"A jamais il a chanté les richesses, Indra,
avec ses chevaux qui piaffent, hennissent, soufflent!
Vainqueur, bardé de son armure, il nous a donné,
pour prix de notre victoire, un char plein d'or!" ②

Indra lui dit alors: "Chante maintenant les louanges des deux
Aévin; ensuite nous te délivrerons!" Il dédia donc aux deux Aévin
les trois stances que voici:

"Venez, Aévin! avec un trésor merveilleux
consistant en chevaux! Donnez-nous, Dasra,
un trésor de vaches et d'or!

Votre char qui ne meurt point
s'avance d'un pas égal sur l'océan,
ô Dasra! ô Aévin!

① RV I, 30, 1-15.

② RV I, 30, 16.

L'une des roues de votre char,
vous l'avez fixée sur la tête du taureau;
l'autre parcourt le ciel!" ①

Les deux Aśvin lui déclarèrent: "Chante les louanges de
l'Aurore; ensuite nous te délivrerons!" A l'Aurore, Sunahśepa
dédia donc les trois stances que voici:

"Quel mortel peut prétendre à jouir de toi,
immortelle Aurore qui aimes à ta guise?
Qui de nous vas-tu choisir, ô Rayonnante?

De loin, de près, nous avons pensé à toi,
Aurore rouge, qui ressembles
à une jument belle à voir!

Viens à nous, Fille du Ciel!
apporte-nous ces prix que nous désirons!
Impartis-nous la richesse!" ②

A chaque stance qu'il chantait l'un de ses liens tombait et le
ventre d'Aikāvāka diminuait d'ampleur; quand la dernière stance eut
été chantée il se trouva libre de liens, et Aikāvāka fut délivré de
sa maladie.

Les prêtres, cependant, s'en remirent à Sunahśepa: "C'est à
toi maintenant de trouver l'assiette de ce jour!" Il eut la vision
du Pressurage-d'Onction et l'accomplit sur l'heure, en récitant les
quatre stances que voici:

① RV I, 30, 17-19.

② RV I, 30, 20-22.

5 "Même si tu œuvres dans chaque maison,
c'est ici, mortier mon ami, que tu dois résonner
le mieux, comme un tambour chez les vainqueurs!

6 Maître de la forêt, mortier,
le vent souffle à ton sommet
prépare le soma pour qu'Indra le boive!

7 Ils œuvrent pour le sacrifice,
apportant des trésors, devant les tiges,
pareilles aux chevaux bais d'Indra!

Pressez maintenant, Maîtres de la forêt,
debout avec vos assistants debout,
pour Indra, le jus doux comme miel!" ①

Il transporta ensuite le soma ainsi pressé à cuve de bois
destinée à le recevoir. Ce faisant, il récitait la stance qu^e voici:

"Ce qui reste, puise-le dans les récipients
et fais couler le soma sur le tamis
dépose-le sur le cuir de la vache!" ②

Cependant, tout en tenant le Sacrifiant par derrière, il versait
l'oblation en récitant les quatre stances que voici qu'il faisait
suivre de l'exclamation liturgique "Svâhâ!" :

1 "Là où est le mortier à la large assise,
là où le pilon se dresse pour presser le soma,
viens, Indra, boire ce que l'on broie! Svâhâ!

① RV I, 28, 5-8.

② RV I, 28, 9.

Là où les deux éléments du pressurage
sont faits comme pour l'amour,
viens, Indra, boire ce que l'on broie! Svâhâ!

Là où la femme s'active
et en avant et en arrière,
viens, Indra, boire ce que l'on broie! Svâhâ!

Là où l'on bande le pilon,
comme on retient les rênes,
viens, Indra, boire ce que l'on broie! Svâhâ! ①

Il conduisit alors le Sacrifiant au bain conclusif, tout en
récitant les deux stances que voici:

"O Agni, écarte de nous, nous t'en prions,
l'ire de Varuṇa, toi qui sais!
Tu es le meilleur des prêtres et des guides,
toi qui brilles! Éloigne de nous les maléfices!

Sois proche de nous, Agni, pour nous aider,
sois très près de nous à l'aube de cette Aurore!
Sacrifie pour nous en faisant offrande à Varuṇa,
Obtiens-nous sa grâce, et nous te bénirons!" ②

Enfin il amena le Sacrifiant à vénérer le foyer Offertoire, en
récitant la stance que voici:

"Sunahśepa lié, de ces mille poteaux
tu l'as libéré, lorsqu'il était à la peine!
Nous aussi tu nous libéreras de nos liens,
ô perspicace Agni qu'ici nous installons!" ③

① RV I, 28, 1-4.

② RV ~~III~~ IV, 1, 4-5. Cet hymne n'est pas du ṝ̥ci Sunahśepa.

③ RV V, 2, 7. Un autre ṝ̥ci n'appartenant pas au ṝ̥ci.

X 0) Le sacrifice étant fini, Sunahšepa vint se reposer sur le sein de Viśvāmitra. "Prophète! rends-moi mon fils!" demanda Ajigarta Sauyavasi. "Non!" lui répondit Viśvāmitra, "les dieux me l'ont donné!" Ainsi Sunahšepa devint-il "Dieudonné, fils de Viśvāmitra"; ses descendants sont les Kāpileya et les Bābhraṇa.

Cependant Ajigarta Sauyavasi tenta de l'inviter encore, lui disant:

"De naissance, tu es un Aṅgiras,
un barde renommé, le fils d'Ajigarta!
N'abandonne point ta lignée,
ô Prophète! reviens à moi!"

A quoi Sunahšepa rétorqua:

X'a "On t'avu, le couteau à la main,
chose inconcevable même chez les śūdra!
tu préfères, Aṅgiras,
trois cents vaches à ma vie!"

Ajigarta Sauyavasi plaida sa cause, disant:

"Ce péché que j'ai fait
m'a causé du remords!
je veux l'effacer à tes yeux:
les trois cents vaches sont à toi!"

Mais Sunahšepa lui dit encore:

"Qui fit le mal une fois,
fera le mal à nouveau!
tu continues d'agir en sôdra,
ton acte est sans rémission!"

Lorsque Sunahšepa, répondant à Ajfigarta Sauyavasi eut dit:
"ton acte est sans rémission", Viśvāmitra l'exhorta à son tour:

X é
"Formidable certes était Sauyavasi,
lorsque couteau en main il s'apprêtait à frapper!
Il était debout, son fils ne l'était pas.
Deviens mon fils, Sunahšepa!"

Sunahšepa lui demanda:

"Ce que tu viens de dire, je le veux;
mais comment, fils de roi, Aṅgiras,
pourrai-je devenir, ô Viśvāmitra,
un fils parmi les tiens?"

Viśvāmitra lui répondit:

"Tu seras l'aîné de mes fils,
ta descendance aura le pas!
Accepte cet héritage divin,
comme je t'y invite."

Et Sunahśepa:

"Invite tes fils à m'accepter,
pour l'amitié et la splendeur!
Ainsi pourrai-je, ô Bharata,
devenir l'un de tes enfants!"

Alors Viśvâmitra, s'adressant à ses fils, leur demanda:

"Écoutez Madhuchandas,
Rṣabha, Reṇu, Aṣṭaka,
et tous vos frères:
acceptez-le pour votre aîné"

Viśvâmitra avait cent un fils: Madhuchandas, et cinquante qui étaient ses aînés, cinquante ses cadets. Les aînés de Madhuchandas jugèrent ceci injuste. Leur père les maudit: "Vos descendants auront les confins de la terre en héritage!" Ils devinrent en effet les Andhra, les Puṅḡra, les Sabara, les Pulinda, les Mûṭiba, qui vivent en grand nombre au-delà des frontières du pays aryen: en fait, la plupart des Dasyu descendent de Viśvâmitra.

Mais Madhuchandas et les cinquante autres qui étaient ses cadets déclarèrent à Sunahśepa:

"Ce que le père a décidé,
Certes nous l'acceptons!
Nous te plaçons à notre tête:
vois! nous sommes tous à ta suite!"

Ravi, Viśvâmitra les bénit, disant:

"Ô mes fils! vous serez
riches de vaches et d'enfants mâles,
vous qui, par votre obéissance,
m'avez donné pour fils un héros!

Avec Dieudonné le héros
à votre tête, ô Gâthina,
vous aurez la fortune,
et lui, verra le vrai pour vous!

Voici votre chef, ô Kuśika!
Suivez Dieudonné!
vous serez son patrimoine;
c'est bien là ce que nous savons!"

C'est pour cela que l'on a dit:

"Ainsi les fils de Viśvâmitra
tous ensemble, avec plaisir,
acceptèrent, eux les Gâthina,
Dieudonné pour chef et pour aîné.

Dieudonné, le prophète,
eut les deux patrimoines:
il régna sur les Jahnu
et instruisit les Gâthina."

Telle est la légende de Sunahšepa qui comporte cent stances et des strophes. L'Oblateur la conte au roi après l'Onction. Il la récite, assis sur un coussin d'or, et son Acolyte lui répond, assis lui aussi sur un coussin d'or. C'est que l'or est gloire: ainsi l'Oblateur confère-t-il la gloire au roi.

A chaque stance que récite l'Oblateur, l'Acolyte répond "Om!"; à chaque strophe "Oui!" C'est que "Om!" est divin, et "Oui!" humain. Ainsi libère-t-on ce qui est divin et ce qui est humain de tout mal, de tout péché.

C'est pourquoi un roi victorieux doit demander, même en dehors du sacrifice, qu'on lui récite la légende de Sunahšepa: pas le moindre soupçon de péché demeurera en lui.

Il doit donner mille son oblateur et cent à l'Acolyte; l'Oblateur recevra aussi les coussins d'or et un char attelé d'une mule blanche.

Ceux qui désirent des fils peuvent demander aussi une récitation de cette légende. Ils auront des fils. ①

~~(Aitareya-Brahmana 7-18)~~

① Jusqu'ici le texte de AB vii, 13-14.

A fin desituer le contexte du mythe, nous mentionnerons, a) son passé immédiat, à savoir son milieu englobant qu'on trouve dans la notion de sacrifice; b) son état présent, à savoir son 'Sitz im Leben', et c) son futur, sa continuation dans la tradition, sa tension vectorielle, sans toutefois entrer dans les détails si intéressants soient-ils, pour une recherche spécialisée (1).

(1) Les références des notes servir d'introduction à une approche indologique plus poussée.

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The Story of Śunahśepa

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Śunahśēpa's name first appears in written literature as the singer of a group of hymns in the Rig Veda (I, 24-30). Although Varuna, Indra and Ushas are among those addressed and though the hymns are echoed in the myth we are concerned with here, there is much in the hymns that precludes their being based upon it. Geldner holds that when the singer speaks of being bound, he means being sick rather than literally being tied up, as in the myth.¹ Winternitz thinks the hymns derive from another, much older myth concerning Śunahśēpa that is now lost to us.²

Our myth comes from the Aitareya Brahmana (VII, 113-18). Thus it is among the earliest Indian prose writings and one of the few myths of such vintage that has come down to us in its entirety.³ Its ancientness is also attested by the fact that the memory of human sacrifice at a king's coronation, something which presumably belonged to pre-history, is nowhere else preserved.⁴

The myth was apparently popular and well-known, for allusions are made to it in any number of writings. The most complete and most important of these is found in the Satapatha Brahmana, where we learn that the myth was recited to kings on the day of their coronation.⁵

I have not taken up here the continuation of Śunahśēpa's mythic career. In later accounts he moves to the periphery as Viśvamita and especially Hariscandra take over the center.⁶ In the process he becomes increasingly ethereal and psychologically unreal.⁷

The original import of the legend apparently paralleled that of Abraham and his near-sacrifice of Isaac, that is to say, the mythic reinforcement of the prohibition of human sacrifice. This is clear from the events and dialogue. Müller also sees it brought out in the symbol of the fire alter and in Ajigarta's name, which he holds is related to that of the last tribe reputed to have sacrificed humans.⁸ The name of the three sons indicates the story-teller's estimation of the clan.

This original purpose, however, is not enough to explain the myth's persistent appeal through some 30 centuries, nor does it throw any light on why we sense in it something important for us, who are so removed in time and temper from the circumstances of its origin. I believe the clue is found in a popular truism of contemporary scholars, namely that the West has characteristically led in natural philosophy but India has been unparalleled in psychology.⁹ By this, of course, we do not mean that analytical psychology which employs the methods of modern science and which we associate with Freud, Jung and others; rather we mean that descriptive psychology which plumbs the total human being functioning in his existential context. I am deeply impressed with the Indians' extraordinary--given the antiquity of this myth, their extraordinarily extraordinary--grasp of the highly varied interplay between man's convolved personality and life as it really is.

The story of Śunahśepa might be sub-titled "The Human Predicament," because here we have a number of individuals who are caught between legitimate desires, even needs, and the intractability of the world "out there."

Harisṅandra is one of these. The whole story gets under way because he wants a son and despite 100 wives, apparently cannot have one. This desire does not, of course, exclude the more or less selfish desire of any father. But it is more than this. A son is necessary if his entire life is not ultimately to be negated. As Narada tells him,

The father who looks upon the face of his son, born
living unto him,
Discharges his debt in him, attains to immortality
through him.

...Always through the son have fathers conquered
darkness;
He himself is again newly-born, the son is to him a
rescuing boat.

The husband entereth his wife, becomes the embryo in
her womb,
And is by her brought forth again, in the tenth moon,
as a new man.

Thus when the ṛṣi says,

Brahmans, desire a son for yourselves: in him ye have
the blameless world of heaven;

and

Light in the highest regions of heaven is the son to
his father,

he is not merely hyperbolizing temporal happiness.

This dilemma, then, explains Harisṅandra's self-defeating proposal to Varuna--explains it, that is, if we can remember here those many times we have closed an eye to reality, can remember

how many times we have tried to convince ourselves of the logic of illogic, simply because we wanted whatever-it-was so badly. Thus, not only is Hariscandra's dilemma a human one, so is his solution. And the same can be said of his evasion and procrastination after Rohita's birth. If only he can delay long enough, surely something will turn up.

Śunahśepa is a different case. His indestructible naiveté refuses to accept the complexity of the human condition. The misery of his early years should have taught him better, but some people are like that. He thinks the ways of the gods are the ways of men, only more just and more consistent; if he is loyal to them, they will be loyal to him--and in human terms. Imagine his confusion when he sees his father coming at him with the knife. Something has gone wrong. And he responds in the only way he knows how. Illogically he calls on the gods who have abandoned him. And illogically they reply. Ushas, the Dawn, resolves his problem and everyone else's. Apparently for one who refuses to see life as unfair, it isn't. But that is a talent that is given, not earned.

Even Ajigarta figures into our scheme. His despicableness is a caricature of human meanness (something we expect in myth and legend). But the psychological motivation is not at all far-fetched. How many of us, no matter what we should be or do, can keep thinking noble thoughts under the day-by-day pressure of penury and want? Ajigarta is the human person permanently malformed by an inhuman existence. His offer to return the cows is an

illustration of this. It is a defensive gesture. He has understandably come to see the world and society as inimical. His first instinct is to avoid being crushed. Whether or not Śunahśepa is complex enough to recognize this, he is spiritually acute enough to know the gesture does not portray repentance; he perceives that the desire to change interiorly is missing. The fact is, the deterioration has gone so far that Ajigarta has lost the faculty to think in terms of the interior life. It is on this deep and fundamental level that Śunahśepa sees his father as a Śudra rather than the Brahman that he is supposed to be.

Śunahśepa, like anyone for whom life resolves itself in simple categories, is pretty hard on the old man. After all, to what extent is Ajigarta responsible for the kind of person he has become? And yet paradoxically the son is probably right. Given another chance Ajigarta would do it again--or worse. And so he must pay. That is his predicament. Whatever subtleties man may indulge in, life itself has a way of disregarding ^{MOTIVES} ~~fault~~.

The central figure is Rohita. Caught through no fault of his own--and who does ask to be born into the human predicament?--caught through no fault of his own between superior obligation and the desire to live on a human plane, he reacts like most of us: he runs away--in this case, literally. Because he is a basically sound person, however, his cowardice has limits. His father's illness strengthens him to fulfill the compact. Even if we do not always do what we ought, most of us do what we have to do, even if the necessity is only moral.

Our moral obligations, however, are not all that clear. The

gods disagree among themselves. Indra's advice provides the temporary compromise man always has an eye cocked for. And when, finally, Indra fails to show up, another side-step offers itself in the person of Ajigarta and Śunahśepa. It should be remembered that Rohita's action in buying Śunahśepa as a surrogate was by no means as reprehensible to his contemporaries as to us.. Yet even from our view-point the whole thing rings true--maybe truer. The unnecessarily generous offer of 100 cows, the casuistry that Varuna would be better served by a Brahman than a Kshatriya, the near-panic in buying off Ajigarta a second and third time before anything could happen to stop the sacrifice and throw everything back to the original situation--all this is a masterful portrayal of an all too human being striving to fulfill an obligation in a way that down deep he suspects is less than perfect.

And it works. It shouldn't. Only the brave and strong and upright should be rewarded; the weak and cowardly should be punished. But fortunately life isn't always like that. If devastating floods are indifferent to virtue, so are the sweet showers of May. Poetic justice, after all, is only poetic.

Viśvamitra is the most shadowy of the principal characters. But we must remember that he has had a pre-history. He figures in any number of myths and comes to this particular narration fully developed; all the battles have long since been fought. He does not chide either Hariscandra or Rohita, although their conduct has been less than heroic. He is not even all that hard on Ajigarta. He also knows his limitations when Śunahśepa calls on him for help. Isn't this that mature humility that comes from hard-won

self-knowledge? On the other hand he recognizes the strength of the uncomplex Śunahśepa, sees in him the rare vocation to serve the higher good unflinchingly, espies in the soul of this youth that pearl of great price for which he, Viśvāmitra, is willing to sell all, not to possess but to serve.

And so we see these five characters as variations on the theme of the human predicament: man caught between his aspirations, sometimes heavenly and sometimes earthly, and the reality of life in this world. What a man would, and what a man can. The solution is heavily weighted on the side of the ideal. Viśvāmitra and Śunahśepa are the saved, and Ajigarta should have accepted starvation rather than abandon his Brahmanic values. The penalty he pays in the dissolution of his humanity is frightening. Yet the tale is by no means one-sided.

Almost in spite of itself, it cannot ignore the reality of the predicament. It cannot pretend life is really all that simple. It will not abandon Hariscandra and Rohita. There is a less perfect way.

This hope is the moral dimension of the myth. It is what saves it from being a mere description of the human situation, no matter how charming. And what is implicit in the careers of Hariscandra and especially Rohita is made explicit in the symbolism of Ushas. Śunahśepa calls upon god after goddess, but only the dawn responds--the dawn which, along with the first signs of spring, is man's oldest and most universal symbol of hope.

Yet it is not the hope of just anything whatsoever. It is the harbinger of a new day, that is of a new life. In Śunahśepa's

case the promise is immediately fulfilled. But just as Śunahśepa's new life actually had its origin in his past, namely in the kind of person he was, so we find it hard to believe Rohita will immediately become the "either/or" person he thinks he wants to be. But he has made progress, and thanks to Ushas he can now build upon this. Wisdom can do a lot of things denied will power.

Here more than in anything else the myth reveals its depth of knowledge of the human soul. Again and again and again we must live through the human predicament, but this we can do only with hope. The hope of a new day. The hope of a day that will be new because we will be new. And we will be new because we will have the strength and integrity and perspicaciousness to choose the better way unhesitatingly. That day will probably never come, and we know it. But our hope in it enables us to tolerate ourselves as we struggle through, and it can even help us approximate if not completely accomplish its own fulfillment. Without it the predicament will mill us between its stones.

As mentioned earlier, this myth was recited to the king on the day of his coronation. In the years that followed, as one by one his youthful dreams were frustrated by stupid friends and spiteful enemies and his own limitations, he had many occasions to recall it. Hopefully he learned enough from it to smile when he realized--at last--why it had been included in that busy day, so many years ago.

NOTES

¹Geldner, p. 24.

²Winternitz, p. 188. Also see n. 1.

³loc. cit.

⁴loc. cit.

⁵Sata. Brah., III, p. 95.

⁶Although I could not locate a complete English translation, the Markandeya Purana seemingly contains the bulk of the Hariscandra myths.

⁷This judgment is admittedly based on partial evidence, such as snatches and paraphrases of the myths.

⁸Müller, p. 119.

⁹Smith, p. 8; Nakamura, p. 152f.



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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Sumat'iepa

1. When so many theories about the future → a myth about the present

2. When so many warnings → a message of hope

3. When so many effects of the West → a story from the East

↳ including that of exploiting the spiritual East

4. I am not propounding a thesis - not offering a solution -

but - inviting to listen - An experiment

↳ suggesting to foundate western man's life by incorporating an Indian myth.

5. The Myth →

6. Analysis of the person

God -
men
reword.

Sumat'iepa - homo religiosus
Rohita - .. sacreances
Harrishah - " politics

(53)

Sumat'iepa → (59)

R.S. 256B
January 30, 1973
Alex Manville

The story of Sunahsepa.

Although King Harichandra (Harishandra, Hariskandra) has 100 wives and several daughters, he has no son. In his anguish he makes a deal with Varuna: if the god will grant him a son, he will sacrifice him to the god at birth. Varuna accepts and Prince Rohita is born a short while later. Despite the original agreement and despite Varuna's constant grumblings about people who make deals and don't keep them, the Kg understandably keeps putting the sacrifice off. Finally, after he has exhausted all his ploys in holding Varuna at bay and R. is already a young man, the Kg finds he must honor his bargain and tells his son all about it.

R. isn't overly thrilled with his father's notions of piety and takes off for the deep dark forest. At the end of his patience, V. visits the kg with dropsy. Somehow R. hears about this in his forest fastness and decides to return and save his father by submitting to the sacrifice.

On the road home, however, he runs into Indra, who advises him to wander for a year and think things over. R. readily complies. This happens four more times. At the end of the fifth year, however, Indra fails to show, and R. turns his face, albeit without enthusiasm, once again homeward.

This time he comes across the Brahman Agigarta and his family: a wife and three sons. R. has had an idea during his wanderings and decides to try it out on Agigarta. The Brahman and his family are very poor, very tattered and very hungry. R. offers A. 100 (1000?) cows for one of his sons to serve as his substitute in the sacrifice. R. reasons that V. will buy the scheme because this way he will get a real live Brahman rather than a Kshatriya. A. accepts the offer in principal but reneges when R. asks for the oldest son. The mother, in turn, won't give up the youngest. This leaves the middle son, Sunahsepa with no one to champion him, and he goes for 100 cows.

The arrival of the little troupe in the kg's city coincides with one of the holiest feasts of the year. V. readily acquiesces to the substitution, and it is decided that Sunahsepa will be the main sacrifice at the solemnest hour of the feast. Sunahsepa's thoughts on the matter are not recorded.

The principal actors gather, four very holy and important Rishis are appointed, and Sunahsepa is led to the fire altar. At this juncture a problem arises. No one, including the kg and the Rishis, will bind the boy for sacrifice. Once again R. resorts to bribery, and for another 100 cows A. ties up his own son. Another impasse. Now that he's bound, no one will kill him. Again 100 cows does the trick, and A whets his knife.

As he sees his father coming toward him with the naked blade, Sunahsepa decides things are getting out of hand and calls to the Rishis--obviously sympathetic toward him throughout--for help. They, in typical priestly fashion, defer to their superiors--in this instance the gods. At first the gods aren't much help either: each passes the matter to the next. Finally, "just in the nick of time,"

Sunahsepa hits the right button. As he recites each of three verses to Ushas the Dawn, each of his three bonds drop away, and with the third the kg's dropsy disappears as well.

When all have recovered from their amazement and the jubilation has quieted down, A. attempts to recover his son and take him home. But Vishvamitra, the holiest and most respected of the Rishis, intervenes. He scolds the unnatural father mercilessly, and Sunahsepa himself adds: "What has never been found even among Sudras, thou hast been seen with a knife in your hand, and hast taken 300 cows for me!" A. suddenly realizes how monstrous his actions have been and returns the 300 cows as a sign of his contrition. But Sunahsepa will still have nothing to do with him: "He who has once done wrong will commit another sin; thou hast not abandoned the way of A Sudra: what thou hast done is irremediable!" "Irremediable!" echoes Vishvamitra. The Rishi then adopts the fatherless boy, renames him Devarata, and leads him off to a life consonant with his obvious vocation from the gods.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Provenance: Rig Veda 1,24-30
Aitareya Brahmana (vii, 113-18)
- 2 Primary intention: prohibition of human sacrifice (Abraham & Isaac)
 - a fire altar
 - b names
- 3 Other themes
 - a the three fathers
 - b locus in life--importance of being what you're supposed to be.
 - c power of prayer/obedience
- 4 Unity--separation--reconciliation
- 5 Lesser points
 - a Rohita (pivotal): flight/forest/wandering (2-fold)
 - b complexity of social structure
- 6 Problems
 - a original agreement — Not a contract but expression of the Human Condition
 - b Varuna/Indra/Ushas
 - c ?
→ Hope. New life.