

# THE GOOSE IN INDIAN LITERATURE AND ART

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# THE GOOSE IN INDIAN LITERATURE AND ART

BY

THE LATE

JEAN PHILIPPE VOGEL

WITH 12 PLATES AND 2 TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS



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*chosen by the author, while finally some immaterial digressions and repetitions in the text called for being discarded. So the task of the editors confined itself to a supervision of the work, only touching those parts which, had he lived, the author himself would undoubtedly have revised.*

*It is the sincere hope of the editors that the work in its present form will be welcomed by the many friends of Professor Vogel as his final tribute to Indian culture, not unworthy of the long list of publications which established his long-standing repute in this field of research.*

Leiden, September 1962

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## INTRODUCTION

In Sanskrit and Pali literature we frequently meet an aquatic bird called *hamsa* and this word according to European dictionaries of those languages means not only a goose but also a swan and flamingo. In translations by western scholars *hamsa* is usually not rendered by 'goose', but either by 'swan' or 'flamingo'.<sup>1</sup> This preference we can well understand. In this part of the world the goose, known chiefly in its degrading domesticated state, is looked upon as a homely animal unfit to enter the exalted realm of poetry. It is only at the approach of Christmas that the goose is greeted with joy, as is so well described by Charles Dickens in his delightful account of the Christmas meal of Bob Cratchit, the shabby clerk of Scrooge. But it is only in a roasted condition that the bird can evoke such enthusiasm.

Besides, the goose labours under the undeserved blame of stupidity. This low estimation of the bird's intellectual powers is due to our own ignorance. Scandinavians familiar with geese in their natural state admire their caution and courage. We need only refer to two distinguished Swedes — Bengt Berg the writer of several books on birds, and Selma Lagerlof who in her *Niels Holgersson's Marvellous Travels* has given us a true epic of the wild geese. Need we mention also the honoured name of the English author and artist, Peter Scott, to show that in Western Europe a better understanding exists? Recently the researches of Konrad Lorenz and his Institute for Animal Psychology at Greifenberg on the Ammer See have drawn considerable attention.

It is curious that Indian scholars have followed the lead of their Western *confreres* in their preference for the swan. Sometimes they use the Sanskrit word untranslated as if it signified a bird peculiar to India and unknown in other parts of the world. An attractive album published by the Government of India shows a picture of the 'Swan, a favourite of Indian poets'. But it is evident from the accessories that it is a tame specimen in a tank belonging to some park.<sup>2</sup>

If we turn to ancient India we find the goose associated with conceptions and

<sup>1</sup> H. H. Wilson in his transl. of the *Mṛcchbhakatika* (*Theatre of the Hindus* 1827 vol. I, p. 100) renders *hamsa* by 'swan', though well aware that the word really designates the wild grey goose as he points out in a footnote. The late Dr. C. R. Lanman, professor of Sanskrit in Harvard University, remarks with reference to *Atharvaveda* VIII 724 'Render *hansas* by the prosaic 'geese', since the poetic tone of the AV is not so elevated as to make that version intolerable. *Atharva Veda Samhita* transl. by W. D. Whitney, vol. II p. 501.

<sup>2</sup> *India: A Pictorial Survey* ed. by the Publ. Div. Min. of Inform. and Broadc., Government of India 1950, p. 22.



sentiments entirely different from those of the West. For the Indians the *hamsa* is the noble bird *par excellence* worthy of being sung by poets like Kālidāsa and figured on religious monuments. The goose is the vehicle of Brahmā the Creator. In ancient fables he is the embodiment of the highest virtues and in Buddhist *jātakas* we meet him reborn as the Bodhisattva, the exalted being predestined to become the Buddha Sākyamuni.

But are we justified in identifying the *hamsa* of Indian literature with the goose? Should we not follow our predecessors, including great scholars like Bohtlingk and Kern, and rather choose the swan or the flamingo, more graceful in the western eye than a plump goose? The question is: are we really allowed to make a choice? Or does Sanskrit *hamsa* mean a goose and nothing else? <sup>3</sup>

In the first place we must consider the actual relations of those three species of aquatic birds with India. According to ornithologists <sup>4</sup> it is very rarely that swans make their appearance in India. They cannot be called indigenous. As regards the flamingo, two kinds are found in India, one being the common flamingo (*phoenicopterus roseus* or *antiquorum*), which has its breeding places on the moors and salt lakes of Central Asia. Its favourite haunt in India is Gujerat, but Stuart Baker asserts that it occurs more or less throughout the subcontinent. The sound produced by the common flamingo is described as a goose-like conversational babble. In this respect therefore there is a resemblance between the flamingo and the goose, but otherwise the appearance of the two species of birds is very different. It is unlikely that the Indians should have designated them by the same name.

The ordinary goose found in India is *Anser indicus*. It is greyish brown and white and easily recognizable by two black bars or stripes at the back of the head. It lives in India from October to April and breeds on the lakes of Tibet and Central Asia. It is common in northern India from the Indus Valley to Assam, most common in the West, and less numerous towards the East, and in Central India. More to the south it is rare, but specimens have been met with in Southern India.

There are other species of geese, prevalently greycoloured, which hibernate in India. They arrive and depart at approximately the same time as *Anser indicus*, but are less frequent. One of them is the greylag (*Anser anser* or *cinereus*) which according to Hume and Marshall is a cold weather visitant to nearly the whole

<sup>3</sup> The corresponding word: Greek *χην* Latin *anser* (*hanser*). Old German *gans*. Anglo-Saxon *gos* point to an Indo-European \**ghansr* from which Old Indian *hamsa* too is derived.

<sup>4</sup> I wish here to express my indebtedness to the late Professor E. D. van Oort and to Dr. G. C. D. Juge, Conservator in the Museum of Natural History of the University of Leiden.

of Continental India to the north of the Vindhya Presumably this is the bird indicated in Sanskrit by the words *kādamba* and *kalahamsa* <sup>6</sup> The *kādamba* is mentioned in a celebrated passage of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* (XIII, 55), where the poet describes the confluence of the Ganges and Jamna at Prayāga (Allahabad) The water of the two rivers differs in colour, and the mingling of these colours — white and bluish grey — is illustrated by a series of well chosen similes He thus compares it with a necklace of pearls interlaced with brilliant sapphires, a garland of white and blue lotusflowers, a white line of autumnal clouds with the sky visible through the gaps, and also with a row of *rājahamsas* mixed with *kadambas* <sup>6</sup>

The *hamsa* is a bird of passage This important fact was of course well known and may have been a main cause of the reverence paid to this bird in ancient India Must it not have appeared a marvel that at a fixed time of the year these birds flocked together and in a northward flight towards the snowy mountains disappeared from sight, and after some months, again at a fixed time, returned to their familiar lakes and pools in India? They came back in larger numbers, for now they were accompanied by their young ones, hatched in the far off trans Himalayan region

This marvellous migration of the *hamsa* is a favourite theme of the classical poets Besides, they mention its goal — the sacred lake Mānasa or Mānasarovar, the Best of Lakes, as it is called nowadays It is situated to the south of Mount Kailāsa, the abode of Siva and Pārvaṭī The migration of the *hamsa* thus acquired a religious significance For Lake Mānasa is a famous *tīrtha* or place of pilgrimage, although owing to the hardships and dangers of the journey thither, the number of pilgrims can never have been very great

There are very few Europeans who have visited the sacred lake and left a record of their journey Best known are the two intrepid explorers William Moorcroft and Sven Hedin, the Swedish geographer The dates of their journeys are separated by nearly a century Moorcroft travelled to Mānasarovar in the summer of 1815 and returned in the autumn A very accurate and detailed account in which the traveller describes his difficult march from day to day was edited by Colebrooke <sup>7</sup> who calls it an arduous and perilous enterprise The object was to open to Great Britain means of obtaining the materials of the finest

<sup>6</sup> *Kadambah kalahamsas* syat *Amarakosa* II 5 23

<sup>6</sup> *Kvācikhaganam priyamanasanam kadambasamsargavatina panktib* The commentator Mallinatha explains 'the birds which love Manasa' by *rajahamsa* and *kadamba* by *nilahamsa*

<sup>7</sup> *Asiatic Researches* vol XII 1818 pp 380 536 D Anville's *Carte générale du Thibet* (1733) supplied for the first time a clear trustworthy representation of Mānasarovar But he identified the Lan tchou with the Ganges and the upper Indus he makes a tributary entering that river

woollen fabric' Besides accomplishing this primary object, Moorcroft's journey brought an interesting accession of knowledge of a country never before explored and ascertained the existence, and approximately determined the situation of Mānasaróvara, verifying at the same time the fact, that it gives origin neither to the Ganges, nor to any other rivers reputed to flow from it

Sven Hedin visited the sacred lake in the summer of 1907 In his book *Trans Himalaya* there are several passages about the wild geese showing a much more sympathetic understanding of those air travellers than is usual with West Europeans<sup>8</sup> On 24 October 1906, while encamped he writes 'At ten o'clock at night a flock of wild geese passed over our camp in the brilliant, silvery white moon shine They flew very low, and quacked the whole time Probably they intended to settle at the spring, but went on when they found the place occupied' Sven Hedin observes that the tribes of wild geese follow always the same routes through Tibet and concludes 'I am fond of the wild geese, and admire their intelligence and their wonderful bump of locality' In August 1907 the traveller was encamped on Rakas tal (Langak tso), a lake connected with Mānasarovar

Here, he says, 'the wild geese breed in spring, and here lay several thousands of eggs, in twos, threes, or fours, in a nest of stones and sand I pictured to myself the happy cackling that must go on in the spring when the goose mothers sit with expectant hearts on the hard nests, and the sun floods Gurla Manadatta with a sea of light The Holy Lake itself he describes as follows The oval lake, somewhat narrower in the south than in the north, and with a diameter of about 15½ miles, lies like an enormous turquoise embedded between two of the finest and most famous mountain giants of the world, the Kailās in the north and Gurla Manadatta in the south, and between huge ranges, above which the two mountains uplift their crowns of bright white eternal snow Both Moorcroft and Sven Hedin, on their visit to Lake Mānasa, saw but one species of birds of passage, viz, geese No swans or flamingoes

Another point of interest in Sven Hedin's account should be noticed On March 30, 1908 he says 'The wild geese had now commenced their migrations, and we constantly heard their cries above our tents, and on first May There was no spring as yet (viz in Tibet) But the wild geese were on their migration The month of April is therefore the time when the geese leave India It is indeed natural that their migration should take place at the beginning of the hot season when the scorching heat threatens to dry up the pools and marshes in the plains

<sup>8</sup> *Trans Himalaya* 1909 vol I pp 166f vol II pp 174f and 106 The Tibetan names of the lake Manasa according to Sven Hedin are Tso mavang (correct spelling *Mtsho ma pham*) and Tso rinpoche (The Precious Lake)

Indian poets, however, in innumerable passages associate the departure of the *hamsas* with the commencement of the monsoon — in other words, about the end of June, two or three months later than the time mentioned by the Swedish traveller. How are we to account for this discrepancy? In India the advent of the rains is hailed with joy. The appearance of the watercarrying clouds is described by Indian poets in glowing measures. Not only mankind, but also the animals exhausted by the intolerable heat, rejoice. The poets must have felt the need of making their favourite bird, the *hamsa*, share in the universal exultation. They solved the problem in their own way and, while departing from reality, they imagined the geese joining the clouds on their northward course and thus made the moment of their migration more impressive and dramatic.

Poets are not naturalists, although they may possess an intuitive knowledge of nature. In their works we find conceits due to poetical imagination. Kalidāsa brings in the *hamsa* in his famous poem *Meghadūta*. The Cloud Messenger. The moment when the exiled Yaksha addresses the cloud, whom he wishes to commission with a message to his wife dwelling on Mount Kailāsa, is expressly stated to be the last day of Ashādhā, viz. the end of the hot season.<sup>9</sup>

The *rājahamsas*, he says (verse 12) longing for Manasa on hearing thy ear enchanting thundering will join thee as companions in the sky as far as Kailāsa, holding bits of shoots of the filaments of the lotus as provender on their journey. It is quite likely that the wild geese feed on the fibre (Sanskrit *bīsa*) of the lotus plant. It is also used as human food and sold in the bazaars of Kashmir. But it is clearly a poetical conceit that the geese should carry such provender on their flight to Lake Mānasa.

In verse 23, on the contrary, the poet alludes to a well known habit of birds of passage when he says that the *hamsas* accompanying the cloud will make a few days' halt in Dasāra.<sup>10</sup> Quite possibly Kalidāsa had himself watched the wild geese halting in that well watered country.

Further on (verse 57), while describing the air route to be followed by the cloud, the Yaksha says: After having passed the various marvels along the slopes of the Snowy Mountains, thou must proceed to the northern region by that Krauñcharandhra which is the Gate of the Geese (Skt. *hamsadwāra*) and preserves the fame of Parasurāma. Here the poet refers to a gap in the mountains believed

<sup>9</sup> The commentator Vallabhadeva rejects the variant *prathamadivase*.

<sup>10</sup> Dasāra has been erroneously connected with Dosarene (Periplus § 62) a Greek form derived from Tosala Tosali. Erakachchha mentioned in Pali literature as a town of Dasanna (Skt. Dasāra) is identical with the Eragassa metropolis of Ptolemy (VII. 1. 50). The little town of Erachh in the Moth tahsil of the Jhansi district marks the site of the metropole and still retains its name. *BSOAS* vol. XII, p. 122.

to be due to the divine hero Paraśurāma who split the rock Krauñchīa with his formidable battle-axe<sup>11</sup>. The spot has been identified with the Niti Pass. This important mountain-pass (16,628 feet) is on the road leading from Garhwal to Tīrthapurī and Mānasarovar. Moorcroft gives an accurate description of this route. He first followed the road to Badrināth along the valley of the Alakananda, one of the head-waters of the Ganges. On May 26 he took the road to the Niti Pass. It runs at some distance along the Dhaulī river which joins the Vishnuganga, the united stream being the Alakananda. It is a fact that the wild geese, when crossing the Himalaya, take their way along the passes — another proof of their sagacity. There is therefore some reason to identify the "Gate of the Geese" with the Niti Pass.

The geese return to India in October. It is the beginning of autumn when the heavy rainfall has revived nature and replenished the riverbeds, lakes and dried-up pools. The atmosphere is free from dust and the dark thunder-clouds have vanished. The clear sky is set off by sparse white clouds and the moonlight is exceedingly bright. Indian poets associate the advent of this welcome season with the return of the geese. In the *Ritusamhāra* (III, 1-2), a lyric poem sometimes ascribed to Kālidāsa, Autumn (*Sarad*) is likened to a bride of lovely form, clad in plumed *kāśa* grass, her face enchanting like an expanded lotus-flower, her slender limbs charming like ripening rice-halms, and her anklets tinkling by the sounds of excited geese. The earth is whitened by plumed grass, the nights by the cool-rayed moon, the waters of the streams by geese, the lakes by white waterlilies, the borders of the forest by alstonias bending under the burden of their flowers and the groves by jasmine trees. The third chapter of Bāṇa's historical romance *Harshacharita* opens with a description of Autumn in which the author says that in the beginning of this season the *kādamba* gives voice and the caravan of *haṃsas* like travellers are welcomed back<sup>12</sup>.

There are certain conceptions regarding the *haṃsa* frequently referred to by Indian poets. These conceits are partly derived from actual habits of the bird, but some are clearly imaginary. This is the case with the belief that the *haṃsa* is capable of separating the milk out of a mixture with water. This marvellous quality is mentioned in the story of Dushyanta and Sakuntalā, related in the *Mahābhārata*<sup>13</sup>.

When the king refuses to acknowledge her as his wife, she rebukes him in a

<sup>11</sup> In Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, p. 115, 4, 6, C M Ridding's transl. 1896 p. 48 it is said of Tārāpīda, the king of Ujjayīnī "From him, too, proceeded a host of virtues, like a flock of *haṃsas* from Mount Krauñchīa

<sup>12</sup> *Harshacharita*, Bombay 1897, p. 83 E B Cowell and F W Thomas transl., 1897, p. 70 Comm. *Kādambāḥ kṛishṇaḥaṃsāḥ*

<sup>13</sup> *Ādiparvan*, 74, 91

series of stanzas In one of them she says The fool hearing good and evil words, when men are talking, accepteth the impure sayings as hog doth ordure But the wise man hearing good and evil words, when men are talking, accepteth the virtuous sayings as the goose doth milk from water

In the introduction to the *Pañchatantra*<sup>14</sup> it is said that the study of Sanskrit grammar requires twelve years As the span of human life is short and the obstacles are many, it is advisable to grasp the essence and omit the trash in such manner as the geese separate the milk from the water

The popular belief attested by ancient literature still subsists in India, as appears from a passage in Premchand's well known story *Pañch Paramesvar* After the verdict of the *Pañchāyat* has been announced by Chaudhari Algū, Rāmdhan Mīsr and other members express their approval by saying This is truly a *Pañchāyat* Now the milk has been clearly separated from the water<sup>15</sup>

Indian poets attribute to the *hamsa* a graceful gait and a charming voice To Europeans solely acquainted with the domestic goose this may seem strange If a lady were told that she walked like a goose, she would hardly appreciate the compliment But in Indian poetry *hamsagaminī* is decidedly an *epitheton ornans* applied to a fair damsel If we watch a stately procession of geese in one of our public parks, it will be admitted that Indian estimation is founded on fact Despite their plumpness they move on the firm ground with more ease and grace than their rivals, the swans

The third chapter of the Lawbook of Manu contains prescripts relating to matrimony and in the first place states the rules to be observed by an Aryan when choosing a wife Here it is laid down that he should marry a woman who has no bodily defects, a pleasant name, and the gait of a goose or elephant (III, 10)

In a more poetical form the idea is expressed by Kālidāsa in the fourth act of his *Vikramorvaśī* Here King Purūravas, the hero of the play, distracted by the separation from his spouse, the nymph Urvasī, roams in search of her through the wilderness In his despair he addresses the animals of the wood and asks whether they have seen his beloved On hearing the gagging of geese, he first believes it to be the tinkling anklets of Urvasī but aware of his error, he addresses the leader of the flock King of the water fowl, by and by you will proceed to Lake Mānasa, but now drop the lotus fibre, your provender for the journey, and take it up anon When his request is not noticed, he fancies that the *hamsa* has appropriated Urvasī's gait and therefore must have seen her He orders the

<sup>14</sup> *Pañchatantra kathamukha* v 10

<sup>15</sup> *Sapt Saroj Calcutta samā* 1979 pp 51 f *iska nam panchayat hai' dudh ka dudh aur pani ka pani kardiya'*

robber to render her to him, for it is laid down that a thief has to surrender the total booty, if part of it is discovered in his possession

As regards the vocal accomplishments of the *hamsa*, Indian opinion is fully shared by the Scandinavians Sven Hedin and Bengt Berg are exultant when they hear the sonorous cackling of the wild geese who are to them like beloved relatives

In India this estimation can be traced back to epic times In the Rāmāyana (II, 112, 15) Rāma, when addressing his brother Bharata, is said to speak with the voice of an enamoured *hamsa* (*mattabamsasvarab*)

The poets of the classical period compare the tinkling of the ankle rings worn by women with the gagging of the geese This ubiquitous simile is never wanting in lyrical poetry The reverence paid to the goose in ancient India may perhaps be partly explained from the close connections of this bird with water, the element so essential to growth and prosperity The great importance of water is tersely expressed in a Sanskrit inscription from the Western Himalaya by the words *jalam hi jīvitam loke* — Water is life in this World May we not assume that the prevalence of the lotus flower — red, white and blue — in Indian poetry is due to the same cause? The goose and the lotus are very closely associated The lotus plant does not grow in the Ganges as western poets like Heinrich Heine and Paul Verlaine would make us believe, but in the stagnant water of lakes and pools, which are also the favourite haunts of the geese Such watery resorts were no doubt more abundant in ancient times than they are now, as their number and extent must have shrunk by the spread of cultivation and consequent deforestation Large tracts of country like Braj along the banks of the Jamna, where nowadays trees are scarce, were once covered by forest as is attested by Sanskrit literature The same conclusion may be drawn from place-names as Mahāvana and Vrinavana

Another aquatic bird, the Ruddy Sheldrake or Brahminy Duck (*Casarca ferruginea*) plays a prominent part in Sanskrit poetry It is a handsome bird of a bright orange brown colour, black collar round the neck, black and white wings and lower abdomen chestnut, and similar to the goose in structure They are found on the sandy banks of the great rivers and lakes, but as a rule only in pairs The *chakravaka*, as this bird is called in Sanskrit, is a symbol of conjugal attachment and frequent reference is made to his grief, when he is separated from his mate during the night<sup>16</sup>

The proverbial attachment of the *chakravaka* to his mate is also observed in

<sup>16</sup> E. C. Stuart Baker *Fauna of British India Birds* Vol VI 1929 p 418

other species of aquatic birds like the crane (*sarasa*)<sup>17</sup> and the curlew (*kraun̄cha*) It is also conspicuous in the goose and this virtue is recognized by Indians and Tibetans

Sven Hedin<sup>18</sup> relates that when Tubges, the huntsman of the expedition, had shot a gander, Oang Gye, the son of the governor of Saka dzong came to complain to him He was quite overcome at this brutal murder, and could not conceive how a man could be so heartless and cruel Sven Hedin tried to excuse it by remarking that they were dependent for their livelihood on what the country yielded The Tibetan retorted But in this district you have plenty of sheep When Sven Hedin asked him whether it was not just as wrong to kill sheep and eat their flesh, Oang Gye replied No, that is quite another matter You surely will not compare sheep to wild geese There is as much difference between them as between sheep and human beings For, like human beings, the wild geese marry and have families And if you sever such a union by a thoughtless shot, you cause sorrow and misery The goose which has just been bereaved of her mate will seek him fruitlessly by day and night, and will never leave the place where he has been murdered Her life will be empty and forlorn, and she will never enter upon a new union, but will remain a widow A woman cannot mourn more deeply than she will, and the man who has caused such sorrow draws down a punishment on himself The excellent Oang Gye was quite inconsolable We might shoot antelopes, wild sheep, and partridges as much as ever, if only we left the wild geese in peace I had heard in the Lob country similar tales of the sorrow of the swans when their union was dissolved by death It was moving to witness Oang Gye's tenderness and great sympathy for the wild geese, and I felt the deepest respect for him Many a noble and sensitive heart beats in the cold and desolate valleys of Tibet

The moving speech of the Tibetan is confirmed by an incident communicated to me by an English friend While out shooting near Fyzabad, the ancient Ayodhyā, he noticed a flock of wild geese flying down the Gogra He took a long shot and one of the birds dropped on a sand bank in the middle of the river Immediately after another bird detached itself from the flock and joined its wounded mate My friend repented his shot

In Japan a goose is sent to brides because the wild geese are said always to fly in pairs and to be faithful to each other Thus the goose became a symbol of

<sup>17</sup> A remarkable example of the conjugal attachment of the Indian crane (*Grus Antigone* Skt *sarasa*) is recorded by the Emperor Jahangir *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* transl by Alexander Rogers ed by Henry Beveridge vol II (London 1914) pp 17 f

<sup>18</sup> *Trans Himalaya* vol II p 362



marriage and as a *netsuke* it is used as a wedding present and emblem of conjugal attachment<sup>19</sup>.

A point of great interest is the colour of the *haṃsa*. In numberless passages of Indian literature it is emphasized that the *haṃsa* is white. We have already quoted verses from the *Ṛitusambhāra* in which Autumn (*Śarad*) is described. A proverb says:<sup>20</sup> "The *haṃsa* is white and the heron is white. What then is the difference between the *haṃsa* and the heron? In the test of milk and water it is proved which is the *haṃsa* and which the heron". Evidently the white goose was not unknown in ancient India and we may assume that, on account of its spotless brilliance and rarity, it appealed to the poets and was honoured with the name of "Royal goose" (*rājahaṃsa*)<sup>21</sup>. This assumption is supported by the best authority possible, viz. the *Amarakośa* which states (II, 24) that the *rājahaṃsas* are white with red bills and feet. The same source (II, 23) equates *kādamba* with *kalahaṃsa* and in another dictionary it is stated that the *haṃsa* with greyish wings (*pakṣhair dhūsaraiḥ*) is called *kalahaṃsa*<sup>22</sup>.

Guided by these data we can interpret a passage at the end of the first act of the *Little Clay Cart*<sup>23</sup>. Vasantasenā, the heroine of the play, importuned by the advances of the vile Śākāra, has found a refuge in the house of Chārudatta and the latter requests his friend the *vidūṣhaka* to accompany her to the residence of her mother. The *vidūṣhaka* feels little inclined to face the dangers of the king's highway in the dark night. He excuses himself by retorting: "If you yourself accompany her who has the gait of a grey goose (*kalahaṃsa*), you will shine like a royal gander (*rājahaṃsa*)".

The terms used may be taken as a veiled allusion to the inferior social standing of Vasantasenā.

Domesticated geese of both species as well as tame cranes must have been familiar to the townspeople of ancient India. When Chārudatta sorrowfully contrasts his poverty with his former opulence he says: "On my threshold overgrown with grass where once the *bali* used to be snatched away by geese and flocks of cranes, there falls now only a handful of grains licked by worms"<sup>24</sup>.

In the fourth act of the "Little Clay Cart", the *vidūṣhaka* is deputed by Chārudatta with an errand to Vasantasenā and describes at length the eight courts of

<sup>19</sup> T. Volker, *The Animal in Far Eastern Art*, Leiden, 1950, pp. 90 f.

<sup>20</sup> Böhtlingk, *Indische Sprüche*, no. 7358, Cf. nos. 2248 (899) and 5537 (2504).

<sup>21</sup> The Chinese white goose hibernates in China and is unknown in India.

<sup>22</sup> *Abhidhānatnamālā*.

<sup>23</sup> *Mrich* (ed. Stenzler), Bonn 1846 p. 25 ll. 13 f. In the translations I have consulted *rājahaṃsa* is rendered by "flamingo" and *kalahaṃsa* by "swan" or "duck" which is a combination unknown in nature.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6, ll. 17-20.

her palatial residence. The seventh court is a *voliere* in which he sees not only all kinds of birds in cages but also pairs of *rajabamsas* white like condensed moon beams, walking after the love sick girls whose gait they seem to study. A domestic crane, who walks up and down he compares to an old eunuch.<sup>25</sup>

In the *Harshacharita* and *Kadambari*, two famous works, composed by Bāna in highly artificial prose, domestic geese and cranes are frequently mentioned.<sup>26</sup> The fifth chapter of the *Harshacharita* or Life of Harshavardhana, the king of Thanesar and Kanauj, who ruled from 606 till 647 A.D., deals with the death of Harsha's father Prabhākaravardhana. The prince hastens to see his dying father and finds him attended by his mother, the principal queen Yasovatī. Evil omens presage the king's approaching death. The next morning Velā, the queen's head attendant, comes from the palace. The clash of her anklets, as they moved on her hurrying feet, set the craning geese (*bhavanahamsā*) of the palace cackling as if from a distance they were asking 'What? What?', while in a blindness of tears she seemed to learn the way from tame cranes (*grihasarasi*) screeching in answer to the girdle, which as she stumbled rang upon her broad hips.

She tells Harsha that his mother is resolved to become a *sati* and to follow her royal husband on the funeral pyre. When the prince went in haste to the women's apartments, he heard from a distance cries indicating the resolution of the other queens to follow the example of Yasovatī. 'See you forget me not, brother parrot in your cage! What say you? I am taken away from you — May we meet again, Śarika, in dreams — Mother, to whom shall I entrust the tame peacock who clings to my path? — Nurse, you must fondle this pair of geese like children. In this manner the *rānīs* took a final leave of their pets.'<sup>27</sup> In the *Kadambari* we read that the audience hall of King Sudraka was astir with the cries of the *kalahamsas* of the palace lake, which, charmed by the sound of the anklets, whitened the broad steps of the hall of audience. The same is said with reference to the courts of the palace of Tarapida.<sup>28</sup>

From these passages it appears that among the domestic animals kept at the court of Indian kings the geese took a prominent place. This is confirmed by the sculptures of Nāgārjunikonda.

In addition to swiftness of wing and other visible qualities, Indian imagination

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem* p. 71. 11. 21-22.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Magdalene Geiger *Der Hamsa. Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* Heft 10. München 1957. pp. 48-53. The authoress has collected numerous passages from the *Kadambari* and *Harshacharita* from which she concludes that the *hamsa* is the goose.

<sup>27</sup> *Harshacharita* (ed. Parab) Bombay 1897. pp. 163 f. E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas transl. 1897. pp. 148 f.

<sup>28</sup> *Kad.* (ed. Parab) Bombay 1896. p. 30. 1. 3 and p. 183. 1. 4. Ridding. p. 12.

endows the *bamsa* with moral virtues of the highest order. He is the noble bird *par excellence*, and worthy of being elected king of the feathered tribe. In Indian fables he figures as the embodiment of magnanimity in contrast with the malicious crow and the hypocritical heron. In the amusing story related in the *Mahābhārata* of the race between the goose and the crow, the former vanquishes his rival not only by his swiftness but also by his generosity.

The contrast between the goose and the heron is expressed in several proverbs.

A mother is his enemy, a father his foe, if a boy is not educated by them. He will not shine in good society as little as a heron in the midst of geese.<sup>29</sup>

This conception still exists in modern India. This is evident from Premchand's story *Parīkṣha* ('The Test') which relates how Sardār Sujān Singh, the aged prime minister of an Indian State, selects an able successor among a great number of candidates. The author says 'That old jeweller of men was stealthily watching where among those herons the goose was concealed'.<sup>30</sup>

The veneration of the goose can be traced back to the early Vedic period when the Aryans were settled in the Land of the Five Rivers. The *bamsas* are repeatedly mentioned in the hymns of the *Rigveda* and are in particular associated with the *Asvins*, the twin gods corresponding to the *Dioskouroi* of ancient Greece. In a hymn (IV, 45, 4) addressed to these benevolent deities it is said: 'The geese of ye two are eager for soma, harmless, gold feathered, gagging, awake at dawn, water swimming, cheerful and'.<sup>31</sup> In two other hymns (V, 78, 13, VIII, 35, 8) the *Asvins* are urged to partake of the soma prepared for them, flying like two *bamsas*. The *Maruts* or Storm gods too come to the soma like geese speeding to their nests (II, 34, 5). *Agni*, the god of fire, hisses in the water like a breeding gander (I, 65, 5).

When in a hymn to *Indra* (I, 163, 10) the horses of the Sun god are said to speed in a row (*īrenīśo*) like *bamsas*, this seems to refer to the well known triangular formation adopted by a flying flock of geese. In a hymn to *Vanaspati* (III, 8, 9) the sacrificial posts are also likened to geese speeding in a row and clad in white. The sacrificial post is an important implement of sacrifice which under the name of *vanaspati* or *stambh* is deified and invoked in the hymn above quoted. The tree is here described as well lopped with an axe, as anointed and adorned by priests, and the posts set up by priests are gods, and as gods go to the gods.<sup>32</sup> There are eleven stakes and directions are given as to the time when and

<sup>29</sup> Bothlingk, *Ind. Spr.* nos 4800 and 7358.

<sup>30</sup> *Sapti Saroj*, Calcutta 1917, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> A. A. Macdonell *Vedic Mythology* 1897, p. 104. The word *ubutab* the meaning of which is not known has been left untranslated.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.

the order in which they are to be erected. They evidently vary in length, the longest one being placed at the southern end of the row and the smallest one at the opposite and so that the tops will incline towards the north. The expression 'clad in white' can refer to the posts being anointed with milk as prescribed by the ritual in the *Satapatha brahmana*. There exists therefore a similarity both in arrangement and colour between the sacrificial posts and the geese.

In the Atharvaveda the *hamsa* is occasionally mentioned but the meaning of the magical spells collected in this Veda is often obscure. A charm against the poison of snakes (V, 12,1) begins with the following stanza. I have gone about the race of snakes, as the sun about the sky, as night about living creatures other than the goose, thereby do I ward off thy poison.<sup>33</sup> This seems to imply, as Whitney observes, that the *hamsa* is regarded as exempt from the dominion of night, doubtless as remaining awake. In the above quoted Rigvedic hymn (IV, 45,4) the epithet 'awake at dawn' (*usharbudh*) is applied to the geese.

In a long incantation (VIII, 7,24) addressed to the herbs for someone's restoration of health we read: 'What herbs of the Angirases<sup>34</sup> the eagles know, what heavenly ones the *raghats* (?) know, what ones the birds, the geese know, and what all the winged ones, what herbs the wild beasts know — those I call in aid for him.' From this stanza we may infer that the geese are credited with a special knowledge of healing herbs, such as in the preceding verse is also ascribed to the boar, the mongoose and the serpent.<sup>35</sup>

In the Upanishads the term *hamsa* is used to designate the wandering individual soul. It also indicates the all soul (*ātma*) or supreme spirit with which the individual soul is identical. In the Svetasvatara (1,6) it is said: 'The *hamsa* wanders in this great wheel of Brahman in which all come to life and perish, as long as he deems himself and the impeller (the divine principle) to be distinct. Then (when he recognizes their identity) chosen by him he attains immortality.' The *hamsa* is described in the Maitryupaniṣad (6,34-35) as the gold coloured bird staying in the heart and in the sun.

The goose cannot be said to be a sacred animal. It is not worshipped like Hanu mān and the cobra.

But it is closely associated with the gods and in that sense may be called divine. In the epics Brahma and Varuna assume the shape of a *hamsa* and in the Harivamśa Indra addresses the geese as brothers of the gods and as divine birds and scions of Kasyapa.

<sup>33</sup> I have followed the translation of Whitney *Atharva Veda Samhitā* vol. I p. 289 except his rendering of *hamsa* by 'the swan'.

<sup>34</sup> A mythical group of fire-priests.

<sup>35</sup> Whitney *op cit* vol. II p. 623.

The relative value attached to the goose can be estimated from chapter XI of the Lawbook of Manu which deals with penances for offences to be paid in the form of gifts to Brahmins. We read in verse 136: Having killed a goose, a crane, an heron, a peacock, a monkey, a hawk or a falcon, he shall bestow a cow on a Brahmin.<sup>36</sup>

In Hindu iconography the *hamsa* is the vehicle (*vāhana*) of Brahmā, but this conception seems to be comparatively late. Usually Brahmā is described as seated on a lotus. In chapter LVIII of Varāhamihira's *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* (6<sup>th</sup> cent.) which contains rules for the modelling of images of the principal deities, Brahma is described as four faced, holding a water jar and seated on a lotus. But in the *Matsyapurāṇa* it is stated that he is sometimes mounted on a goose and sometimes sitting on a lotus. The Mahābhārata contains the story of Rāma in a condensed form, called Rāmopākhyāna. After Rāma's victory over Rāvana he repudiates Sita. Then Brahmā appears on a costly aerial chariot (*vimāna*) drawn by geese. He is escorted by the *lokapālas* Sakra, Agni, Vāyu, Yama, Varuna and Kubera, the seven *ṛishis* and Rāma's deceased father Dasaratha. They testify Sita's innocence.

The compound *kamalāsana* (lotus seated) as an epithet of Brahma occurs chiefly in the late chapters of Canto VII and XIII of the Mahābhārata.<sup>37</sup> It is one of the twenty synonyms of Brahmā enumerated in the *Amarakośa* I, 7, 16-17 whereas an interpolated verse gives nine more names including *hamsavāhana*.

From the monuments of the Gupta period it appears that in the fifth century Brahmanical iconography had become systemized. In this respect the ruined Śiva temple of Bhumara in Nagod State, Bhāgelkhand (C.P.) is of peculiar interest. According to Sir John Marshall it belongs to the sixth century. From the excavation carried out by R. D. Banerji it became evident that the only part of the temple still standing was the cella or *garbhagriha* in which the Śivalinga was enshrined. The outer wall enclosing the procession path as well as the *mandapa* had completely collapsed. Among the debris several niches containing figures of deities were found. One of these Mr. Banerji identified with Brahma.<sup>38</sup> It shows a four-headed figure, the back face being invisible, seated in the *paryāṅka* posture, *viz.* cross-legged, a strip of cloth being tied round both knees. The figure has four hands two of which are broken but must have rested in the lap. The two remaining hands in Mr. Banerji's description hold a lotus and a stick. But the

<sup>36</sup> *The Laws of Manu* transl. by G. Bühler, *SBE* vol. XXV, 1886, p. 458. Cf. Yajñavalkya III 272. Here too the *hamsa* heads the list.

<sup>37</sup> E. W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> *American ASI* no. 16 (1924), p. 12, pl. XII b.

supposed stick is curved and looks more like a bow. Anyhow, the attributes do not conform to those usually assigned to Brahmā, *viz* a water jar and a rosary. It may be suggested that the deity represented is Siva as a *yogi*.

Another monument of the Gupta epoch procures more reliable data for our present inquiry. It is the profusely decorated and well preserved Vishnu Temple of Deogarh, picturesquely situated on a bend of the Betwa, the ancient Vetravati<sup>39</sup>. The façade on the west excels by its varied and graceful ornamentation. Each of the remaining three walls is provided with a niche containing an exquisitely carved scene relating to Vaishnava mythology. The subjects represented are Vishnu sleeping on the seven hooded world serpent Śeṣha on the south, the penance of Nara and Narayana on the east, and the deliverance of the elephant (Gajendramoksha) by Vishnu on the north. The upper part of the southern panel is occupied by a row of deities. The four headed Brahma seated cross legged on a lotus flower occupies the centre. Kārttikeya astride on his peacock and Indra on his elephant are on his right side, Siva and Parvatī mounted on the bull Nandin on his left. In the eastern panel Brahmā seated on the lotus occupies the same position but here he is flanked by two couples of aerial spirits. Pandit M. S. Vats, to whom we owe an excellent monograph on the temple of Deogarh, attributes it to the early part of the sixth century.

A very fine example of Brahmā associated with the goose is furnished by a Chalukya temple at Āhole. This place, now a little village in the Badami taluka of the Bijapur district, must have been an important town of the Western Chālukyas during the seventh and eighth centuries. In 1897 Mr. Cousins discovered here three massive sculptured slabs which must have belonged to the ceiling of a temple now ruined. They represent the three principal gods of the Hindu Pantheon, *viz* Brahmā, Vishnu on Śeṣha and Siva accompanied by Pārvatī. Brahmā has four faces and four hands and wears a high tiara and an antelope's hide (*aṇṇa*). He is seated on a throne, and is worshipped by bearded *rishis*, partly standing in the clouds. A goose on his right side looks up to him.<sup>40</sup>

Mr. H. Krishna Sastri has described a sculptured pillar on the Indrakīla at Bezvada (Bejvāda, ancient Vijayavatā), a town situated on the left bank of the Kistna river and belonging to the Kistna district. The hill is believed to be the place where Arjuna practised *tapas* to obtain the *pasupata* missile from Siva. On the northern face of the pillar is a standing figure of Brahmā. The objects in three of his four hands are indistinct but seem to be the usual lotus, rosary and water jar. One of his right hands is raised in the attitude of protection (*abhaya mudrā*).

<sup>39</sup> *Memoir ASI* no. 70 (1952) pp. 14 f. pl. X XI.

<sup>40</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1907-8 p. 109 pl. LXXVI.

The bird standing by his right foot is certainly not a swan but a goose. The pillar bears a Telugu inscription which Mr. Krishna Sastri attributes to the ninth century.<sup>41</sup>

The goose is also associated with Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and the spouse of Brahmā. We may refer to the valuable paper of Professor P. K. Gode, who points out that the peacock has ousted the swan (i.e. the goose) as the *vāhana* of Sarasvatī in the Deccan and also in other parts of India.<sup>42</sup>

In the introduction of his chronicle Kalhana, after relating the legendary creation of Kashmir from the Lake of Satī, enumerates the principal places of pilgrimage by which his native land was renowned. Among those *tīrthas* there was a pond, situated on the top of the Bheda hill and as pure as the source of the Ganges, in which the goddess Sarasvatī was seen in the shape of a goose.<sup>43</sup> In the course of time this sacred lake ceased to be visited by pilgrims and all recollection of its position was lost. It was Sir Aurel Stein<sup>44</sup> who, while engaged in his marvelous archaeological and geographical researches in "the Happy Valley", succeeded in recovering its exact site. In September 1895 his investigations guided him to a square tank of limpid water enclosed on all sides by decayed stone steps on the flat top of a little hillock. In this locality still known as Budabror, corresponding to Sanskrit Bhedabhattāraka, he recognized the sacred tank of Sarasvatī. It is situated in the hilly country some 20 miles west of Shapīyon. This large and picturesque village with its houses built of small bricks and timber in the valley of the Rembyara torrent (Sanskrit Ramanyātavi) was the last but one stage on the ancient trade routes across the Pīrpantsāl Range from Bhūmbar to Śrinagar.

We are inclined to ask in what manner Sarasvatī revealed herself "in the shape of a goose." Was it the curious shape of some rock in which the credulous eye recognized a manifestation of the divine bird? Kalhana's brief mention of the *tīrtha* leaves the question unanswered. We can only say that such "self-created" (Skt *svayambhū*) objects of worship are found not only in Kashmir but also in other parts of the Himalaya. A remarkable example is the *tīrtha* of Amamāth where at an elevation of 17,300 feet a large block of transparent ice is worshipped as a *svayambhū* *linga* of Śiva Amāresvara. The annual pilgrimage in Śrāvana, the first month of the rainy season, attracts many thousands of pilgrims not only from Kashmir but from all parts of India.

<sup>41</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1915-16 p. 96 pl. LIV a. In his article Mr. Cousins mentions instances of Brahmā being attended by a peacock.

<sup>42</sup> *Hamia sabana and Mayura sabana Sarasvatī* *JISOA* vol. IX, 1941 pp. 133-140.

<sup>43</sup> *Rajāt* I 35. Cf. Kalhana's *Rajataranginī* transl. by M. A. Stein, vol. II, p. 8. In the reference to the source of the Ganges my rendering departs from Stein's.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Stein's transl., vol. II pp. 273-279.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE GOOSE IN THE EPICS

The sacred lake Mānasa, the favourite breeding place of the wild geese during the hot season and the rains, does not seem to occur in Vedic literature<sup>1</sup> It was apparently unknown to the Aryans of the Vedic period In the *Mahabharata* and the *Rāmāyana* it is repeatedly mentioned In the *Anusasana parvan* (108,3), the 13th canto of the former epic, bathing in the Mānasa tirtha is enjoined, and in the same passage allusion is made to the supposed derivation of the name from Sanskrit *manas* mind In the *Ramayana*<sup>2</sup> this connection between Manasa and *manas* is also assumed It says Because on the top of the Kailasa, O Rāma, Brahma hath erstwhile created this lake by his mind, therefore it became (known as) Lake Mānasa In this verse we notice an inaccuracy, or let us rather call it a poetic license The lake is not on the top of the Kailasa, but at some distance from its foot This is the prosaic truth, but the poet's vision saw it in a more elevated and impressive situation

The fourth canto of the *Ramayana*, called *Kishkindha kānda*<sup>3</sup> contains an interesting passage setting forth that the geese exceed all birds in the height of their flight Here, in the course of a lengthy speech, the vulture Sampati, the brother of Jatayus gives the following account of the six aerial paths of the birds

The first (lowest) path is that of the *kulīngas* and whatever birds live on grain (commentary pigeons, etc), the second is that of the *balī* eaters (the crows)<sup>4</sup> and of those birds that eat the fruit of trees (comm parrots, etc), the falcons follow the third path and the curlews (Skt *krauñcha*) with the ospreys (Skt *kuvara*), the hawks (Skt *syena*) follow the fourth path and the vultures the fifth But the sixth path is that of the strong and bold geese endowed with beauty and youthful vigour Highest is the flight of Garuda and we all are born from him<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Bohtlingk and Roth *Skr Wörterb* sub voce *Manasa*

<sup>2</sup> *Ram* 1 26 8

<sup>3</sup> *Ram* IV 58 24 27

<sup>4</sup> The *balī* is the daily offering of different foods which the Aryan householder is enjoined to lay on several carefully purified places for certain gods and spirits which are enumerated in the Lawbook of Manu III 84 92 The ubiquitous crow who especially profits by these offerings is called *balibhuj* the *balī* eater

<sup>5</sup> We cannot warrant the correctness of the English equivalents of the names of birds found in Sanskrit English dictionaries



*Nala and Damayanti*

On account of their swiftness the geese are fit messengers. They appear in the role of love-messengers in the moving tale of Nala and Damayanti, the most famous of the numerous stories inserted in the Great Epic.<sup>6</sup> It has also become widely known in the West through translations in English, French, German and several other European languages.<sup>7</sup> Among the German versions the poetical rendering by Friedrich Ruckert deserves special mention. He does not call the *hamsas* of the story either swans or flamingos, as other translators have done, but correctly calls them geese.

The romance begins by eulogizing Nala, the illustrious lord of Nishadha, and Damayanti, the daughter of the king of Vidarbha. By hearing each other's praise there sprang an irresistible love between the two. Once when Nala was sitting in a grove near his palace he saw geese adorned with gold roaming around. He caught one of them and the bird spoke to him: 'Do not kill me. I will do you a favour. In the presence of Damayanti I will speak of you in such manner that she will esteem no other man but you'. The king released the goose and the flock flew up and went to Vidarbha where they alighted in the vicinity of Damayanti, who was sporting with her handmaids in the pleasure of the royal palace. When she beheld the wonderful birds she and her maidens tried to catch them. But the geese spread in all directions in the park and the girls ran after them. The goose Damayanti had followed, when she came near him, assuming human voice, spoke to her: 'O Damayanti, Nala the king of Nishadha, is like the Āśvins in beauty and no other men are his equals. If you became his spouse, O fair one, your birth and beauty would have their reward. You are the pearl among women and Nala is the foremost of men. How excellent would be the union of two so distinguished. Damayanti, thus addressed by the goose, answered him: 'Speak likewise to Nala'. The bird consented and returning to Nishadha he related it all to Nala.

*The Death of Bhīshma*

The sixth canto of the Mahābhārata, called Bhīshma parvan, described the first ten days of the battle between the hundred Kauravas or descendants of Kuru and the five Pāndavas or sons of Pāndu. The canto is named after Bhīshma, the son of Sāntanu and Gangā the river-goddess. He is the great uncle of the Kauravas as well as of the Pāndavas. The old warrior after incredible deeds of heroism is at

<sup>6</sup> MBh., III 52-79 (*Nalopakhyaṇa*).

<sup>7</sup> A version in blank verse was published by Sir Edwin Arnold in his *Indian Idylls*, 4th ed. London 1909, pp. 38-183.

last overpowered by his enemies and mortally wounded by Arjuna. When he falls headlong from his chariot bleeding from innumerable wounds, there are so many arrows sticking in his body that he does not touch the ground in his fall, but rests on a bed of bolts.

Gangā, his divine mother, learning the fate of her son deputed *rishis* in the shape of geese. When these messengers see the old hero lying on his bed of arrows they fly around him in sunwise manner and express their surprise that Bhīshma was going to depart this world when the sun was in his southern progress. Bhīshma then informs the geese that it is not his intention to expire during the inauspicious southern progress of the sun. As his father has given him the boon to choose himself the moment of his death, he has decided to retain his vital breath until the sun-god has entered on his northern course.<sup>8</sup>

It deserves notice that Bhīshma addresses those messengers of his divine mother not as *rishis* but as geese. In this connection we may note indications of an association between the Ganges and the goose. Such a relation is attested also by a ruined temple at the village of Dah Parbatīya near Tezpur. This stone temple, dedicated to the worship of Siva, was explored by R. D. Banerji<sup>9</sup> who attributes it to the later Gupta period and to the sixth century A. D. It must be the earliest temple of Assam. The well preserved doorframe is profusely decorated with sculpture. On both sides of the entrance, at the foot of the doorjamb, we notice the graceful figures of the sacred twin rivers Gangā and Yamunā, the former accompanied by three female attendants, two of them holding a *chowri* (Skt. *chāmara*) and the third a dish of flowers. Similar figures of Gangā and Yamunā are regularly found in the same position in temples of the Gupta and medieval period.<sup>10</sup> But an unusual feature is the couple of flying geese beside the haloed head of each river goddess.

### *The Fable of the Goose and the Crow*

The eighth canto of the Great Epic, named Karnaparvan, describes the exploits of Karna, the son of the sun god Sūrya by Kuntī, the mother of the three eldest Pandavas. When Karna boasts of his superiority over Arjuna, whom he is sure to vanquish, Salya, his charioteer, damps his spirits by telling him the fable of the race between the goose and the crow (*Hamsa kākīyam ākhyanam*).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> MBh. VI. 119-97-110.

<sup>9</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1924-25 p. 98 pl. XXXII a.c. Cf. B. K. Barua, *A Cultural Hist. of Assam* 1951, vol. I p. 193 pl. II fig. 2.

<sup>10</sup> J. Ph. Vogel, *Ganga et Yamuna dans l'iconographie brahmanique* *Etudes Asiatiques* publ. à l'occasion du 25<sup>e</sup> anniv. de l'EFEO pp. 385-402.

<sup>11</sup> MBh. VIII. 41.

A wealthy and pious Vaisya, thus the story runs, lived near the shore of the sea. His numerous children had a pet crow whom they fed with the remnants of their meal. The crow puffed up with pride used to scoff at the other birds. Once upon a time there appeared a flock of fast flying geese, equal to Garuda by their swift ness. The overweening crow challenged the leader of the flock to a flying match. The geese burst out into laughter. "We geese who are denizens of Lake Mānasa move over the whole earth and among the feathered tribe we are always worshipped on account of our far flight." The crow boasts that he knows no less than 101 different manners of flying and some of them he mentions by name. The goose retorts that he knows only one flight which is familiar to all birds. When the race is started, the crow flies in a hundred different manners, the goose only in one. At first the goose remains behind and the crows make a great tumult. The goose steadily flies westward and the crow is startled on beholding the sea, the abode of *makaras*, without any trees on which to alight when weary. The goose having crossed the ocean, looks round and discerns the crow exhausted and about to perish. On seeing this, the goose wishes to save him and remembering the duty of the righteous he speaks to him. "You have mentioned many different flights, but, pray, what do you call the flight which you are flying now? The water touches your wings and your bill. Tell me, what flight are you practising now?" At the prayer of the crow, who is near drowning, the goose out of pity lifts him from the waves and, placing him on his back, brings him back to the island from which the race was started. Thus the crow was vanquished by the goose.

*The Standard of Indra instituted by Uparichara*<sup>12</sup>

The Paurava king Uparichara, also called Vasu, conquered the Chedi country. He then abandoned his royal state and practised such asceticism as alarmed Indra who induced him to resume his regal functions by promising him an aerial chariot, the garland Indramālā and a bamboo pole. When a year had elapsed the king caused the pole to be fixed in the earth and from that time until now the excellent rulers of the earth fix such a pole in like manner as it was commenced by him. The next day its erection is effected by the kings, while it is adorned with *pitakas*, perfumes, garlands and ornaments. And the lord Isvara (Indra) is worshipped in the shape of a goose (*hamsarūpena*) adopted by him, while propitiated by the great Vasu (i.e. Uparichara). But the great Indra seeing the auspicious adoration paid him by Vasu, the foremost among kings, was satisfied and said: 'The men who will worship and the kings who will joyfully celebrate my festival like the lord of Chedi, they will obtain splendour and victory.'

Madame Viennot<sup>13</sup> recognizes the myth of Uparichara in one of the two remarkable rock sculptures found on both sides of the entrance to a cell of the Buddhist monastery of Bhaja in the Poona district of the Bombay State. Evidently these two large reliefs, attributed to the third and second century B.C., do not pertain to Buddhism. One represents Sūrya on his chariot drawn by four horses, the other Indra seated on his majestic elephant Airāvata. The author draws attention to the conspicuous garland worn by Indra round his neck and to the banner carried by the attendant who is sitting behind him. Both these objects, according to the account above quoted, were promised by Indra to Uparichara. Moreover it is a point of special interest that we can discern the head of a goose issuing from the railing which encloses a sacred tree in front of the elephant. It is therefore very tempting to accept Mme. Viennot's ingenuous interpretation, despite some details which seem to militate against it, viz the action of Indra's elephant in seizing one of the three sacred trees and trampling on another, and the absence of king Uparichara, the hero of the story. Anyhow the explanation of the enigmatical relief offered by the author is certainly more acceptable than the attempts made by two other distinguished scholars to interpret it from Buddhist literature.<sup>14</sup>

### *Varuna assumes the shape of a Goose*

In the chapters 1-36 of the last canto of the Ramāyana, the Uttarakanda, the sage Agastya gives Rama an account of the origin of Rāvana and his Rakshasas and of their deeds previous to the conflict with Rāma.

When Rāvana reached Usirabija, thus Agastya's narrative, he saw king Marutta engaged in sacrificing together with the gods. The sacrificial rites were performed by the priestly sage Samvarta, the brother of Brihaspati, surrounded by the whole host of gods. The four lokapālas on seeing the Rakshasa who had received the boon of invincibility were seized with fear and changed themselves into animals. Indra became a peacock, Yama a crow, Kubera a lizard, and Varuna a goose. When the other gods had done likewise, Rāvana entered the sacrificial enclosure like an unclean dog. Encountering Samvarta he boasted of his strength, but the undaunted king prepared to oppose him with bow and arrows. The maharshi however persuaded him to desist from violence, while he was engaged

<sup>13</sup> Odette Viennot *Le culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne. Ann. du Musée Guimet. bibl. etu.* des vol. LIX. Paris 1954. pp. 94-98. pl. II fig. B.

<sup>14</sup> E. H. Johnston *J. Indian Society of Oriental Art* vol. VII. 1939. pp. 1-8. R. G. Gyani *Bull. Prince of Wales Museum of Western India* no. I. 1950. 51. pp. 15-21. Mme. Viennot points out (*op. cit.* p. 107) that the same metamorphosis of Indra into a goose occurs in the Mahasuka jataka or Birth story of the Great Parrot. no. 429 of the Pali collection.

in a sacrifice to Siva and the king laid down his weapons Rāvana took this for a sign of submission He proclaimed his own victory and after devouring the *rishis* assembled at the sacrifice he departed

When Rāvana had gone, the celestials assumed again their divine aspect and in token of their favour they conferred boons on the animals into which they had changed themselves Indra spoke to the blue-tailed peacock I am pleased with you, *dharmajña* You need not be afraid of snakes These thousand eyes of mine will be placed in your tail<sup>15</sup> Whenever I rain, your joy will betoken my good will' In this manner Indra, the lord of the gods, gave a boon to the peacock, for previously the feathers of the peacock's tail were simply blue Yama, the King of Justice, said to the crow 'Bird, I am very pleased with you, hear the utterance of my pleasure The manifold ailments wherewith other creatures are vexed by me, they will have no power over you, owing to my favour Death you need not fear, such is my boon, O traveller of the sky' Varuna spoke to the goose that sports in the waters of Gangā "Listen to my words of contentment, O master of the feathered tribe Yours will be a charming and lovely colour resembling the orb of the moon and glittering like pure foam By joining my element, the water, you will ever be beloved and you will attain unequalled joy This is the token of my favour" Previously the colour of the geese, Agastya explained to Rāma, was not entirely white Their wings were provided with dark blue tips and their chest had the soft hue of blades of grass<sup>16</sup> Then Kubera, the son of Viśravas, spoke to the lizard that lives in the mountains 'I am pleased with you and grant you a golden colour Your head will ever be golden and imperishable, by my favour you will have this colour of gold'<sup>17</sup> When they had given them these boons and the sacrificial feast had come to an end, the gods together with the king departed again, each to his own abode

The four deities mentioned in this passage are the *lokapālas* or regents of the quarters enumerated in their usual order — Indra whose paradise is in the east, Yama the lord of the Pitāras or deceased 'Fathers' whose realm is located in the south, Varuna the god of water in the west and Kubera the god of wealth who resides in the north The following observations may account for the connection between these gods and the four animals on which they confer their boons Indra is especially venerated as the giver of rain and the peafowl are delighted at the approach of the rainy season The crows as scavengers are, like the jackals, closely associated with the *śmalāna*, i.e. the locality outside the city where the dead are cremated The crow is called the *baḥ* eater (*baḥibhuḥ*) as he is foremost among

<sup>15</sup> Indra is called 'thousand-eyed'

<sup>16</sup> The north western recension reads *śarpagrapandurāḥ*

<sup>17</sup> The v1 of the north western recension *ajjanako* is incompatible with the preceding verse

the birds to devour the *balī* or daily foodoffering which the Aryan householders are enjoined daily to deposit on the threshold and other places for the benefit of various spirits. The belief that the crows never die their natural death, perhaps due to their ubiquitousness, is still met with among the rural population of India.

The flattering speech addressed by Varuna to the goose, is particularly interesting. According to the explanation of Agastya the geese originally had wings with dark blue (Skt *nīla*) tips and their chest had the soft hue of blades of grass. Their white colour they acquired by the favour of Varuna.

The 'golden' colour of the lizard as well as its habitat in the northern mountains must have suggested a connection with Kubera the regent of the north. Possibly this reptile was also believed to be a guardian of treasure like the snake. It is difficult to make out the meaning of the word *sadravya* applied to the head of the animal. The commentator explains it by *svarnavarṇam* 'gold coloured'.<sup>18</sup> But after the granting of a golden colour it seems superfluous to repeat the same favour with reference to the head of the animal.

From the passages quoted from the epics it is evident that Indian gods do not disdain to appear in the semblance of a goose.

### *Brahma in the shape of a Goose*

The most remarkable feature by which the Mahabhārata differs from occidental epics is the large proportion allotted to discussions on *Niti*, i.e. worldly wisdom, especially for the benefit of kings, in matters of politics, on *Dharma*, i.e. systematic law and morality and on *Moksha* i.e. deliverance, the final aim of Indian philosophy. These subjects are sometimes presented in the form of pleasing tales and fables and in poetical proverbs but also in lengthy sections consisting of dry discussion. The very extensive twelfth and thirteenth cantos called *Sānti parvan* and *Anusāsana parvan* are entirely devoted to such didactic purposes. Their connection with the epic story is rendered possible by the singular circumstances preceding the death of Bhishma (see above page 18) which are utilized by him to instruct Yudhishtira on philosophy, morality and law. In his long discourse Bhishma inserts the dialogue between Brahmā in the shape of a goose and the Sādhyas which he calls an ancient legend (*itihāsam puratanam*).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The word *dravyam* in its Tamil form *travyam* is used in the sense of gold and is explained in the lexica by the purely Tamil word *pon* the typical word for gold in the Tamil language. In Telugu and Kannada *dravya* has the same meaning but not in Malayalam. For this information which seems to confirm the commentary I am indebted to Dr K. de Vreese.

<sup>19</sup> MBh XII 299. The Sādhyas are an indeterminate host of militant gods. Cf. E. W. Hopkins *Epic Myth* p. 175.

The unborn eternal Prajāpati, having become a goose, on his round through the three worlds came to the Sādhyas. The Sādhyas said: "Bird, we the Sādhyas gods question you. We ask you the law of salvation (*mokṣadharmā*). What do you deem the highest good? By what deeds is man liberated from all bonds, oh lord of birds?" What follows are thirty six proverbs attributed to the divine goose.

### *Pradyumna and Prabhāvatī*

The chapters 150-156 (vss. 8554-8635) of the Harivamśa describe the destruction of the demon king Vajranābha by Pradyumna, the son of Krishna.

Vajranābha, the great Asura, practised *tapas* on the top of Meru and thereby he obtained from Brahmā the boon that no god would be able to kill him and his castle Vajrapura, all made of jewels, would be inaccessible even to the wind. Then the evil-minded Vajranābha, puffed up with pride by this boon, began to harass the world. He went to the abode of the gods and said to Indra: "I wish to be master of the three worlds. Now offer me battle, o lord of the gods, and surrender me the earth." Indra proceeded to Dvārakā and invoked the aid of Krishna who said: "We are preparing a horse sacrifice. When this is accomplished, I shall slay Vajranābha." They both thought of a stratagem to enter the inaccessible castle of the demon king. During the sacrifice an actor, named Bhadra, pleased the assembled *rishis* by his excellent acting. They allowed him to choose a boon and he expressed the wish that, moving through the air and inviolable by any beings, he might traverse the Earth with her seven continents.

Then Indra, the lord of the gods addressed the geese who are the descendants of Dhṛitarāshtrī and dwell in the world of the gods: "You are our brothers, divine birds, that are the scions of Kaśyapa and draw the chariots of the beneficent gods. The gods have to fulfil a task, namely the destruction of their foe. This must be done by you and our council you should betray on no account. Everywhere you have unhindered entrance, best of geese. Go to the castle of Vajranābha inaccessible to others and roam in the ponds of his *zenana*, as you are wont to do.

He has a jewel of a daughter who excels the three worlds in beauty, Prabhāvatī ('Radiant') by name, and who is indeed radiant like the light of the moon. Her kinsmen have decided that the fair maiden will choose a husband after her own wish. You, therefore, must tell her of the noble Pradyumna. Speak to her of his virtues in such a manner that the heart of Prabhāvatī will be fixed on him. And every day you should bring notice of the state of things to me and to my younger brother Krishna. Exert yourselves so long till the pnce will win the fair daughter.

of Vajranābha. Then Pradyumna and his warriors will go forth and destroy the demon king"

The geese, hearing these words of Indra, went to Vajrapura as they were used of old. They alighted in the charming ponds covered with golden blue lotuses and waterlilies soft to the touch. They roamed in the ponds enjoyed by the royal *zenana*, those sweetly babbling denizens of Indra's heaven, and they excited wonderment by their unprecedented speech of Sanskrit.

The Asura then said to the scions of Dhṛitarāshtrī: "Ye sweet voiced birds that ever sport in Indra's heaven. Come freely hither, web footed ones, this house is yours and you may enter it with confidence. Thus addressed by Vajranābha, the birds consented and entered the dwelling of the lord of Dānavas<sup>20</sup>. They made themselves familiar with the place and speaking with human voice they rejoiced the women by telling them sundry appropriate tales. Then the geese met the sweetly laughing Prabhavatī and one of them, Suchimukhī by name, the princess made her companion.

This wily goose once said to the princess whose confidence she had won by a hundred tales: "I know that you, Prabhavatī, are the beauty of the three worlds. But youth passes away and what is past returns as little as a stream of water. No delight equals the enjoyment of love. Your father allows you to choose your own husband, but all suitors, both Devas and Dānavas, you have rejected. Then Suchimukhī extolled the beauty and valour of Pradyumna, the son of Rukminī.

Although the Asura princess knew that he was the enemy of her father's race, she desired no other husband but Pradyumna. She bade her goose friend to bring about her union with him, and Suchimukhī gladly accepted the office of messenger.

Now the Asura king, seated in his *zenana*, asked the goose: "Prabhavatī has told me of your interesting stories. Tell me, Suchimukhī, what marvel, not seen before by others, have you seen in the world, excellent bird?" The goose answered:

"I have seen an actor who knew the songs of Devas and Gandharvas<sup>21</sup> and who amazes the gods by his dancing. Vajranābha was anxious to see the art of this marvellous actor and asked the goose to find an expedient by which he might be brought to his court.

The geese, dismissed by Vajranābha with this mandate, returned to Indra and Krishna and told them everything. The latter instructed his son Pradyumna in what manner he was to proceed to wed Prabhavatī and to kill her father. By magic he gave the companions of his son the appearance of actors. Pradyumna he

<sup>20</sup> Descendants of Danu = Asuras

<sup>21</sup> The musicians of Indra



made the hero (*nāyaka*) of the play and Sāmba the buffoon (*vidūshaka*), and Gada and the others their followers.<sup>22</sup> The warriors ascended an aerial chariot produced by Pradyumna and thus proceeded to Svanagara, the suburb of Vajra nābha.

The Yādavas<sup>23</sup>, disguised as actors, were received by the Asuras with the utmost joy and splendidly entertained. They at once showed their skill by performing the dramatized Rāmāyana. The audience was enraptured by the play and rewarded the actors with necklaces and other ornaments of gold and beryl. Vajra nābha sent word that they should be brought to his residence and thus the Yādavas entered the inaccessible castle of their enemy, the demon king Vajranābha and his kinsmen were seated to enjoy the spectacle and the Yādavas, accoutred as actors, commenced their pantomime of dreadful purpose. After a prelude their women sang a *chhalikya*, delighting ear and mind, and then they enchanted the Asuras by a play the Descent of Gangā.<sup>24</sup> Pradyumna pronounced the benediction and after the *nandi* he recited a stanza appropriate to the subject of the play.<sup>25</sup> They then performed a *nataka*, the Rape of Rambhā,<sup>26</sup> composed by the omniscient *muni* Nārada. Pradyumna was Nalakūvara and Sāmba his buffoon and Mount Kailāsa was produced by magic.

The goose who was Prabhāvatī's companion said to the princess: I have gone to lovely Dvārakā and there met Pradyumna secretly. I have told him how devoted you are to him. To-day your union with him will take place. Prabhavatī was delighted at this message and bade her goose friend to remain in her dwelling so that she might be fearless when meeting her divine lover. The goose consented and ascended a pavilion made by Visvakarman, the artificer of the gods, where she arranged everything for the coming of Pradyumna. Then the bird as swift as the wind went to Pradyumna and soon returned to announce him to his bride.

In the meanwhile Pradyumna had noticed a wreath of fragrant flowers covered with bees and changing himself into a bee he hid in that wreath. It was brought by her maids into the room of the princess and laid down near her. The bees flew away when twilight appeared, but Pradyumna settled on the lotosflower attached to Prabhāvatī's ear. Suddenly she was seized by a violent tremor and a burning

<sup>22</sup> Samba is a son of Krishna by Jambavatī and therefore a halfbrother of Pradyumna. Gada is a younger brother of Krishna. The *vidūshaka* is the companion of the hero. Cf. Sten Konow, *Das Indische Drama (Encyclopaedia of Indo-aryan Research)* 1920 p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Yadavas or descendants of Yadu is the name of the royal clan to which Krishna belongs.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. beneath p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> A theatrical performance begins with a benedictory stanza (*nandi*) recited by the stage manager (*sutradhara*).

<sup>26</sup> This myth is related in the Rāmāyana VII 26.

passion. Then the son of Krishna showed himself in his true form and the light of the moon was dimmed by his radiance. The princess stood motionless, but her lover addressed her in courteous language and asked her the favour of marrying her according to the rite of the Gandharvas<sup>27</sup>. Then he touched a fire bearing jewel and made an offering of flowers while reciting the appropriate *mantras*. He then took her by the hand and led her round the sacred fire. He enjoyed the pleasures of love with his bride and at daybreak returned to the abode of the actors. When at last her father discovered the secret of his daughter's marriage, she was abducted by her husband in an aerial chariot and there ensued a battle between the Yādava warriors and the Asuras ending with the defeat and death of Vajranābha.

The rôle played by the geese in this story is fundamentally the same as in the famous legend of Nala and Damayantī noted above. In both the birds are love messengers. But there is a marked moral difference in these two love stories. In the elder story the "unseen" affection of the two lovers springs from hearing the fame of each other's virtues, whereas in the story of Pradyumna and Prabhāvatī the union of the two lovers is part of a stratagem devised by the gods to overcome the demon king.

In the myth of the destruction of Vajranābha, the geese of Indra's paradise are designated by the honorific epithet *Dhṛitarāshtra* (verses 8585, 8608 and also 12670). This term is a patronymic of *Dhṛitarāshtra* and is used in the *Mahābhārata* to designate the hundred sons of the blind king of Hastināpura. But in connection with the geese it seems to be a matronymic. This at least may be concluded from the first chapter of the *Sambhava-parvan*<sup>28</sup> which deals with the genesis of the various classes of mythical and human beings, and of the sundry species of animals. This fantastical genealogy starts from Brahmā and his six mental sons. Marīchi, the first of them, had a son Kasyapa, who is the progenitor of all creatures by the fifty daughters of Dakṣa<sup>29</sup>. One of Dakṣa's daughters, Tāmṛī by name, had five daughters — Kākī the mother of owls, Syenī the mother of hawks, Bhaṣī the mother of falcons (Skt *bhāsa*) and vultures, Dhṛitarāshtri the mother of *bamsas* and *kalabamsas*, and Sukī the mother of *chakravakas*, i.e. Brahmanī ducks.

The diaskeuast who composed this genealogy naturally chose names of birds for the 'mothers' of the most important species of birds. But it is curious that he

<sup>27</sup> The Law book of Manu (III 32) describes this form of marriage as the voluntary union of a maiden and her lover which springs from desire and has sexual intercourse for its purpose. It is stated to be lawful for Kshatriyas but not for Brahmins.

<sup>28</sup> MBh, *Adiparvan* 65, 10 f. Cf. E. W. Hopkins *Epic Myth* p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> On that account Indra hails the geese as descendants of Kasyapa and brothers of the gods (verse 8586, also 8613).

made an exception for the geese. What can have been his motive? We can only surmise that in his days there existed already a tradition which ascribed the origin of the *haṃsas* to a progenetrix named Dhṛitarāshṭrī.

The Great Epic knows also a king of the Gandharvas Dhṛitarāshṭra who is incarnated in the homonymous ruler of Hastināpura<sup>30</sup>. But in the Sambhava-parvan this king is said to be an incarnation of a Gandharva king Haṃsa, the son of Arishṭha<sup>31</sup>.

The substitution of a progenitor Dhṛitarāshṭrī is explicable from the general tendency to derive the origin of certain species of animals from mythical mothers. Saramā the bitch of the gods (*devaśunī*) who appears in several hymns of the *R̥gveda*, is believed to be the ancestress of the dogs, hence the derivate *sārameya*, used as a synonym of *īvan*. The mythical mother of the snakes is Kadrū, the Tawny One. The story of the rivalry between her and her sister Vinatā, the mother of Garuḍa and Aruṇa, the charioteer of the sungod, is related in the Mahābhārata. The divine progenetrix of cattle is Surabhi, "the Fragrant one" who also figures among the wives of Kaśyapa and daughters of Dakṣha as the mother of the Rudras<sup>32</sup>.

In Buddhist cosmology Dhṛitarāshṭra, the white guardian of the east and king of the Gandharvas, is one of the Four Mahārājas. In Tibet their painted figures are found on both sides of the entrance of the monastery and in China they are placed as guardians at the gates of the temples<sup>33</sup>.

In the *Haṃsa-jātaka*, one of the most favourite birth-stories, the king of the geese, in whom the Bodhisattva was reborn, bears the name Dhṛitarāshṭra<sup>34</sup>. Apparently this name was borrowed from the Brahmanical tradition which assigned it to the progenitor of the anserine race.

In classical Sanskrit literature the word *dhātaraśhṭra* in the sense of a goose is occasionally met with. It is impossible to decide whether it designates a goose in general or a special kind of geese.

In Bāṇa's well-known *Kādambarī*, a prose romance ascribed to the seventh century, the author relates how Chandrāpīḍa, the king of Ujjayinī, starts on a *digvijaya* or conquest of the world and conquers Suvarṇapura ('Goldtown') not far from the Eastern Ocean, the abode of those Kīrātas who dwell near mount Kailāsa. While hunting he is carried away by his horse in pursuit of a couple of *kinṇaras*

<sup>30</sup> MBh XV, 15, 31

<sup>31</sup> MBh I, 67, 83 f

<sup>32</sup> E. W. Hopkins, *Epic Myth* pp 13, 19, 23, 200

<sup>33</sup> A. Grünwedel-J. Burgess, *Buddhist Art in India*, 1901, pp. 36n, 47n, 136. L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, 1895, pp 83 f

<sup>34</sup> See below, p. 32

and at length beholds the Achchhoda Lake in the midst of a clump of trees. It was shaken by the wings of white *dhārtarāshṭras* as the battle of the Bharatas by the rivalry of Pāṇḍavas and Dhārtarāshṭras<sup>35</sup>.

Another example of the word *dhārtarāshṭra* in its double meaning is found in the prologue to the *Venīsamhāra*, a *nāṭaka* of Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa<sup>36</sup> which, as the title indicates, deals with a dramatic scene of the Mahābhārata. This heroic drama which enjoys great popularity in India is assigned to the second half of the seventh century. After the *nāṇḍī* consisting of three benedictory stanzas the stage-manager (Skt. *sūtradhāra*) appears on the scene to acquaint the auditory with the title of the play and with the name of the poet by whom it was composed. He begs the auditors to pay attention on account of the exertion of the poet, the weight of the exalted theme and the interest attaching to a novel drama. Then he addresses his assistant (Skt. *pāripāśvaka*) who still lingers in the postscenium (Skt. *nepathya*) and requests him to commence the usual concert executed by the actors as an introduction to the play. The *pāripāśvaka* now makes his appearance and asks the *sūtradhāra* what season should be the subject of the choral song. The *sūtradhāra* answers that it must be the autumnal season when the whole sky is whitened by flocks of geese, by white lotus flowers and by the pollen of *kāśa*-grass and when the lakes are filled with sweet water. He continues his praise in a stanza, exhibiting a favourite figure of rhetoric, called *śleṣha*, in which most of the words are used in an ambiguous sense. The verse therefore can be applied to the autumn but can also be interpreted so as to foreshadow the events represented in the drama<sup>37</sup>.

According to its obvious acceptation it can be rendered: "The well-winged and sweet-voiced geese (Skt. *dhārtarāshṭra*), impelled by autumn and adorning all quarters of the sky, with vigorous and lusty speed swoop down on the flat surface of the teeming earth".

The hidden meaning of the stanza is as follows: — "King Dhṛitarāshṭra's sons, strengthened by partisans and with martial tunes, boldly advance, forced by the will of fateful time and doomed to fall on the flat surface of the teeming earth"

<sup>35</sup> *Kāḍambārī*, Bombay, 1890 and 1896, p. 247, *The Kāḍambārī of Bana*, transl. by C. M. Ridding 1896, pp. 92 f. The battle of the Bhāratas took place at Kurukṣhetra. The commentator explains *dhārtarāshṭra* as *hamsaiśleṣha* 'a kind of geese'.

<sup>36</sup> *Venīsamhāra die Ehrenrettung der Königin, ein Drama in 6 Akten von Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa*, herausgegeben von Julius Grill, Leipzig, 1871.

<sup>37</sup> Sten Konow, *Das Indische Drama*, 1920, p. 77. For a summary of the play cf. Sylvain Lévi, *Le théâtre indien*, Paris 1890, pp. 224 f.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOOSE IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

In Buddhist literature the *hamsa* occupies the same honourable position as in Brahmanical lore. Let us begin by quoting two stanzas from the *Dhammapada*, the collection of religious sentences in which the ideals of the early Buddhists have found such a marvellous expression. Verse 91, belonging to the *Arahanta vagga* or "Chapter of the Arahats", says "The mindful depart, they rejoice not in a fixed abode. Like geese leaving the lake, they relinquish their house and home." The other stanza is verse 175, it belongs to the *Lokaaggā*, the "Chapter of the World". "The geese move in the sky by magic. The wise are lead away from the world, having vanquished *Māra* and his host." In the numerous translations of the *Dhammapada* the word *hamsa* is generally rendered by 'swan', sometimes by 'flamingo'. It is only in the Latin version added to Fausboll's edition that it is correctly rendered by *anser*. It will be remembered that the famous Pali scholar was a Dane.<sup>1</sup>

In the two stanzas quoted the wise man who abandons the world is compared to a goose. The simile, if more closely considered, is not very appropriate, as the cause moving the bird to migrate is quite different from that of the homeless hermit. It is exactly the care of his family life. Anyhow it will be admitted that a comparison with the *arhat*, the being who has attained nirvāṇa the Summum Bonum of religious aspiration is flattering for the goose. In the second stanza the poet says that the geese move in the sky by mystic psychic power (*iddhi*) and in this respect they emulate the *arhat*.

In the *Visuddhimagga* or Path of Purity, Buddhaghosha employs a similar comparison, when dealing with the first stage of mystic meditation (*jhāna*, Skt *dhyāna*). He says "For as young geese, from the time their wings have grown, exercise themselves by flying up little by little into the sky, and in due course go towards the moon and the sun, even so the friar (*bhikkhu*) having determined his object of meditation in the manner described, extendeth it to the limit of a celestial sphere and even beyond."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Dhammapada* ed by V. Fausboll London 1900 pp. 22 and 40

<sup>2</sup> *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa* ed by C. A. F. Rhys Davids Pali Text Soc. 1920 vol. I, p. 153

The same text compares the yogi, averse from the elements of mundane existence and delighting in the seven contemplations, with the golden goose at the foot of Mount Chittakūta who does not delight in a puddle at the gate of a Chandāla village but delights only in the seven great lakes<sup>3</sup>

In the legendary story of the Buddha's life the geese appear at a moment of great significance, closely connected with his Enlightenment of Bodhi. When the Bodhisattva, having bathed in the river Nairāñjanā, proceeded towards the Bodhi tree, the Nāgarāja Kalika came forth and in a hymn of praise foretold his approaching enlightenment. In the *Buddhacharita* the Nāga mentions lines of birds fluttering in the sky which offer reverential salutations to the Buddha. Other Sanskrit texts are more explicit and enumerate various kinds of birds, including geese and peacocks, paying homage by performing the *pradakshina*. In other words, in their flight they encircle the Bodhisattva, while keeping him on their right side. On a railing pillar from Amarāvati, preserved in the British Museum, this scene is portrayed in a very ingenious manner (Pl. Ia). In accordance with the custom of early Buddhist art, the Bodhisattva is not shown in bodily form, his presence being indicated by two pairs of footprints on both sides of the river. In the sky a double row of geese, flying across the river, is making their aerial circumambulation, as is evident from the attitude of the leader of the flock. The Nāgarāja Kalika attended by three Nagis, their hands raised in adoration, is visible in the adjoining partition of the relief<sup>4</sup>.

Another important Buddhist site on the right bank of the lower Kistna is Nagarjunakonda. The excavations, conducted by Mr. A. H. Longhurst in 1927-31, have yielded an enormous number of very remarkable sculptures exhibiting a late stage of the Andhra school of Amarāvati. Most of the scenes depicted in these panels relate to the life story of the Buddha, and one of them clearly refers to his crossing of the Nairāñjanā river. Here, however, his presence is not symbolized by a pair of footprints as at Amarāvati, but he is shown in bodily shape. A figure kneeling in front of him with hands raised in adoration, though mutilated, is still recognizable as the Naga king Kālīka. Over the Buddha's head we notice a row of seven or eight flying geese performing the *pradakshina* around his halo (Pl. Ib). For the identification of this scene I am indebted to Dr. A. J. Bernet Kempers<sup>5</sup>.

Among the 120 sculptured panels illustrating the life story of the Buddha

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem* vol. II p. 650

<sup>4</sup> J. Ph. Vogel *Indian Serpent Lore* 1926 pp. 99 f. pl. VII a

<sup>5</sup> A. H. Longhurst *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunakonda* Memoir ASI no. 54 1938 p. 56 pl. XLVII b

which are arranged along the retaining wall of the first corridor of the Barabudur there are two, nos 85 86, relating to the Nairāṇjanā. The one shows the Bodhisattva on his way to the river enlivened by numerous fishes. On his right side a group of four kneeling figures, perhaps Nāgās, worships him raising their joined hands in adoration. Behind them we notice a tree with four birds flying in the direction of the Bodhisattva. They remind us of the birds mentioned in the *Lalitavistara*, the sacred text which the sculptors of Barabudur have followed in their rendering of the Buddha legend. It is impossible to identify them but they are certainly neither geese nor peacocks. The other panel, representing the Bodhisattva bathing in the Nairāṇjanā, is one of the most exquisite reliefs of the Barabudur. The Bodhisattva is shown standing in the middle of the river and attended by celestials kneeling in front of him or floating in the air. A doe and a fawn are visible on the bank of the river and on the opposite side a peacock perched on a tree, but no other birds.<sup>6</sup>

### *Hamsajataka*

The exalted character attributed to the goose by the Buddhists as the embodiment of every virtue is most clearly expressed in the *Hamsajātaka*. In the great Pālī collection we have this birth story in three versions (nos 502, 533, 534), but it is most beautifully told in that gem of Buddhist Sanskrit literature, the *Jātakamālā* (no 22)<sup>7</sup> of Āryasūra. The hero of the story is the king of geese Dhritarashtra, the Bodhisattva reborn. He was the chief of a large tribe of geese numbering many hundreds of thousands that dwelt in Lake Mānasa. The commander of his army, Sumukha by name, was of noble birth and endowed with a keen intellect and great skill in matters of policy. They used to instruct that flock of geese, as a teacher and his foremost disciple would instruct all his other pupils. Brahmadatta, the king of Benares, hearing the fame of that wise king of geese and of his commander in chief, was seized by curiosity to see them. On consulting his ministers, they advised him to construct an artificial lake in one of his forests and to proclaim that he granted safety to all birds who would choose it for their abode. Now when autumn had come, a couple of geese, belonging to the very tribe of Dhritarashtra, flew up from Lake Mānasa and passing over various countries happened to come to Benares and saw the wonderful lake of King Brahmadatta. They stayed there for several months and at the beginning of the rainy season they returned to Manasa. Here they gave an account of their

<sup>6</sup> N. J. Krom *Barabudur Archaeological Description* The Hague 1927 vol. I pp. 191 f.

<sup>7</sup> *Jātakamālā* ed. H. Kern 1891 pp. 127 142. J. S. Speyer's transl. *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* vol. I 1895 pp. 181 200.

wanderings and dwelt on the beauty of King Brahmādatta's creation. They urged on the lord of geese to betake himself to that marvellous place by the end of the rains.

The goose king consulted his wise minister who disadvised the proposed journey. He remarked that the hearts of men are generally false and their compassion deceitful. Deign to consider this, my liege, he said — The cries of forest animals and birds are dictated by their heart, but men are the only beings skilled in the reverse.

Despite these protests the king of the geese reluctantly yielded to the wish of his subjects. In a bright autumn night, accompanied by Sumukha and a numerous flock of geese, he set out in the direction of Benares. Their arrival was reported to King Brahmādatta who at once ordered one of his most skilled fowlers to catch the two wonderful birds whose beautiful wings shone like gold. The fowler who belonged to the Nishāda tribe of wild hunters, laid down his snares on the spots frequented by the two geese. The first to be caught was the unfortunate goose-king. He at once uttered a special cry of warning and the whole flock flew up in the sky. But Sumukha, the commander in chief, did not withdraw from the side of his master. The king of geese entreated him to seek his own safety but the faithful minister remained steadfast. While they were still arguing the darkskinned Nishāda appeared and was seized with wonder on seeing two geese and only one of them ensnared. Sumukha addressed him in human language and after explaining his motive offered his own body as a ransom for the life of his lord. The fowler, though hard hearted by his cruel trade, was greatly touched by the noble words of the bird and released the king of geese from the snare. At Sumukha's request he carried the two geese, free and unbound, on a shoulderpole to the royal palace.

King Brahmādatta was greatly pleased when he beheld the two famous geese brought into his zenana and learnt the wonderful tale of their capture from the mouth of the Nishāda. He welcomed his guests in courteous words and assigned to each of them a seat according to their ranks — a golden throne to the king of geese and a bamboo stool to his minister. Then there ensued a discourse in which the Bodhisattva set forth the virtues of a righteous king. After taking leave from Brahmādatta, the ruler of Benares, he rose in the sky and followed by Sumukha, his commander in-chief, he joined his tribe of geese.

The three versions of the Pālī collection differ considerably in length, the *Hamsajātaka* (no 502) being only a brief resume of the story, whereas the *Chullahamsika* (no 533) and the *Alahamsikajātaka* (no 551) relate it at considerable length. The last mentioned version, as the name implies, is the most



extensive. The number of stanzas contained in the three versions is 25, 88 and 103 respectively. The story agrees essentially with the Sanskrit redaction, but there are certain variations. In the *Hamsa* and *Mahāhamsajātaka* it is *Khemā*, the chief queen of the king of Benares, who in a dream sees gold coloured geese and induces her husband to capture them by means of an artificial lake. In the Pali *jātakas* the fowler is called a *Nesāda*, i.e. a man belonging to a jungle tribe often met with in Sanskrit literature. The golden geese are said to dwell on Mount Chittakūta in the Himavanta, the ancient name of the Himālaya. No mention is made of Lake Mānasa. In the customary epilogue in which the personages of the story are identified, Buddha explains that the king of geese was himself, Sumukha was his disciple Ānanda, the flock of geese his community, the king his chief disciple Sāriputta, and the *Nesāda* his charioteer Chhanna.

The importance attached to the *jātaka* of the goose king and his noble minister (the latter is in western estimation the real hero of the story) is reflected in sculptural and pictorial art. Among the *jātaka* scenes found on the railing of the stūpa of Bharhut there is one designated as *Hamsajātaka* in the accompanying inscription. It is merely a fragment showing the head and neck of a goose and the outspread tail of a peacock. Cunningham, however, has pointed out that it does not picture the goose story related above but refers to another *jātaka* of the Pali collection, viz. the *Nachchajātaka* (no. 34).<sup>8</sup>

The marvellous rock cut monastery of Ajanta contains two detailed and well preserved frescoes of the *Hamsajātaka*.<sup>9</sup> They are found in the large *vihara* caves II and XVII. Griffiths calls cave II one of the latest and most richly wrought of the monastic caves but adds that its decorations are sadly defaced and blackened by smoke. The fresco shows the geese in a lotus pond. The darkskinned fowler is pictured four times—in accordance with the successive events of the story—first hiding behind a rock and watching the geese, then wading in the pond and preparing his snare (?), then conversing with the two geese as indicated by his gesticulating hands, and finally carrying off the geese perched on his hands.

The fresco in cave XVII presents a complete picture of the *jātaka* (Pl. II). In the foreground the lotus pond in which two geese are disporting and on the right a small pavilion screened off by ornamental hangings. Here too the two heroes of the story, Dhritarāshtra and Sumukha, are seated on the hands of the fowler while being taken to the royal court. Immediately above the flock of geese are

<sup>8</sup> See beneath p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> Griffiths *Ajanta Paintings* vol. I p. 15 fig. 35 pl. 64. 2. Lady Herringham *Ajanta Frescoes* pl. XXV. 27. XXXIII. 36. XLI. 54. Yazdani *Ajanta* Part II 1933 pp. 12. 15. pl. XV. XVI. Part IV 1935 pp. 40 f. pl. XVII. a. b. The author quotes the Pali version of the story but the frescoes representing *jātakas* are more closely related to the *Jatakamālā*.

seen flying up at the capture of their lord and leader. The most conspicuous part of the fresco is the court scene, in which the interview of the king of Benares with his two feathered guests is delightfully rendered. The king is seated on an elevated seat, surrounded by his female attendants, one of them holding a fly whisk, and another a parasol. A bald headed person in simple dress, sitting on a stool on the left side of the king, is probably his Brahmanical adviser and prime minister. The two wise geese are seated on square stools in front of the king. The stool of the goose-king Dhṛitarāshtra is provided with a decorated back and a coverlet. Sumukha, somewhat smaller in size, sits on a low and plain seat without cover behind his master and at a greater distance from their royal host. Thus the court etiquette is observed in every respect.

There is plenty of evidence that the painters of Ajanta have followed the text of the *Jatakamālā*. This has enabled the Russian scholar Sergius Oldenburg to identify the *Hamsajātaka* and several other *jātakas* from the reproductions published by Griffiths. It deserves notice that the queen Khemā who plays a prominent part in the Pālī version of the story is absent in the court scene. In certain details the artist has allowed himself some freedom. In both the Sanskrit and Pālī versions it is said that the fowler carried the captured birds on a shoulder pole. The artist, probably realising that this would be a most uncomfortable seat for a goose, placed them on the raised palms of the fowler.

It is a fact established by a century of research that the long rows of marvellous reliefs decorating the Barabudur of Java are all based on certain sacred books. The first texts recognized were the *Lalitavistara*, which is closely followed in the rendering of the lifestory of the Buddha, and the *Jatakamālā*. Whereas the life of the master is pictured on the 120 large panels along the retaining wall of the first corridor, the thirty four birth stories related in Āryaśūra's masterwork are carved on the balustrade enclosing that corridor. Apparently an ancient Indian tradition, first attested by the railing of Bharhut, has thus been preserved. Unfortunately the *jataka* panels of the Barabudur, owing to their position on a railing of less solid construction, have suffered more injury than those arranged along the opposite wall.

The *Hamsajātaka* is assigned its proper place between the *Chuddabodhi* and the *Mahābodhi jātakas*. The story of the two noble geese is illustrated in four panels (nos 77-80 of the series) of which three are square and the fourth is rectangular.<sup>10</sup> The first panel shows a flock of geese feeding at a lotus pond which must be the holy lake Manasa (Pl. IIIa). It is evident that the two birds

<sup>10</sup> N. J. Krom *op cit* vol. I pp 361 ff. Series I (B) 2, plates IX nos 77-79 and X no 80.

conspicuous by their size represent the goose-king and his minister. In the next scene we see the king of Benares seated on a throne devoid of ornament. He is consulting with his four ministers of whom two are sitting and two standing in front of him. The third relief presents a fine picture of the geese taking wing (Pl IIIb). The individual sitting in the corner beneath must be the fowler addressing the two geese in front of him. The rectangular panel containing the closing scene of the story is badly mutilated. It shows the two geese in the presence of the king of Benares whose figure has become indistinct. The king of geese has entirely disappeared, but must have occupied an elevated seat opposite the royal throne. *Su mukha* is plainly visible on a lower seat. A censer and vase are placed in front of him and a kneeling servant holds a parasol, symbolic of royalty. The king holds a censer. At his side two females are seated, the one next to the king making an *añjali*. Three attendants are standing, one holding a fly whisk (*chāmara*) and another a dish (Pl IIIc).

The sculptor of Barabudur was restricted in his task by the limited space available to him and by his stubborn material. These drawbacks forbade him to produce a detailed and vivid picture of the moving tale, as was achieved by the painter of Ajanta. But it will be admitted that he has succeeded in rendering the main events of the story in such clear, though concise, manner as to render it at once intelligible to the faithful.

### *The Birth story of the Swift Goose (Javanabamsa jataka) <sup>11</sup>*

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was born as a swift goose and lived on the Chittakūta surrounded by ninety thousand geese. One day, having along with his flock eaten wild rice in a certain pool in the plains of *Jambudīpa*, he flew slowly to the Chittakūta and it was as if he was spreading a golden mat in the air. Now the king of Benares saw him and said to his ministers: 'Yon bird must be a king as I am. He took a fancy to the bird and honoured him with garlands, perfumes and unguents. The Great Being asked the geese: "When the king would do such honour to me, what does he want?" He wants to make friends with your Majesty. Well, let me be friends with him', quoth he and made friends with the king.

Now one day after this, at the time when the king was used to go to his garden, the Bodhisattva having gone to the Lake Anotatta came with water on one wing and sandalpowder on the other. With the water he bathed the king and besprink

<sup>11</sup> *The Jataka* ed V Fausholt 1887 vol IV pp. 211-218. *The Jataka* transl. from the Pali 1901 vol IV transl. by W. H. D. Rouse pp. 132-136. The above is an abbreviated and slightly modified rendering of the published translation.

he caused to be set up a stone pillar, and about his own neck a bell to be bound. He then perched on the top of the stone pillar, and placing the archers looking away from the pillar towards the four cardinal points, said, Mahārāja, let these four men shoot four arrows at the same moment towards the four cardinal points, and I will catch these arrows before they touch the ground and lay them at the men's feet. You will know when I am gone for the arrows by the sound of the bell, but I shall not be seen. Then all at one moment the men shot the four arrows, he caught them and laid them at their feet, and was seen to be sitting upon the pillar. You have seen my speed, Mahārāja, he said, then went on. That speed, Mahārāja, is not my utmost nor my middle speed, it is my worst speed, and this will show you how swift I am. Then the king asked, Well, friend, is there any speed swifter than yours? There is, my friend. Swifter than my swiftest a hundredfold, a thousandfold, nay a hundredthousandfold, is the decay of the elements of life in living beings. The king hearing this lesson was in fear of death, could not keep his senses, and fell in a faint. The multitude were in despair, they sprinkled the king's face with water, and brought him round. Then the Great Being said to him, Mahārāja, fear not, but remember death. Walk in righteousness, give alms and do good, be wakeful. Then the king answered and said, My lord, without a wise teacher like you I cannot live, do not return to mount Chittakūta, but stay here, instruct me, be my teacher to teach me! and he put his request in a stanza

Dear is your voice, and dearer far your presence when I see. Then since I love the sight of you, o goose, come dwell with me!

The Bodhisattva said

Ever would I dwell with thee, in the honour thus proffered, but thou mightst say in wine one day. Broof me that royal Bird!

Then the king promised never to touch strong drink but the Bodhisattva replied

The cry of jackals or of birds is understood with ease. Yea, but the word of man, o king, is darker far than these.

The Bodhisattva finally promised the king to pay him an occasional visit and having said this he departed to the Chittakuta.

In the usual epilogue to the *jataka*, the Buddha identified the persons, saying At that time Ānanda was the king, Mogallāna was the youngest bird, Sāriputta was the second, the remaining flock of geese were the community of Buddha, and I myself was the swift goose.

*The Jataka of the Owl*<sup>12</sup>

Once upon a time the people who lived in the first cycle of the world gathered together, and took for their king a certain man, handsome, auspicious, commanding and endowed with all good qualities. The quadrupeds also gathered and chose for their king the lion, and the fishes in the ocean chose for king a fish called Ānanda. Then the tribes of birds assembled in the Himavanta upon a flat rock, crying, 'Among men there is a king, and among the beasts and also among the fish, but amongst us birds there is none. We should not live in anarchy, we too should choose a king. Fix on some one fit to be set in the king's place.'

They searched about for such a bird and chose the owl. Here is the one we like, they said. And a bird made proclamation three times to all that there would be a vote taken on this matter. After patiently hearing this proclamation twice, on the third time up rose a crow, and cried out, 'Stay now! If that is what he looks like when he is being consecrated king, what will he look like when he is angry? If he only looks at us in anger, we shall be scattered like sesame seeds thrown on a hot frying pan. I don't want to make this fellow king!'

Then he flew up into the air, cawing out, 'I don't like it! I don't like it!' The owl rose and pursued him. Thenceforward those two nursed enmity one towards the other. And the birds chose a golden goose for their king and dispersed.

A fragmentary railing pillar found at Mathura and preserved in the local museum<sup>13</sup> is carved with a scene which may be connected with the *jataka* of the owl, although the details differ from the story related above. It shows an owl seated on a stool between two monkeys who are pouring water over its head. From the circumstances of the find it may safely be inferred that the railing pillar on which it is carved belonged to a Buddhist monument.

Although the story of the frustrated coronation of the owl makes part of the large Pali collection of *jatakas*, it is clear that originally it had nothing to do with Buddhism. We find it also inserted in the framework of the third part of the *Pañchatantra* which describes the war between the crows and the owls (*Kākolukya*). In the solemn Sanskrit version the preparations made for the coronation of the owl are enumerated but no mention is made of the golden goose. The crow declares that the only proper monarch of the birds is Garuda. The incident is the cause of the lasting feud between crows and owls.

<sup>12</sup> *Uluka-jataka*. The *Jataka* ed. by Fausboll vol. II p. 351 no. 270. We have followed the rendering by W. H. D. Rouse in Cowell *op. cit.* vol. II p. 242. The three stanzas have been omitted.

<sup>13</sup> J. Ph. Vogel *BEFEO* vol. IX 1909 p. 529. *Cat. Arch. Museum of Mathura* 1910 p. 150 no. J 41. J. Ph. Vogel *La sculpture de Mathura* (*Asiatica* vol. XV) 1930 pp. 64, 102 f. pl. XXI d.

The corresponding third book of the *Hitopadeśa* relates the war between the geese and the peacocks. The goose, Hiranyagarbha, the king of all aquatic birds, lives in the lake Padmakeli in Karpūradvīpa. Chitravarṇa, the king of the peacocks, dwells in a burnt forest of the Vindhya in Jambudvīpa. Chitravarṇa at the head of all kind of birds attacks the castle of Hiranyagarbha, which is set on fire by the treacherous crows. The life of the king of the geese is saved by the devotion of his general, the crane (*sārasa*), who is killed by the cocks. The fourth book describes how peace is restored.

### *The Jātaka of the Dancing Peacock*<sup>14</sup>

Once upon a time, in the first cycle of the world, the quadrupeds made the lion their king, the fishes the fish Ānanda, and the birds the golden goose. Now this goose had a lovely daughter and her royal father granted her any boon she might ask. The boon she asked was to be allowed to choose a husband according to her own pleasure. When the king of geese had granted her this boon, he assembled all the birds on the Himavanta. All manner of birds came, geese and peacocks and all other birds, and they flocked together on a great plateau of bare rock. Then the king of geese sent for his daughter and bade her go and choose a husband after her own heart. As she reviewed the crowd of birds, she saw the peacock with his neck of jewelled sheen and tail of varied hue; and she chose him, saying: "Let this be my husband". Then the assembly of the birds went up to the peacock and said: "Friend peacock, this princess, in choosing her husband from among all these birds, has fixed her choice on you". The peacock, overjoyed, exclaimed, "Until this day you have never seen my strength"; and in defiance of all shame and decency he spread his wings and began to dance; and in dancing he exposed himself. Filled with shame the king of golden geese said: "This fellow has neither modesty within his heart nor decency in his outward behaviour; I certainly will not give my daughter to one so shameless". An there in the midst of all that assembly of the birds, he repeated this stanza:—

Thy voice is charming, beautiful thy back,  
Like beryl is the brilliance of thy neck,  
A fathom long the feathers of thy tail,  
But for thy dance my child I give thee not.

<sup>14</sup> *The Jātaka*, vol I, p. 206, no 32 We have partly followed the rendering by R. Chalmers in Cowell, *op cit*, vol I, p. 83 H. J. Francis and E. J. Thomas, *Jātaka Tales*, Cambridge 1916, p. 30 The rendering of *suvannabamsa* by 'Golden Mallard' is open to objection Tawney, *J of Philology*, vol XII, p. 121, compares the story of Hippokleides (Herodote VI, 129), which "closely resembles the story of the Dancing Peacock", and suggests the mediation of the Bactrian Greeks But in my opinion the amusing fable is purely Indian and does not require any so far fetched origin

In the very same meeting the king of geese gave his daughter to a young gander who was his sister's son. The peacock, ashamed at the loss of the goose damsel, rose up and flew away. The king of geese went back to his own dwelling place.

Among the Bharhut sculptures there is a fragment showing the head and neck of a goose at the side of the head and outspread tail of a peacock. It is designated as *hamsajataka* in a Brāhmī inscription, but Cunningham has rightly identified it with the *Nachchajataka*.<sup>15</sup> There are several other instances in which the titles of the Bharhut reliefs differ from those of the Jātaka Book.

### *The Jātaka of the Palasa Tree*<sup>16</sup>

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was reborn as a golden gosling and when he was full grown, he lived in a golden cave, in the Chittakūta mountain in the region of the Himālaya and used to go constantly and eat the wild rice that grew on a natural lake. On the way by which he went to and fro was a big *palāsa* tree. Both in going and returning, he would always stop and rest there. So confidence sprang up between him and the divinity that had been reborn in that tree. By and by a certain fowl, after eating the ripe fruit of a banyan, came and perched on the *palāsa*, and dropped its excrements into the fork of it. Thence there sprang up a young banyan, which grew up to the height of four inches and was bright with red shoots and greenery. The royal goose, on seeing this, addressed the tree-spirit and said, My good friend *Palāsa*, every tree on which a banyan shoot springs up is destroyed by its growth. Do not suffer this to grow, or it will destroy your place of abode.

The *palasa*, however, disregarded this wise council, and the royal goose spread out its wings and made straight for Mount Chittakūta. Thenceforth he came not back any more. By and by the banyan shoot grew up. In this tree also a tree-spirit took birth, and in its growth it broke down the *palasa*, and with a branch the abode of the divinity also fell. At this moment reflecting on the words of the royal goose the tree-spirit lamented. The king of the geese foresaw this danger in the future, but I did not hearken unto his words. Thus did the banyan, as it grew up, break down all the *palasa* tree and reduce it to a mere stump, and the dwelling of the tree-spirit wholly disappeared.

<sup>15</sup> *The Stupa of Bharhut* 1876 p. 69 pl. XXVII fig. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *The Jātaka* vol. III pp. 208-210 no. 370. We have partly followed the rendering of H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil *op. cit.* III pp. 137 f. The *palasa* is *Butea frondosa*, a tree conspicuous by its brilliant crimson blossoms.

*The Hamsa stūpa on Mount Indrasaila*

The Indrasaila or Mountain of Indra at some distance from Rājagriha, the ancient capital of Magadha, was an isolated rock famous in Buddhist tradition. It was here that the Buddha, seated in a cave and wrapped in mental concentration, was visited by Indra, the lord of the gods, anxious to consult the Master on forty two doubtful questions.

The Indrasaila was visited by the Chinese pilgrims Fa hsien and Hsuan tsang. The former (c. 400 A.D.) describes it as a small solitary rocky hill, at the head or end of which was an apartment of stone, facing the south, — the place where Buddha sat, when Indra, Ruler of Devas, brought the deva musician Pañcha sikhā to give pleasure to him by playing on his lute.

The account of the famous pilgrim Hsuan tsang, who travelled in India in 629 A.D. is more detailed but agrees in substance with that of his predecessor. According to his description<sup>17</sup>, the mountain, whose sombre gorges were covered with vegetation, had two peaks, and in the precipitous south side of the west peak was a broad low cave in which the Buddha often lodged. A monastery stood on the east peak of the mountain. In front of the monastery, he continues, was a *stūpa*, called the Hamsa *stūpa*, and to account for this name he relates the following. The Brethren of this monastery had been Hinayānists and so Gradualists, who accepted and observed the rule as to the three lawful kinds of flesh for food. It happened, however, on one occasion that these kinds of food were not to be had, a Brother walking up and down saw a flock of wild geese flying overhead. He said aloud in joke, 'To-day there is no breakfast for the Brethren; the Mahasattva must know the right time.' Before he had finished speaking one of the wild geese, dropping to the ground, gave up his dead body for the Brethren. The *bhikkhu* went and reported the matter to them, whereupon all were greatly moved. They said among themselves, 'The Buddha preached and taught the right thing at the right occasion, with dogged stupidity we have followed the gradual doctrine. It is the Great Vehicle which is the right system. We must give up our former tenets and follow the holy ordinances. This wild goose has come to warn us, and be our true guide and we must make a lasting memorial of his substantial merit. So the goose was buried, and this *stūpa* was erected over his body.

<sup>17</sup> I follow Thomas Watters' condensed translation in *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* vol. II p. 172.



## CHAPTER III

### THE GOOSE IN INDIAN FABLES AND FAIRY TALES

#### *The Tortoise and the two Geese*<sup>1</sup>

In a certain pool there lived a tortoise, Kambugriva by name. He had two friends of the tribe of geese named Samkata and Vikata to whom he was attached by the utmost affection. These two geese used to come to the bank of the lake and after holding converse with him about the stories of sundry divine and great seers, they resorted to their nest when the sun had set. Now in the course of time, owing to drought, the pool gradually dried up. Then the two, afflicted by this affliction, spoke: 'O friend, this lake has become nothing but mud. We are perplexed at heart, thinking what will become of you.' On hearing this the tortoise replied: 'Now it is impossible for us to live in the absence of water. Yet we must think of some expedient. Fetch therefore a strong rope or a light stick and look for a lake with abundant water. Then, when I have seized it in the middle with my teeth and you hold both ends, you must bring that stick together with me to that lake.' They said: 'Well, friend, thus we shall do. But you must keep a vow of silence, otherwise you will fall down from the stick.' When so was done, Kambugriva beheld a certain town lying beneath. When the townspeople there saw him being transported in such wise they cried with wonderment: 'Look, look! something in the shape of a wheel is carried by two birds.' Now Kambugriva, hearing their clamour, was going to say: 'Oho, what clamour is this?' But when it was half spoken, he fell and was done to pieces by the townspeople. Therefore I say: 'He who does not act on the word of well meaning friends, will perish like the foolish tortoise who dropped from the stick.'

The *Hitopadesa*<sup>2</sup>, which is largely based on the *Pañchatantra* and must have been composed in Bengal gives the fable in a modified form. The scene is laid in Magadha, now South Bihār. The three animals are induced to migrate not by a drought but by the appearance of fishermen who intend to kill the tortoises.

<sup>1</sup> *Pañchatantra* I 13. Theodor Benfey *Pantschatantra* Leipzig 1859 vol. II pp. 90 f. In the earliest redactions it is the eleventh story of the first *tantra*. J. Hertel *Das Pancatantra seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung* 1914 p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Hitopadesa* IV 2.

and fishes in the lake. When they have started on their aerial voyage, the tortoise is noticed by some cowherds who rush after him shouting that they will cook and eat him. The tortoise seized by anger shouts back: 'Ashes you will eat', with the result that he drops and is killed by the cowherds.

The story of the loquacious tortoise, like many popular fables, was turned into a *jātaka*, it is no. 215 of the Pālī collection. Here it is employed by the Bodhi-sattva, reborn as a minister of Brahmādatta, the king of Benares, as a parable intended to cure this monarch of a moral defect. For this monarch was so garrulous that he did not leave other people an opportunity to speak. The story, as told by the wise councillor, differs in several details from the fable of the *Nīti-sāstras*. The tortoise lives in a lake in a region of the Himālaya. Two young geese with whom he has become intimate, invite him to come to their home in the Golden Cave at the foot of Mount Chittakūta. They undertake their voyage in the manner described above. The village children shout: 'There are two geese carrying a tortoise by a stick'. When the tortoise wants to tell them that it is not their business, he falls in the open courtyard of the palace and splits in two. The king asks his wise councillor how this accident happened and the latter seizes the opportunity to lecture his royal master on the evil effect of garrulity. In its moralizing form the story has lost much of its charm.

The fable of the tortoise and the two geese has accompanied the *Pañchatantra* and *Huopadesa* on their marvellous migration east and west. It is not surprising to find it in the famous collection of La Fontaine (X, 3) under the title *La tortue et les deux canards*. The geese have become ducks! In the French poem there is nothing reminiscent of its Indian origin. The initiative of the aerial journey of the three animals is attributed to the light-headed tortoise, *qui, lasse de son trou, voulut voir le pays*. Whether such an adventurous wish is compatible with the character of a tortoise, must be left to animal psychologists to decide.

It is surprising that among the numerous *jātakas* pictured on the railing of the *stupa* of Bharhut the story of the tortoise and the geese is not represented. But it should be borne in mind that when this famous monument was discovered by Cunningham a large part of the railing had been destroyed by the villagers.

The bottom fragment of a railing pillar preserved in the Mathurā Museum (no. J 36) shows a tortoise in the act of falling, being belaboured by two men with sticks. Evidently the scene refers to the tragic *denouement* of the ancient fable, as it is told in the *Pañchatantra*.<sup>3</sup> The pillar must have belonged to the railing of a flight of steps leading up to the platform of some building, probably

<sup>3</sup> J. Ph. Vogel *La sculpture de Mathura* pp. 63 and 102 f. pl. XXI c.

a *stūpa* M Foucher has recognized the story on a railing at Bodh Gaya which is ascribed by Coomaraswamy to the later Gupta period <sup>4</sup>

The examples quoted from Indian art are neither numerous nor very striking. The sculptural art of Java, on the contrary, has produced several specimens remarkable for their great variety of style. Earliest in date is the panel on the staircase of Chandi Mendut, the Buddhist temple adjoining the Barabudur <sup>5</sup>. The outer surfaces of the two parapets enclosing the flight of steps are both decorated with ten panels arranged in four rows and illustrating *jātakas*, most of them not yet identified. The central panel of the lower most row on the left parapet clearly illustrates the fable of the tortoise in a manner unsurpassed by its vivid rendering (Pl. IVa). The tortoise carried by the two geese is threatened by two men aiming their bows at him, a third man holds out his hands to catch the unfortunate animal in its fall. Underneath the tortoise is seen in the hands of its human enemies. The story is thus told in two stages according to the method of continued narrative familiar from Bharhut. The grazing buffalo in the foreground indicates that the unknown artist followed the version of the Hitopadesa. It deserves notice that nowhere we meet the version of the Pali Jataka book. It may be questioned whether similar scenes, used to decorate Javanese temples, have been rightly designated as *jātakas*. In the present case the Bodhisattva is absent. It is more probable that they attracted the artists on account of their popular and picturesque character, so that it will be preferable to call them fables.

A further development of the fable of the tortoise in Indo Javanese art is found on another Buddhist temple, known as Chandi Sajiwan and situated at a distance of half a mile to the south east of Prambanan in Central Java <sup>6</sup>. The original purpose of the temple is unknown and, as is usual in Java, it is indicated by the name of the neighbouring village. It is reckoned among the latest monuments of the middle Javanese period and must belong to the end of the ninth century.

The temple proper presents a sadly ruined aspect, as the facing stones have mostly fallen away. The basement, however, is well preserved. It is decorated with a continuous band of foliated ornament of marvellous elegance in which nineteen figured scenes have been introduced. A similar arrangement is found on the railing of Bharhut, but the Javanese artisan has combined the decorative

<sup>4</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy *La sculpture de Bodhgaya* (*Ars Asiatica* vol. XVIII 1935 p. 31 pl. LVIII 3).

<sup>5</sup> Th. van Erp *Hindu Monumental Art in Central Java* (*Twentieth Century Impressions of Netherlands India* p. 144 plate). N. J. Krom *Inleiding tot de Hindoe Javanische Kunst* 2nd ed. The Hague 1923.

<sup>6</sup> J. R. van Blom *Tjandi Sadjawan* 1935 pp. 84 f. The author gives a résumé of the various illustrations of the story in Indo Javanese art. Cf. Krom, *op. cit.* II p. 18.

and illustrative elements with a vastly superior skill and artistic feeling. The sixteen reliefs which are still more or less intact evidently represent the same kind of fables as found on the *Chandi Mendut*, but treated in a totally different manner. On the earlier monument the stories are visualized in a series of well defined rectangular panels, each showing a minutely detailed and lively scene in which the action of men and animals is admirably expressed. On the *Chandi Sajiwan* the fables have been reduced to simple formulas, more indicating than illustrating the gist of the story. When starting from the flight of steps on the west side of the temple and circumambulating it, the visitor will recognize the fable of the talkative tortoise in the second scene (Pl. IVb). The two geese holding the stick with the tortoise are plainly visible and immediately under them there are two cherub-like persons, one pointing to the phenomenon above and the other busy with the captured tortoise. Here too the relief combines two successive stages of the story.

The two temples above mentioned belong to Central Java and represent the classical period of Indo-Javanese architecture. In the eastern part of the island there are a number of monuments exhibiting a later phase in which the indigenous art of Indonesia asserts itself and Hindu influence recedes. These temples are mostly dedicated to Brahmanical deities but include a few which belong to the Buddhist religion. The *Chandi Jago*<sup>7</sup> near the town of Malang is a noticeable example of the latter class.

The old Javanese panegyric chronicle *Nagarakṛtāgama* (41, 4) states that Vishnuvardhana, the Javanese king of Singasari, after his death (which occurred in A.D. 1268) was worshipped in the shape of a Śiva image and as a Buddhist icon. There is reason to assume that the Buddhist effigy of the deceased king was the stone image of Amoghapaśa, a form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara which was once enshrined in the *Chandi Jago*. This image as well as those of the subsidiary deities still retain a pronounced Indian character and the inscriptions indicating their names are written in an early kind of Nāgarī. The basement, on the contrary, on which the temple is raised, is decorated with reliefs in the Indonesian style. They comprise two scenes reminiscent of the fable of the tortoise but differing from it in several details. It is surprising that instead of two geese and a tortoise we see here one bird, not very goose-like in appearance, carrying a stick with two tortoises attached to it (Pl. Va). They are watched by two dog-like animals seated in front of them. In the adjoining scene these animals are shown in the act of devouring the two tortoises.

<sup>7</sup> Krom *op cit* vol. II pp. 114f.

Another example of the same subject may be quoted from the group of religious buildings, known as Chandi Panataran, to the north of the town of Blitar. Here we find four large statues of temple-guardians (height 6 ft 2 in including the pedestal) shown in the aspect of Rākshasas.<sup>8</sup> Each of them has a date, Saka 1269 (A D 1347), incised on the socle. The back of each of these unwieldy stones is carved in the shape of a towering mass of rocks surmounted by clouds in the fantastic forms of giants and monsters. Projecting in high relief from this confused background there are clear pictures of animals, each indicating some well known fable. In one case it is the story of the loquacious tortoise which is rendered in its Indonesian fashion (Pl V b). In the sky we discern a bird carrying the stick with the two tortoises while the two dogs are sitting beneath. The collar round their necks shows them to be dogs and not, as has been suggested, jackals. The latter species is unknown in Java and Bali except from Sanskrit literature. It is curious that in the *Tantri*, the middle-Javanese adaptation of the *Pañchatantra*, the two geese, here represented as a married couple, bear the names Chakrāṅga and Chakrāṅgī.<sup>9</sup> These names are also known in the island of Bali where the fable comprises two geese (*hangsa*), two tortoises, called Durbuddhi and Ka chapā, and a couple of jackals (*sona* or *srigala*). The story is very popular and often found either painted on wood and cloth or carved in stone. For this information I am indebted to Dr R. Goris.

### *The Goose and the Crow*<sup>10</sup>

On the road to Ujjayinī in a dreary tract there stands a peepul tree and in it lived a goose and a crow. Once in the hot season a certain traveller, overcome by fatigue, put away his bow and arrow near by at hand and fell asleep at the foot of the tree. Then after a while the shade of the tree moved away from his face. As soon as the goose who lived in that tree perceived that his face was exposed to the glare of the sun, he spread out both his wings and made shade again. Then the wayfarer, thoroughly enjoying his sleep, opened his mouth. But the crow dropped ordure in his mouth and flew away. Then when the man got up and raised his eyes he perceived the goose and hitting him with an arrow he killed him. Therefore I say. One should not dwell with the wicked nor travel with them.

The story illustrates the noble nature of the goose in contrast with the vile

<sup>8</sup> Krom *ibidem* pp 268 f.

<sup>9</sup> C. Hooykaas *Tantri de middel Javaansche Pancatantra bewerking* Leiden 1929 p 84.

<sup>10</sup> *Hitopadesa* Book III 5th (or 4th) story. The fable is not found in the *Pancatantra*.

propensities of the crow The presentation of a goose living in a peepul tree (*Ficus religiosa*) is also found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*

*Story of the two carpenters Prānadhara and Rājyadhara*

The following stories are from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* or 'Ocean of the Rivers of Stories'

The first one is told by a carpenter named Rājyadhara to Naravāhanadatta, the son of Udayana, king of Vatsa, on the occasion of Naravāhanadatta's journey to the city of Karpūrasambhava where he will meet his future wife Karpūrikā, the daughter of the king of that city<sup>11</sup>

In the city of Kāñchī there was a famous king of the name of Bāhubala who won Fortune by the might of his arm We were two brothers in his kingdom, carpenters by trade, skilful in making magical instruments of wood and other materials, such as Maya<sup>12</sup> first invented My elder brother, Prānadhara by name, was infatuated with a passion for courtesans and I, named Rājyadhara, was devoted to him That brother of mine consumed my father's property and his own and also some portion of what I had acquired, which, melted by affection, I made over to him

Then he, out of desire to get wealth for the sake of a wench, constructed a couple of wooden geese with a mechanism of strings That pair of geese was sent out by night by pulling strings, and entering by means of the mechanical contrivance into the king's treasury through a window, they took from it with their beaks ornaments placed in a chest, and returned to the house of my brother And he sold the jewels and spent the money with the wench, and in that way he robbed the king's treasury every night

The keeper of the treasury, being exceedingly vexed, went and told the matter plainly to the king Then the king posted him and some other guards in the treasure-house at night Those guards went into the treasure-house at midnight, and while there saw my brother's two mechanical geese entering in by the window, impelled by strings The geese moved round by means of their mechanism and took the jewels, then the guards cut the strings and took the geese to show the king in the morning Then my elder brother said in a state of bewilderment

Brother, my two geese have been seized by the guards of the treasury, for the string of the mechanism has become slack and the pin of the mechanism has dropped So we must both of us leave this place immediately, for the king, when

<sup>11</sup> *Kathas*, XLII 1 XLIII 218 Penzer *Ocean of Story* vol III pp 259 295

<sup>12</sup> A Danava (demon) who built a marvellous hall for Yudhishtira

he hears of it in the morning, will punish us as thieves. For we are both known to be skilled in mechanical contrivances. Here I have an aerial chariot, which quickly goes eight hundred *yojanas*, if you once press a pin. Let us go by means of it to day to a foreign land.

After saying this my brother Prānadhara mounted with his family that air travelling chariot. He flew up in the sky and went off to some distant place. I mounted another aerial chariot which I had myself made and quickly travelled two hundred *yojanas* from that place.

### *The Story of Karpūrikā's former Birth*

After having arrived at Karpūrasambhava in an aerial chariot made for him by Rājyadhara, Naravahanadatta is told by an old lady that Karpūrikā detests men and will not consent to be married because she remembers something which happened in her former birth. The story is rendered in her own words as follows.

On the shore of the Ocean there is a great sandal tree and near it is a lake adorned with full blown lotuses. On that spot I was a female goose in a previous birth on account of my *karman*. Out of fear of the sea I made a nest in that sandal tree, with my husband who was a *rājahansa*. When I was dwelling in that nest, suddenly the mighty flood of the sea came and carried off the infant sons I had born. Bereft of my offspring by the surf I sat wailing and fasting for grief in front of a *linga* of Śiva that stood on the shore of the sea. Then that royal gander, my husband, came to me and spoke. Rise up! Why do you bewail your children that have perished? We shall get other ones. As long as there is life, all things can be obtained. This speech pierced my heart like an arrow and I reflected. For shame! how wicked are males about their young children, how loveless and pitiless even towards devoted wives. What boots me thus husband and what my wretched body? Thus reflecting, I prostrated myself before Śiva, and devoutly placed him in my heart, and then in front of his symbol, before the eyes of the gander, my husband, I uttered this wish, May I become in the next birth a princess remembering her former state, and therefore I flung myself into the sea. Thus, my friend, I have been born in this life such as you see. Because I remember the cruelty of that husband in a former birth, my mind takes no delight in any suitor. Therefore I do not wish to be married. The rest depends on Destiny.

After the old lady had told him this, Naravahanadatta deliberated with his minister Gomukha as to the steps to be taken, and then he assumed the appearance of a *pasupata* ascetic, and, accompanied by Gomukha he went to the king's gate and roamed about in front of it, crying out again and again. Ah, my goosey! Ah,

my goosey!<sup>12</sup> When the maids in the palace beheld him, they informed Karpūrikā, and the princess, having been a goose in a former birth, had him conducted into her presence and asked him What is this that you are continually saying Ah, my goosey! Ah, my goosey? Though she said this to him, he went on to say Ah, my goosey!

Then his companion Gomukha answered her I will explain this in a few words Listen, your Highness In a former birth he was a gander on account of his *karman* Then he built himself a nest in a sandal tree near the sea, and lived there with his female And as it happened their offspring in that nest were swept away by a wave, and his mate, distracted with grief, threw herself into the sea Then he, being grieved at separation from her, and disgusted with his bird nature, desirous of leaving that body, made a pious wish in his heart May I be in a future life a prince remembering my former state and may this virtuous goose be my wife, remembering her former existence also Then he thought of Siva and flung his body into the water of the sea So he has been now born as Naravahanadatta, the son of the king of Vatsa in Kausambi When he was born a voice said distinctly from heaven This prince shall be the emperor of all the kings of the Vidyā dhara

Gomukha told her also their adventures in quest of her, and ended by saying For this reason, Queen, my master wandered about, exclaiming Ah, my goosey! until he came into your presence Now from the pleasing sight of the noble moon of your countenance he enjoys the removal of the darkness caused by the presence of innumerable woes Now honour your noble guest with the blue lotus garland of your look

When Karpūrika heard this feigned speech of Gomukha she thought it was true relying on the fact that it harmonised with her own recollections She melted in her soul with love, and she thought After all, this husband of mine was attached to me, and my despondency was causeless And she said I am in truth that very female goose and I am fortunate that my husband has for my sake endured suffering in two births So now I am your slave overcome by love

Then the king thought himself fortunate, having heard that his daughter had conceived a desire to be married and that an appropriate suitor for her had at last arrived in Naravahanadatta who was marked with all the signs of a great emperor He gave with all due honour his daughter Karpūrika to Naravahanadatta according to the prescribed form



*The Faithful Couple of Geese*<sup>13</sup> 29518

Pushkarāksha, the king of Takshasilā, received a predictment that he was to become the husband of Vinayavatī, a beautiful Vidyādhari who had been miraculously born from the fruit of a *jambu* tree. A hermit, Vijiṭāsu by name tells him how she was his wife in a former birth.

There was in old times a merchant in Tāmraliptī, named Dharmasena, and he had a beautiful wife, Vidyullekhā by name. As was decreed by Destiny, he was robbed by bandits and wounded with weapons by them and at the point of death he went out with his wife to enter the fire. Then the two saw suddenly a beautiful couple of geese coming through the air. They entered the flaming fire, and died with their minds fixed on those geese, and so the husband and wife were born in the next birth as *rājahamsas*.<sup>14</sup> Once in the rains, as at night they were in their nest in a date-palm, a tempest uprooted the tree and separated them. The next morning, when the storm had ceased, the gander sought his mate, but he could not find her anywhere in the lakes far around. At last he went, distracted with love, to the Mānasa lake, the proper place for geese to visit in that season of the year, and another female goose that he met on the way gave him hopes of success. There he did find his own wife and after spending the rainy season he went to a mountain top to desport himself with her. There his consort was shot by a certain hunter and the gander flew away from that spot, distracted by fear and grief. The hunter went off, taking with him the dead goose, but when he saw many armed men coming towards him from afar, he thought that they would perhaps snatch the bird from him. Quickly he cut some grass with his knife, and covering up the goose with it, he left her on the ground. But when those men were gone and the hunter approached anxious to seize her, the goose before his eyes flung off the grass, flew up into the sky and disappeared. She had been revived by the juice of a life restoring herb cut off among the grass.

In the meanwhile the gander, her husband, went his way and alighted on the shore of a lake among a flock of geese, bewildered at not seeing her on whom his heart was bent. At the very moment a certain fisherman threw his net and caught all those geese, and thereupon sat down to take his food instantly. Then the female goose, in search of her husband came on the same spot and found him caught in the net, and in her despair she looked round in every direction. There she saw on the bank of the lake a necklace of pearls which a certain person, who had gone into the water to bathe, had laid on the top of his clothes. She went

<sup>13</sup> *Kaṭha* LXIX, 110-159 Penzer *op cit* vol VI pp 17-20

<sup>14</sup> The parting thought at a person's death is believed to be decisive for the mode of his rebirth.

and seized the necklace without that person seeing her do it, and she moved gently through the air past the fisherman to show it him. Now the fisherman, seeing the goose with the necklace in her beak, left his fowling net and ran after her, stick in hand. But the goose deposited the necklace on the top of a distant rock, and the fisherman, eager to get it, proceeded to climb up that rock. When the goose saw that, she quickly went to a tree near her captured mate and a monkey that was asleep on it she struck in the eye with her beak. The monkey, being terrified by the stroke, fell on the net and tore it, and so all the geese escaped. Now the two geese — husband and wife — were reunited, and they told one another their adventures, and in their joy roamed about to heart's content. When the fisherman, after seizing the necklace, came back greedy of the birds, the man whose necklace had been taken away met him, as he was looking for it. And as his fear betrayed him, that man recovered it from him and cut off his right hand with his sword.

Once the two geese sheltering themselves against the heat under one lotus by way of a sunshade, rose up at noon time from the lake and roamed in the sky. And soon the two birds reached the bank of a river which was haunted by a certain hermit, who was employed in worshipping Siva. Then the couple of geese were pierced by one arrow by a hunter as they were moving along, and fell together on the earth. The lotus, which they had used as a parasol, fell on the top of a *linga* of Siva while the hermit was worshipping it. Then the fowler, seeing them, took the gander for himself, and gave the female to the hermit, who offered it to Siva.

'Now you, Pushkaraksha, are that very gander, and by the virtue of that lotus, which fell on the top of the *linga*, you have been now born in a royal family. And that female goose has been born in a family of Vidyādhari as Vinayavatī, for Siva was abundantly worshipped with her flesh. Thus she was your wife in a former birth.' When the hermit Vṛjātāsū had said this to Pushkarāksha, the king spoke to him again. 'How comes it, hermit, that the entering of the fire, which destroys a multitude of sins, produced in our case the fruit of birth in the nature of a bird?' Thereupon the hermit replied, 'A creature receives the form of that which it was contemplating at the moment of death.'

Then the hermit sent word to Rankumālin and Taravali, the parents of Vinayavatī that the marriage of their daughter with king Pushkarāksha was to take place on that same day. And at an altar, illuminated by the great hermit Vṛjātāsū by means of his *tejas*, Rankumālin gave Vinayavatī to the king and he bestowed on him at the same time a heavenly chariot, that would travel in the sky. With the permission of the hermit, the king took his new wife with him, mounted that heavenly chariot, and, crossing the sea, came quickly to his own city, being like the rising of the moon to the eyes of his subjects. Then he conquered the earth

and became emperor by virtue of his chariot, and lived there a long time in enjoyment with Vinayavati

*The Story of King Brahmadata and the Golden Geese* <sup>15</sup>

In the city of Benares there lived of old time a king named Brahmadata, exclusively devoted to Śiva, who had a dear queen, Somaprabhā by name, and a Brahmin minister Śivabhūti, equal to Brihaspati in intellect. One night that king, as he was lying on a bed on the top of a pavilion, exposed to the rays of the moon, saw a couple of geese crossing through the air, with bodies of gleaming gold, attended by a train of *rājahamsas*. When that wonderful pair had passed from his eyes, the king was for a long time afflicted, and his mind was full of regret at no longer enjoying that sight. He passed that night without sleep, and next morning he told his minister Śivabhūti, and said to him: So, if I cannot feast my eyes on those golden geese to my heart's content, what boots me my kingdom and my life?

After pointing out that different kinds of food, drink and dwelling have been assigned by Destiny to various classes of creatures, Śivabhūti continued: So have made, o King, a great lake to be the dwelling place of these geese, covered with various kinds of lotuses, and watched by guards, where they will be free from molestation. And keep always scattering on the bank food of the kind that birds love, in order that water birds may quickly come there from various quarters. Among them these two golden geese will certainly come, and then you will be able to gaze on them: do not be despondent.

The king did according to the advice of his minister and very soon the guards set to watch the lake informed the king that the two golden geese had settled down on a clump of lotuses. Then the king went down to the lake in a state of great delight and he beheld those golden geese and worshipped them from a distance, and ministered to their comfort by scattering for them grains of rice dipped in milk. And the king took so much interest in them that he spent his whole time in watching those geese, with their bodies of pure gold, their eyes of pearl, their beaks and feet of coral, and the tips of their wings of emerald which had come there in perfect confidence.

Now one day, as the king was roaming along the bank of the lake, he saw in one place a pious offering made with unfading flowers. And he said to the guards there: Who made this offering? Then the guards of the lake said to the king: Every day, at dawn, noon and sunset these two golden geese bathe in the lake,

<sup>15</sup> *Kathas* CXIV 17-144 Penzer *op cit* vol VIII pp 133-143. The first part of the story seems to be a reminiscence of the *Hamsa jataka* above p 32.

and make these offerings, and stand absorbed in meditation, so we do not know Mahārāja, what is the meaning of this great wonder. When the king heard this from the guards, he thought. Such a proceeding is quite inconsistent with the nature of geese, surely there must be a reason for this. So I will perform *tapas* until I find out who these geese are. Then the king and his wife and minister gave up food and remained performing penance and absorbed in meditation on Siva. Now after the king had fasted for twelve days, the two heavenly geese came to him, and said to him in a dream, with articulate voice. 'Rāja, rise up, to-morrow we will tell you and your wife and minister, after you have broken your fast, the whole truth of the matter in private.' When the geese had said this they disappeared, and next morning the king and his wife and his minister, as soon as they awoke, rose up, and broke their fast. And after they had eaten, the two geese came to them, as they were sitting in a pleasure pavilion near the water. The king received them with respect, and said to them. 'Tell me who you are.' Then they proceeded to tell him their history.

From their tale it became evident that the two geese belonged to a group of five Ganas, attendants of Pārvatī who, on account of their disrespectful behaviour, had been condemned by the goddess to be reborn on earth. The two worst offenders, guilty of unseasonable laughter, would have to endure many miseries as poor Brahmīns, Brahmārākshasas, Pisāchas, Chandālas<sup>16</sup>, robbers, bob-tailed dogs and various kinds of birds. In this manner they had at last been reborn as two geese. They would be freed from their curse when all five, having obtained insight, would in course of time meet together and visit Siva in the place where Brahmā and the other gods performed *tapas*. Now the two geese had recognized that the three other Ganas, stricken by the curse of Pārvatī, had been reborn as king Brahmadatta, his wife Somaprabha and his minister Sivabhuti. Therefore, they said, having attained insight, we appeared to you at night. Come, let us go to that holy place of Siva on the Tridasa mountain, where the gods performed asceticism.

Thus king Brahmadatta and his wife and his minister heard this romantic tale from the couple of geese, and gained knowledge from their teaching, and obtained the power of flying through the air like gods. And then they went, accompanied by these two birds to Siddhīśvara, and there they laid aside the bodies they had entered in consequence of the curse, and were reinstated in their former position as attendants upon Siva.

<sup>16</sup> Brahmārākshasas are Brahmīns reborn as Rākshasas in consequence of evil deeds. Pisāchas are demons haunting the battlefield and the cremation grounds. Chandālas are untouchables the lowest of men.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GOOSE IN INDIAN ART

#### *Maurya Period*

The prominence given to the goose in the ancient literature of India is also reflected in Indian art. From the time of Aśoka until the rule of the Great Moguls we find rows of geese in various attitudes employed as a favourite element of decorative art.

Among the inscribed pillars of the great Buddhist emperor there are three where the cylindrical abacus of the capital is decorated with a line of geese. Best preserved is the lion-pillar of Lauriyā-Nandangarh in the Champāran district of North-Bihār. This imposing monument, nearly forty feet in height, is inscribed with the six pillar-edicts of Aśoka. The capital is crowned with the figure of a sitting lion of which the lower jaw is missing. The geese on the abacus are shown in the act of pecking their food <sup>1</sup>.

The Aśoka pillar of Sāncī in Madhya Pradesh (Central India) is sadly damaged, but must have been very similar to the well-known column discovered at Sāmāth near Benares in 1904. The latter monument was erected on the spot where the Buddha Śākyamuni had commenced to divulge his doctrine. The shaft bears an edict of Aśoka against schismatics. The pillar of Sāncī is broken into several pieces. "The pillar, when intact, was about forty-two feet in height and consisted of a round and slightly tapering monolithic shaft, with bell-shaped capital surmounted by an abacus and a crowning ornament of four lions, set back to back, the whole finely finished and polished to a remarkable lustre from top to bottom. The abacus is adorned with four 'honey-suckle' designs separated one from the other by pairs of geese, symbolical perhaps of the flock of the Buddha's disciples (Pl. VIa). The lions from the summit, though now sadly disfigured, still afford a noble example of the sculptor's art" <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The statement by V. A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* 2nd ed. 1930, p. 18, that the abacus is decorated with a row of flying geese is incorrect. Cf. A. Cunningham, *Arch. Survey Rep.*, I, p. 73, who speaks of "a row of Brahmanī geese pecking their food. The birds, however, are geese and not Brahmanī ducks (Skr. *chakravāka*)".

<sup>2</sup> John Marshall, *Ann. Rep. A. S. I.*, 1913-1914, Calcutta, 1917, pp. 17 f., *A Guide to Sanchi*, 2nd ed. 1936, pp. 101 f. The inscription is partly identical with the epigraph on the shaft of the Sarnath pillar. Vide E. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Aśoka, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. I, Oxford 1925, pp. 160 f.

In 1877 two pillars of the Maurya period were discovered by an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India near the hamlet of Rāmpurvā in the north eastern corner of the Champāran district. The northern pillar was buried in a morass, with some three feet only protruding from the surface. The southern column was standing to a height of some six feet above the ground. The upper portion of the shaft and the capital were missing. In November 1907 excavations were carried out on the site under the able direction of Mr. Dayaram Sahnū, the assistant of Sir John Marshall.<sup>3</sup> Their primary object was to extricate the northern pillar which proved to be a work of great difficulty. Mr. Sahnū not only accomplished this arduous task but also succeeded in excavating the bell shaped capital and the figure of a sitting lion carved in the round which once must have crowned the pillar.<sup>4</sup> It was so well preserved, save for the loss of the upper jaw, that it fitted almost flawlessly on to the cap. The lion figure, three feet high, is a master piece of Maurya art. The capital resembles that of the Nandangarh pillar but surpasses it in the beauty of its carving. The abacus is adorned with a row of geese, twelve in number, which start in opposite directions from below the lion's tail and meet below the forepaws (Pl. VIb).

We may add that the excavations of Mr. Sahnū also brought to light the capital of the southern pillar as well as the image of a bull which once surmounted it. Although as works of art they are decidedly inferior to the corresponding members of the lion pillar, their style and polish leave no doubt that the southern pillar too is a Maurya monument. There is no inscription indicating the purpose for which it was erected. The lion and bull capitals found a worthy place in the vestibule of the Indian Museum at Calcutta, but their present abode is the hall of the former viceregal palace at New Delhi.<sup>5</sup>

On the three monuments of Asoka described above the goose is rendered in a perfectly natural manner. Sir John Marshall says with reference to the style of the lion capital of Sarnath, the sculptor has modelled his figures direct from nature and has delineated their forms with bold faithful touch. This also applies to the geese on the three capitals described above.

In the case of the lion capital of Sarnath it is generally assumed that the four animals — an elephant, a lion, a bull and a horse, separated by four wheels — have a symbolical meaning, although opinions differ as regards the interpretation of their symbolism. There is therefore reason to raise the question whether the

<sup>3</sup> *Ann. Rep. A. S. I.* 1907-8 pp. 181-188 pl. LXV-LXVIII.

<sup>4</sup> A copy of the first six pillar edicts is engraved on the shaft of the lion pillar of Rampurva. Cf. Hultzsch *op. cit.* pp. XVIII f. The shaft is stated to measure 44 feet 9½ inches in length.

<sup>5</sup> R. Chanda, *The Beginnings of Art in Eastern India with special reference to sculptures in the Indian Museum Calcutta Memoir A. S. I.* no. 30 1927 pl. II b and III a.

geese found in the same position on three monuments of Asoka cannot have a deeper significance. Sir John Marshall in his description of the Sanchi pillar suggests that they symbolise the flock of the Buddha's disciples. A distinguished Sinhalese archaeologist, Dr S. Paranavitana, interprets them as symbols of the wandering ascetic who has renounced the life of a householder — an explanation supported by two stanzas from the *Dhammapada* quoted above, p. 30.

The geese appear also on a Buddhist monument of great sanctity at Bodhi Gaya, viz. the Adamantine Seat (Sanskrit *vajrasana*) indicating the spot where the Buddha sat at the moment of his enlightenment. It is a polished slab of gray sandstone placed between the Mahabodhi temple and the Bodhi tree, the sides are decorated with figures of geese alternating with palmettes (Pl. VIc). Sir Alexander Cunningham in the course of his excavations discovered it placed against the western wall of the temple. But as the back of the slab which abutted against the wall was also carved, he concluded that it did not occupy its original position.<sup>6</sup>

### Peshawar

A discovery of unusual interest was made in 1908 at Peshawar, the well known frontier town of the North West. The Chinese pilgrims<sup>7</sup> relate that Kanishka the great ruler of the Kushān dynasty and a patron of Buddhism, had founded here a *stupa*, enshrining a relic of the Buddha, which they praise as the largest pagoda of India. Repeatedly it had been burnt down and rebuilt. The monastery attached to the *stupa* was renowned as the place where great divines like Parsva and Vasubandhu had dwelt.

The French archaeologist Alfred Foucher in the fascinating account of his travels in the Peshawar district<sup>8</sup> noticed two mounds outside the eastern gate of the city of Peshawar in which on account of their situation and configuration he recognized the site of the famous pagoda and adjoining convent of Kanishka. Excavations undertaken by the Archaeological Department in the supposed *stupa* mound confirmed Foucher's brilliant hypothesis. Dr D. B. Spooner who conducted the explorations succeeded in tracing the basement of a large *stupa* in the middle of which a relic casket of gilt bronze was unearthed (Pl. VIIa). The

<sup>6</sup> Cunningham *Mahabodhi* London 1892 p. 19. Cf. Coomaraswamy *La sculpture de Bodhgaya* (*Art Asiatique* vol. XVIII) Paris 1935 p. 12 pl. 44-45.

<sup>7</sup> Fa-hien *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms* transl. by James Legge 1886 p. 34. Si-yu-ki *Buddhist Records of the Western World* transl. by S. Beal 1884 vol. I p. 99. Thomas Watters *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* 1904 vol. I pp. 203-214.

<sup>8</sup> *Notes on the Ancient Geography of Gandhara* transl. by H. Hargreaves Calcutta 1915 pp. 6-10. fig. 3. The site is located outside the Lahore Gate about a kilometre south-east of the present walls of the city.

figure of the Kushān king in his northern garb and the Kharoshthī inscription engraved on it left no doubt about its identity. The casket is decorated with the familiar Hellenistic *motif*, very frequent in Graeco Buddhist sculpture, of a garland carried by Erotes, while the lid shows a row of six geese flying with wreaths in their bills and thus, as it were, performing the *pradakṣhinā* round the sacred relic enshrined in the casket. Dr. Spooner<sup>9</sup> evidently was in some doubt about the identity of the birds. In the first published account of his discovery he speaks of a highly ornamental band of geese or swans, but in a subsequent article he calls them geese and this is the correct designation. It will be seen in the sequel that the decorative device of the flying geese is also found in the later Buddhist art of India.

### Taxila

Another remarkable discovery was made by Sir Alexander Cunningham on the site of the ancient city of Taxila, situated on the trade route from Pushkalāvati to Mathurā, a few stages from the crossing of the Indus. In the Rāmāyana (VII, 101, 1011) the foundation of this town is ascribed to Taksha, the son of Bharata. In the Mahabharata (XVIII, 5) it is associated with the serpent sacrifice of Janamejaya the grandson of Arjuna. Asoka ruled it as viceroy of his father and one of the numerous *stūpas* commemorated the touching tale of his son Kunāla. Alexander the Great found an ally in the rājā of Taxila and in the ensuing centuries it was occupied successively by Bactrian Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushāns. In one of these monuments, known as the Gangu Stūpa (no. 32) Cunningham<sup>10</sup> recovered a circular stone box about one foot in diameter and three inches in depth, beautifully turned and polished and covered by a slab of sandstone. Inside there was a small hollow crystal figure of a *hamsa* or goose, containing a thin gold scroll inscribed with Kharoshthī characters (Pl. VIIb). These letters had been punched on the scroll from the back, so that they appear in relief on the upper side.

The crystal goose was presented to the British Museum. The inscribed gold scroll has disappeared, but we may assume that the facsimile published by Cunningham is a faithful copy of the original. It shows a much more distinct lettering than is usual in Kharoshthī inscriptions.<sup>11</sup> The transcripts made by the scholars who have dealt with the inscription show only a few differences but in their interpretation there is a bewildering disagreement. This much is certain that the

<sup>9</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1908-9 pp. 49 f. pl. XII XIII and 1909-10 p. 136 pl. LII LIII.

<sup>10</sup> *ASR* vol. II p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sten Konow *Kharoshthī Inscriptions Corpus Inscr. Ind.* Calcutta, 1929 vol. II part I pp. 83-86 pl. XVII.



inscription refers to a 'relic of the Lord (Buddha)' and that it contains the two compounds, both in the genitive case, *m(ā)tuha(m)sisa* and *pituha(m)sasa* meaning 'of mother's *hamsa*' and 'of father's *hamsa*'. Evidently the relic of the Buddha was enshrined in a *stūpa* by the donor for the benefit of his parents after death. Such a pious wish is very frequent in Buddhist votive inscriptions of the Kushān and Gupta periods. What is exceptional in the present case is the use of the words *hamsa* and *hamsī*. Professor F. W. Thomas<sup>12</sup> who was the last to discuss the gold scroll inscription of Taxila, was no doubt on the right track when he compared passages from the Upanishads, in which the *atman*, the individual soul, is indicated by the word *hamsa*.

In this connection it is interesting to note an object discovered by Sir John Marshall in the course of his excavations at Taxila<sup>13</sup>. It is the crystal neck of a goose found together with beads of carnelian and green jasper in a flat pyxis shaped casket of schist inside the relic chamber of a small *chattya* not far from the Dharmarajikā. There can be little doubt that this fragment belonged to a crystal *hamsa* which served the same purpose as the one noted above.

### Gandhāra

In the cold season of 1902-03 trial excavations were undertaken by Sir John Marshall on the ancient site of Chārsadda, in which Cunningham had recognized Pushkalāvati, the ancient capital of Gandhāra. It is mentioned by Arrian under the name of Peukelaōtis and by Ptolemy (VII, 144) as Poklaeis, a town of the Gandarai. The latter locates it correctly between the Indus and the Souastos, which is the present Swāt river, called Suvāstu in Sanskrit. The ancient site covers an extensive area along the left bank of this river and on the opposite side rises a high artificial plateau known by the Persian name of Bālā Hisār, i.e. the High Fort.

Among the smaller finds was a metal mould of earthenware described by Sir John Marshall as follows: 'The subject of the mould is a female, or effeminate male, figure riding on a swan. The bird carries a garland in its beak, and a band passes around its body behind the wings and legs. Below its neck is a heart-shaped depression, for the reception of a jewel. The figure on its back has the left arm uplifted and wears a necklace. Whether it is intended to portray the well-known Greek type of Aphrodite, or the later type of Apollo, it is difficult to say. Probably, I think, the latter. Such representations of Apollo appear to have been in vogue in Asia Minor in Imperial times. On copper coins, for instance, of

<sup>12</sup> *JRAS* 1916 pp. 282-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Taxila* p. 245 pl. 51f. The first object from the left seems to be the crystal neck of a goose.

Julia Paula and Tranquillina, struck at Chalcedon in Bithynia, Apollo is depicted riding upon a swan. The figure on the coins is nude and its proportions are effeminate, but the presence of the lyre above and behind the head makes the identification certain. The terra cotta mould is unfortunately slightly broken, and it is impossible to say whether a lyre was originally depicted or not.<sup>14</sup>

In the present case the swan is a definite product of Hellenistic art

### *Mathurā*

The town of Mathurā, situated on the right bank of the Jamnā (Sanskrit Yamunā) and on the great trade route connecting Pushkalāvati and Taxila with Bharu kachchha on the west coast and Tamralipti at the mouth of the Ganges, was from olden time a great centre of religious worship and art. Whereas at present Braj, the country round Mathurā, is celebrated as the scene of Krishna's childhood, the numberless remains of ancient sanctuaries which have come to light in this region, pertain mainly to Buddhism. They testify the existence of a marvellously productive school of sculpture which flourished under the rule of the local satraps and during the reign of the Kushan kings Kanishka, Vāsishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva, whose names occur in many inscriptions. The Mathurā school, though fundamentally based on the early school of Central India, contains many features borrowed from the Graeco Buddhist school of Gandhāra.

Desultory explorations were carried out in the vicinity of Mathurā by Cunningham and F. S. Growse and accidental finds of great interest were frequently made. In 1888-91 Dr. A. Fuhrer, archaeological surveyor of the United Provinces, undertook a systematic excavation of the Kankali Tīla, a mound situated half a mile to the south of the Katra. It yielded a large number of sculptures which evidently belonged to a Jaina monument.<sup>15</sup> A votive inscription dated in the year 79, on a broken pedestal mentions the Vohva stūpa built by the gods.<sup>16</sup> The sculptures recovered by Dr. Fuhrer were deposited in the Provincial Museum of Lucknow. A collection of drawings prepared by his draftsmen appeared in a volume of the Archaeological Survey with brief notes by Mr. Vincent A. Smith.<sup>17</sup> Among these sculptures there is one of great interest for our present subject.<sup>18</sup> It is part of a *torana* arch carved on both sides and probably belonging to the period of the local satraps, i.e. the beginning of the first century.

<sup>14</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1902-3 p. 154 fig. 8

<sup>15</sup> J. Ph. Vogel *Cat. of the Arch. Mus. at Mathura* 1910 pp. 16 f.

<sup>16</sup> G. Buhler *Ep. Ind.* vol. II p. 204 no. XX p. 319 pl. III

<sup>17</sup> V. A. Smith, *The Jain Stupa and other Antiquities of Mathura ASI New Imperial Series* vol. XX, 1901 p. 27 pl. XIX-XX.

<sup>18</sup> J. Ph. Vogel *La sculpture de Mathura* 1930 p. 124 pl. LVII

The carved surface is subdivided by three raised curved borders into three narrow crescent shaped spaces. These crescents are each filled with a curious procession of divine, supernatural and human beings — the former flying and partly mounted on dragons and leogryphs, and the latter comfortably seated in homely two wheeled vehicles drawn by horses, bullocks and camels. The corners are occupied by uncouth figures of crocodiles (*makara*). These cortèges move from both sides towards the centre occupied by a seated figure, evidently a *Tirthankara*, i.e. a Jain pontiff. Dr. Bühler assumed that the sculpture pictures a pilgrimage to some Jain sanctuary. In his detailed description he notes a *hamsa* and on the photograph illustrating his article this bird seems to head the deities in the upper crescent. But if we consult the drawing reproduced by Mr. V. A. Smith (pl. XX), it will be seen that the mysterious bird belongs to a flock of three geese flying round a little building placed on the right hand side of the *Tirthankara* (Pl. VIIIfa). We are at once reminded of the geese encircling in their flight the Buddha at the river Nairastjanā.<sup>19</sup> In the present instance the birds have their left sides turned towards the building and their movement is therefore not *pradakṣiṇam* but *prastajam*, as is customary in sepulchral rites. May we conclude that it is a sepulchral monument to which they pay homage? If so, this conclusion may help to interpret the subject of this remarkable piece of sculpture.

Another Mathurā sculpture in the local museum must be mentioned.<sup>20</sup> It is probably part of the coping of a railing and shows two friezes, the upper one consisting of the well-known Hellenistic decorative motif of the garland in its indianized form. The lower frieze contains three scenes of which only the central one is complete. It depicts two antelopes, apparently a buck and a doe, walking briskly over a rocky eminence enclosed by two trees. The scene possibly refers to the birth story of the two kings of deer related by Hsüan tsang in connection with the Deer Park of the *rājā* of Benares.<sup>21</sup> The scene on the left shows an ascetic seated on a cushion of grass and apparently petting a bird of which only the head is preserved. Behind him stands a young ascetic wearing a loin cloth who seems to be busy with a *bangy* (Hind. *bhaṅga*) or shoulder yoke. A fire-altar and water-pitcher complete the scene. There can be little doubt that it illustrates some *pratikṛti*. It is impossible to identify the bird, but to judge from the head and from its size it may quite well be a goose.

<sup>19</sup> See above p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> *La sculpture de Mathurā* p. 127 pl. LXa. Cf. also *ibid.* p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> *Srija ki* transl. by Beal, vol. II pp. 301.

### Kashmir

We must now turn our attention to Kashmir, the Happy Valley. This country, renowned for the grandeur of its snowcapped mountains, occupies the upper valley of the Jhelam, the ancient Vitastā, known to the Greeks and the Romans as the Hydaspes.<sup>22</sup> From early times it was a great centre of Indian culture and Sanskrit learning. Famous among its poets were Somadeva, the author of the *Kaṭhasaritsāgara* and the chronicler Kalhana who composed the *Rājataranginī*, a history of the kings of Kashmir. The numerous temples, all alas reduced to ruins still testify the fame of great rulers like Lalitaditya and Avantivarman.

An early site of unusual interest was explored and described in 1925 by Mr R. C. Kak.<sup>23</sup> This site, situated near the village of Hārwan on the slope of the hills rising from the eastern shore of the Dal lake, had been identified by Sir Aurel Stein with Shadarhadvan, i.e. the Grove of the Six Saints, mentioned in the *Rājataranginī* (I, 173) as the dwellingplace of Nāgārjuna, the great Buddhist teacher.<sup>24</sup> The excavations brought to light the remains of a group of buildings arranged on successive terraces along the slope of the hill. On the highest terrace the basement of a large apsidal temple was excavated, rectangular in plan and rounded at the back, consisting of a spacious rectangular antechamber and a circular sanctum behind. This earliest type of Buddhist temples must have been employed all over India, as is attested by structural and rock cut examples. Structural temples of this type are found at Taxila, Sanchī and Nagarjunikonda. In the last mentioned place Prakrit inscriptions incised in the floor designate them by the name of *chettiyaghara* or *chettīya* house. As *chettīya* (Sanskrit *chaitya*) is a synonym of *stūpa*, the name implies that the object of worship was a *stūpa* and it is therefore not surprising that Mr Kak's excavations on the site of this temple did not bring to light any fragments of a Buddha image.

The temple stood in a courtyard paved with tiles which are decorated with a great variety of designs. Each tile is marked with a Kharoshthī numeral, they were evidently arranged after a preconceived plan. Among the decorative motifs we notice the undulating garland borrowed by the sculptors of Gandhāra from Hellenistic sarcophagi. We have mentioned it above in connection with the relic casket of Kanishka.

From fragments found in the course of his explorations Mr Kak concluded

<sup>22</sup> Horace mentions *quae loca fabulosus lambit Hydaspes* as the most remote region of the world. Ptolemy's Βιδασ-ης is a more precise rendering of the Sanskrit name.

<sup>23</sup> *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* ed. by the Ind. Socy. London 1933 pp. 105-111 pl. XV XLII and LXXVII.

<sup>24</sup> Kalhana's *Rājataranginī* transl. by M. A. Stein Westminster 1900 Vol. II p. 455.

that the façade of the temple, at least to a certain height, was also faced with tile-work. This conclusion is confirmed by the discovery of a long platform at the back of the courtyard which almost along its total length is decorated in this rather peculiar fashion. The design chosen for these rectangular tiles is remarkable indeed. Each tile is divided in three horizontal registers. Most conspicuous is the central register showing a row of long haired yogis seated in a crouching position with the hams touching the heels and the chin resting on the two hands which are placed on the knees (Pl VIIIb). This position is designated by Mr Kak as the crowposture (Sanskrit *kākasana*). Above is a balcony in the shape of a Buddhist railing over which the heads and shoulders of a row of human couples are visible, a decorative motif well known from Gandhāra and Mathurā. Beneath is a procession of geese each holding a flowering lotus stalk in his bill and walking from left to right. It is tempting to assume a connection between the yogis and the geese, although the latter appear also on tiles belonging to the courtyard where they seem to have a merely decorative function. Such a connection between the wandering ascetic and the migrating goose, as has been noticed above (p 30) is expressed in the *Dhammapada*.

### *Temple of Uttareśvara*

The anonymous author of *Periplus Maris Erythraei* § 51<sup>25</sup> mentions a town Paithana situated at a distance of twenty days journey to the south of Barygaza — now Broach on the mouth of the Narbada — and from there ten days journey east another very great city, named Tagara. These places he calls the two most important emporia of the Deccan. Tagara is ranked by Ptolemy (VII, 1, 82) among the towns and villages situated in the interior of Ariakē, by which name the Andhra empire is designated. In Ptolemy's list it is followed by Baithana, (i.e. Patitthāna, Skt. Pratishtāna) the capital of Striptolemaios, i.e. Pulumayi of the Andhra dynasty. Tagara has been identified by Dr J. F. Fleet with Ter, a hamlet upon the west bank of the Tema river on the western confines of Hyderabad Deccan. Mr H. Cousens of the Archaeological Survey of India, after a flying visit to Ter in November 1901, published a detailed description of the ancient temples which still testify the former importance of the place<sup>26</sup>. These buildings, now sorely delapidated, appear originally to have been dedicated to the cults of Buddhism and Jainism, but were afterwards adapted to the worship of Hindu deities.

<sup>25</sup> *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* transl. by W. H. Schoff. London 1912 pp. 43 and 196.

<sup>26</sup> J. F. Fleet *JRAS* 1901 p. 537. H. Cousens *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1902-03 pp. 195-201 pl. XXXXXX. Tagara is frequently mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions of the Śiṃhāra dynasty of the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD.

One of these sanctuaries is a temple now known by the name of Uttaresvara, built in moulded and carved brick with wooden beams and door frames very or nate but now crumbling to dust. The use of those materials points to a very early date, perhaps the fourth century A.D. The *sikharas*, or towers, rise in the Dravidian style in horizontal storeys, with heavy overhanging roll mouldings, decorated with boldly fashioned chaitya arches. Beneath the projecting cornice of the wooden doorframe Mr. Cousens noticed a band of geese with a central lotus (Pl. IX). It is evident that the geese are shown sitting in various postures, some of them apparently preening their feathers. The treatment is natural and not in the least conventional.

### Ceylon

The moonstones of Ceylon are of peculiar interest for our subject. The name designates semi-circular stone slabs placed at the foot of the flight of steps leading up to the entrance of Buddhist sanctuaries at Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa, the ancient capitals of the island. They have drawn the attention of artists and archaeologists by the elegance of their sculptural decoration which follows a distinct pattern but also shows remarkable variations. At Anurādhapura the centre of the design is formed by half an expanded lotus flower conventionally treated and enclosed by four concentric bands of ornament (Pl. Xa b). Most conspicuous is the third band consisting of a procession of animals walking from left to right — an elephant, a bull, a lion and a horse, twice or thrice repeated with an elephant at the rear. An inner band invariably shows a procession of geese moving in the same direction, their number — eleven, thirteen, sixteen or eighteen — varying according to the size of the stone.

It has been generally assumed that these animals and birds must have a symbolical significance. This is the more probable because the same four animals are also found on the abacus of the Asoka pillar at Sārnāth where they alternate with four figures of the *dharmachakra*, or Wheel of the Law. Mr. H. C. P. Bell, the Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon, concluded from his remarkable discovery of bronze figurines of the same animals buried under the four porches of the Vijayarama monastery to the north of Anurādhapura, that the animals on the moonstones symbolise the four quarters. This induced Mr. V. A. Smith to ascribe the same significance to the four animals adorning the famous lion capital of Sārnāth. Combined with four *dharmachakras* they were meant to signify that the Buddhist Community was *chaturdisa* i.e. relating to the four quarters or, in other words, universal.

Dr. S. Paranavitana has more recently devoted an extensive and well docu-

mented study to the symbolism of the moonstones of Ceylon<sup>27</sup>) While rejecting the explanation of his predecessor he interprets the four animals as symbols of the four perils of mundane existence — birth, decay, disease and death — which occupy such a fundamental place in the Buddha's doctrine

Dr Paranavitana ascribes the moonstones of Anurādhapura to approximately the ninth century The date of one of the earliest specimens at Pankuliya to the north of the town is fixed by a Sanskrit inscription in *grantha* letters of about the eighth century recording the name of the person who caused the flight of steps leading up to the Buddha shrine to be made It is remarkable that the design of the moonstone belonging to this sanctuary is simpler than the usual type It has an outer band of only two species of animals, the horse and the elephant Another moonstone found at the Oggomuva Vihāra has only elephants, twelve in number, walking towards a non descript object or symbol occupying the apex of the arch, six from the right and six from the left This moonstone in Dr Paranavitana's opinion must be ascribed to an earlier date than of the well known specimens at Anurādhapura<sup>28</sup>

The moonstones found on the site of the medieval capital Polonnaruwa, which Dr Paranavitana attributes to the twelfth century, show a remarkable development Here each band consists of a procession of one and the same animal (Pl Xc) At the Vatadāgē, i.e. the circular shrine within the quadrangle of the Tooth relic (Daladā maluva), there are three such friezes — an inner circle of twelve horses, a central one of fourteen elephants and an outer band of thirty geese An even more elaborate specimen, belonging to the Hītadāgē, i.e. the Temple of the Tooth built by Nissanka Malla, is decorated with four concentric bands consisting of nineteen horses, eighteen elephants, twenty three lions and thirty six geese<sup>29</sup>

Here too the number of animals differs but the place assigned to the *hamsas* is invariably the outer band As regards their significance Dr Paranavitana concludes that they symbolise the wandering ascetics who leave their home His conclusion therefore practically agrees with Sir John Marshall's explanation of the geese on the capitals of three pillars of Asoka<sup>30</sup>

Although the moonstones are typical products of Sinhalese art, their origin must be sought in South India The shape of the *stūpas* of Anurādhapura with

<sup>27</sup> *Artibus Asiae* vol XVII 1954 pp 197-231

<sup>28</sup> *Ceylon Journal of Science* vol II part 3 p 155 pl LXXXI A similar decoration is found on the Lomas Rishi Cave

<sup>29</sup> On the Vatadāgē and Hītadāgē cf *Ceylon Journal of Science* pp 164-167

<sup>30</sup> Cf above p 57

their four rectangular projections, known under the name *labalkada*, points to a close connection with similar monuments in the Kistna valley. Excavations conducted by Mr T N Ramachandran<sup>31</sup> in 1938-40 on the Buddhist site of Nāgarjunakonda on the right bank of the lower Kistna have brought to light two curious specimens of moonstones. One was discovered at the entrance of an apsidal temple (*chettayaghara*) facing north, in which the object of worship was a *stupa* or *chattya* (Pali *chettya*) measuring 7 ft 10 in at the base. The moonstone is decorated with the figures of a lion, a buffalo and a horned lion.

Not far from this shrine another apsidal temple, facing south, came to light. It contained a Buddha image, broken in four pieces which, when entire, must have measured eight ft in height. The moonstone at the entrance of the temple was carved with a procession of twelve animals — five lions, two elephants, a deer, a horse, a boar, a bull, and a buffalo, walking or running from left to right.

It is clear that there is a great variety in the choice of animals both on the moonstones of Nagarjunikonda and on the earliest specimens found in Ceylon. They can be traced back to the friezes of animals walking, or more frequently running, sometimes led or goaded on by men, which are found at Amarāvati on the coping of railings, at the bottom of railing pillars and also on *chattya* slabs<sup>32</sup>. At Anurādhapura the whole scheme of decoration became fixed in a manner described above and it follows that, if the symbolical significance ascribed to it by Dr Paranavitana is something more than an ingenious hypothesis, it must have been an invention of the Sinhalese clergy. The symbolical meaning of the geese at any rate can be traced back to the monuments of Asoka.

Dr Paranavitana has drawn my attention to a lofty brick building at Polonnaruwa which he identifies with the Tivankaghara mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa* 78, 39 in connection with the Tivanka image of Buddha which it enshrined<sup>33</sup>. The chronicler states that it was decorated with rows of figures of lions, kinnaras and *bamsas*. The stucco which once faced the walls has mostly perished but there still remain a number of well modelled geese walking from left to right under the projecting cornices.

<sup>31</sup> Nagarjunikonda 1938. *Memor ASI* no 71. Delhi 1953 pp 13 and 15 pl XII.

<sup>32</sup> J Burgess *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta* London 1887 pl I XXIX, 2 XXX and XXXV. Friezes of lions running from right to left are also frequent on the sculptures of Nagarjunikonda, where they are placed above the illustrative reliefs of A H Longhurst *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunikonda* *Memor ASI* no 54 pl XXIVc, XXVa, XLIVa, XLVb, XLVIa.

<sup>33</sup> Dr Paranavitana connects Pali *tsanka* with Skt *tribhanga* indicating the three-bended posture of the figure.



*Pallava Art*

The sudden rise of the royal house of the Pallavas is one of the many puzzles of Indian history. Their origin is obscure but they established and extended their supremacy in Coromandel during the seventh century. Their continuous struggle with the Chālukyas must have weakened their power, but it seems that their final downfall was mainly due to internal dynastic dissensions.<sup>34</sup>

The monuments of their fame, mostly rock cut temples dedicated to the great deities of the Hindu pantheon, exhibit a style fundamentally different from the exuberant Buddhist art of Amarāvati. It is marked by a solid strength and simplicity of expression and by a singular restraint in decoration.<sup>35</sup>

For our subject it is important that the Pallavas decorated some of their rock temples with a frieze of geese right below the convex cornice which is provided with so called dormer windows, viz. horse shoe arches enclosing a human head. One of the earliest examples is a small apparently unfinished temple at Mogalrajapuram, a village three miles to the east of Bezvada (fig. 1). Here a row of six *hamsas* is carved on one of the horizontal beams supporting the roof of the temple. The treatment of the motif shows no connection whatever with the lively friezes of walking, feeding or flying geese found in the architecture of northern

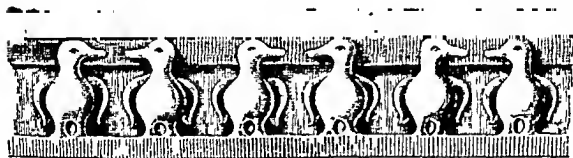


Fig. 1

India. Here the birds have become stylized. They are shown standing to front with their heads turned sideways alternately to the right and left. Their short wings, prominent bills and rigid posture give them some resemblance to penguins.

The five temples of Mogalrajapuram are ascribed by Mr. Longhurst to the

<sup>34</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 1955, pp. 144-151.

<sup>35</sup> A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, *Memories ASI* no. 17, 1921, Part I, Early Period, no.

33, 1928, Part II, Intermediate or Mamalla Period, no. 40, 1930, Part III, The later or Rājashāha Period.

early period of Pallava architecture which coincides with the reign of Mahendra-varman I (c. 600-c. 630). The monuments of this period are cave-temples with only one external façade cut in the face of the rock. But this art reached its acme of perfection under the patronage of his son and successor Narasiṃhavarman, surnamed Mahāmalla, i.e. the Great Wrestler. This is manifest from the marvellous group of rockcarved shrines perpetuating his name at Māmallapuram, a locality thirty miles to the south of Madras<sup>26</sup>.

Mr. Longhurst mentions the frieze of geese on three temples at Māmallapuram. Two of them belong to the group of Dharmarāja's Maṇḍapa. One is a large five-celled Saiva temple and the other, known as the Trimūrti Temple, is dedicated to the three gods — Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The third example is called the

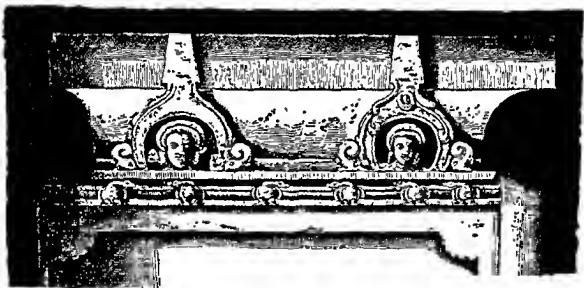


Fig. 2

Varāha Maṇḍapa, as one of the four large panels carved on the walls of the hall represents the Boar *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The frieze of six geese surmounted by two 'dormer windows' shows the same type of stylized birds as the earlier temple of Mogalrājapuram noted above (fig. 2). The only difference is that here only two of the haṃsas stretch their neck towards the right and four to the left.

The famous rock-carving covering the side of a huge rock at Māmallapuram is one of the most remarkable products of Pallava art. Traditionally it is known as 'Arjuna's Penance', but the Russian archaeologist Victor Goloubew has rightly

<sup>26</sup> According to Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Archéologue du sud de l'Inde*, vol. I, p. 77, the village is called Navalipuram by the local people. Mannucci, *Storia di Mogor*, transl. by W. Irvine, London,

identified it as a picture of another famous myth — the descent of the Ganges <sup>37</sup> It is related both in the Mahābhārata (Vanaparvan 105 109) and in the Rāmāyana (Bālakānda 38 44) The hero of the story is Bhagīratha, the descendant of Sagara, the king of Ayodhyā, who by his *tapas* induced Śiva to break the impact of the heavenly river by receiving her on his head It is this important episode — the four armed god granting Bhagīratha's wish — which takes such a prominent part in the rock picture 'Bhagīratha, standing on his chariot, went ahead and Gāṅgā followed him All gods with the crowds of rishis and the demons, the chief gandharvas and yakshas with the kinnaras and the great snakes, the serpents and apsaras joyfully followed Ganga and so did all aquatic animals

It is not surprising that among the many animals who join gods and men to venerate Ganga there is also a couple of geese Placed at the side of Bhagīratha but with their heads turned in the direction of the cleft which separates the two halves of the rock they are the first to hail the sacred river on her advent in the sublunary world The designer of the tableau has given them a prominent position and the craftsmen delineated them in such a manner that no doubt can subsist regarding their identity (Pl XIa)

### *Gupta Period*

On the monuments of the Gupta Period (300 500 A D ) several examples of the *hamsa* motif may be quoted In the first place there is at Sāncī a lion pillar belonging to the early Gupta age, which must be noted <sup>38</sup> This pillar, when entire was approximately 22 ft 6 in in height and was composed of two pieces, one comprising the circular shaft and square base, the other the bell capital, necking, lions and crowning wheel (*chakra*) The shaft is now broken into three sections, which owing to the character of the breakages cannot be fitted together again The lion capital is described by Sir John Marshall as a feeble and clumsy imitation of the one which surmounted the pillar of Āśoka found on the same site Here too the circular abacus is decorated with figures of geese and lotuses, but they are unequal in size and disposed in irregular fashion and lack the symmetrical precision of the earlier monument

1907 vol I p 153 has Mavelivarao and J Haafner *Reize in eenen palanquin* Amsterdam 1808 vol II p 412-438 has Maveliewarom This seems to indicate a form Mavalivaram The denomination Mahabalipuram is a modern invention

<sup>37</sup> *La descente de la Ganga sur terre a Mavalipuram Ars Asiatica* III 1921 pp 23 25 Pl XXVII XLVII

<sup>38</sup> *Ann Rep ASI* 1913 14 Calcutta 1917 pp 18 f and *Guide to Sanchi* 2nd ed 1959 p 107 The Gupta lion capital of Sanchi was first published by Cunningham *Rep ASI* vol X, 1880 p 62 pl XXI

A very fine example of the *bamsa* motif is found on a profusely decorated Gupta pillar belonging to one of the ruined temples at Eran (Pl XIb), the ancient Arikina in the Sāgar district of Madhyapradesh.<sup>39</sup> The base as well as the capital exhibit the well-known device of a vase with overhanging foliage which excited the admiration of James Fergusson. The square block above the capital is adorned with a graceful pair of geese, each holding a string of pearls in its beak.

The motif is also employed in pictorial art. We find it at Ajanta where the ceiling of cave I has retained a graceful painting of geese between lotus flowers.<sup>40</sup> (Pl XIIa)

### Mediaeval Period

A beautiful frieze of *bamsas* carrying a long string of pearls, carved in wood, has survived in the temple of Kālī situated at Markula not far from Triloknāth in the lonely upper valley of the Chandrabhāgā. In the course of my researches in Chambā, an ancient Hill State of the Panjāb, I discovered the Markula temple, a fascinating specimen of the wooden architecture of the western Himalaya. Dr H. Goetz in an able discussion of its style arrives at the conclusion that it is the only surviving example of the wooden temples which once must have been common in Kashmir. He conjectures that it was originally dedicated to Siva and that its foundress was Sūryamatī, the queen of Anantadeva of Kashmir (1028-63).<sup>41</sup>

The façade of the inner shrine displays an incredible profusion of woodcarvings. Over the entrance we notice figures of the Grahās, seated on their respective *vāhanas*, in miniature chapels arranged in two rows. The gables of the upper row project from the long frieze of *bamsas* which runs along the whole breadth of the façade and thus forms its upper limit. The style of the façade according to Dr. Goetz is a natural evolution from Early Gupta and medieval art.

In the mediaeval art of India the goose departs from nature and becomes more and more conventional. The same tendency can be observed in other animals used for decorative purposes, such as the lion and the *makara*, originally a crocodile but gradually developing into a plump quadruped, provided with a twisted proboscis.<sup>42</sup>

Dayaram Sahni mentions "geese with foliated tails in cornices" among the orna-

<sup>39</sup> Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra drew my attention to this pillar and sent me the photograph reproduced in plate XI b.

<sup>40</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Ind. and Indon. Art* fig. 185.

<sup>41</sup> H. Goetz, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba. Memoirs of the Kern Institute* no. 1. Leiden 1955, pp. 98 ff., 110 ff., 120 pl. XIX.

<sup>42</sup> J. Ph. Vogel, *Le makara dans la sculpture de l'Inde. Revue des arts asiatiques*, XVII pp. 133-147, pl. XXXIII-XXXIX.

mental motifs of Kashmir architecture which are of a purely Indian origin<sup>43</sup> An other example was found by the same archaeologist in the course of his excavations on the site of the Jetavana, the famous Buddhist monastery of Sravastī<sup>44</sup> In the porch of a monastic building he discovered two platforms of moulded bricks One of them was decorated with a pair of geese standing opposite each other with their heads turned backwards Here the birds are entirely stylized, only the heads betraying their anserine origin On account of the style Mr Sahni assigned them to the tenth century

### *Muslim Period*

The *hamsa* continued to be employed as a decorative motif on Hindu buildings of the Muslim period It occurs on the famous palace of Gwalior in Central India (Madhya Pradesh), praised by James Fergusson as 'The most remarkable and interesting example of a Hindu palace of an early age in India' It was built about 1500 by Raja Mān Singh (1486-1516), the last ruler of the Tomara dynasty The immense space of the wall is faced with an enamelled tile decoration and the various bands of mosaics include rows of elephants, peacocks and geese Nowhere, Fergusson says, 'do I remember any architectural design capable of imparting similar lightness to a simple massive wall'<sup>45</sup> The French artist Louis Rousselet, describes it with equal enthusiasm Bands of mosaics, he says, representing candelabra, Brahma ducks, elephants and peacocks in blue, rose colour, green and gold, give the immense blank wall an incomparably beautiful appearance The bricks of which these mosaics are composed still retain their primitive brilliancy of colour and delicacy of shading though ten centuries have passed over them I know of no country in the world where an architect has succeeded so well in giving a graceful appearance to a heavy blank wall<sup>46</sup>

Another very remarkable example of the Muslim period may be quoted from the western part of the Himalaya This mountainous region between Kashmir and Nepal comprises a number of petty hill states ruled by Rājput dynasties of great antiquity Nurpur, situated on a spur of the Dhaulā Dhār, 2000 ft above sea level, and some twenty two miles north west of Nagar kot or Kangrā, was the capital of a small hill state, ruled by the Pathaniya clan of the Rājputs This name implies that their original seat had been Pathan kot in the plains which Muslim

<sup>43</sup> *Ann Rep ASI* 1915-16 p 52

<sup>44</sup> *Ann Rep ASI* 1907-8 p 118 pl XXXIV c

<sup>45</sup> Fergusson and Burgess *Hist of Ind and Eastern Archit* London 1910 vol II pp 175 f

<sup>46</sup> Louis Rousselet *India and its Native Princes* London 1876 p 303 On the plate facing p 304 the geese are perfectly clear They form the uppermost frieze and are shown walking from right to left and thus as it were circumambulating the building

aggression had forced them to abandon for a less accessible fastness. During the seventeenth century the history of the rājās of Nūrpur was marked by a series of rebellions against their suzerains, the Great Moguls of Delhi. Rājā Bāsu revolted against Akbar but was defeated in 1594-5 and deprived of Paṭhān-koṭ. He died in 1613 and was succeeded by his eldest son Sūraj Mall. The malevolent and seditious temper of the new ruler soon estranged him from the favour of the emperor Jahāngīr. He broke into open rebellion, but was overthrown in 1618 and had to flee to Chambā where he died <sup>47</sup>.

In 1886 the Nūrpur fort was explored by Mr. C. J. Rodgers, the Archaeological Surveyor of the Panjāb. A moulded stone which he noticed among the débris of a large mound, led him to the supposition that this mound contained some ancient building. On excavation he found the basement of a large temple, profusely decorated with carvings, besides a number of sculptural fragments which must have belonged to the superstructure. The excavation was completed in March 1904. The space round the temple was then widened out and thus all decorative details were exposed and made accessible to the camera.

Pandit Hirananda <sup>48</sup>, in his otherwise accurate description of the Nūrpur temple, remarks that its plan is very similar to those of the famous temples of Govind Dev at Bindrāban and Hari Dev at Govardhan near Mathurā. The Bindrāban temple was erected in 1650 by Rājā Mān Singh of Amber, the ancient capital of the Jaipur State. But if we compare the plan published by Major Cole <sup>49</sup> with that of the temple of Nūrpur, it will be seen that they show very little similarity. The mode of decoration too differs. In the case of the temple of Govind Dev it is worth noticing that figures of deities and animals have been avoided, whereas the Nūrpur temple is decorated with a continuous row of such figures including the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and scenes relating to the legendary life of Kṛiṣṇa. From these subjects it may be inferred that the temple was dedicated to Viṣṇu.

For our purpose it is of special interest that at the top of the basement we notice a frieze showing an endless procession of geese apparently encompassing the entire structure (Pl. XIIb). It is curious that the treatment is not conventional but as natural as was usual in the early art of India.

No epigraphical documents are available to enlighten us on the history of the temple. Pandit Hirananda assumes that it was probably built by Raja Bāsu, the

<sup>47</sup> J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States* Lahore 1933, vol. I, pp. 225-232.

<sup>48</sup> *Ann. Rep. ASI* 1901-5, pp. 110-120, pl. XXXVI-XL.

<sup>49</sup> H. H. Cole, *Illustrations of Buildings near Muttra and Agra showing the mixed Hindu-Mahomedan Style of Upper India*, London 1873, pl. 1; Cf. J. Fergusson-Burgess, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 155.

founder of the Nurpur fort, and that its destruction may be connected with the suppression of the rebellion of his son and successor Sūraj Mall in 1618. It would follow that the great temple cannot have been used for worship more than a score of years. This accounts for the circumstance that the sculptural decoration was remarkably fresh and free from decay when the buried basement was discovered by Mr. Rodgers.

It is well known that Jahāngīr took a great delight in pictures and was proud of the extraordinary ability of the artists in his employ. This is evident from several passages in his *Memoirs* and also from the amusing account of the English ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe.<sup>50</sup> The emperor took also a keen interest in animals and plants and whenever strange specimens came to his notice he had them pictured by his court painters. Two of them he mentions repeatedly in his *Memoirs*: Abū l Hasan Nādiru z zaman, i.e. the Wonder of the Age, and Ustād Mansūr Nādiru l 'asr, i.e. the Wonder of the Era. In his estimation they were the best painters in his father's and his own reign. He has recorded that he ordered Master Mansūr to paint a beautiful falcon, more than a hundred flowers from Kashmir and a *sāj*, an aquatic bird which Jahāngīr had noticed in the same country where he used to pass the hot season.

In 1950 the Museum of Ethnology at Leyden acquired an unfinished miniature (4.10" by 2.5") showing three geese standing on the edge of a lake. It is inscribed with the name of Mansūr in Persian script (Pl. XIIc).

Mrs. van Lohuizen<sup>51</sup> who was the first to publish this miniature emphatically opposes its attribution to the famous court painter of Jahāngīr. She ranks it among the charming 18th century sketches of aquatic birds, several specimens of which are preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum and in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. The signature, she says, is valueless, for it is well known that practically every animal drawing is attributed by Indian dealers to Mansūr, which claim they do not hesitate to support by adding the famous name.

Whatever may be the name of the painter of this picture, he certainly was an able artist who in a marvellous manner rendered the shape and the character of the birds. The outline of each bird is firm and alertness is expressed in their attitude. The picture is not a sketch but a miniature, which for some unknown reason remained unfinished. The colouring is restricted to the gray wings, the red bills

<sup>50</sup> *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir* transl. by A. Rogers ed. by H. Beveridge vol. II 1914 pp. 20, 108, 145, 157.

<sup>51</sup> *Oriental Art* New Series vol. I no. 1 p. 14 fig. 2. Mr. A. H. W. Verwey informs me that according to Mr. Douglas Barrett and Mr. John Irwin the picture cannot be attributed to Ustād Manšūr on a basis of style and also that there is an error in the signature viz. *المنصور* instead of *المصور*.

and the feet. Along the edge of the lake a few flowering plants are slightly indicated.

The conclusion of our enquiry is perfectly clear. The goose is a favourite decorative device in Indian art from the time of Aśoka to the Mogul period. From Kashmir to Ceylon it is employed to adorn religious buildings both Buddhist and Brahmanical. The swan and the flamingo, on the contrary, do not occur. The evidence of Indian art is in perfect agreement with the observations of naturalists. We may therefore be certain that the Sanskrit word *hamsa* always designates the goose and nothing else.



PLATES I—XII

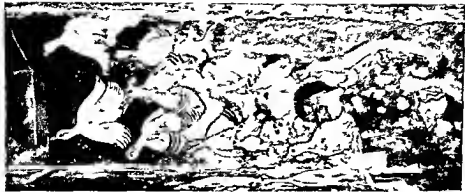


a

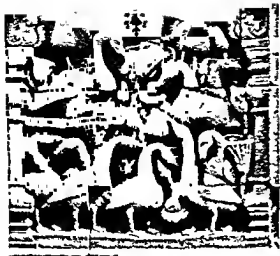


b

1. KALKA LAUDING THE BUDDHA. DETAIL FROM A BAS-RELIEF FROM AMARAVATI



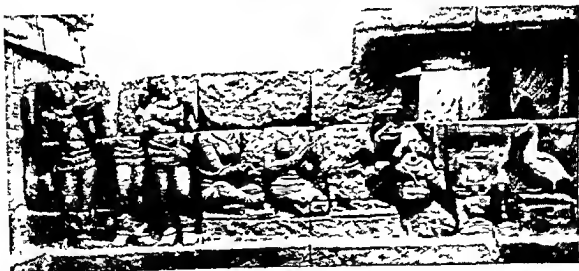
HANSA JATAKA IN A TRISCO IN CAVT XVII AT AJANTA



*a*



*b*



*c*

THE RAMAYANA ON THE BALI STRADE OF BARAU DURA FIRST GALLERY



*a*



*b*

*a* THE FABLE OF THE TORTOISE AND THE GESE IN A PANEL ON THE STAIRCASE OF CHANDI MENDUT CENTRAL JAVA

*b* THE SAME STORY IN A PANEL ON THE CHANDI SAJIWAN CENTRAL JAVA



a



b

- a ANOTHER VERSION OF THE FABLE IN A BAS RELIEF OF CHANDI JAGO EAST JAVA  
 b THE SAME STORY ON THE BACK OF A LARGE STATUE OF A TEMPLE GUARDIAN  
 OF CHANDI PANATARAN EAST JAVA



a



b

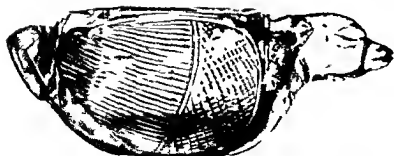


c

- a LION CAPITAL OF AŚOKA AT SANCHI WITH THE ABACUS DECORATED WITH CHEEVE  
 b LION CAPITAL OF RAMPURVA WITH A SIMILAR DECORATION OF ITS ABACUS  
 c FRONT SIDE OF THE VAJRASANA AT BODHI GAYA DECORATED WITH A BORDER OF CHEEVE  
 ALTERNATING WITH PALMETTES



*a*

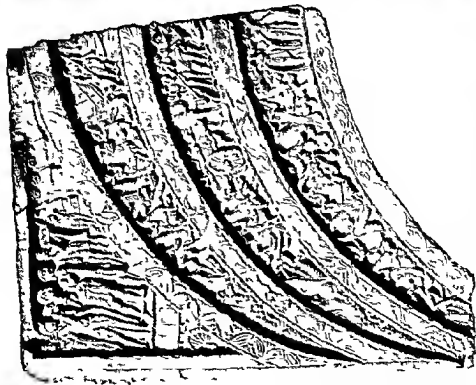


*b*

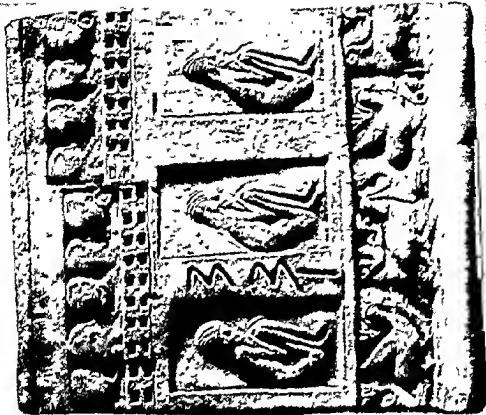
*a* RELIC CASKET OF KANISHKA FOUND AT PESHAWAR SHOWING A ROW OF SIX CEES FLYING PRADAKSHINA WISE AROUND IT

*b* CRYSTAL FIGURE OF A HANSA OR GOOSE FOUND IN A CIRCULAR STONE BOX IN THE GANDHARI STU PA AT TAXILA





*a* TORANA ARCH FROM A JAINA MONUMENT AT MATHURA IN THE UPPER BEAM A FLOCK  
OF THREE GESE IS DEPICTED AMONG THE CREATURES PAYING HOMAGE TO A SHRINE  
*b* FRIEZE OF YOGIS AND SAMASAS FROM THE PLATFORM ALONG THE COURTYARD OF AN  
APSIDAL TEMPLE AT HARWAN KASHMIR

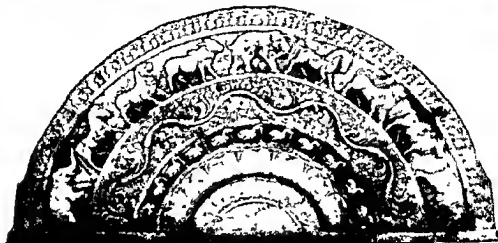




CORNICE AND PANEL OF A SCULPTED WOODEN DOORFRAME OF THE TEMPLE OF UTTARÉSARA  
AT TIR (TACARA) HYDERABAD DISTRICT



*a*



*b*



*c*

SEMI CIRCULAR STONE SLABS (MOONSTONES) AT THE FOOT OF THE FLIGHT OF STEPS  
LEADING UP TO THE ENTRANCES OF BUDDHIST SANCTUARIES OF CEYLON  
*a* and *b* AT ANURADHAPURA      *c* AT POLONNARUWA



THE CENTRAL FIGURE AT MAMALLAPURAM SHOWING TWO FIGURES  
TO THE RIGHT OF THE FIGURE OF A STANDING ASCETIC  
/ HAMSA MATH ON A CULTA HILLAR FROM TRAN (AIRIKINA) SACAR DISTRICT





1



2



- 1 FLORALISTIC DESIGN WITH FISH, FRESCO PAINTING FROM THE CLUNG OF CAVIT II, AJANTA  
 2 PROCESSION OF GANESHA, FRIEZE FROM THE KRISHNA TEMPLE AT NURPUR, KANGRA  
 3 UNFINISHED MINATURE PAINTING SHOWING GANESHA BY AN INSCRIPTION ATTRIBUTED TO  
 USTAD MANSUR, COLLECTION NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY, LEIDEN  
 4 GANESHA IN THE ISLAND OF BALI 5 GANESHA IN THE KIV CARPENS



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