

The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism

Prefatory Note :

THE scope of the following dissertation is a detailed study of the mythological concept of Sakka as found in Early Buddhism. The historical evolution of this concept from that of Indra of the ṚgVeda and its development during the period of the compilation of the early Pali Canon are the two main points kept in view. The chief sources for the facts investigated and discussed have been the following:—

Dīgha Nikāya
Majjhima Nikāya
Aṅguttara Nikāya
Saṃyutta Nikāya
Dhammapada
Suttanipāta
Theragāthā
Therīgāthā
Udāna
Jātaka
Vinaya Piṭaka (Mahāvagga).

The Commentaries have been drawn upon only when it was thought necessary to do so either for the purpose of elucidation or for comparison with the later trends of development. Among the authorities consulted on the origin and development of the concept of Indra in Vedic Mythology special mention must be made of the authoritative treatises of Macdonell, Keith and Mackenzie. On the development of the Buddhist concept of Sakka the important contributions of Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids have been given special consideration although the main thesis put forward herein runs counter to their conclusions. Other authors consulted have been listed in the bibliography.

List of Abbreviations.

AB.	..	..	..	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AV.	..	..	..	Atharva Veda
B.C.	..	..	..	Before Christ
<i>Bṛhad. Up.</i>	..	..	..	Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad
<i>Ch. Up.</i>	..	..	..	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
<i>cp.</i>	..	..	..	Compare
<i>Dial.</i>	..	..	..	Dialogues of the Buddha
EB.	..	..	..	The Ethics of Buddhism
<i>f.</i>	..	..	..	feminine
<i>f.n.</i>	..	..	..	footnote
<i>ib., ibid.</i>	..	..	..	ibidem—in the same book
<i>Kauś. Up.</i>	Kauśitaki Upaniṣad
<i>loc. cit.</i>	loco citato—in the passage already quoted

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Mtu.	Mahavastu
p.	page
PLL.	Pali Language and Literature
RPV.	Religion and Philosophy of the Veda
RV.	..	..	..	R̥g Veda
s.	..	..	..	sub-under
SB.	..	..	..	Satapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE.	..	..	..	Sacred Books of the East
sg.	..	..	..	singular
s.v.	..	..	..	sub verbo—under the word (heading)
TB.	..	..	..	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS.	..	..	..	Taittirīya Saṃhitā
TPU.	..	..	..	The Thirteen Principal Upanishads
v.l.	..	..	..	varia lectio—variant reading
Vol.	..	..	..	Volume
VM.	..	..	..	Vedic Mythology
YV.	..	..	..	Yajur Veda

Add to these abbreviations of titles of Pali books as used in the *Pali-English Dictionary* (Pali Text Society).

Bibliography.

General :

Eliot, Charles	..	..	Hinduism and Buddhism. Vol. I
Geiger, W.	..	..	Pali Language and Literature (translated by Ghosh).
Grousset, René	..	..	In the Footsteps of the Buddha
Keith, A. B.	..	..	Religion and Philosophy of the Veda. (Harvard Oriental Series, Vols. XXI and XXII)
Law, B. C.	..	..	Heaven and Hell
Macdonell, A. A.	..	..	Vedic Mythology
Mackenzie, Donald, A.	..	..	Indian Myth and Legend
Müller, Max F.	..	..	Six Systems of Indian Philosophy
Reed	..	..	Primitive Buddhism
Rhys Davids, T. W.	..	..	Buddhist India
Rhys Davids, (Mrs.) C. A. F.	..	..	Sākya. A Manual of Buddhism
Smith, Sir G. Elliot	..	..	In the Beginning (Thinkers' Library)
Tachibana, S.	..	..	The Ethics of Buddhism (Colombo, 1943)
Winternitz, Maurice	..	..	A History of Indian Literature, Vol. II

Translations :

Eggeling, Julius	..	..	Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (SBE.)
Griffith, Ralph T. H.	..	..	The Hymns of the Atharva Veda, Vols. I and II
Griffith, Ralph T. H.	..	..	The Hymns of the R̥g Veda, Vols. I and II
Hume, Robert Ernest	..	..	The Thirteen Principal Upanishads
Keith, A. B.	..	..	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, (Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. XXV.)
Rhys Davids, T. W. and Oldenberg, H.	..	..	Vinaya Texts I. (SBE.), Vol. XIII.
Rhys Davids, T. W. and (Mrs.) C. A. F.	Dialogues of the Buddha II
Rhys Davids, (Mrs.) C. A. F.	The Book of the Kindred Sayings I. (Saṃyutta Nikāya)

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Lexicons :

Childers, R. C.	The Dictionary of the Pali Language
Grassmann, Hermen	Wörterbuch Zum Rig-Veda
Malalasekara, G. P.	..	..	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names
Monier-Williams, Sir Monier	..	..	Sanskrit-English Dictionary
Stede, Williams and Rhys	..	..
Davids, T. W.	..	..	Pali-English Dictionary

Journals :

Indian Culture	..	..	Vols. I, VII
University of Ceylon, Review			Vol. I, No. 2

§1. INDRA—his Indo-European Character.

Indra, the favourite national god of the Vedic Indian, is celebrated in more than one fourth of the number of hymns in the *R̥g Veda* (VM. p. 54). Indra is an Indo-European conception. Mackenzie¹ shows how Indra bears resemblances to other 'hammer gods.' It is difficult to indicate with certainty, the original home and the time in which Indra first took shape. Mackenzie surmises that Indra was first worshipped on the Steppes during the Stone-Age. The Nomads of the Steppes in their migrations distributed the central idea of the god to different countries. Thus the idea of the god grew according to climatic conditions and different cultural environments (*ib.* p. 2). According to Mackenzie, Indra's counterpart in China is P'an Ku, who uses the 'thunder hammer' in shaping the hills. In Scotland his replica is Fin-mac-Coul. The ancient Egyptians knew him as Ptah. In Southern Europe he is Zeus-pater (Jupiter), the wielder of the thunder-bolt; in Northern Europe he is Thor. Among the Hittites, he is Tarku; he is our Indra in Mitanni and in the Punjab (*ib.* pp. 2-3). It will be endeavoured to show in the following paragraphs that Sakka is another form of the development of Indra.

The resemblances between the Teutonic Thor and the Vedic Indra are very close. It is a remarkable fact that Thor's frightening of Loke with his hammer has a resemblance to Sakka's (as Vajirapāṇi) frightening of Ambaṭṭha and Saccaka in early Buddhism (§4. s. *Vajirapāṇi*).

That the name Indra did not originate in India, receives support from an inscription at Boghas Koi in Asia Minor, referring to a peace treaty between the Kings of the Hittites and Mitanni. Professor Hugo Winckler has deciphered the word "In-da-ra" as the name of a Mittanni god who had associations with Varuṇa, Mitra and Nasatya (*ib.* pp. xxxi. etc.).

It is the belief of scholars that the derivation of the word Indra is from 'Innara,' a loan word from the Hittites.² The Iranians knew of Indra as a god equal to Varuṇa, and even in the earliest times, there is no clear proof to show that Varuṇa was in any sense superior to Indra (RPV. p. 90). Whereas Varuṇa

1. Donald A. Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend*, pp. 1-2.

2. See 'Birth of Gods' by Dr. Ghosh in *Indian Culture*, Vol. VII.

lost ground in India Zoroaster developed the figure of Ahura Mazda, and deprived him of a rival by bringing Indra to the degraded rank of a demon (*ib.* p. 468). It is suggested by Gray that Indra's degradation from divine to demonic character is due to his connection with the bringing of beneficent rains during the monsoons in India and heavy rains of water that bring malaria in Iran.³ Indra's Vedic epithet Vṛtrahan which appears in the Avesta as *verethrag-na* is not connected with Indra (VM. p. 68). The god in the Avesta is a personification of victory.⁴ Benveniste shows that Indra ultimately absorbed the divine figure Vṛtrahan (*ibid.*). Macdonell thinks that even in the Avesta there was a god approaching to the Vedic Vṛtra-slaying Indra (VM. p. 68). According to Max Müller⁵ the word *Indra* means the person who sends rain (*indu* = drop of rain), that is to say, Indra is a 'rainer' or 'irrigator.' This etymology of Indra seems probable as we find that Vedic Indra is also a god of rain.

The earliest Indo-Europeans were familiar with the story of a dragon-slaying hero.² The counterparts of Indra and Vṛtra are to be found in Indo-European mythology, as Keith has pointed out. We have the myths of Zeus and Typhon, Hercules and Hydra, Apollo and Python, Thor and the Serpent, Marduk and Tiamat, Gilgames and Humbaba.⁴ The Indo-European character of Indra is thus established.

§2. Sakka identified with Indra.

Sakka, to whom reference has already been made, is the Buddhist counterpart of the Vedic god Indra. The Jātaka commentary clearly identifies Sakka with Indra: "Sakko ti Indo" (J.V. 115). In the Pali Suttas Sakka is generally alluded to by the 'triple worded appellative' as Mrs. Rhys Davids has aptly described it,⁶ namely, 'Sakko devānam indo' (S.I. 216-240; IV. 100-2; 201-2; 269-80; A.I. 143; III. 370; IV. 89, 105, 163, 242; D.I. 217; II. 180, 208-209, 221-2, 263-89; M.I. 252 et. seq.). It is necessary to observe here that the word 'inda' is used in the sense of 'ruler' as generally implied in Pali and not as the Vedic proper name 'Indra'.

He is also referred to as 'devānam indo' especially in places where he is addressed as such (S. IV. 102; D. II. 277-85). In other instances where Sakka's rulership of the gods is specifically implied he is just known as 'indo' (D. I. 221; II. 284; III. 176; M. I. 140, 261, 274; Sn. 316, 679, 1,024; J. IV. 133, verse 104; V. 52, verse 26, 158, verse 30).

This application, however, is to be regarded as distinct from other occurrences of the term 'Inda' in the Suttas (D. I. 244; III. 204) where it is used

3. See 'Indra and Vṛtra' by Keith in *Indian Culture*, Vol. I. No. 1, p. 465.

4. Keith, *loc. cit.*, p. 462.

5. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 46.

6. *Sākyā*, p. 276.

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with particular reference to the Indra of Vedic mythology and without any relation to his Buddhist counterpart. It is significant that in these passages relating to Vedic ritual and sacrifice it is only the historical term 'Inda' (*Indra*) that is always used but never 'Sakka' (*Sakra*). This seems to indicate that by the time of the writing of the Buddhist books the new character of Sakka had developed far from its original Vedic prototype and the necessity was felt to distinguish between the two terms although in the Veda both were merely epithets of one and the same god.

In the Vedic pantheon Indra is said to be the greatest god (RPV. p. 124). The only exception, if at all, appears to be Varuṇa, but it is necessary to add that he too is sometimes regarded as nothing more than just equal, in might, to Indra (*ibid.*). As Indra is the chief god of the Vedic Aryan, so has Sakka turned out to be the chief and popular god of the Buddhist. The number of the gods is given as thirty-three in the Ṛg Veda and it is significant that the Iranian number of gods is also the same (RPV. p. 35). There are said to be thrice eleven gods : eleven in heaven, eleven on earth and eleven in the 'waters' i.e., air (RV. 8. 35). In another place Agni is prayed to bring with him the thirty-three (gods) to the sacrifice (trayas-triṃśatam ā vaha, RV. 1. 45.2.) The Atharva Veda similarly divides the gods into dwellers in heaven, air and earth, but does not specify their number as thirty-three. The Śatapatha and Aitareya Brāhmaṇas give the number of gods as thirty-three, dividing them into three groups comprising eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Ādityas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa adds to these, either Dyaus and Pṛthivī (4. 5.7) or Indra and Prajāpati (11. 6. 3). The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (2. 18. 8) adds Vaśatḱāra and Prajāpati to make up the total number of gods as thirty-three (VM. p. 19). Monier-Williams cites a list adding the two Aśvins to make up the total thirty-three.⁷ The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa passage (11. 6. 3) recurs in the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3. 9. 2). When Vidagdha Śākalya questions Yājñavalkya as to the real number of the gods, Yājñavalkya replies : " There are just thirty-three gods." They are said to be the eight Vasūs, eleven Rudras, twelve ādityas, Indra and Prajāpati (*ibid.*).

The word 'tidasa' (Sn. 679) "thrice ten" has led Mrs. Rhys Davids⁸ to believe that the number of gods is only *thirty*. It is quite obvious that the word represents the Thirty-Three gods reduced to the round number of Thirty.⁹ The word 'tidasa' need not be taken literally, for the word 'tāvatiṃsa' (∟Skt. trayaś triṃśa) clearly establishes the historical number of the gods as *thirty-three*.

According to one account (SB. 11.6.3) Indra is regarded as one of the thirty-three gods, and according to another (AB. 2.18.8) Indra is not included

7. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary, s., tridāsa.*

8. *Sākya, p. 276.*

9. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary, loc. cit., and Pali-English Dictionary, s. tidasa.*

in the group of the thirty-three gods, but appears as a god apart from, but ruling, the thirty-three. In the Pali Suttas it is clearly laid down that Sakka is not just one of the Thirty-Three but their Chief who stands separately (D. II. 221). Thus the representation of Sakka as the ruler of the Thirty-Three gods in Buddhism is clearly a development from the Vedic conception of Indra as the most powerful or Monarch of the gods (RV. I. 165; 2.32.4; 8.51.7; 7.21.7) and also from his association with the particular number of gods enumerated as thirty-three, as we have discussed earlier in this paragraph.

§3. The designation 'Sakka.'

The usual name by which this god is known in Buddhism is Sakka. In Vedic literature the epithet 'Śakra' is used to indicate Indra's power (from root śak = to be able)¹⁰ especially in his capacity as friendly helper (RV. 1.10.5-6; cp. Sāyana: "Śakta indrah"). Sometimes this word appears also as an epithet of other gods. But it is significant that it is used many more times as an epithet of Indra than of any other god, in the Ṛg Veda. In fact, it applies to Indra about *forty* times and only *five* times to other gods (VM. p. 58).

Thus we see that the word śakra, which is admittedly the Vedic form from which is derived Pali Sakka, denotes in the Ṛg Veda only a particular attribute of the god Indra, and it is of the utmost significance to observe that the word had assumed an independent character even before the time of the Buddha. It is already found as a *name* in the Atharva Veda: "Śakra gives his gift of treasure" (AV. 5.2.7); "Śakra gives precious wealth to him who sheds the juice (Soma) and worships him" (AV. 20.51.3); "Śakra is free from unrighteous deed" (AV. 3.31.2).¹¹ Thus it is difficult to agree with Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids, when they say (*Dial.* II. p. 296) that this word is not found as a name in pre-Buddhistic literature, for as we shall see below, the pre-Buddhistic nature of the subject matter of the Atharva Veda cannot be doubted.

We are informed¹² that the real names of gods are not mentioned aloud in certain ceremonial rites, as enemies are apt to do harm when they come to know of the real significance of the performance. In the Upahavya rite between the gods and the Asuras, the name of Indra was never uttered aloud. Instead they used his popular epithet Śakra to represent his name (*ibid*). Hence the word Sakka may have become the popular designation for the Vedic god Indra, and in course of time gained currency, as a proper name. The fact that Śakra was only an epithet of Indra may have been forgotten, thus making Sakka the important god and reducing 'Inda' (∠Skt. Indra) to a mere epithet of Sakka—the state of affairs as actually found in early Buddhism.

10. See also AV. 3.31.2; 4.11.2; 8.4.21; 9.4.5; 12.1.37; 20.17.6; 20.77.6; 20.89.3 20.111.2.

11. Cp. 'Śakrāya śakine śacivate,' (RV. 1.54.2).

12. See Keith, RPV. p. 338.

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In the *Gṛhya Sūtras*, we see that the three Aryan castes, *viz.*, the Brahman, the Kṣatra and the Viś, were identified with Agni, Indra and Viśvedevāḥ respectively (SBE. Vol. xii. p. xvi). Indra, Varuṇa, etc., are represented as Kṣatras (= rulers) in the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.4.11). We see that Indra here is a symbol of Kṣatrahood. It is therefore conceivable that in time he became exclusively a Kṣatriya god.

Mrs. Rhys Davids says that 'Sakka' is a dynastic name¹³ referring to the supposed divine origin of the Sākya clan.¹⁴ Since the Buddha by birth belonged to the Sākya (Pali Sakka or Sākiya) of the Kṣatriyas it is possible to surmise with Mrs. Rhys Davids (*ib.* pp. 276-7) that the members of the Sākya clan were greatly taken up with this popular epithet of Indra, as it was identical with their own clan name. We may also agree with her that it is because of this reason that the name Sakka was favoured by the Sākya. But the evidence at our disposal does not in anyway support the further contention of Mrs. Rhys Davids that no such name as Sakka for the governor of the 'thirty-worlds'¹⁵ was in use when Sākya or early Buddhism began. We have already alluded to the fact that the Atharva Veda contains material that is even older than the facts preserved in the Ṛg Veda, and according to reliable authority must be placed at any rate earlier than the Taittiriya Saṃhitā of the Black Yajurveda and the earlier Upaniṣads, and, therefore must be considered pre-Buddhistic,¹⁶ it is evident that Mrs. Rhys Davids' contention cannot be maintained with any justification.

The very fact that the word Sakka was a very popular name during the time of the Buddha, who in many of his Suttas used it to represent the god in question, indicates its pre-Buddhistic origin.

Professor Rhys Davids thinks that during the period in question Sakka almost ousted Indra.¹⁷ He believes that it was a case like Jupiter ousting Chronos or Indra ousting Varuṇa. We know that Jupiter and Chronos are separate gods. So are Indra and Varuṇa. Śakra is only an epithet of Indra and nowhere in Vedic mythology do they appear as separate gods. Thus we see that the statement of Professor Rhys Davids can be justified only if it is taken to mean that the epithet Śakra of the Vedic Indra became crystallized in course of time as a separate *name* for the same god.

If as Mrs. Rhys Davids holds, the name 'Sakka' is a substitute for Vedic Indra used by the Sākya clansmen because of its phonetic similarity to their own clan name, it is natural to expect in the early Nikāyas a derivation of the

13. *A Manual of Buddhism*, p. 185.

14. *Sākya*, p. 277.

15. *Ibid.* p. 277.

16. *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II. pp. 125, etc.

17. *Buddhist India*, p. 235.

word suggesting such connection with the Sākya clan. But nowhere do we find such an etymology offered in Buddhist books, whether text or commentary. On the other hand a fanciful etymology given in the Saṃyutta Nikāya makes it very improbable that there was the least association in the author's mind of the designation 'Sakka' (for Indra) with 'Sākya,' the clan name. Thus it is said that the god is known as 'Sakka' because he gave munificently in his former births ("Sakkaccaṃ dānaṃ adāsi" S. I. 229). What is meant here is that as an ordinary person in the past Sakka performed many meritorious deeds as the result of which he gained the rulership of the gods. Buddhaghosa too says that the State of Sakka is procurable by liberality ("dānaṃ hi loke Sakka-sampattim deti" DA. II. 472). These considerations are sufficient to show that the Buddhist Conception of Sakka is a historical growth out of the Vedic epithet Śakra which is characteristically used for Indra from the time of the Ṛg Veda and becomes a common designation for him in the Atharva Veda.

§4. Epithets of the god in Buddhism.

Sakka has many epithets in Buddhist mythology. The Sakka-Saṃyutta enumerates a list of seven epithets, *viz.*, Maghavā, Purindada, Sakka, Vāsava, Sahassakha, Sujampati and Inda, offering interesting, though fanciful, etymologies for them (S. I. 229, 230). It is important to observe that these very epithets were generally used in the case of Indra also in the Ṛg Veda.

Maghavā:

In the text above cited (S. I. 229, 230) it is said that Sakka was, in one of his previous births a young brahmin named Magha ("Magho nāma mānava ahoṣi"); hence the name Maghavā. Buddhaghosa (Dh. A. I. 265, etc.) describes the particular good deeds performed by Magha-Mānava that ultimately won for him the rulership of the gods (Cp. DA. II. 478). Sakka is sometimes called 'Maghavā Sujampati' (J. III. 146, verse 183) or 'Maghavā Sakko' (J. V. 141, verse 61).¹⁸

This popular epithet of Sakka helps to confirm his identity with Vedic Indra. In the Ṛg Veda, Indra is said to be a god of unbounded generosity. So, he is Maghavan 'bountiful,' an attribute "almost entirely monopolized by him in the Ṛg Veda" (VM. p. 63). In later Vedic texts too, this title is common. It occurs as a name of Indra in the Upaniṣads (Kaus. 2.11; Kena 1.3.10). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (SB. 14.1.1.13) says that Indra is Makhavat (Makha = Sacrifice) 'possessed of Makha' and Makhavat is the one who is mystically called Maghavat. As the sacrifice was the most important feature in the Brāhmaṇas, there is no wonder that Maghavan gained this new inter-

18. Cp. Mtu. I. 165, 167, ("Sahaśranetro Maghavān va Śobhase") and, Mtu., III. 366 ("śakro āha: Maghavān ti me āhu manuṣya loke.") See Dpp. II. p. 406. f.n. 1 (s. Magha).

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pretation. It may be that, as he is propitiated by various sacrifices, he has in turn become the benefactor of the suppliant and turned out to be the ' bountiful one ' according to the principle of *Do ut des*.

Purindada :

This epithet of Sakka is worthy of note. According to the explanation offered by the Sakka-Saṃyutta, the term means that he ' gave gifts from town to town ' (" pure pure *dānaṃ adāsi*," *loc. cit.*). In other places in the commentaries he is said to be called Purindada because he was a " giver of alms in the past " (" pure *dānaṃ dadāti ti purindado ti vuccati* " Vv. A. 171).

In the Veda, the clouds were the fortresses (*purah*) which Indra attacked. Hence the epithets *purbhid* (RV. 1.51.5. cp. VM. p. 60) ' fort-shatterer ' and *puram̐lara*, primarily applied to Indra, though often it refers to Agni (VM. p. 98). The earlier meaning of the word ' purandara ' and ' purbhid ' was forgotten, and a new meaning was attached to the mispronounced word ' Purindada. ' Purindada is thus to be regarded as a distorted form of Vedic Purāṃdara.¹⁹

Vāsava :

This is another interesting epithet of Sakka (S. I. 229, 230 ; D. II. 260, 288 ; J. III. 215, verse 117 ; 391, verse 113). In the Sakka-Saṃyutta Vāsava is represented as a houseowner ; in a previous birth he is said to have given dwelling places (" *pubbe manussabhūto samāno āvasathaṃ adāsi*," *loc. cit.*).

The Dīgha Nikāya (D. II. 260), says that Vāsava is the ' Lord of the Vasūs ' (" *vasūnāṃ Vāsavo seṭṭho* "). According to the Upaniṣads there are eight Vasūs : fire, earth, wind, atmosphere, sun, sky, moon and stars. " These are Vasūs, for upon them this excellent (*vasu*) world is set, for they give a dwelling (*vāsayante*) to the world. Therefore they are called Vasūs.²⁰ In another Upaniṣad the vital breaths (*prāṇāḥ*) are called ' *vasūs*. ' They are so called because they cause everything in this world to continue to live ($\sqrt{\text{vas}}$; *Ch. up.* 5.3.16.1). Indra is identified with *Prāṇa*, the source of all vital breaths and their chief (*Kaus. Up.* 3.2 ; *Bṛhad. Up.* 1.5.12) showing how, even in the mystic symbolism of the Upaniṣads, Indra is related to the Vasūs. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that Indra is the ' Vasu ' of the gods (SB. 1.6.43), that is to say, he is the benefactor or the treasure of the gods, a comment tallying with Sāyana's usual gloss on ' Vasu ' as ' *dhanarūpa* ' ! The text has a play on the word *vasu* for ' *vas* ' ' to dwell ' may as well be intended here.²¹ Even in the Veda (RV. 7.10.35) Indra is invoked with the Vasus. " Indra was attended in his heaven by vague spirits, called Vasus, who appear to have

19. Cp. *Pali-English Dictionary*, s.v. ; Geiger, PLL. §44.3.

20. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 120. *Bṛhad. Up.* 3.9.3).

21. See SBE. Vol. XII. p. 176. f.n. 1.

acted as his Counsellors.”²² The Vedic ‘*Vasupati*’ translated as ‘lord of wealth’ may equally well mean the ‘lord of the Vasūs.’

The Saṃyutta explanations of the terms Vāsava quoted above betrays the manner in which the Buddhist author has invented the meaning to suit his purpose. But Buddhaghosa commenting on the word as found in the Dīgha Nikāya says that Vāsava is the lord of the Vasu gods (“Vasu-devatānaṃ Seṭṭho,” D.A. II. 481), a gloss which is obviously of greater historical value when the Vedic and Upanishadic references to Vasu gods are taken into account. Therefore it is clear that as a synonym of Buddhist Sakka it shows an unmistakable historical connection with Indra of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads.

Sahassakkha :

Sakka is called so because he could think of a thousand matters in a moment: “Sahassaṃ pi atthānaṃ muhuttēna cinteti” (S. I. 229, 230). Sahassacakkhu and Sahassanetta are two other synonyms of the word (*Dial.* II. 297). In the Ṛg Veda Indra and Vāyu are already called *Sahasrākṣa* (RV. 1.23.3).

Sujāmpati :

This is another interesting epithet of Sakka (Sn. verse 1024 ; S. I. 229, 230). Sakka Saṃyutta says that he is called Sujāmpati because Sujā, the Asura Maiden, was his consort (“Sakkassa devānaṃ indassa Sujā nāma asurakaññā pajāpati ahoṣi,” *loc. cit.* Cp. Ud. 29). The word ‘Saciapati’ (lord of might) occurs as an epithet of Indra, eleven times in the Ṛg Veda (VM. p. 58). In Brāhmanical mythology, Sacī is the daughter of Asura Puloma and, the Brāhmanas take him to be the husband of Sacī.²³ According to Buddhist books Sujā or Sujātā was Vepacitti’s daughter (DPP. s. Sujā).

B.C. Law believes that ‘Sujā’ is a different reading of the Vedic word ‘saci’; but it is philologically impossible to derive ‘Sujā’ from ‘Saci.’ In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Indra is called ‘Yajñapati,’ leader of Sacrifices (SBE. Vol. xxvi. p. 262). The epithet Sujāmpati, therefore, may be an approximation to ‘Yajñapati’ in meaning. This suggestion receives support from the fact that in the Ṛg Veda *Sruc*, (f) means ‘sacrificial ladle’ and its genitive plural ‘srucām’ could be the origin of Pali ‘Sujam,’ for the change of *c* to *j* is common in Pali.²⁴ In the Atharva Vedā ‘divine power of the highest order’ is ascribed to different sacrificial ladles (VM. p. 155). So, we may not be far from the truth if we say that Indra, originally the ‘lord of sacrificial ladles’ (Sujāmpati), came to be later regarded as ‘lord of sacrifices.’

22. Donald A. Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend*, p. 17.

23. B. C. Law, *Heaven and Hell*, p. 13.

24. See, Geiger, PLL. §23.2.

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It is more probable,²⁵ however, both on philological and ideological grounds, that the Pali 'Sujāmpati' may, correspond to a Vedic *Sujām-pati*, where 'Sujā' is the Vedic feminine substantive made from *Su* (prefix) + *jā* (radical noun)²⁶, meaning 'well-born', hence 'divine'. The word *Sujāta* is clearly applied to gods in the Ṛg Veda (Grassmann s.v.) and, therefore, Sujāmpati must mean 'lord of gods,' a sense agreeing very well with 'devānam indo' in Pali.

Inda :

The word Inda (∟Skt. Indra, §2) itself is used as a mere name of Sakka in early Buddhism. In the Sakka-Saṃyutta, it is said, that Sakka is called 'Indra' because he ruled over the Tāvatiṃsa gods with perfect sovereignty "Devānaṃ Tāvatiṃsānaṃ issariyādhipaccaṃ rajjaṃ kāresi" *loc. cit.* As (we have seen already (§2) Sakka is called 'ruler of the gods' (devānam indo). This sense of 'inda' to mean 'king, ruler and chief' is not found in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas or Upaniṣads²⁷ and is therefore probably of Buddhist origin. But it is significant that in the Brāhmaṇas there is a clear reference to how the other gods anointed Indra as their king (AB. 8.3.12). In Pali the word 'Inda' meaning 'ruler' is to be found in compounds like 'asurinda' (= asura + inda; S. I. 221) or manujinda (Sn. 553, etc.).²⁸ Devarājā (Nd. I. 177; S. I. 236) and Mahinda (J. V. 397, verse 228, 411, verse 285) are some other epithets of Sakka that clearly refer to the fact that he was the ruler of the gods.

Vajirapāṇi :

Indra in the Veda is represented as 'bearer of the thunderbolt'—the mythological representation of the lightning stroke. He comes under the names of *Vajrabhṛt*—'bearing the bolt,' *vajrabāhu* or *vajrahasta* 'holding the bolt' in his arm or hand' and *vajrin* 'armed with the bolt' (VM. p. 55) although in Buddhist mythology Inda is nowhere represented as a violent character, nevertheless he sometimes appears with his bolt, even if it is only for the purpose of frightening an antagonist of the Buddha or any of his followers. He is called Vajirahattha (D. II. 259; §15). As the Buddha converted Sakka and caused him to enter the first Path of Sanctification (§16) perhaps it was thought improper that he should use his weapon for any violent purpose. In the Ambaṭṭha Sutta (D. I. 95) we see how Sakka comes as Vajirapāṇi Yakkha armed with his thunderbolt to threaten Ambaṭṭha,²⁹ who refrained from

25. I am indebted to my tutor, Dr. O. H. de A. Wijesekera, for this suggestion.

26. See Grassmann, *Wörterbuch Zum Rig Veda*, s. *jā*.

27. See 'Indra' in *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, where Monier-Williams cites only Manu and Hitopadeśa, for this derived sense.

28. See *Pali-English Dictionary*, s. *inda*. 2.

29. Cp. "Silence, thou evil one," roared Thor, "or else with my hammer shall I strike thy head off and end thy life." *Teutonic Myth and Legend*, p. 173. Quoted by Mackenzie in *Indian Myth and Legend*, p. 16.

answering the questions of the Buddha. Here, we see Sakka as a patron of the new religion. He used his weapon only to frighten a person who did not agree with the Teacher. The same Vajirapāṇi (M. I. 231) is said to have appeared before Saccaka and frightened him for having such audacity as to debate with the Buddha. These are the only instances in the Suttas in which Sakka comes in the guise of a Yakkha bearing a bolt. In the Sambulā Jātaka (J. V. 92, verse 284) Sakka comes with his thunderbolt to frighten the goblin who harasses Sambulā. Again in the Ayakūṭa Jātaka (J. III. 146, verse 180) Sakka appears with his fiery bolt to frighten the Rākṣāsas who come to kill the Bodhisatta. In the Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka (J. VI. 155, verses 732-36) Sakka frightens the tyrant king Khaṇḍahāla and his minister for trying to harm Khaṇḍahāla's eldest son. These instances are sufficient to show that Sakka uses his weapon for the good purpose of helping the distressed.

Sakka's weapon is a blazing mass of iron (D. I. 95 ; J. III. 146, verses 181-2). In the Veda too, it is described as *āyasa*, metallic (RV. 1.52. This striking similarity of detail is another proof of the identity of Vedic Indra and Buddhist Sakka.

Yakkha :

Although the word does not appear to be an epithet of Sakka, yet in his capacity of the holder of the thunderbolt (vajra) he is, as we have seen above, frequently spoken of as a Yakkha (D. I. 95 ; M. I. 252). He is also alluded to as Yakkha even without any reference to his weapon: "Sakka nāmakō Yakkho" (S. I. 206). Similarly, Inda, Soma, Varuṇa and Pajāpati appear in a list of protective Yakkhas (D. III. 204). The use of this word is also significant for the historical origin of the concept in so far as it is seen that the term Yakṣa is applied to various mythological objects and deities such as Hiranyagarbha, Manas, Brahman in the sense of 'mysterious' or 'adorable' in pre-Buddhistic literature, as has been shown by Dr. Wijesekara³⁰. In this sense it is also used as an epithet of the Buddha or is applied to Devatās in Buddhism.³¹

Kosiya :

This epithet of Sakka (D. II. 270 ; M. I. 252) is a derivation from the original word *Kauśika*, an epithet of Vedic Indra (RV. I. 10) which implies that Indra favoured the family of the Kuśikas (VM. p. 63). Sakka was addressed as Kosiya by the Buddha when he first met him (D. II. 270). According to Sāyana *Kauśika* means "favourable to the Kuśikas".³² In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Indra is called Kauśika Gautama and it appears that Kuśika desired to have a son equal to Indra, whence the latter was born as

30. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 24, etc.

31. *Ib.*, p. 32, f.n. 84.

32. SBE. Vol. XXVI. p. 82, f.n. 1.

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Kuśika's son Gāthin or Gādhin (*ibid*). Thus Indra may have become the tutelary god of that particular clan to have gained this epithet.³³ According to Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids "Kosiya is used, not in speaking of, but in speaking to Sakka, just as the family (gotta) name, not the personal name, is used by polite persons in addressing a man" (*ib.* pp. 296-7). It is difficult for us to agree with this, however, as we see that the word 'Kosiya' is definitely used as a name in speaking of Sakka (J. V. 395, verse 223; 396, verse 224; M. I. 253).

Vatrabhū :

It is highly significant that Sakka is called Vatrabhū at least in one place in Pali literature (J. V. 153, verse 93); 'SA. I. 83' cited (s. Sakka) in the DPP. for an occurrence of Vatrabhū seems to be an error. The epithet is clearly reminiscent of Vedic Vṛtrahan 'slayer of Vṛtra' which is used about seventy times in the Ṛg Veda (VM. p. 60). The Pali form 'Vatrabhū' can well be a phonetic development of the same compound. The first word 'Vatra' is clearly derived from Vedic Vṛtra where the vowel -ṛ- has become -a-, as is very common in Pali.³⁴ The second member of the compound '-bhū' appears to be a phonetic development of Vedic '-han' (radical noun, masculine from root *han*). This same form in -ū occurs in other places in Pali. We may compare bhūnāhu (voc.) Sn. 664, bhūnāhuno (gen. sg.) M. I. 502, bhūnāhuno nom. (pl.) J. V. 266, which are clearly made up of bhūna (= embryo) + han (= killer). Thus Pali 'Vatrabhu'³⁵ may, have come through an intermediate form 'vatra-hu' with the substitution of -bh- for -h- due to the analogy of forms as abhibhū, gotrabhū, etc. Faustöll has indeed suggested, the alternative readings Vatrahū and Vatrahā (J. V. 153, f.n. 3).

Gandhabbarāja :

This word occurs (J. VI. 260, verse 7) in the sense of 'king of the Gandhabbas,' as another epithet of Sakka.³⁶ The Gandhabbas had a king of their own, known as Timbaru (D. II. 268). But we also hear how Sakka once appointed Pañcasikha a king of the Gandhabbas (*ib.* 288). Sakka's intimate association with the Gandhabbas can be seen also from the fact that Mātali (§13) who is perhaps the closest companion of Sakka was also a Gandhabba. In the Ṛg Veda the Gandharva is represented as grasping the bridle of the steed mounted by Indra (RV. I.163; cp. YV. (TS.) 4.6.7). It may, therefore, be inferred that Sakka who had the authority to appoint 'governors' like Pañcasikha to rule the Gandhabbas on his behalf was naturally regarded as the 'monarch of the Gandhabbas.'

33. Cp. *Dial*, II. p. 297.

34. Geiger, PLL. §12.1.

35. I owe this suggestion (-han > bhū) to Dr. O. H. de A. Wijesekara.

36. Cp. J. VI. 260: "Gandhabbarājoti Sakkam Sandhāya āha."

Māyāvī (?) :

It is recorded (S. I. 238, 239) that once Sakka visited Vepacitti when he was ill, and the latter seeing Sakka coming at a distance, said: "Heal me, O Ruler of the gods." Sakka demanded in return the knowledge of 'Sambara's magic art' (Sambarimāyaṃ)³⁷ if he were to heal him. Vepacitti having consulted the Asuras thought it wise to refuse Sakka's request, and recited the following verse:—

"Māyā pi (v.l. māyāvi) Maghavā Sakka devarāja Sujampati
Upeti nirayaṃ ghoram sambarova satam samam."

In the Kindred Sayings I, Mrs. Rhys Davids renders the verse thus :

"Thou of the Maghas, Sakka, king of gods,
Sujampati, the conjuror's magic art
Leads to the dread abyss where Sambara
The Asura hath been a century."

This translation, however doubtful, is definitely nearer the mark than the construction put upon it by the Commentary. Buddhaghosa's comment is obviously mistaken inasmuch as he identifies Vepacitti with Sambara. According to him Sambara's disease was due to a curse pronounced upon him by sages alluded to earlier in the Sakka Saṃyutta (S. I. 227). It is added there that being unable to bear up the pain Sambara shot up in horror three times during the night (tikkhattum ubbijji, *ib.*, 228) and Buddhaghosa remarks that it is because of this trembling (vepati) of Sambara's mind that he came to be called Vepacitti (SA. I. 347). Sambara is clearly Śambara, the demon of drought, of the Ṛg Veda (Sanskrit-English Dictionary, *s.v.*), and Vepacitti very probably Vaipaścita (or Vaipaśyata) met with in the Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra mentioned as maternal patronymic of the demigod Tārksya (Sanskrit-English Dictionary, *s.v.*).

Mrs. Rhys Davids' rendering of 'upeti' as 'leads to' is, however, erroneous since upeti never means that but always 'goes to, attain, fall into' (Cp. Pali-English Dictionary). Thus what is meant is not that 'mayā leads . . .' (in which case 'pi' hangs loose!) but that 'the māyāvī (possessor of magic art) goes to hell . . .' 'Māyāvī' or 'Māyavant' already occurs as an epithet of asuras (Mitra, Varuṇa, etc.) in the Ṛg Veda (VM. pp. 24, 156), and Indra's connection with 'magic powers' (Māyābhiḥ) is also referred to in the Ṛg Veda (6.47.18). Thus the implication of the verse may be that Vepacitti, unwilling to give Sakka greater powers (māyā) by teaching him the Sambarimāyā also, makes the veiled threat that 'one who practises māyā will go to hell like Sambara who has been in hell for full hundred years.'

37. Sambara is said to have been one of a band of Māyāvins killed by Indra, (RV. 1.54.4); Cp. 1.51.6.

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§5. The Buddhist cosmic system and Sakka's place in it.

The Buddhist cosmos consists of three Dhātus or world systems. They are the *Kāma*, *Rūpa* and *Arūpa* worlds. This division we may consider as an echo of the Vedic division of the Universe into the regions of the earth, air and heaven. The classification of the various *Devalokas* is as follows:—*Cātummahārājika*, *Tāvatiṃsa*, *Yāma*, *Tusita*, *Nimmanarati*, *Paranimmita Vasavatti* and *Brahmaloka*, which comes last (D. I. 216-9; M. II. 194-5). B. C. Law compares the seven lokas with the seven Vedic regions:—*Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, *Svar*, *Maha*, *Jana*, *Tapas*, *Satya* or *Brahmaloka*. He says that *Bhuvah loka* has its counterpart in the *Tāvatiṃsa* Heaven,³⁸ where Sakka reigns supreme.

§6. The cause of Sakka's divine sovereignty.

Sakka's status in the present birth, as Buddhaghosa points out (DA. II. 472), is very much due to the practice of liberality (*dāna*) in his previous births. This forms the first step in the practice of the teaching of the Buddha. Liberality, the pride of the Buddhists in India, was inherited by them from their ancestors. Abundant records are found in the Vedas, *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Sūtras* of the emphasis laid on this particular form of benevolence. We may quote an example from an ancient work³⁹ illustrating the efficacy of the results of hospitable actions performed for a guest:

“He who entertains guests for one night obtains earthly happiness, a second night gains the middle air, a third heavenly bliss, a fourth the world of unsurpassable bliss; many nights procure endless worlds. That has been declared in the Veda.”

Buddhist books record many instances in which givers enjoyed heavenly bliss, after the dissolution of their bodies. So, liberality, whether in Buddhism or *Brāhmaṇism*, is always followed by great rewards in the present life or in the next.⁴⁰ It is, therefore, assumed that Sakka's attainment of celestial sovereignty was due to the practice of this eminent virtue of his in the past. There is the possibility for any man to become a Sakka,⁴¹ only if he is capable of practising the necessary virtues. We hear of the *Bodhisatta* becoming a Sakka for thirty-six times (A. IV. 89), again the Teacher *Sunetta* had become Sakka for thirty-six times (*ib.* 105).

Once, Sakka himself admonishing the gods said that one should observe the eight vows on religious days if one were to become a Sakka (A. I. 144). The phrase “*Sakko nāma devānam indo*” (D. I. 216)—the chief of the gods

38. See *Heaven and Hell*, pp. 2-3.

39. *Āpastamba* (II. 7.16), cited by Tachibana. EB., pp. 141-2.

40. See EB., pp. 143, etc.

41. A woman cannot become a Sakka (A. I. 28; M. III. 65).

named Sakka—brings to light the belief held that any person would have the opportunity of becoming 'the chief of the gods' only if he had fulfilled the necessary moral obligations during his previous births.

It is significant that according to the Veda Indra conquered heaven by *tapas*—religious fervour (RV. 10.167). In the age of sacrifices it was deemed possible for a person with a will even to usurp Indra's throne by performing numerous sacrifices.⁴² Thus it is possible to infer that Indra attained celestial power by performing great sacrifices. We have already seen (§4) how the epithets Makhavat (Maghavat) "possessed of sacrifices" and perhaps Sujampati "lord of sacrificial ladles" emphasize the importance of sacrifice for the attainment of Indra-hood during the period of the Brāhmaṇas. It is highly important to observe how Indra once prevented the Asuras from offering sacrifices by overturning their fire-altar (SB. 2.1.2.14-17). Thus Indra did not wish to see the Asuras prevailing over him by their sacrifices. The Jātaka too states how once Indra tried to wean an ascetic from practising asceticism (*tapas*) through fear of losing his celestial kingdom (J. V. 153, etc., verses 93, etc.)

According to the Dhammapada (p. 5, verse 30), Maghavā attained to the sovereignty (*seṭṭhatam*) of the gods through moral earnestness (*appamāda*). With the growth of philosophical ideas in Vedic literature *tapas* came to be regarded as one of the greatest virtues conferring on one who practised it the highest power. The gods attained divine rank by *tapas* (TB. 3.12.3). They even overcame death by *tapas* (AV. 11.5). A change, however, came over during the Brāhmaṇa period, when the conception of *tapas* gave place to the conception of *Yajña* (sacrifice). In the teaching of the Buddha much importance is not attached to *tapas* as the practice of asceticism. The Buddha never favoured the practice of sacrifices enjoined in the Brāhmaṇas. According to the Dhammapada, it is *Appamāda*, moral earnestness, that is the way to deathlessness "*Appamādo amatapadam*" (p. 4, verse 21). The fact that 'deathlessness' is the most important attribute of *divinity* in the ancient mythology of many races⁴³ brings the term into particular relation with Sakka's attainment of divine sovereignty through *appamada*. In the Upaniṣads immortality (*amṛtatva*) is synonymous with life in the heavenly world or *Svargaloka* (*Kaṭha* 1-13). Thus it may be considered that *Appamāda* in Buddhist culture has replaced the two conceptions, *viz.*: Vedic *Tapas* and Brāhmanic *Yajña*, and *appamāda* in performing virtuous deeds has become the way to the attainment of divinity and, consequently, of the kingship of the gods. This is probably the origin of the Buddhist emphasis on *appamāda* for the attainment of Sakkahood (*Sakkattam*).

42. Reed, *Primitive Buddhism*, p. 185.

43. Sir G. Elliot Smith, *In the Beginning*, pp. 58-60 (Thinkers' Library).

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§7. Kingdom of Sakka.

The Kingdom of Sakka is referred to as 'Tidiva' or 'Tāvatiṃsa.' 'Devaloka' is the general name given to it (J. IV. 450, verse 204). 'Tidiva' occurs several times (D. II. 167, 272; III. 176; S. I. 96, 181; J. IV. 322, verse 125; 450, verse 205; V. 14, verse 33) referring to the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven, as the Pali-English Dictionary (*s.v.*) has already taken it. Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids have translated the word generally as "Heaven" (*Dial.* II. p. 191) and "Devaloka" (*ib.*, p. 307). But as the verses in which the second and third citations occur clearly show that 'Tidiva' refers to no other heaven but that of Sakka or Inda,⁴⁴ there need not be any hesitation to regard 'Tidiva' as synonymous with 'Tāvatiṃsa.'

The term already occurs in the Vedas (RV. 9.113.9; AV. 9.5.10; "tri. āke tridive") with reference to Indra. It also occurs in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁴⁵ and Praśna Upaniṣad (2.13) and the word is translated as "third heaven".⁴⁶ The Tāvatiṃsa heaven is only superior to the heaven of the Cātummahārājikas, and the other worlds up to the Brāhmaloka are all superior to it (§5). Sakka is the lord of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven. This heaven is said to be located on the summit of Mount Meru (Sn. verse 682).

A terrestrial century is equivalent to one day and night of the Tāvatiṃsa gods. Thirty such days and nights make their months. Their year comprises twelve such months. Their life span is a thousand of such celestial years, that is, in human reckoning, thirty-six million (D. II. 327-8).

There are statues of Inda at the well-adorned Cittakūṭa Gateway of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (J. VI. 126, verses 561-2). The chief city of the kingdom is Masakkasāra (J. VI. 271, verse 1175). The city is beautiful on account of its great palaces, pleasure parks, lakes and what not. The pleasure gardens are filled with the notes of peacocks, herons and various kinds of sweet-singing birds (J. VI. 272, verse 1176). Every kind of bird that was ever known took its abode in these beautiful gardens. One of Sakka's pleasure gardens is Ekapuṇḍarika Uyyāna 'Lotus Pleasaunce' and he spends his sweet leisure hours in the company of celestial maidens who play on five hundred musical instruments (M. I. 252). The Vidhura Paṇḍita Jātaka (J. VI. 278, verse 1216) mentions four other gardens of Sakka: Phārusaka, Cittalatā, Missaka and Nandana.

The Jātakas say that a certain creeper known as 'āsāvati' grew in the Cittalatā grove, and after the lapse of a thousand years it bore just one fruit and the Devas visited the spot to see the wonder (J. III. 251, verse 26). Again

44. Cp. Buddhaghosa 'tidivapuravarena Sakkena.'

45. See *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. *tridiva*.

46. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, *s.v.* and Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 382; Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*, *s.v.* 47, cp. Heaven and Hell, p. 32.

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the Aṅguttara Nikāya gives us information about the Pāricchattaka tree. This tree according to Childers⁴⁷ is *Erythrina Indica* which is known as 'Coral tree' or 'Umbrella tree.' It is said that the gods sport at the foot of this tree for four celestial months indulging in the five pleasures of the senses, when the tree is in full bloom. The gods express their joy when the tree is sere in leaf, saying, "There will be a fall of leaves soon." They in like manner express their joy when its leaves fall, when the buds appear, when the shoots are set, when the blossoms come forth and are shaped like red lotuses. When the tree is in full bloom its sweet fragrance is spread full fifty leagues. The perfume is blown even against the wind for a hundred leagues (A. IV. 117).

§8. Sakka's palace.

Sakka dwells in a beautiful palace called *Vejayanta* 'Victoria.' The Majjhima Nikāya gives a description of this palace (M. I. 253). It is interesting to note that an illustration of this palace is to be found on the Bharahat Tope.⁴⁸

§9. Council Hall and Assembly.

According to the Nimi Jātaka (J. VI. 127, verses 567, 568) Sakka's Council Hall is said to be artistically built, supported by firmly wrought octagonal columns of *lapiz lazuli*. The gods meet in the Council Hall to discuss matters of moment. Sakka presides over the meetings and "consults with them rather than issues to them his commands" (*Dial.* II. 296). Sakka would burst into a hymn of praise on occasions when the gods express their satisfaction on hearing the greatness of the Buddha (D. II. 208):

"The Thrice-and-Thirty, verily both gods and lord rejoice,
Tathāgata they honour and the cosmic law sublime
Whereas they see the gods new-risen, beautiful and bright,
Who erst the holy life had lived, under the Happy One,
The Mighty Sage's hearers, who had won to higher truth,
Come hither; and in glory all the gods outshine.
Thus they behold right gladly, both lord and Thirty-Three
Tathāgata they honour and the cosmic law sublime." (*Dial.* II. pp. 242-3)

§10. Meetings of the Assembly.

The gods have regular meetings on days of religious importance: they meet on the fifteenth day at the full moon, in the month when bhikkhus enter upon Vassa (D. II. 207), or on the fifteenth day of the Pavāraṇa ceremony (*ib.* 220). At the meetings Sakka takes the chair. At the four sides sit the four Great Kings (D. II. 207). We may agree with the idea of Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids⁴⁹ that these Four Great Kings were the Record Keepers who kept the minutes of the meetings.

47. R. C. Childers, *The Dictionary of the Pali Language*, s.v.

48. See Cunningham, *Stupa of Bharhut*, p. 137. cited at *Dial.* II. 296.

49. *Dial.* II. p. 263, f.n. 1.

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Sakka in making his presidential address would burst into a hymn of praise of the Buddha. He would include in his speech eight true facts in praise of the Buddha (D. II. 221-2).

Visitors of great renown came to the Sudhamma Hall to speak to the gods. Brahma Sanatkumāra was an ever-failing figure (D. II. 210). The Janavasabha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya (*ib.*, 200) gives a vivid description of this eloquent orator.

As we saw (§7) that Sakka was a lover of music it is natural to infer that there must have been many a theatrical performance in his Council Hall. We hear of his favourite attendant Pañcasikha, the divine musician with his famous viṇā (D. II. 264). We learn that Sakka took delight in music performed by celestial maidens with five hundred musical instruments in his Ekaṇḍarika Uyyāna (§7). These very same maidens must have played a prominent part in giving admirable musical items at the Hall. The fact, that Suriyavaccasā used to dance at the Sudhamma Hall (D. II. 268) makes this very probable.

§11. The Denizens of Sakka's Heaven.

The Tāvatiṃsa gods have a very bright complexion. They possess a radiance powerful enough to illuminate the whole area of their visit on earth. When the gods visited the brahmin village Ambasaṇḍā (D. II. 264), the village folk went about saying: "For sure the Vediya Mountain is on fire today, for sure the Vediya Mountain is burning today, for sure the Vediya Mountain is in flame today" (*Dial.* II. p. 300). Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids point out that "On ordinary peaceful occasions Sakka consults with them rather than issues to them his commands" (*Dial.* II. 296). This may indicate that Sakka treated the Thirty-Three gods as his equals. But the texts also assert that they were inferior to him in ten matters—"in length of life, in beauty, in happiness, in renown, and in lordship, and in the degree of his five sensations, sight, hearing, smelling, taste and touch," (*ibid.*).

§12. Sakka's personal traits and power.

Sakka's personality reflects the warrior of the time of the Buddha. He wore buskins and a sword hung at his side; he walked under a canopy of state borne over his head (S. I. 226). In the fights between the gods and the Asuras, Sakka took a prominent part in instructing his generals for the fight (S. I. 216-8) and the gods were asked to draw inspiration by looking to his banner (*ib.*, 219). He surpassed the other gods in ten respects—length of life, beauty, happiness, renown, lordship, the strength of his five senses, sight, hearing, smelling, taste and touch, (A. IV. 242; Cp. *Dial.* II. p. 296). He was inferior to the Buddha, of whom he becomes a pupil (D. II. 284). The Arahants too, were his superiors (S. I. 235).

His anthropomorphic nature is shown clearly by the fact that he is not in any way free from general human weaknesses. He is passionate, full of hatred, ignorant, timid and cowardly (S. I. 219). He is subject to birth, old age, death, lamentation, sorrow, dejection and despair (A. I. 144). The verse recited by Sakka concerning the fleeting nature of all existence when the Buddha passed away, shows by implication that Sakka did not consider himself as being free from decay and death. But the Veda takes a quite contrary view when it is said there that Indra is unaging (RV. 3.46). This definitely reflects the change in philosophical attitude that had taken place by the time of early Buddhism. The Vedic ideal of divine immortality is ironically shown to be a mere temporary state however long its duration may appear in comparison with life in the world of men.

Sakka is a good orator. His words "belong to the sphere of persuasion and mildness of concord, amity and harmony." (*Kindred Sayings*, I. 287). The Aṭṭhakathā adds that Sakka possessed a voice like that of a golden bell proceeding from the exquisite screen of his teeth.⁵⁰ He is a great teacher, for he could teach the word of the Buddha to Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas (D. II. 284). He was so averse to drinking that he wished others would not be addicted to such a vicious habit, and uttered many a stanza to the king of Benares showing him the evils of drinking (J. V. 15-18, verses 36-59). This fact, it is hardly necessary to point out, is in ironic contrast to the general impression of Indra as an addict to the Soma-drink in Vedic mythology. He highly commended exertion and energy (S. I. 216-7). He is a queller of demons (J. V. 92, verse 284) a trait that can be traced back to the Veda (VM. pp. 160-1).

In the Veda he appears as a great helper and giver of boons to his supplicants. Indra increases the wealth of the person who offers sacrifices and praises to him (AV. 4.21). The same good quality of our god could be seen in several places in Buddhist literature. Pañcasikha was granted a boon by him: Bhaddā, the 'Sun-maiden,' whom Pañcasikha longed for was given to him (D. II. 288; Cp. §16). He granted King Vessantara eight boons (J. VI. 573, verse 2332). Guttīla once went to him for help to defeat his pupil (J. II. 252, verse 184). He once ordered Mātali to offer ambrosial food to a fainting ascetic (J. V. 396, verse 224). Once at his express command Vissakamma created a palace called 'Righteousness' for the 'Great King of Glory,' Mahāsudassana (D. II. 180). He is full of understanding (S. I. 221). He is a lover of sport (M. I. 252). Sakka could read the minds of others (D. II. 180). He once raised rain and storm to uproot a banyan tree (A. III. 370). In this instance we see Sakka in his original capacity of 'rain god' (§1). He once helped king Koravya by causing the banyan tree to bear fruit (A. III. 370). We have already seen how Sakka showed his supernormal powers when he appeared as Vajirapāṇi Yakkha (§4). Sakka could assume any form at will.

50. *Kindred Sayings*, I. p. 302, f.n. 2.

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When Sakka wanted to give alms to Venerable Mahākassapa he appeared as a weaver of Rājagaha (Ud. 29). When the Buddha visited Rājagaha, Sakka taking the guise of a young brahmin went in front of the Buddha reciting a few stanzas (Vin. I. 38). We can trace the origin of this idea to the Ṛg Veda, where Indra is said to take many shapes by his magic powers (RV. 6.47.18; Cp. *Brhad. Up.* 2.5.19).

§13. Sakka's Chariot.

Sakka is borne in a chariot which had a team of a thousand thoroughly trained horses (S. I. 224; M. VII. 79). The horses were as swift as the wind and the sound of the chariot echoed through the firmament. It shook the sky, sea and earth (J. V. 408, etc., verses 275-8). The chariot being such, it is no wonder that the noise of its wheels roused the Buddha from his meditation, when Sakka came in it to see him (D. II. 271). In the Veda, Indra's car is said to have had two, hundred, thousand, and sometimes thousand and ten horses yoked to it (RV. 2.18; 4.46; 6.47). An Upaniṣadic passage makes it clear that Indra had thousand steeds yoked to his car (*Brhad. Up.* 2.5.19). In Buddhist books too, the number of horses is a thousand (S. I. 224; M. VII. 79). We have learnt that Sakka's chariot was as swift as the wind. In the Veda, Indra's car "is golden and is swifter than thought" (RV. 10.112; Cp. VM. p. 55). Indra came down in his chariot to the sacrificial ground (VM. p. 55). Similarly Sakka used his celestial car in visiting the Buddha and other notable personages, (D. II. 271). Sakka has Mātali for his charioteer. Mātali is a Gandhabba Chieftain and he is said to have visited the bhikkhus in a forest glade with other Gandhabba chiefs (D. II. 258). Though Mātali is represented as Sakka's Charioteer, we see him more as one of his favourite companions (Sakka-Saṃyutta). Once Mātali asked Sakka the reason for his silence when he was rebuked by Vepacitti the Asura leader (S. I. 221), and Sakka replied that it was his way not to be irritated at angry words.

The word 'Mātali' is not found in the earliest part of the Ṛg Veda. It is first found in a very late passage (RV. 10.145), and is not used in the sense of a charioteer; it is used to represent a divine person. Sāyana, however, commenting on the word says that Mātali is Indra's charioteer ("Mātaliṃ indrasya sārathīḥ"). In a passage in the Atharva Veda (11.6.23) it is implied that Mātali was Indra's charioteer. Thus the historical development of the Buddhist conception of Mātali as Sakka's charioteer and comrade is not difficult to understand.

§14. Sakka's Associates.

The Four Great Kings appear as Sakka's companions. They are closely associated with him. Of the Four Great Kings, Vessavaṇa seems to be his favourite. He went with Sakka to show the grandeur of his palace 'Victoria' (Vejaṅta) to the Great Elder Moggallāna (M. I. 253). It was King Vessa-

vaṇa who informed Sakka of Elder Uttara's preaching at Mount Saṅkheyya (A. IV. 163); informed by Vessavaṇa, Sakka also came to the Elder Uttara to hear the Dhamma (*ibid.*). When Sakka came to see the Buddha for the first time, he saw Bhuñjati, king Vessavaṇa's consort waiting on the Buddha and as he could not personally see the Buddha as the latter was engaged in meditation at that moment he asked Bhuñjati to salute the Buddha on his behalf (D. II. 270). This makes it clear that Bhuñjati and Vessavaṇa were familiar with the Buddha before Sakka knew him.

Many a time, Sakka visited the Buddha with Brahma (S. I. 233; Th. 1.64, verse 628; D. II. 157). When the Elder Sunitā 'destroyed the intoxicants' Sakka came to pay him homage in the company of Brahma, (Th. 1.64, verse 628). When the Buddha passed away Sakka and Brahma were on the spot to utter two stanzas, (D. II. 157).

Vepacitti, the Asura king appears in the Nikāyas as Sakka's chief opponent in the battles between the gods and the Asuras (S. I. 221). In spite of this antagonism Sakka is later said to have visited Vepacitti when he was ill (S. I. 238; Cp. above p. 16). Buddhaghosa says that he was the father-in-law of Sakka (SA. I. 265; Cp. DPP. II. p. 926, s. *Vepacitti*). This figure is probably the same as Vaipaścita (or Vaipaśyata) mentioned in the Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra (see above p. 17).

Verocana, another 'asurinda,' is said to have visited the Buddha in the company of Sakka although the latter was his rival (S. I. 225). It is significant that, according to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, once Indra and Verocana, the respective leaders of the gods (deva) and the Asuras, approached Prajāpati to obtain the knowledge of the real self: "Then Indra from among the gods went forth unto him, and Verocana from among the Asuras. Then without communicating with each other, the two came into the presence of Prajāpati, fuel in hand (in token of studentship). Thus for 32 years the two lived the students life," (*Ch. Up.* 8.7.2-3).

Pajāpati, a companion of Sakka, appears as one of the kings of the devas with Varuṇa and Īsāna (S. I. 219; D. I. 244). He is at times mentioned with Brahma (M. I. 140). He is mentioned among the Mahāyakkhas in the Ātānāṭiya Sutta (D. III. 204; cp. DPP. s. *Pajāpati*).

Pañcasikha, the divine musician was the most trusted attendant of Sakka. When Sakka wanted to meet the Buddha, he asked Pañcasikha to pave the way for him (D. II. 263). It was through his kindness that Sakka was admitted to the presence of the Buddha (*ib.*, 288).

So, Pañcasikha was largely responsible for the meeting of Sakka and the Buddha. The first step of Sakka's spiritual attainment was due to him. Pañcasikha was made king of the Gandhabbas. He was granted the boon of gaining his much-sought-for prize, Suriyavaccasā (*ibid.*). It is recorded that

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Pañcasikha acted as the messenger to the Buddha conveying a report of the happenings in the heaven of the Thirty-Three when the gods praised the Buddha (D. II. 220). It appears that Pañcasikha was a favourite of the Buddha, for, it is said that he performed before the Master on his beluvapaṇḍu-viṇā and that the Master appreciated his music and song (D. II. 267). Buddha-ghosa says that Pañcasikha was loved by all the devas, and they wished to resemble him (DA. II. 260 ; cp. DPP. s. *Pañcasikha*).

We have already seen that Mātali was Sakka's charioteer and friend (§13.) It was with Mātali's son Sikhaddi, that Suriyavaccaṣā was in love, thus bringing a lot of anxiety to Pañcasikha (D. II. 268). The conception of Pañcasikha can be traced to the notion in the Atharva Veda of "the hither dancing crested Gandharva" (4.37.7).

Vissakamma, the divine architect was also a companion of Sakka. Sakka once asked Vissakamma to build a palace for king Mahāsudassana (D. II. 180). Tvaṣṭṛ is the Vedic counterpart of Vissakamma. In the Veda Viśvarūpa is an epithet of Tvaṣṭṛ (VM. p. 12). The word *Viśvakarman*, owing to its meaning could have given the idea of an architectonic aspect (VM. p. 118). In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna Tvaṣṭṛ is identified with Visvakarman (VM. p. 117). In the Veda Visvakarman is represented as a universal father and *generator*, the one all-seeing god who has on every side eyes, faces, arms and feet (RV. 10.81.82).⁵¹ The personal character of Visvakarman is very vague and uncertain, a fact which can be seen from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa where the very acts ascribed to Viśvakarman are also, ascribed to Brahman ; at a later time Viśvakarman, the All-maker became a mere subordinate spirit.⁵² Thus it is clear that Pali Vissakamma is a development from the character of Tvaṣṭṛ the divine architect in the Veda.

Suvīra and *Susīma* are two other companions of Sakka. We learn of them only in the Sakka-Saṃyutta (S. I. 216-8). When the Asuras marched against the gods, Suvīra and Susīma were asked to go and meet them.

It is said, that Sakka once visited a parrot (§17) in the company of his consort who, according to the Aṭṭhakathā (J. III. p. 491) was Sujā. Again, Sakka disguising himself as a weaver came with his wife Sujātā (Sujā) and offered alms to Venerable Mahākassapa (*Ud.* 29). Therefore it is very probable that Sakka was usually accompanied by his wife in his sojourns.

It is interesting to note that the Elder Mahāmoggallāna was responsible to a great extent for satisfying Sakka's spiritual needs. When the hand-maids of Sakka asked who Moggallāna was, Sakka said that he was a fellow with him in the higher life, "Sabrahmacāri me eso" (M. I. 255). Thus it is clear that Sakka was familiar with Moggallāna.

51. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. *Viśvakarman*. Cp. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 47.

52. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 59.

§15. Sakka as leader of the gods against the Asuras.

The gods and the Asuras fought each other many a time and Sakka appears as a great hero of the gods along with Pajāpati, Varuṇa and Īsāna (S. I. 219). In case of fear the gods were requested by Sakka to look up to the crest of his banner or the crests of the banners of Pajāpati, Varuṇa and Īsāna (*ibid.*). In these fights sometimes the gods were victorious and the Asuras were defeated (D. II. 285; M. I. 252) and at other times the Asuras were able to defeat the gods (S. I. 224). When the gods were defeated they decided not to have any dealings with the Asuras (A. IV. 432, etc.) but after the heat of the defeat was over, they again resolved to defeat the Asuras. In their attempt the gods fought the Asuras to a finish and drank the 'Asura nectar,' and became more and more powerful (D. II. 285). It is said that the Asuras defeated and panic-stricken entered their city (A. IV. 433). The Sakka Saṃyutta gives three names of Asura leaders *viz.* Vepacitti, Verocana and Sambara. Rāhu (A. II. 16), Pahārāda (A. IV. 197, 200) Bali (D. II. 259) and Sucittī are some other Asura chiefs mentioned in the Suttas. The Asuras are spoken of as living in the ocean being conquered by Vajirahattha, and are called Vāsava's brethren (D. II. 259; cp. DPP. s. *Asura*).

Asura in Vedic literature is the name of the celestial demons (VM. p. 156). In the tenth book of the Ṛg Veda Asuras are mentioned as opposed to the gods in general (*ibid.*). Macdonell believes that the conflict between the gods and Asuras as found in later Vedic literature, is a development of the early Vedic notion of the conflict of a single god with a single demon, as the case of Indra and Vṛtra (*ibid.*) The word *Asura* in the Atharva Veda means demon. In the Ṛg Veda it is a designation of both demons and gods. In the Avesta the word *Ahura* (= *asura*) is the name of the highest god. Thus, we see that the word originally meant god. Later the word 'Sura' was used for a benevolent god and *Asura* for a bad angel (*ibid.*). This conflict between the Suras and Asuras in Buddhist mythology reminds us of the hostilities between Indra's band and the Dāsas in the Veda.

§16. Sakka meets the Buddha.

The Sakkapañha Sutta (D. II. pp. 263-289) narrates how Sakka first met the Buddha when he was residing on the Vediya Mountain in the cave called 'Inda-sāla guhā' (*ib.*, 269). For a long time he had been anxious to see the Buddha. He was unable to meet him as he was preoccupied with the work he had to perform for the Thirty-Three gods (*ib.*, 271). Sakka himself explains to the Buddha that he on one occasion went to Sāvatti to see him, but as the Buddha was deeply buried in meditation at that time that he could not meet him (*ibid.*). The Aṭṭhakathā tells us that the Buddha did not give Sakka the opportunity of having this meeting, as he was not ripe enough to understand the Dhamma. It is added that the Buddha knew that after a few days he would visit him at 'Inda-Sala guhā' when he would see the 'five

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omens' and, further that Sakka would come with the devas of the two Deva-lokas and attain the First Path of Sanctification with eighty-thousand devas (DA. II. 697-8). Sakka realized the greatness of the Buddha only when he discovered new gods appearing in his domain outshining the others in ever increasing numbers (D. II. 208). 'Gopaka Devaputta' played a highly important part in the conversion of Sakka (*ib.*, 271). In his previous birth he was a girl by name Gopikā. Gopikā put her trust in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha; she fulfilled the precepts and abandoned the thoughts of a woman and cultivated manly thoughts. After her death she was born in the realm of the Thirty-Three gods. This incident caused Sakka to appreciate the greatness of the Buddha all the more (*ibid.*).

Everafter his conversion Sakka remained a staunch supporter of the new faith. We find him constantly attending on the Buddha and his disciples, whenever he wanted to do some service to them or to gain spiritual insight (cp. §17).

In fact, Sakka in course of time became very familiar with the Buddha (S. I. 230). He once came to the Buddha to find out what constitutes a pleasant spot. The Buddha told Sakka that the varied beauties of pleasure parks, forests, or lakes of lotuses are of little worth with regard to man's happiness. The Buddha added that a beautiful spot on earth is the place where Arhants dwell (*ib.*, 232-3).

The Vinaya Mahavagga records how, one beautiful night, Sakka came to listen to the preaching of the Buddha (Vin. I. 26). Sakka, when he visited the Buddha with Verocana, the Asura king, told him that forbearance is an excellent virtue (S. I. 225). Sakka at another time visited the Buddha when he was sojourning at the "Vultures' Peak" and learnt that whatever is given to the Order of Bhikkhus entails great fruit in the life hereafter (*ib.*, 233). On another occasion he visited the Buddha to find out why some beings in this world are completely set free, while others are still bound by bonds (S. IV. 97). On a further visit he asked the Buddha how a bhikkhu obtains deliverance on the extirpation of craving and he was told that such deliverance results from the realisation that it is improper to adhere to any 'dhammas' (M. I. 251).

The Vinaya Mahavagga (Vin. I. 38) also gives us information regarding Sakka's personal service to the Buddha. When the Buddha was entering the city of Rājagaha, at the king's invitation, Sakka, taking the form of a young Brāhmaṇa, walked in front of the Buddha reciting the verses:—

"Danto dantehi saha purāṇajaṭilehi vippamutto vippamuttehi,
Singinikkha savaṇṇo Rājagahaṃ pāvisi bhagavā
Mutto muttehi saha purāṇajaṭilehi vippamutto vippamuttehi
Singinikkha savaṇṇo Rājagahaṃ pāvisi bhagavā
Tiṇṇo tiṇṇehi saha purāṇajaṭilehi vippamutto vippamuttehi
Singinikkha savaṇṇo Rājagahaṃ pāvisi bhagavā
Dasa vāso dasabalo dasadhammavidū dasabhi c'ūpeto
So dasasata parivāro Rājagahaṃ pāvisi bhagavā," (*ibid.*).

"The self-controlled One with the self-controlled, with the former Jaṭilas, the released One with the released, the Blessed One, gold-coloured like an ornament of singī gold, has entered Rājagaha.

The emancipated One with the emancipated, with the former Jaṭilas, etc.

He who has crossed (the ocean of passion) with them who have crossed (it), with the former Jaṭilas, the released One with the released, the Blessed One, gold-coloured like an ornament of singī gold, has entered Rājagaha.

He who is possessed of ten Noble States and of ten Powers, who understands the ten Paths of Kamma and possesses the ten (attributes of Arahantship), the Blessed One surrounded by ten hundred of followers, has entered Rajagaha." (SBE. Vol. XIII. Vinaya Translations, pp. 141-2).

Sakka told the people of Rājagaha that he was an attendant of the Buddha (Vin. I. 38). One day he dug a tank with his own hands, when the Buddha needed water to wash his rags (*ib.*, 29). It is recorded that this tank was seen by Hsüan-tsang.⁵³ Sakka created a stone slab for the Buddha to place his rags on, and another stone on which to rub his rags, while they are being washed (*ibid.*).

At the moment of the Buddha's passing away Sakka who was present there with Brahma Sahampati uttered the following stanza:—

"Aniccā vata Saṅkāra
Uppāda vaya dhammino
Uppajjhivā nirujjhanti
tesam vūpasamo sukho." (D. II. 157; S. I. 158).

"They 're transient all, each being's part and powers,
Growth is their nature, and decay.
They are produced, they are dissolved again.
To bring them all into subjection—that is bliss." (*Dial.* II. pp. 175-6).

§17. Sakka visits Arahants and other good men.

Sakka is said to have visited several good men on earth. He paid honour to these good men and Arahants though he himself was worshipped by brahmins and nobles on earth. Sakka, with his following, came to see some bhikkhus, who met them in a forest glade (D. II. 260). Once, invited by king Vessavaṇa, Sakka came to see the Elder Uttara preaching at Mount Sankheyya (A. IV. 163). At another time he, in the company of Brahma, came with clasped hands to pay homage to the Elder Sunīta, who had destroyed the Āsavas (Th. 1.64). Therī Subhā was worshipped by Sakka and his band of gods (Th. 2.158). Sakka visited king Nimi and informed him that the gods in heaven praised him, and requested the king to pay a visit to the Devaloka (M. VII. 79). Sakka on certain occasions visited some good men to save them from troubles of some kind or other. Once when a goblin was on the point of harassing Sambulā Sakka with his thunderbolt was able to frighten and drive away the goblin (J. V. 92, verse 284). When a certain Rākṣasa came to kill

53. René Grousset, *In the footsteps of the Buddha*, p. 163.

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the Bōdhisatta, Sakka used his fiery bolt to drive him away (J. III. 146, verses 181-2). These two instances reveal to us that Sakka here appears in the capacity of the queller of demons like Indra in the Veda (cp. §15). Again we see that the tyrant king Khaṇḍahāla and his minister were frightened by Sakka in his effort to save the king's eldest son (J. VI. 155, verse 732). Sakka once consoled an ascetic, when he was lamenting over a dead deer (J. IV. 215, verse 116). He even went to the extent of helping a parrot who clung to a withered tree out of a sense of gratitude, thereby running the risk of being starved to death (J. III. 492-3, verses 22-7).

§18. Sakka's interest in the Dhamma.

The Sakka Pañha Sutta records an important discussion between the Buddha and Sakka (D. II. pp. 276-289). Sakka, in appreciation of the Buddha's utterances, says: "Passion is a disease, passion is a cancer, passion is a dart, passion drags a man about by one rebirth and then another, so that he finds himself now up above, now down below (*Dial.* II. p. 317). As was referred to above Sakka once questioned the Buddha concerning the real nature of a beautiful spot and learns from him that it is the land, where Arahants dwell (S. I. 232). At another time he questioned the Buddha about the fruits of actions that men do, and the Buddha tells him that whatever men give to the wise and virtuous Sangha entails great fruit in the future (*ib.*, 233). The Cūla-taṇhā-Saṅkhāya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya tells us how Sakka wanted to know how a bhikkhu gets deliverance by the extirpation of craving (M. I. 251). Sakka visits the Buddha at the Vultures' Peak and asks him why some beings are set free in this very life and why others are not and Sakka learns that it is due to the indulgence of five senses (S. IV. 97). All these references to Sakka's interest in the good things of life and religion and the humility with which he frequently approached the Buddha for spiritual instruction show to what extent the blustering Indra of the Ṛg Veda has been 'moralized' in early Buddhism, as we shall see in the next paragraph.

§19. Sakka's moral character.

We have seen that Sakka in a previous birth practised seven virtues (§6) whereby he attained celestial sovereignty. These seven virtues are:—

- (1) Maintaining his parents.
- (2) Showing reverence to the head of the family.
- (3) Using gentle words.
- (4) Uttering no slander.
- (5) Practising liberality with an unselfish and pure mind.
- (6) Speaking the truth.
- (7) Not giving way to anger.

The attribution of these virtues to Sakka shows clearly that in Buddhism Sakka is an ethical conception, representing the moral side of his Vedic counter-

part. The Buddha has, in the words of Dr. Tachibana (EB. p. 3), "humanized and moralized" the Indra of the Veda. That is to say, Indra appears in Buddhist literature with a personality of a moral nature. It must be remembered, however, that even in the Veda, Indra is not depicted only as a violent character. In many places he is represented as a benevolent god; "an ethical character is attributed to him" (VM. p. 65). It is this good side of Indra's nature that is characteristically emphasized in Buddhist literature. Perhaps it was felt that such an ideal in the divine sphere as Sakka-hood with all its celestial bliss and greatness would be of assistance to the lay adherents as an encouragement to them to lead the good life, just as in the material world Cakkavatti-sovereignty represented the highest peak of attainment, with Buddhahood as its counterpart in the spiritual sphere. These three ideals are sometimes mentioned together as possessing certain similarities (A. I. 28; M. III. 65).

In the Veda, Indra appears as a god who took delight in capricious violence. As a result of drinking some juice frequently Indra is said to have acted several times in an unruly manner. Sakka in Buddhist literature is averse to drinking (J. V. 15-18, verses 36-59) as we have already seen (§12). Although sometimes he is thought of as a god of immoral character in the Veda, still in many an instance he is described as a god of good character, as may be seen from the following quotation:—

"More generally Indra is spoken of as the one compassionate helper (RV. I. 84; 8, 55, 69), as the deliverer and advocate of his worshippers (RV. 8.85) as their strength (7.31), and as a wall of defence (8.69). His friend is never slain or conquered (10.152). Indra is very often called the friend of his worshippers, sometimes even a brother (3.53), a father (4, 17; 10, 48) or a father and mother in one (8.87)" (VM. p. 62, etc.).

In Buddhism, morality is the first step to Supreme Enlightenment. It is this moral demand in Buddhism that made Sakka an agent of morality. The Saṃyutta Nikāya tells us how Sakka was honoured as a righteous god (S. I. 227). As he has no wrath in him, he does not give way to angry words (*ib.*, 238). He deplores anger and praises love and kindness (*ib.*, 240). He is polite and honours the wise (*ib.*, 226). He says that the highest virtue is forbearance (*ibid.*). It is said that Sakka in his fight with the Asuras was victorious because of his righteousness (*ib.*, 225). Sakka was so true to his word that he did not betray even his enemy (*ibid.*). He commends gentleness and forbearance (*ib.*, 221-2). It is interesting to note that Sakka once came from heaven in a disguised form to offer alms to Venerable Mahākassapa (*Ud.* 29). On this occasion he told Mahākassapa that, although a god, he himself felt the need to do meritorious deeds (*ib.*, 30).

There is an interesting story in the Sakka Saṃyutta (S. I. 237, 238), which tells us how Sakka held himself in check, even under provocation, heedful of his spiritual growth.

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Once when Sakka was running away from his enemy, he showed more concern for a bird's nest than for his own life. He asked the charioteer Mātali to turn back lest he should kill the innocent birds, and thereby he ran the risk of being captured by the enemy (S. I. 224; cp. Kulāvaka Jātaka). It seems that Sakka practised the habit of worshipping the Buddha and other virtuous persons, such as Arahants and good 'upāsakas,' before he started his work. Sakka would extend his clasped hands towards the direction of the Buddha and those good men, even on occasions in which he used to go to the gardens for enjoyment (S. I. 234-236). His large-heartedness is really due to the moral change wrought in him by his conversion to the Buddha Dhamma. On the day he became a 'Sotāpanna,' we hear the Buddha saying that he had lived a pure life for a long time (D. II. 275). Once the Great Elder Moggallāna visited Sakka (M. I. 252) and was honoured by him. Sakka, with spiritual reverence, took a low seat, offering the Great Elder a higher one. Sakka in another instance pays homage to a bhikkhu of good conduct (J. III. 305-7, verses 110-8). He was so good at heart that he even went to see his enemy when ill (S. I. 238). When the Venerable Mahākassapa went on his begging round to Rājagaha, Sakka appeared in the guise of a weaver, and offered cooked rice to him. The rice offered by Sakka came to be full of many sweet dishes. Mahākassapa knew that the weaver was no less a person than Sakka the ruler of the gods. He advised Sakka not to do so again, but Sakka replied that he himself wished to do meritorious deeds (*Ud.* 29, 30). This fact makes it very clear that the Buddhist god was bent on performing good acts.

§20. Similarities between Buddhist Sakka and Vedic Indra.

Sakka is represented in Buddhist books as the chief of the gods. So is Indra in the Veda (§2). The epithets Vāsava, Maghavā, Purindada, Kosiya, Vajirapāṇi, etc., apply to Sakka as well as to Indra (§4). It is said that Sakka attained celestial sovereignty through 'appamāda.' We find a parallel in the Veda, with regard to Indra, for, Indra is said to have conquered heaven by 'tapas' (§6). Sakka's wearing buskins, using a sword and fighting with the Asuras (§12) clearly indicate that he still retains the warlike spirit of Indra. Sakka is a queller of demons. This is an important character of Indra too (§15). The trait of Sakka which makes him a helper and a giver of boons is to be found in Indra also (§19). Sakka at times retains Indra's character as a god of rain (§12). In the Veda we see that Indra is the 'son of truth.' An Atharva Veda passage (3.31.2) says that Śakra is free from unrighteous deed. Truthfulness and righteousness are, as we have seen, very prominent traits in Sakka's nature also (§19). Sakka's chariot is mentioned in terms similar to those describing Indra's (§13). Sakka's rivalry with the Asuras reminds us of Indra's fights with various Asuras in the Veda (§15). Sakka's heaven is called *tidiva* just as Indra's abode is named *tridiva* in the Veda (§7). Sakka's charioteer Mātali has his parallel in the earlier period (§13). Sakka and

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Verocana meet the Buddha just as Indra and Virocana go to Prajāpati for spiritual instruction in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (§14).

§21. Differences between Sakka and Indra.

The above discussion of the character of Buddhist Sakka in its relation to the corresponding figure of Vedic Indra has shown to what extent the similarities due to historical connection are apparent. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there are certain differences between the two characters, which cannot be passed unnoticed. These differences are partly due to the changes consequent on the distance in time that separates Indra of the Ṛg Veda from the Buddhist Sakka of the sixth century, B.C., and, perhaps, also partly due to the cultural differences between the two geographical areas, the Upper-Indus Valley and the Lower-Gangetic basin, which formed the cradles of the early Vedic religion and Buddhism respectively. The chief trait of Vedic Indra is his blustering and boastful truculence due to the fact that he came into prominence among the warlike Vedic Aryans, whereas Buddhist Sakka is conspicuous for his geniality and softness of character due to his Buddhist environment. Thus the drunkenness of Vedic Indra, which fits in well with the martial atmosphere about the warriors of Vedic Indra, became almost out of place in the Buddhist culture of the Magadhan region of the sixth century B.C., which grew up in comparatively peaceful times.

The description of the Cosmos along with Sakka's place in it (§5) is apparently a Buddhistic creation. The conception of these world stages was a religious necessity, for man after death, had to find a state of existence proper and in proportion to his merits and spiritual attainments. Sakka's kingdom (§7), its pleasure gardens, the palace Vejayanta (§8) and Sudhamma Hall (§9) are probably all creations of the Buddhist poets, who were, no doubt, influenced by the analogous institutions of the time as well as a mythological tradition of the eastern area quite different from that of the *Madhyadesa*. Sakka's ethical character seems to have evolved on the model of the character of a Buddhist Upāsaka (§19).⁵⁴

§22. Conclusion.

In the light of the above facts, we may come to the conclusion that *Buddhist Sakka is a development of the Vedic god Indra with a pronounced emphasis on the moral side of his nature which was found, as we have seen above, only in an incipient stage in the Ṛg Veda.* These considerations, it is hoped, will help to refute the theory of Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids "that Sakka and Indra are quite different conceptions."⁵⁵ It is therefore by no means true that Sakka is a "direct contrary"⁵⁶ of Indra.

54. See, Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 333.

55. *Dial.*, II. p. 297. Cp. Malalasekara, DPP. s. *Inda*.

56. See *Pali-English Dictionary*, s. *Inda*.

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We have shown (§4) how the epithets of the Vedic god Indra were used for Sakka too. The historical connections of these words, although the meanings came to be twisted into different shapes, show us the way in which Vedic Indra gradually evolved into Buddhist Sakka.

Indra in primitive mythology was only a deified representation of Thunder. So, in the first place, he was regarded as the god of Thunder. By and by the notion of the natural phenomenon began to disappear, and its place was taken by a psychological unification of human motives and passions in accordance with the growing tendency towards anthropomorphism. Indra became a glorified human being though always superior to mankind. He was conceived as the god of battle giving aid to the Aryans in subduing their enemies the Dāsas or the Dāsyus. He was the protector and helper of his worshippers. He was favourable to the warriors. Sometimes, he was sensual, unruly and even 'immoral.' In short he was a picture of the warlike Aryan who was bent on the conquest of new lands and the repelling of his enemies.

As the legend of Indra passed from mouth to mouth various stories must have grown round the central character according to the individual fancy of the story-teller. And it is only in this manner that we can explain those many traits in Sakka's personality which appear as novel and original in Buddhism.

The Vedic Aryan hoped to derive benefit through prayers to the god. The gods were propitiated in this way and man hoped to be benefited through their favour. But during the period of the Brāhmaṇas ceremonial rites were considered the most important feature in life. They believed that a god could be moved by means of ceremonies. Indra became 'Yajñapati' lord of sacrifices (§4). So, in the Veda and Brāhmaṇas we see that Indra was a supreme being to whom man had to offer his prayer and sacrifices as remarked above. A change, however, came with the tendency of early Buddhism to minimise the value of rites and sacrifices. Indra consequently lost his dignified state. He was regarded as a person inferior to the Buddha or an Arahant or to a virtuous man in point of inner greatness (§17). The Buddha as a Bōdhisatta was a Sakka for thirty-six times (§6). An ordinary man who could observe the eight precepts could become a Sakka himself (§6). The great power and glory of the Vedic god has thus faded into insignificance with the change in spiritual outlook, for, as Dr. Tachibana correctly points out (EB. p. 3), according to the Buddha, those who have attained the position of self-perfection through their own power are more highly esteemed than any gods. When we realize that Buddhist Sakka has reached his celestial sovereignty through nothing but his moral efforts (§6), it becomes easy for us to understand the significance of the place given to Sakka in the ethical cosmology of early Buddhism. Buddhism has no gods to pray to. Sacrifices to gods do not permit one to attain enlightenment. No outside influence except one's self, can bring release from the misery of existence. The Buddha does not preach a salvation through a god. So it is no wonder that the Buddha does not pay

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the least regard to the denizens of a fairy land, so far as man's salvation is concerned. Thus Indra in Buddhism does not enjoy that dignified position in which he was placed in the Veda (cp. EB. p. 23).

Accordingly, we can understand how "the savage infuriated Vṛtra-slayer of the Veda" came to be "the exponent of ethics of mildness and non-violence, and a master in the art of self-command," without ignoring the basic fact of the historical identity of two characters.

It may be justifiable to think of Sakka as a reflection of the Magadhan culture of the 5th and 6th century B.C., symbolizing the atmosphere around a great Magadhan monarch, who lived in a kingdom of wealth and luxury. The Vejayanta Palace with its celestial damsels may refer to an Indian Castle, with a harem of young girls. The pleasure gardens and lakes with all their natural beauty may truly be the replicas of gardens and lakes of the Magadhan king's territory. The Sudhamma Hall brings to mind vividly the picture of the Mote Hall of the Indian Rājā. The discussions of the gods in the Hall remind us of the kind of business that must have been performed in such an assembly. Dancing and various musical performances reflect the pastimes indulged in by Indian monarchs of all times. Thus, we may conclude that whatever is new in the conception of Sakka in Early Buddhism as compared with his Vedic prototype, Indra, could have easily sprung from the needs and conditions of the new culture which was the cradle of the new religion.

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