

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna
“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Om Holy Book #9



Ashvattham prāhur Avyayam - Gita

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Why Ashvattha?

The question naturally arises: Why such a highly exalted honored position is accorded to the Ashvattha tree? The answer is straight: Bhagavān Śrī Krishna Himself has proclaimed in his *Bhagvadgītā*: *Aśvatthaḥ sarvavrkṣāṇām* = **Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha!** It is honored since it is the holiest of all the holy trees. It can very well stand as a true symbol (*satya pratīka*) of OM, which in turn is the true symbol of the Parabrahma Paramātmān.

Of the two pieces of araṇi (the fire-generating couple of wood) the upper one, the *manthana daṇḍa*—the churning rod, is made of this Ashvattha tree. It is the male organ. It is equaled with Praṇava (OM).

Apte analyzes the word Ashvattha as *Na śvas ciraṃ śālmavṛkṣādivat tiṣṭhatīti* = the one which does not live long like śālmali and similar trees.

And Monier-Williams says: Aśvattha = under which horses stand, the holy fig tree, *Ficus Religiosa*; the upper (or male) araṇi is made of its wood. AV. Vi. 11.1; Ś. Br. Xi; KātyŚr.

This Ashvattha tree is highly venerated and is mentioned in various ancient Indian scriptures in a glorified worshipful manner. Macdonell and Keith in their work entitled *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* have given many references and citations. They say:

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

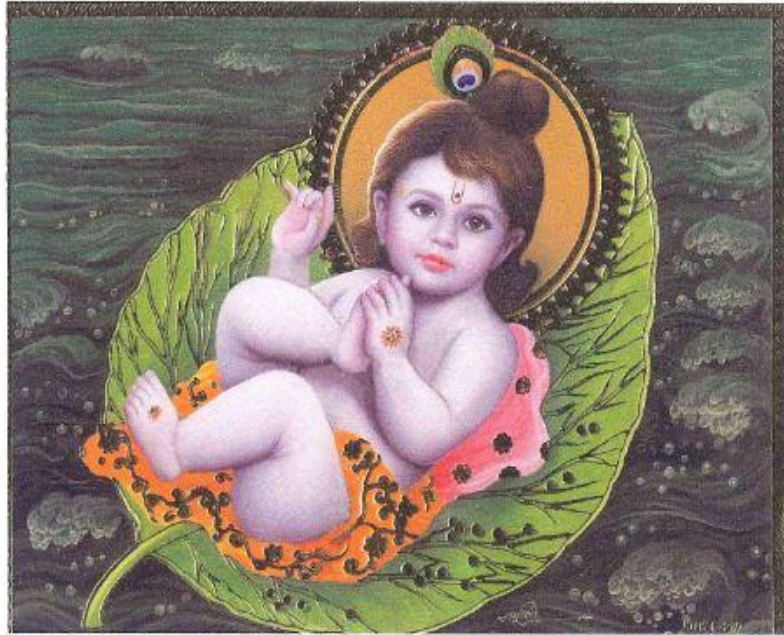
“Aśva-ttha (horse stand) is one of India’s greatest trees, the *Ficus Religiosa*, later called *pippala* (now Peepal)... Its hard wood formed the upper of the two pieces of wood used for kindling fire, the lower being Śamī. The gods are said to sit under it in the third heaven.”

Śamī is reputed to contain fire in latent form. [cf. Śamīmivābhyantara-līnapāvākām. *Raghuvamśa*.] So the lower part could very well be taken as the female partner, giving birth to the fire which is hidden in her womb. It is a perfect union and possesses a great symbolism.

The Aśvattha tree is also called Bodhidruma (The Tree of supreme spiritual enlightenment). It is under this tree that Siddhartha Gautama became Bhagavān Buddha. Ancient records tell us that during the reign of Ashoka the Great, a branch of this tree in Bodha Gayā was taken to Sri Lanka and was transplanted there. In our own times, a branch of the same tree, still flourish- in Sri Lanka, was brought back to the Land of Holy Buddha and was transplanted in Sarnath (Varanasi). Fortunately we have had a darshana of this holiest of holy trees. It is inspiring. It has a divine life.

The sacred Peepal Tree

Amongst the sacred trees of India, Peepal or *Ficus religiosa* stands foremost. According to common belief, Lord Vishnu and other gods reside under it. Devout Hindus worship Peepal as they believe that this tree is the symbolic representation of various gods and goddesses like Vishnu, Buddha, Krishna, Brahma, Lakshmi, Surya, Aditya, Vana Durga, etc.



करारविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
वटस्य पत्रस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥

Karāvindena padāravindam mukhārvinde viniveśayantam.
Vaṭasya patrasya puṭe śayānam bālam mukundam manasā smarāmi

I meditate upon baby Mukunda (Lord Shri Krishna) while lying on a banyan leaf, putting his lotus foot into his lotus mouth, by his lotus hand.

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

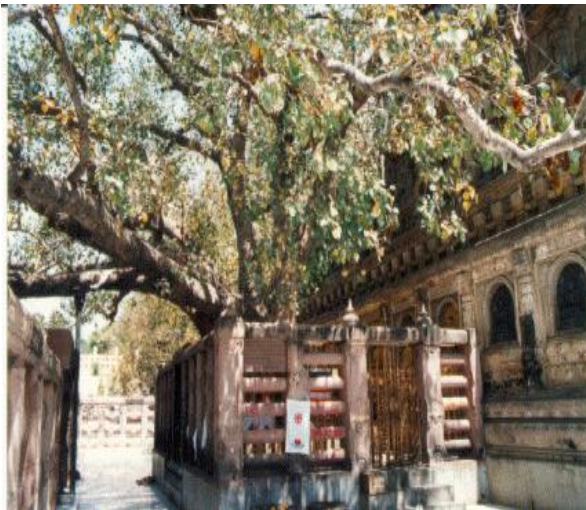
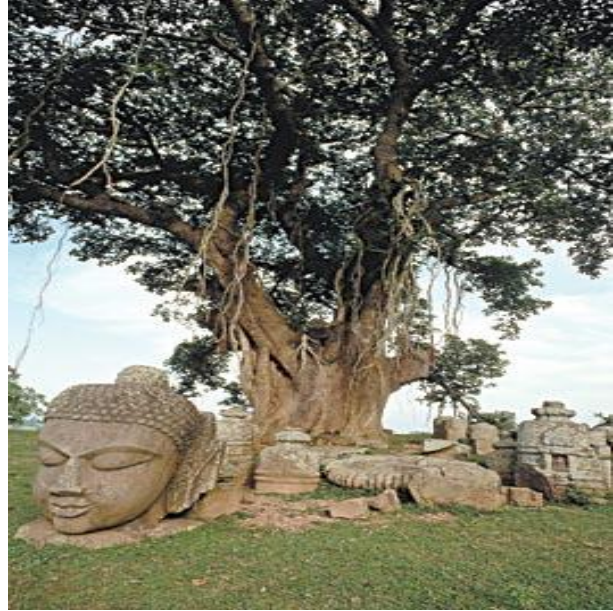
This tree appears to have been associated with the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley Civilization [?]. This sacred Peepal finds its mention in the *Rigveda*. According to Vedic sources its wood was used as fire vessels [!] and as drill for producing sacred fire. Peepal is sprinkled with water accompanied by prayers for the removal of certain ills, such as throbbing of the eyes and arms, dreadful dreams, etc.

The Peepal tree is called by nine [!] different names in different languages and geo-graphical settings. In Sanskrit it is called *Bodhi* [Caladala, Pippala, Kuñjarāśana and Aśvattha too]. In Hindi, Marathi, and Punjabi this tree is called Peepal. In Bengali this is called *Asvattha*, and Gujaratis call it *Piplo*. In Oriyan culture this is *Mui Chitka* tree. In the Deccan, Telugu-speaking devotees call it *Pippali* and in Kanarese this is *Arali*; the Keralites call it *Al* or *Aryal* in Malayalam language.

The custom of Peepal worship dates back to the Harappan culture and this has also an important position in brahmanical religion. According to the Hindu scriptures it is said that when *Daityas* or giants had driven out gods and goddesses from the Heaven they took shelter under the Peepal tree. According to the *Padma Purāṇa* Au-Lakshmi [!], the god [!] of ill-luck, resides in this tree and for this reason the Au-Lakshmi is worshiped by devout Hindus on every Saturday.

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

This tree is one of the most beautiful trees in this country and grows to a huge size. This is found everywhere, but especially where the Brahmins perform their ablutions.



“Among all the trees I am the *Aśvattha*”

Its large leaves are very soft to touch and are of bright green colour. These leaves are so light and thin that the slightest breeze sets them in motion and as they produce an impression of most refreshing coolness, the tree is considered to possess health-giving properties.

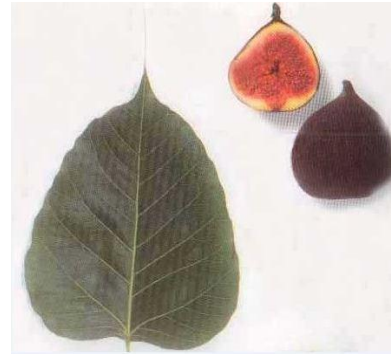
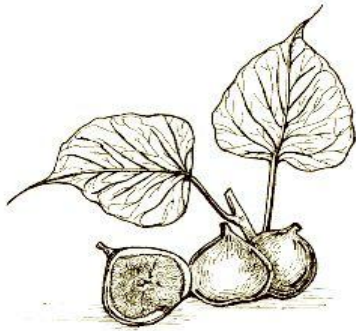


Various rituals current among womenfolk are connected with the Peepal tree. In Bengal, on the *Sankranti* (the last day of Bengali calendar) *Asvattha Pata Broto* or fast is observed which is meant to increase happiness and prosperity of the whole family.

In northern India, on the *Somavati Amavasya* worshippers pour water and unboiled milk on the roots and make circumbulations of the tree 108 times. In Rajputana, married women worship the Peepal to avoid widowhood. Peepal is also symbolic of ancestors' worship during October-November when earthen pitcher is hung to its branches and filled with water, milk, *Til* and honey. It is believed that ancestors come down from the tree [?] and accept the offerings.

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

The Peepal tree is also significant from the medicinal point of view. According to *Ayurveda*, *decoction* of its bark with honey is good for care of the skin diseases. It is said that "Asvattha bark is useful in gonorrhoea, ulcer, and various skin diseases." From the dried fruit of this tree a powder is prepared and dissolved in water and taken twice a week to cure the deadly disease asthma.



Ritualistically speaking, Hindu women worship Peepal for the boon of male off- spring. According to the *Atharva Veda* Peepal tree is considered as benefactor of mankind by blessing barren women with children. Thus the tree is considered potent with fertility.



Barren women circumambulates the tree with string

“Among all the trees I am the Áśvattha”

So we can see that Peepal tree is worshipped for its multifarious medicinal and utilitarian value as well.

ASHVATTHA - resource *Yahoo India Answers*

Called Ashvattha in Sanskrit, the peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) is a very large tree. Its bark is light grey, smooth and peels in patches. Its heart-shaped leaves have long, tapering tips. The slightest breeze makes them rustle. The fruit is purple when ripe.

The peepal is the first-known depicted tree in India: a seal discovered at Mohenjodaro, one of the cities of the Indus Valley Civilisation (c. 3000 BC - 1700 BC), shows the peepal being worshipped. During the Vedic period, its wood was used to make fire by friction.

The peepal is used extensively in Ayurveda. Its bark yields the tannin used in treating leather. Its leaves, when heated in ghee, are applied to cure wounds.

The Brahma Purana and the Padma Purana, relate how once, when the demons defeated the gods, Vishnu hid in the peepal. Therefore spontaneous worship to Vishnu can be offered to a peepal without needing his image or temple. The Skanda Purana Peepal Tree also considers the peepal a symbol of Vishnu. He is believed to have been born under this tree.

Some believe that the tree houses the Trimurti, the roots being Brahma, the trunk Vishnu and the leaves Shiva. The gods are said to hold their councils under this tree and so it is associated with spiritual understanding.

The peepal is also closely linked to Krishna. In the Bhagavad Gita, he says: "Among trees, I am the ashvattha." Krishna is believed to have died under this tree, after which the present Kali Yuga is said to have begun.

In the Upanishads, the fruit of the peepal is used as an example to explain the difference between the body and the soul: the body is like the fruit which, being outside, feels and enjoys things, while the soul is like the seed, which is inside and therefore witnesses things.

According to the Skanda Purana, if one does not have a son, the peepal should be regarded as one. As long as the tree lives, the family name will continue.

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

To cut down a peepal is considered a sin equivalent to killing a Brahmin, one of the five deadly sins or Panchapataka. According to the Skanda Purana, a person goes to hell for doing so.

Some people are particular to touch the peepal only on a Saturday. The Brahma Purana explains why, saying that Ashvattha and Peepala were two demons who harassed people. Ashvattha would take the form of a peepal and Peepala the form of a Brahmin. The fake Brahmin would advise people to touch the tree, and as soon as they did, Ashvattha would kill them. Later they were both killed by Shani. Because of his influence, it is considered safe to touch the tree on Saturdays. Lakshmi is also believed to inhabit the tree on Saturdays. Therefore it is considered auspicious to worship it then. Women ask the tree to bless them with a son tying red thread or red cloth around its trunk or on its branches (see Sacred Trees).

On Amavasya, villagers perform a symbolic marriage between the neem and the peepal, which are usually grown near each other. Although this practice is not prescribed by any religious text, there are various beliefs on the significance of 'marrying' these trees. In one such belief, the fruit of the neem represents the Shivalinga and so, the male. The leaf of the peepal represents the yoni, the power of the female. The fruit of the neem is placed on a peepal leaf to depict the Shivalinga, which symbolises creation through sexual union, and so the two trees are 'married'. After the ceremony, villagers circle the trees to rid themselves of their sins.

The peepal is also sacred to Buddhists, because the Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment under it. Hence it is also called the Bodhi tree or 'tree of enlightenment'

Source: Swami Mukhyananda – Ashvattha Mahimaa footnotes:

¹ In ordinary usage *Aśvattha* is a tree belonging to the fig variety. It grows up to a very huge size, but its berries are very small. Its leaves have long stalks and hence the leaves are constantly in movement with the slightest breeze, when other trees are still. [It is also called *Caladala*]. Probably this has earned it the name *Aśvattha* [?]. Consequently it has served as a symbol of religio/philosophical significance. It is also a very hardy tree and, like the ego, it is very difficult to eradicate. It grows anywhere, and even if a little of the root is left, it sprouts up again. Because of its religio/philosophical association, it is considered a holy tree, and is often seen in the villages with a platform around it with some holy images at its base. Being a huge spreading tree, the village meetings, schools, etc. are also held under the shade of the *Aśvattha* tree.

² "All these creatures, my dear, have *BEING* (SAT) as their *root*, have *BEING* as their *abode*, and have *BEING* as their *support*."

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Bhagavad Gita: 15.1

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमध्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ गीता १५।१

Ūrdhvamūlm adhaḥśākham Aśvattham prāhuravyayam.
Chandāmsi yasya parṇani yas tam veda sa Vedavit.

Roots above; branches below; this Ashvattha is reputed to be imperishable; *whose leaves are the Vedas*; One who knows this is a knower of all the Vedas.
Kathopanishad and Bhagavadgita.



Bhagavadgītā -named Puruṣottama-Yoga

मूलग्रन्थसन्दोहः

The world-tree rooted in Brahma.
Its root is above, its branches below--
This eternal fig tree¹

That (root) indeed is the Pure. That is Brahma.
That indeed is called the Immortal.
On it all the worlds do rest,
And no one soever goes beyond.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

भगवद्गीता

The fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* is named Puruṣottama-Yoga. It begins with :—

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ (गीता 15. 1).

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखाः
गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि
कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥ (गीता 15. 2).

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते
नान्तो न चादिर्न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूल-
मसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥ (गीता 15. 3).

And here is the Śāṅkara-bhāṣya on the above verse one, which is an echo of the *Kaṭha* mantra just discussed above.

Shri Shankaracharya explains :

ऊर्ध्वमूलं कालतः सूक्ष्मत्वात्कारणत्वान्नित्यत्वान्महत्वाच्चोर्ध्वमुच्यते । ब्रह्माव्यक्तं मायाशक्तिमत् । तन्
मूलमस्येति सोऽयं संसारवृक्ष ऊर्ध्वमूलः ।

श्रुतेश्च :—

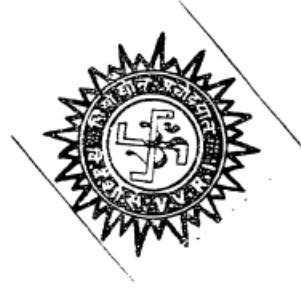
¹ This same simile of the world as an eternal fig-tree growing out of Brahma is further elaborated in BhG. 15. 1-3.).

उपनिषदादि-

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽर्वाकशाख एषोऽश्वत्यः सनातनः। (कठ. 6. 1) इति ।

पुराणे च :-

अव्यक्तमूलप्रभवस्तस्यैवानुग्रहोत्थितः ।
बुद्धिस्कन्धमयश्चैव इन्द्रियान्तरकोटरः ॥
महाभूतविशाखश्च विषयैः पत्रवांस्तथा ।
धर्माधर्मसुपुष्पश्च सुखदुःखफलोदयः ॥
आजीव्यः सर्वभूतानां ब्रह्मवृक्षः सनातनः ।
एतद् ब्रह्मवर्नं चैव ब्रह्माऽऽचरति नित्यशः ॥
एतच्छिञ्चत्वा च भित्त्वा च ज्ञानेन परमासिना ।
ततश्चात्मरतिं प्राप्य यस्मान्नाऽऽवर्त्तते पुनः ॥
(मभा. 14. 35.20-22) इत्यादि ॥



अधःशाखं महदहङ्कारतन्मात्रादयः शाखा इवास्याधो भवन्तीति सोऽयमधः शाखस्तमधःशाखम् । न श्वोऽपि स्थातेत्यश्वत्यः, तं क्षणप्रध्वंसिनमश्वत्यं प्राहः कथयन्ति । अव्ययं संसारमायामयमनादिकालप्रवृत्तत्वात् । सोऽयं संसारवृक्षोऽव्ययोऽनाद्यनन्तदेहादिसन्तानाश्रयः, हि सुप्रसिद्धस्तमव्ययम् । तस्यैव संसारवृक्षस्येदमन्यद् विशेषणम् । छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि, छन्दांसि छादनादृश्यज्ज्वालाक्षणानि यस्य संसारवृक्षस्य पर्णानि च पर्णानि । यथा वृक्षस्य परिरक्षणार्थानि पर्णानि तथा वेदाः संसारवृक्षपरिरक्षणार्थाः, धर्माधर्मतद्वेतुफलप्रकाशनार्थत्वात् । यथाव्याख्यातं संसारवृक्षं समूलं यस्तं वेद स वेदविद्वेदवेदार्यविदित्यर्थः । नहि संसारवृक्षादस्मात् समूलाज्ज्यो अन्योऽणुमात्रोऽप्यवशिष्टोऽस्ति, अतः सर्वज्ञः सर्ववेदार्यविदिति समूलसंसारवृक्षज्ञानं स्तौति ॥ 1 ॥

Source: The *Bhagavadgītā*, with the commentary of Shankaracharya, tr. by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984).

They say that the Aśvattha (Peepal) tree, which has its roots upward and the branches downward, and of which the Vedas are the leaves, is imperishable. He who realizes it is a knower of the Vedas.

Ūrdhva-mūlam, that which has its roots upwards:—Brahman, possessed of the unmanifest power in the form of Māyā, is referred to by the word 'upward' because of its subtleness in point of time by virtue of its being the Cause, and also because of Its eternality and vastness; and That is the root (*mūlam*) of this world. The Tree of the World which is such, is *ūrdhvamūlam*. This accords with the Upaniṣadic text "This has its roots above and branches below" (Kaṭha. 2. 6. 1). In the Purāṇa also we have:

It sprouts from the Root in the form of the Unmanifest; it grows through the sturdiness of that very One. And it has abundance of intelligence as its trunk, and the apertures of the organs as hollows.

The great elements are the boughs; so also, it has the objects of perception as its leaves. It has virtue and vice as its beautiful flowers, and happiness and sorrow are the fruits it bears.

मूलग्रन्थसन्दोहः

This eternal Tree presided over by Brahman is a means of livelihood to all creatures. And this verily is the resort of Brahman; in it Brahman dwells for ever.

Having felled and split this Tree with the great sword of Knowledge, and then, attaining the bliss of the Self, one does not return from that (bliss). (Cf. Mbh. Āś. 47. 12-15).

That Tree, which has its roots upwards and is constituted by the enchantment of mundane existence, and which has the branches downwards— *mahat*, egoism, subtle elements are its branches, as it were, extending downwards, which does not last even for the morrow is *aśvattha*. They say that the *aśvattha* Tree, undergoing destruction every moment is imperishable, and constituted by the enhancements of mundane existence. Having been in existence from time without beginning, that Tree of the World is imperishable. It is, indeed, wellknown as the sustainer of the beginningless and ceaseless series of bodies, etc. They call it imperishable. (Presented more or less in substance, rather than in the exact wording).

छान्दोग्योपनिषद्

Chāndogyopaniṣad (8. 5. 3) says :

ब्रह्मलोके ... अश्वत्थः सोमसवनः।

तत्रैव चाश्वत्थो वृक्षः सोमसवनो नामतः, सोमोऽमृतं तन्निःस्रवोऽमृतस्रव इति वा। (शाङ्करभा० 8. 5. 3).

Svami N. :—There are in the world of Brahman, in the third heaven from here (i.e. from earth) ... the *Aśvattha* tree, which showers Soma-juice (that is to say, nectar).

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

वाचस्पत्यम्¹

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः (27)

¹ By Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati Bhaṭṭācārya, reprinted by Chowkhamba, Benares, 1962. We have begun this with *Vācaspatyam* because it makes a good beginning and leads to many valuable sources. We have relocated certain citations and placed them where they make a better reading. After all *Vācaspatyam* is selective. We have also added Śāṅkarabhāṣya to enrich the text. Excepting the *Vācaspatyam* we have generally indicated our source of selection.

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Ashvattha, Maitri Upanishad:

एकोऽध्वत्थनामैतद् ब्रह्म ।

One and only one named Ashvattha--This is Brahman. Maitri Upanishad.

Ashvattha, Vedavit

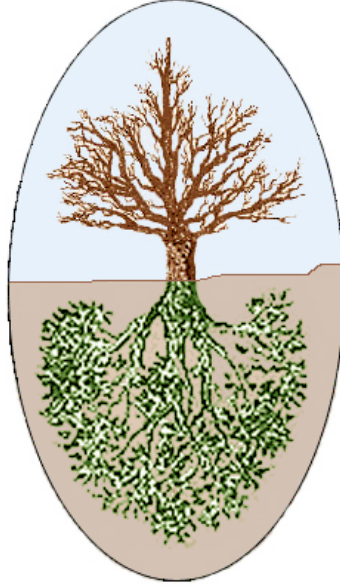
यस्तं वेद स वेदवित्

Yas tam veda sa Vedavit

Vedas: Glory and Grandeur of Ashvattha

There is a mantra in the Vedas: *Ashvattha' somasavana'*, meaning Ashvattha showers Soma Rasa in small drops. Now this Soma Rasa is nectar blessing immortality. Another Vedic mantra quotes the gods: *We have drunk Soma rasa. We have become immortals.*

Ashvattha Design Yas Tam



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अश्वत्थ
संसार वृक्ष

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽर्वाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ॥
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥ कठ० 2. 3.1.

Ūrdhvamūlo'vākśākha eṣo'śvatthaḥ sanātanah.
Tadeva śukraṃ tad Brahma tadevāmṛtamucyate.
Tasmiँllokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tadu nātyeti kaścana
Etadvai tat.

”THIS is THAT eternal Ashvattha tree with its root above and branches below. That root indeed, is called Bright; That is Brahman, and that alone is the immortal. In that all worlds are contained and none can pass beyond. This verily is that.” (Kaṭh. 2. 3. 1).

Fn. Asvattha.doc

OM Honored in Ancient India 5000 Years Ago

उपनिषदादि-

OM Honored in Ancient India 5000 Years Ago

We have collected a large number of "Offerings" on OM. This is, probably, the most exciting, thrilling, and sensational one. It gives us an authentic picture of the honor accorded to the Universal God OM 5000 years ago in Harappa. Dr. N. S. Rajaram, writing under the title—"Vedic Language and Symbols in the Deciphered Indus Seals"—has provided us with this epoch-making information and an image of OM, named *Omkāra Mudrā*, in Harappa.¹ Says he:

"The recent decipherment of the Harappan script has allowed scholars to identify deep connections between the Vedic literature and Harappan archaeology. The written messages on the seals are from the later Vedic and Vedantic texts, while the images often embody Vedic symbolism. . . . This reverses the chronological relationship between Vedic and Harappan civilizations found in the text books; it shatters the Aryan invasion theory, and also shows the Aryan-Dravidian divide to be a modern myth. . . . This has far-reaching consequences, and calls for a complete re-writing of ancient Indian and world history."

Harappan OM — Original and Rotated



Harappan Seal



Original Harappan OM



Rotated by 90° gives
Devanagari OM

As an example the author has chosen the seal depicting the "bow-shaped" image with *aśvattha* leaves—a very sacred symbol. This seal is known as 'Omkāra Mudrā'. Along with the seal photo Dr. Rajaram has displayed two line drawings of the seal.

¹ *Prabuddha Bhārata*, January 1999, pp. 322-28.

The one above is in the original position, while the other is rotated ninety degrees. The reader will immediately recognize the one below to be the letter 'OM' used in Devanagari and other North Indian scripts. What is interesting is that South Indian scripts like Kannada and Telugu retained the original orientation while slightly elongating it.

The description of this seal is found in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad¹ as the 'bow-shaped Praṇava Akṣara' (Praṇava means OM). Other Upanishads, notably the Kaṭha Upanishad, contain similar descriptions. Even the Bhagavadgītā has such a reference. The written message on the seal can be deciphered as '*varadaḥ saḥ redhate*' which is a reference to a famous verse² in the fourth book of the R̥gveda.

Śaunakopaniṣad has equated Praṇava, Udgītha, Indra and Vṛṣabha—they are all one and the same! Dr. Rajaram has drawn our attention to a very significant *mantra* of the R̥gveda. This very *mantra* has been cited by our Upaniṣad and explained in a way that is in full consonance with the glory and grandeur of the Praṇava.

It is remarkable to note that this very *mantra* has been given varied and various interpretations by Yāska, Patañjali, Śabaravāmin, Kumārila, and Sāyaṇa as shown by Othmar Gachter in his *Hermeneutics and language in Pūrva Mimāṃsā* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 111-15. It is fully featured in full color on the cover (dust jacket) of the book. However, the interpretation found in the Śaunakopaniṣad is totally innovative and unknown to any of the interpreters enumerated above.

Dr. Rajaram ends : "From all this we may safely conclude that there are very deep connections between the Harappan Civilization and the Vedic culture. The Aryan invasion is a modern myth. The decipherment may be seen as the last nail into the Aryan invasion coffin, and along with it the various theories about the Aryan-Dravidian divide and their linguistic theories."³

This remarkable paper has also thrown a new light, logical and legitimate, on the origin of the word *OM*. Now we don't have to swallow the bitter pill that *OM* is a borrowed word from a 'rabble of aboriginal savages'. It is as "Saṃskṛta" as the Veda and Vedānta.

Dr. Rajaram says that the writing on the seal reads *Vardah saḥ redhate*. We are unable to understand the meaning of the third word. Modern dictionaries don't help, naturally. It might mean something like *roravīti*.

¹ See our page # 14.

² See RV 4. 58. 3—a pretty good rendering of its fourth pāda—*maho devo martyām āviveṣa* ('The mighty divine enshrined in the heart of all mortals').

³ See the contribution by Asko Parpola in this very collection. His theory is justifiably rejected by Hock. [MLN].

उपनिषदादि-

The Śaunkopaniṣad has also cited another Ṛgveda *mantra* which begins with *Marutvantam vṛṣabham vāvṛdhānam*. Here is the full *mantra* along with its translation by Svami Satya Prakash Sarasvati and Satyakam Vidyalankara as appearing in their edition of the Ṛgveda. (New Delhi : Veda Pratishthan, 1977).

The *Mantra* reads :

Marutvantam vṛṣabham vāvṛdhānam akavārim divyam śāsam Indram.
Viśvāsāham avase nūtanāyogam sahodām iha te huvema.

Their translation is : We invoke the resplendent self, the lord of vital elements, the showerer of benefits, to grant us protection. He augmenting in glory overcomes all adversities. He is the celestial ruler and subduer of all evil forces. He is fierce in struggle and bestower of strength.

This is a "free" rendering by those who don't believe in concrete objects. Theirs is an abstract painting colored by their own specific theology. There are no figures, no images, just the ideas to be imagined. It does not fit well with the theme presented in the Upaniṣad. There is a very good translation of this *Mantra* here itself on p. 45.



Harappan Seal - Omkāra Mudrā

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Bodhi Tree at Anuradhapura

The original Bodhi tree was destroyed by the Emperor Ashoka's wife, out of jealousy of his passion with Buddhism. A sapling from the Bodhyaya tree had been sent to Princess Sangamitta, Ashoka's daughter in Sri Lanka in 288 BC. She had entered the order of Buddhist monks to spread the teaching of Buddha. So the tree in Bodhgaya that we see today was replaced with the seedling sent to her.

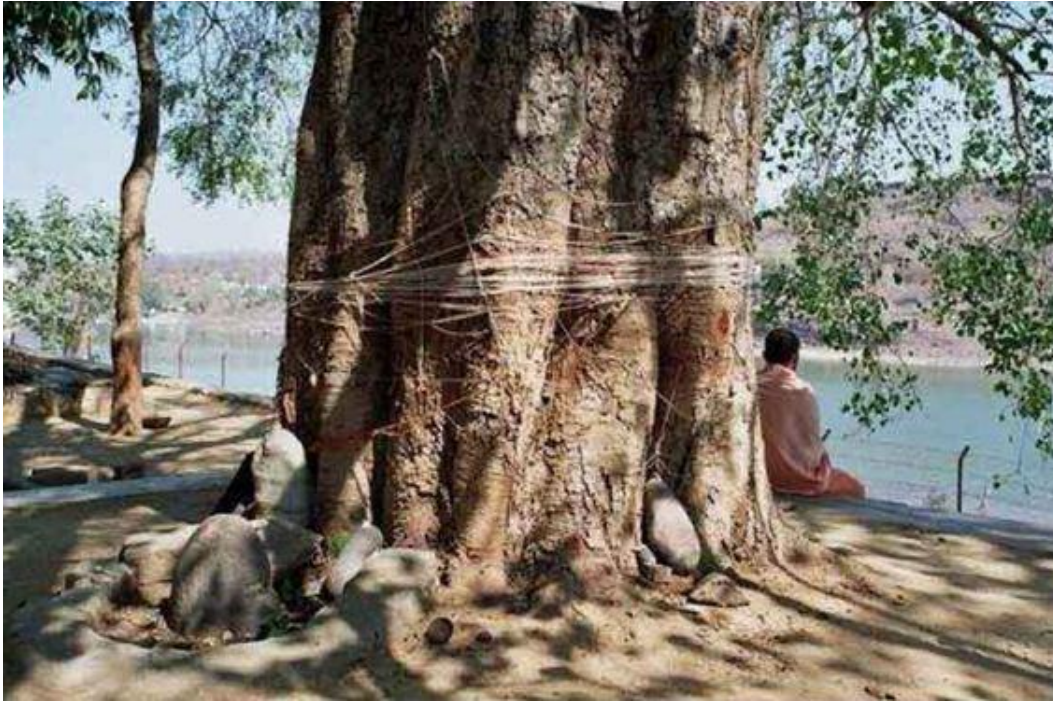


Being a descendant of the original Bodhi tree where Buddha achieved enlightenment, Bodhyaya is still an important religious site.

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Images:

Emilie Cremin



Young devotee at Omkareshvar



The board says “no smoking”

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Linda Canestraight – 2003



Ashvattha along the road to Omkareshvar



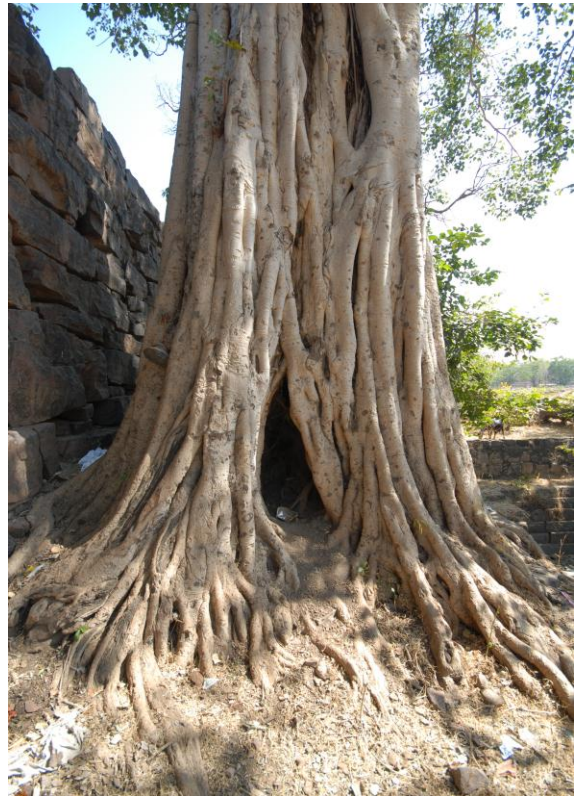
Ashvattha trees everywhere on the road to Omkareshvar

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Father Geo George Kannanayal – 2009



Ashvattha Tree at Omkareshwar fort wall



Tree roots exposed

Punch Mark Coins

By Jayaprakash Rao and Raghava Achar

Even after 200 years and all the development in the field of technology almost the same steps are followed even today in the manufacture of coins in mints all over the world. Occasionally metal in the desired weight of coins was melted and poured into some flat board to take its shape. The surface was then impressed on one side by means of punch devices.

Ancient coins initially bore only one symbol. Later the number of symbols increased to five. Since the technique of punching coins is unique, the coins thus made are known to numismatists and historians as Punch Mark Coins.

The punch devices of these coins do not have any inscription. Instead they have a number of symbols. These run into several hundreds in various forms viz. geometrical and floral patterns, trees, hills, birds, animals reptiles, human figures etc. The group of symbols on these coins were confined to specific or limited geographical spread. Therefore, these feature help to distinguish the coins of one area from another.

From the 3rd century BC to 2nd century AD these punch mark coins were in circulation all over India. Symbols were originally stamped only on one side of the coin and the other side remained blank. When the coins wore out due to use they other side was used to revalidate the coin with fresh symbols.

The reverse side of the coin were impressed with minute symbols. These marks were not impressed in the mint. they appear to have been impressed at intervals while they were in circulation. Such marks, occasionally few, seldom exceed ten. It is believed that the coins with more marks were in circulation for a longer time. These marks are believed to have been impressed by the Shroffs, bankers or Money testers (*Rupa Tarka* or *Rupa Darsaka*). The marks were affixed to testify or authenticate the coins in respect of weight, purity and genuineness.

The problem with punch mark coins is that various stamps or punches were struck at different times by different hands through which they passed. This prevents their real nature to be recognized.

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

The common punch marks found on punch mark coins are as below:



Coin Images:

Ashvattha & Elephants:



Ancient copper coin



Kausham Copper coin



Asmaka Janapada

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Ashvattha & Hills:



Paithan – Newasa Region coin



Cooper Coin



Devanm-piyatissa



Silver Karshapana



King Mulananda coins



Lead coin 120-345 CE

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Ashvattha Trees:



Ancient Lanka copper-lead



150-75BC circa Karshapana



Peepal Tree (unknown origin)



Peepal Tree (unknown origin)



Circa 1-20CE Bhanumitra



Ashvattha (origin unknown)

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Ashvattha & Sun:



Gupta Hardaker



Ujjai 150-74BC



Karshapana 4th-2nd BCE



Cooper Coin

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Ashvattha Tree with other symbols



Circa 1st BCE



Kuninda 1st Century BC



Tree with Bull

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Peepal Leaf Coins:



Peepal Leaf Coin



Indore State Coin Peepal Leaf



Indore Rupree dated 1207

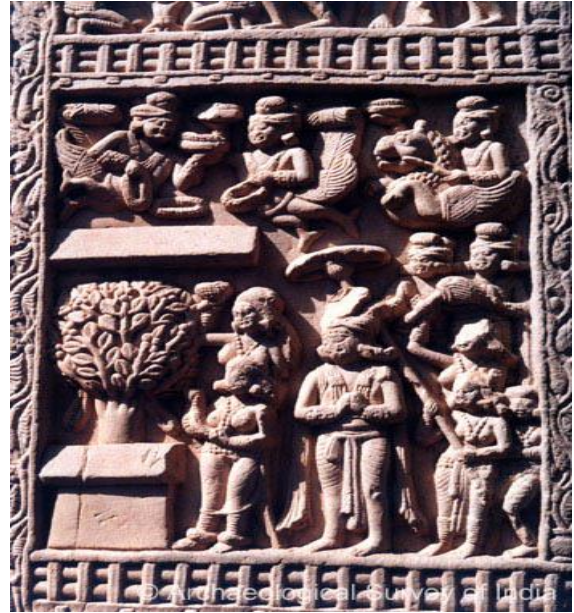
“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Ashvattha Statues, Painting & Tapestries

Stone carvings with Ashvvattha tree:



Siddhartha Under the Bodhi Tree



Worshipping Bodhi

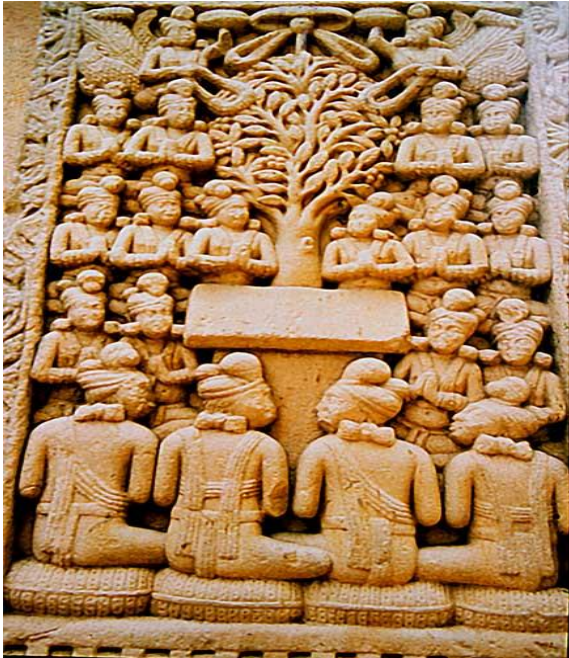


1st Century BC Chandavara

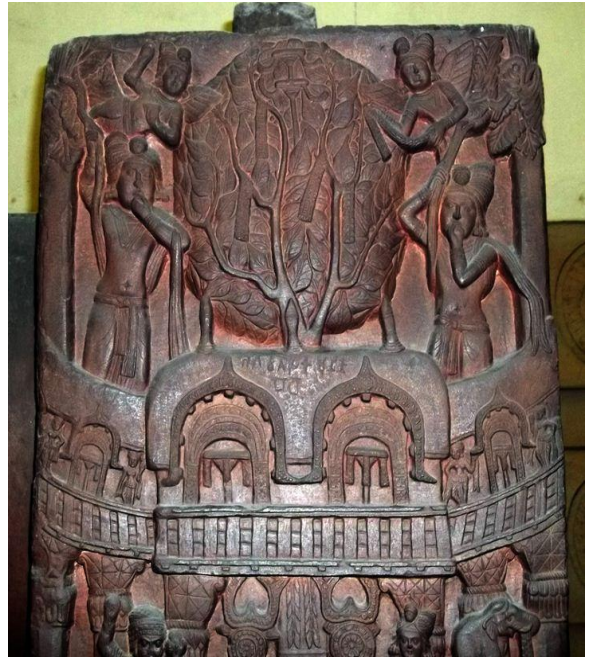


Worshipping the Peepal tree

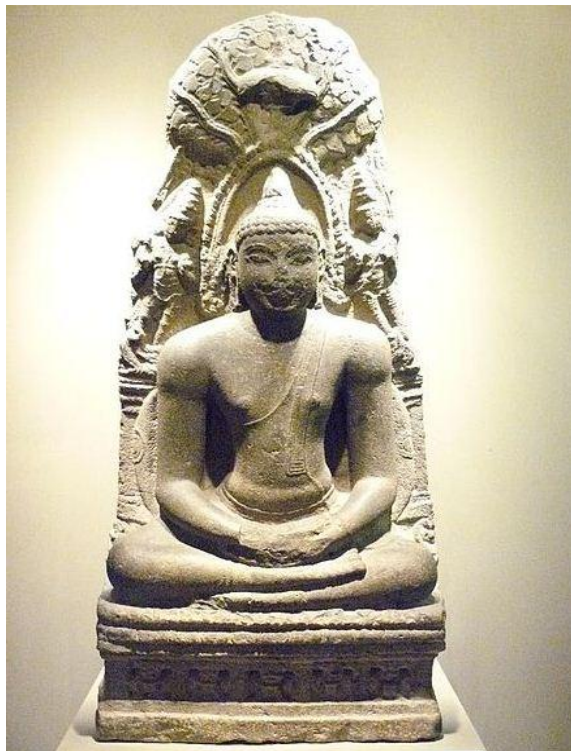
Ashvattha is Shri Krishna



Buddha represented as Bodhi Tree



Pasenadi Pillar Bodhi Tree



Buddha sitting under Bodhi Tree



Kot-diji shard from burial vessel

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Metal Statues:



Golden Buddha under Bodhi



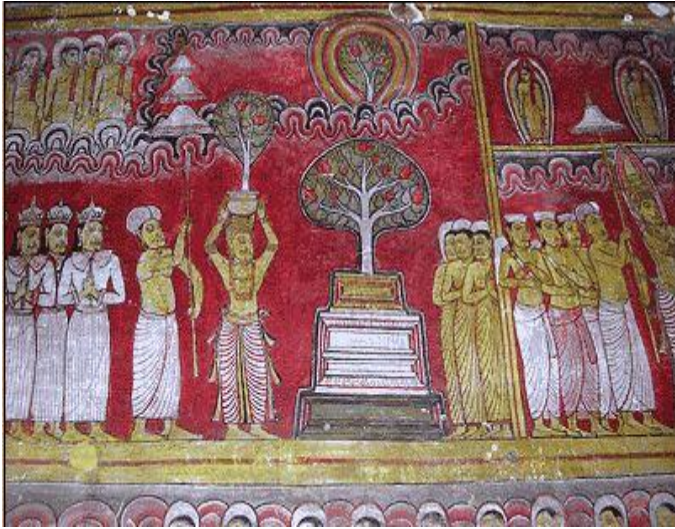
Brass Buddha under Bodhi



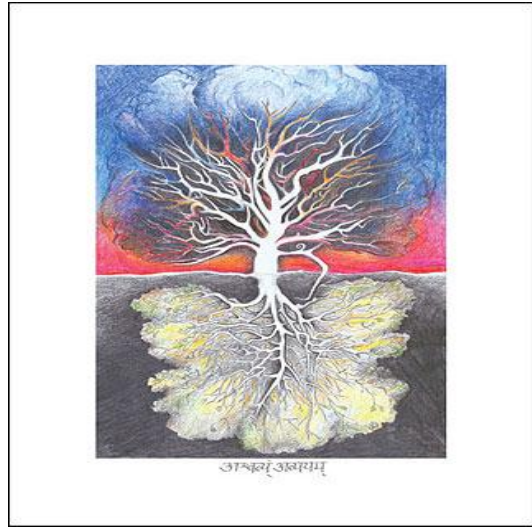
Buddha meditating under Bodhi

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

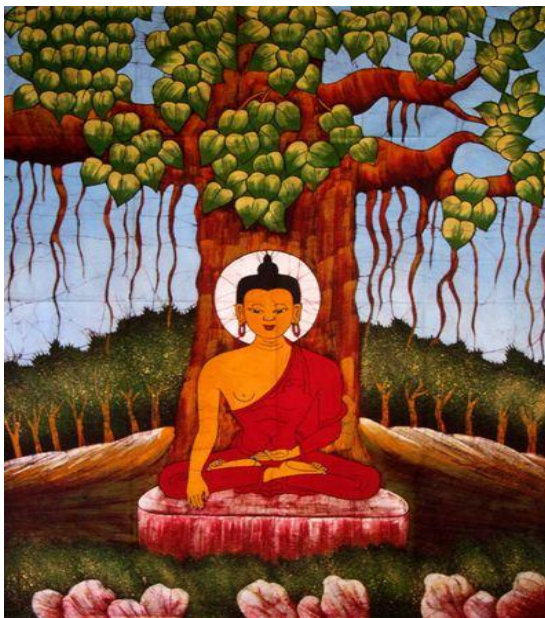
Paintings:



Ancient Mural at Damulla-honoring the Bodhi



Modern drawing © Kim Wade



Worship under Bodhi Tree



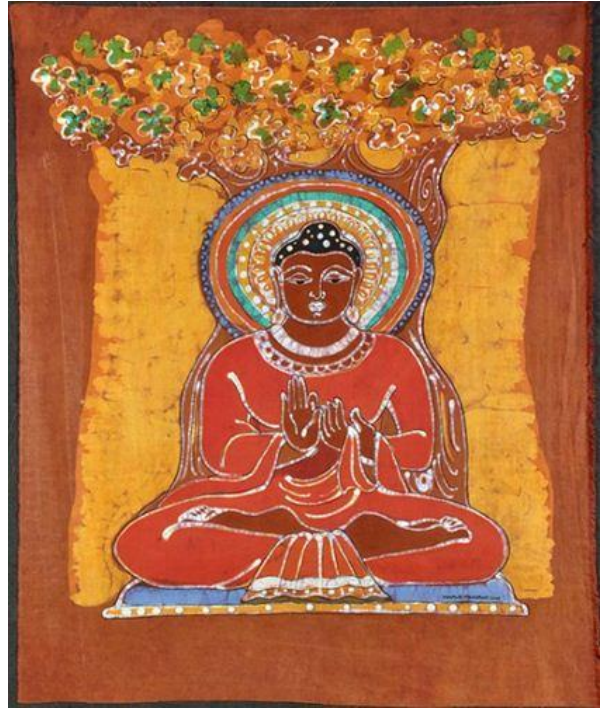
Devotees being taught under Bodhi tree

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”

Tapestries:



Gilded Bodhi at Wat Phrahat
Lampangluang



Buddha meditating under Bodhi



Ashvattha tree with roots showing



Ashvattha tapestry

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Ashvattha and the Gods



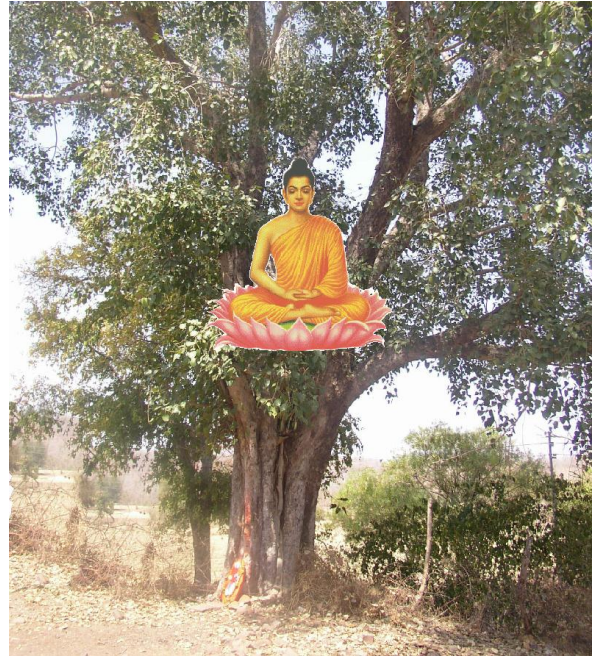
Krishna at the base of the Ashvattha



Krishna Ascends above



“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”



Buddha appears

“Among all the trees I am the Ásvattha”



Buddha descends sitting under tree



Shiva appears at base of Ashvattha



Shiva ascends



Vishnu joins Shiva

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna



Vishnu ascends to join Shiva



Brahma joins Vishnu and Shiva



Ascending together



Merging together

“Among all the trees I am the Aśvattha”



Forming the Aśvattha leaf



Gayatri Mantra



Ashvattha leaves surround Om



Om is all, all is Om

Ashvattha is Shri Krishna

Ashvattha – Bodhi – Peepal – Tree of Knowledge

With Its Roots Above and Its Branches Below

