

In the Hindu mythology Meru is a fabulous mountain, for on it is situated Svarga, Indra's heaven with the cities of the gods, and the habitations of celestial spirits.¹

This mighty upheaval, the highland of Tibet, the Meru of the Indian cosmography, was praised in the following words by the *Mahābhārata*, the great epic poem of the Hindus, and probably the greatest poem in the world's literature: »There is a mountain named Meru of blazing appearance, and looking like a huge heap of effulgence. The rays of the sun falling on its peaks of golden lustre are dispersed by them. Abounding with gold and of variegated tints, that mountain is the haunt of the gods and the Gandharvas. It is immeasurable, and unapproachable by men of manifold sins. Dreadful beasts of prey inhabit its breast, and it is illuminated with divine herbs of healing virtue. It standeth kissing the heavens by its height and is the first of mountains. Ordinary people cannot so much as think of ascending it . . . Standing high for infinite ages, upon it once all the mighty celestials sat them down and held a conclave».²

The same source tells us that Meru is in the Himalaya between Mālyavant and Gandhamādana. »This gold-mountain is the highest of all mountains. It is round as a ball, shines like the morning sun, and is like a fire without smoke. It is 84,000 Yojanas high and goes as far down in depth, and it overshadows the worlds above and below and across . . . It is furnished with heavenly flowers and fruit, and covered everywhere with bright gold dwellings . . . The top of Meru is covered with forests that are beautified with flowers and the wide-stretching branches of Jambu trees, and which resounded with the melodious voices of kinnaries».³

Vishnu's dwelling place is on the top of Mount Mandara to the east of Meru and to the north of the Milk-Sea. On the south of the Nīla mountain and the northern side of Meru are the sacred Northern Kurus, the residence of the Siddhas.⁴

In the same ancient poem we read: »From the Himavant mountains which are the most excellent in the world and which are extolled as divine, holy and loved by the gods who seek these regions, they using them as pleasure-grounds; from these mountains of which Meru is the centre you ascend through the air to Svarga.

die Sitā (der Fluss von Yarkan) nach Norden.» Sun, moon, and stars turn round the Meru, and above the King of Mountains are the heavens. Köppen: Die Religion des Buddha, Berlin, 1857, I, 232 et seq.

¹ From a purely geographical point of view Dowson believes it should be identified with some mountain north of the Himalayas. It is also Hemādri, »golden mountain», Ratnasānu, »jewel peak», Karnikāchala, »lotus mountain», and Amarādri and Deva-parvata, »mountain of the gods». Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature. Second Edition. London 1888 p. 208.

² Indian Mythology according to the Mahābhārata. In outline by V. Fausbøll. London 1902, p. 20.

³ Ibidem p. 43.

⁴ Ibidem p. 103 and 169.