

# BAKA DĀLBHYA: A COMPLEX CHARACTER IN VEDIC RITUAL TEXTS, EPICS AND PURĀNAS

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*Tai olisipa sivuolento  
ikivanhassa myytissä  
Vilahtaisi selityksettä  
taka-alalla kerran pari*

From the poem *Senjasen nostalgiat*  
(‘The nostalgias of Mr So-and-so’)  
by Juhani Peltonen

[Or I wish I were a minor character  
in an age-old myth  
flitting about the background,  
unexplained, once or twice]

## INTRODUCTION

The following article<sup>1</sup> originated from my need to understand a curious character who appears in an independent retelling of the Mahābhārata's Āśvamedhikaparvan called Jaiminīyāśvamedha, also known as Jaiminibhārata. This text presents a unique version of Yudhiṣṭhira's horse sacrifice in the spirit of intense Kṛṣṇa-bhakti.<sup>2</sup> In the Jaiminīyāśvamedha, the adventures that occurred during the free roaming of the sacrificial horse differ fundamentally from the stories in the Mahābhārata. In the penultimate episode (JA 60.6-64) of the ritual tour the ritual escort led by Arjuna met, once again, a setback: the pair of sacrificial horses reached the northern sea and disappeared into the water.<sup>3</sup> The escort continued its journey on the water by means of an amphibious horse-drawn chariot and reached an island. There they met an old ascetic standing on the shore with his eyes closed and holding a dry banyan leaf above his head. His body was covered with creepers, birds' nests, ants, and serpents were resting on his shoulders. He had practised austerities there for an immeasurable time and seen twenty Brahmās of the past. He was called Baka Dālbhya.<sup>4</sup>

After opening his eyes, Baka Dālbhya was delighted as he found Kṛṣṇa among the escorts. This meeting ended Baka's long seclusion and he was at last able to see the eternal godhead again. In an early phase of his life Baka had received a vision of

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of the Introduction and Section 1 was published in the *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 1(3) (1995) (Internet address: [www.shore.net/~india/evjs](http://www.shore.net/~india/evjs)).

<sup>2</sup> For the Jaiminīyāśvamedha, see Koskikallio 1993; W. L. Smith 1999; Koskikallio & Vielle, forthcoming. All the references to the Jaiminīyāśvamedha in this article are based on the text of the Bombay edition of 1863.

<sup>3</sup> Exceptionally, there were two ritual horses to be guarded, because at an earlier stage of the story Arjuna's escort met a rival group performing an āśvamedha for King Mayūradhvaja. Inevitably, a crisis followed, and, finally, thanks to the resourcefulness of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, everything ended with a reconciliation. In the end, both parties decided to continue their ritual together. (JA 41-46.)

<sup>4</sup> JA 60.10-11: *dadarśa phālguno vṛddhaṃ munim madhye saritpateḥ | dvīpasthaṃ dhārayantaṃ ke vaṭapatraṃ kareṇa ca || jīrṇaśuṣkaṃ śatacchidraṃ lūtāmandiramaṇḍitam | bakadālbhyaṃ mahābhāgaṃ nimīlya nayane sthitam*. It should be noted that the text gives the name as one word. The compound form *bakadālbhyaḥ* appears at least once in puranic sources proper, too (see below Section 2.1). The Mahābhārata uses the forms *bako dālbhyaḥ* or *dālbhyo bakaḥ*. The two-word form Baka Dālbhya is used in this paper, mainly because each part of the name is also dealt with separately. In the sequel, the spelling of the original text will be mentioned, if it is not Baka Dālbhya (see also Summary Table at the end of the article). The variation Baka/Vaka is encountered all through the material. In the post-Vedic texts the form Dālabhya also appears. In Vedic sources the name Dālbhya predominantly appears as Dārbhya. Also the form Dālbhi is found in Vedic texts (see Witzel 1990: 40-41). For the formation of these patronymics, see below fn. 94.

the godhead who appeared in the form of a small baby lying on a leaf of the banyan tree (Kṛṣṇa Vaṭapattraśāyin). Now Baka told his life story to Kṛṣṇa and the other visitors. The story included a rather psychedelic journey through several heavenly worlds (*brahmalokas*) where Baka had encountered heavenly creatures (*brahmā-śiṣyas*) with four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two and sixty-four heads. When Baka ended his story, the pair of horses miraculously emerged from the ocean. Finally, the seer of enormous age left the island and joined with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.<sup>5</sup> Later on Baka Dālbhya had an important role in the horse sacrifice proper; he acted as a ritual adviser, and his office was defined by the term *pitāmaha* ('grandfather'), by which the *brahman* officiant of the Vedic *aśvamedha* is meant.<sup>6</sup>

In the following, I am trying to clarify the background and the various dimensions of this epic/puranic character. The fundamental aim of this paper is to list all the occurrences of the name Baka Dālbhya and the patronymic Dālbhya, as well as most of the passages that mention the word *baka* ('heron') as a proper name. By collecting the scattered data on these Vedic, epic and puranic personalities, it is possible to get a general view of the various aspects of the Dālbhya figures and follow the interplay between sources that belong to different periods, different genres and different ideologies. The first task, however, is to go through the Vedic information on the Dālbhyas.

<sup>5</sup> The Baka Dālbhya episode of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha has many parallels with another Vaṭapattraśāyin legend which belongs to the Mārkaṇḍeya section of the Mahābhārata's Āraṇyaka-parvan (MBh 3.186.77-187.55). The Mahābhārata tells how Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya travelled over the universe which was destroyed by the flood in the end of the *Kaliyuga*. Among the waters, he perceived a huge banyan tree and saw a boy on a bough. Mārkaṇḍeya's strange tour continued and he entered the mouth of the banyan-boy. Thus Mārkaṇḍeya arrived inside the child's limitless stomach where he found the whole earth intact. When the seer was finally projected from the mouth of the boy, he paid homage to the child. In the end, Vaṭapattraśāyin revealed to Mārkaṇḍeya that actually he was the manifestation of the eternal Nārāyaṇa. (For puranic versions of the Vaṭapattraśāyin legend, see below fn. 93.)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Koskikallio 1993: 118. The appointment of the ritual personnel begins at JA 63.50, which reads as follows: *ācāryas tu kṛto vyāso bakadālbhyaḥ pitāmahaḥ | ṛtvijaś ca kṛtā divyā ṛṣayo dipatejasaḥ*. Baka Dālbhya is also mentioned in the puranic Gargasamhita. This medieval bhakti compendium, too, contains a description of a horse sacrifice (see Koskikallio, forthcoming). The last book of the Gargasamhitā rewrites much of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's material. Despite the fact that the text does not give any information on Baka Dālbhya during the horse's tour, it lists him among the ritual officiants. Also here he is the 'Brahmā' (*vidhi*) of the ritual (GaS 10.55.29: *ācāryaḥ kṛto vyāso bakadālbhyo vidhir mayā* [i.e. by Garga] | *ṛtvijaś ca kṛtā divyā ye vai pūrvaṃ nimantritāḥ*). Baka Dālbhya is also remembered when the *dakṣiṇā* gifts are distributed (GaS 10.57.17; cf. JA 64.46).

## 1. DĀLBHYAS IN VEDIC SOURCES

### 1.1. Baka Dālbhya

Although different forms of the name Dālbhya are not so rare in Vedic ritual texts, there are only five explicit references to Baka Dālbhya. The first to be taken up here is the story of Vaka Dālbhi and King Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya in Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā 10.6.<sup>7</sup> This legend of a ritual dispute also is an important one because it is the first text mentioning the epic King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as has been noted by Albrecht Weber long ago. This episode is retold in the Mahābhārata and some puranic sources, too (see Section 2.1.).

According to KS 10.6, Vaka Dālbhi belonged to a group called *naimiṣīyāḥ*, i.e. he was a ritualist from the Naimiṣa forest. After a *sattra* he left his co-ritualists to divide between themselves the twenty-seven young *dakṣiṇā* bulls received from the Kurupañcālas, and went to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya with high hopes. The king, however, asked Vaka to go away and gave him cows that were made sick by Rudra Paśupati. This was because Dhṛtarāṣṭra thought Vaka was to blame for the loss of cows. Vaka cooked the animals and performed a sacrifice against the inhospitable Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and next morning all possessions of Dhṛtarāṣṭra had faded away. The king's ritual specialists informed that Vaka's sacrifice was the reason for his loss. Therefore Dhṛtarāṣṭra met Vaka again and this time gave him generous gifts. The *naimiṣīya* performed a rite in which he offered one rice ball to Agni Surabhimat, and the king was saved.

The other early texts mentioning the ritualist Baka Dālbhya are the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa and the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad. Both refer to him twice using the form Baka Dālbhya. JUB 4.6-8 tells about King Bhageratha Aikṣvāka and his wish-fulfilling sacrifice (JUB 4.6.1: *rājā kāmāpreṇa yajñena yakṣyamānāsa*). He posed four questions concerning the workings of the ritual to Kurupañcāla brahmins. The text says that Baka Dālbhya was learned among the Kurupañcālas (JUB 4.7.2: *kurupañcālānāmī bako dālbhyo 'nūcānāsa*) and he answered those questions fluently. Thus, King Bhageratha decided to choose him as the performer of his ritual. Baka sang the *udgītha* by means of the *gāyatra-udgītha* and the king reached heaven (JUB 4.8.5: *sa haikarāḍ eva bhūtvā svargaṃ lokam iyāya*).

The other reference to Baka Dālbhya in this text is in the first book (JUB 1.9.3). It says that once, in the case of two simultaneous soma sacrifices, Baka forced Indra away from the rival Ājakeśins and led him to himself by chanting the syllable *Om*. Thus, Baka Dālbhya is introduced as a Sāmavedic singer (*udgātr*) in both Jaiminīya-Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa passages.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion, see Caland 1908: 52-53; Heesterman 1962: 29-31; Falk 1986: 58-60; cf. also Weber 1855: 469-471 (referring to other Dālbhyas as well).

The Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, too, refers to him in connection with Sāmavedic singing. ChU 1.12 includes a more or less satirical<sup>8</sup> description of the 'udgītha of dogs' witnessed by Baka Dālbhya. This passage tells how Baka met a group of dogs at the time when he was wandering as a Vedic student. Baka saw a white dog towards which a group of other dogs came running. These dogs asked the white one to sing for food (ChU 1.12.2: *annaṃ no bhagavān āgāyatu*), but he requested them to come again early in the morning. Baka, too, kept watch until the next morning. Then all the dogs came in a line seizing each other's tails like brahmins while singing the *bahiṣpavamānastotra* (ChU 1.12.4: *te ha yathavedaṃ bahiṣpavamānena stoṣyamānāḥ saṃrabdhāḥ sarpaṅtīty evam āsasṛpuḥ*). They sat down making the sound *hiṃ* and begun a song praying for food and drink.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the passage mentions (twice!) that Baka Dālbhya was also known as Glāva Maitreya (ChU 1.12.1 & 1.12.3: *tad dha bako dālbhyo glāvo vā maitreyaḥ*...).

This alter ego of Baka Dālbhya is referred to in other texts as well: in the Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa (PB 25.15.3), the Ṣaḍviṃśabrāhmaṇa (ṢB 1.4.6) and the Gopathabrāhmaṇa (GB 1.1.31). In the Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa, Glāva (without patronymic) appears as a *prastotr* (an assistant of the *udgātr*) in a list of officiants of the sacrificial session of the serpents.<sup>10</sup> Through this *sarpasattra* the serpents are said to have gained a firm support in these worlds (PB 25.15.2: *eṣu lokeṣu pratyatiṣṭhan*). Furthermore, they vanquished death, left aside their old hide and became able to creep further (25.15.4: *etena vai sarpā apa mṛtyum ajayann apa mṛtyum jayanti... te hitvā jīrṇāṃ tvacam atisarpanty apahite mṛtyum ajayan*). This interesting passage contains many names of serpents, but also Janamejaya, the performer of the *sarpasattra* known for his hatred towards snakes in the Mahābhārata, is mentioned as one of the two *adhvaryus* of this sacrifice. Among the serpent ritualists there is also Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata who is mentioned as the *brahman* officiant of this *sarpasattra*. (Cf. Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya of KS 10.6)

Ṣaḍviṃśabrāhmaṇa 1.4.6 introduces Glāva Maitreya in a passage dealing with the *jyotiṣṭoma* and ceremonies before the morning recitations of the soma day. The text explains that Glāva used to chant *viśvarūpa* verses in the *sadas* hut during the night before the sacrifice and in the morning he promised to make 'the separation between good and bad [metres]'. Thus he appears to be as an *udgātr*.<sup>11</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> S. G. Tulpule (1991: 273-274) has proposed that the passage might be an early reference to bhakti and to dog as a devotee of the god.

<sup>9</sup> ChU 1.12.5: *o3m adā3m | oṃ3 pibā3m | oṃ3 devo varuṇaḥ prajāpatiḥ savitā2 'nnam ihā2 'harat | annapate3 'nnam ihā2 'haro3m iti*.

<sup>10</sup> The same list with some divergent readings occurs in the Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra (BŚS 17.18) and the Baudhāyanagrhyasūtra (BGS 3.10).

<sup>11</sup> ṢB 1.4.6: *etad dha smāha glāvo maitreyaḥ prāhṇe vā adyāhaṃ pāpavasīyasaṃ vyākariṣyā-mīti sa ha sma sadasy evopavasathye 'hany udanñ āsīno viśvarūpā gāyati*. *Viśvarūpa* verses are chanted by the *udgātr* who is leaning against the left wheel of the right *havirdhāna* cart and is facing north (ṢB 1.4.4).

Gopathabrāhmaṇa passage (GB 1.1.31-38), on the other hand, tells 'the legend of a scholastic duel between Maudgalya and a strange sage Glāva Maitreya, apparently an adherent of the Sāma-Veda' (Bloomfield 1899: 110). In this story, Glāva turns out to be the loser of a ritual competition. The reason for his defeat was that he could not explain the basis of *sāvitrī* and *gāyatrī* metres and their heavenly equivalents. Finally, these secrets are explained by Maudgalya.

On the whole, these texts do not provide very penetrating information about our character, but the picture they are scetching is quite a consistent one. On the one hand, Baka Dālbhya is a ritualist with connections to *sattra* groups among the Kurupañcālas, particularly in those of the Naimiṣa forest; on the other hand, he is a Sāmavedic specialist. As we have seen, these two roles come together also in his alter ego Glāva Maitreya, who was a Sāmavedic officiant at the mythical *sattra* of the serpents, mentioned in PB 25.15. A similar kind of double role, that of an esoteric ritual expert and a Sāmavedic chanter, is also met with in the fifth passage on Baka Dālbhya, not yet referred to: in ChU 1.2.13 it is told that Baka Dālbhya knew the essence of *udgītha* and he was the chief ritual singer of the Naimiṣīyas (*sa ha naimiṣīyānām udgātā babhūva*). Moreover, the next verse (ChU 1.2.14) takes up the syllable *Oṃ* (cf. JUB 1.9.3) and underlines its role in making the *udgītha* perfect.

## 1.2. Keśin Dālbhya

Besides Baka, several other Dālbhyas are mentioned in Vedic texts. The one most often referred to, both in primary and secondary literature, is Keśin Dālbhya.<sup>12</sup> As in the case of Baka, the passages referring to Keśin depict a Kurupañcāla environment. Keśin Dālbhya is a Pañcāla, usually not a brahmin but a sacrificer (*yajamāna*), i.e. a *kṣatriya*.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes he is introduced explicitly as a king. Most of the legends on Keśin Dālbhya are typically Brahmanic, concentrating on the efficacy of a certain form of ritual, a way of chanting, a cursing formula, etc. Thus, these stories reflect the continuous search of the 'true ritual' implicit in the ritual history of India.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes they take up the original context in which the superior ritual 'tool' in question was applied for the first time. This kind of aetiological legend

<sup>12</sup> The most detailed discussion on Keśin Dālbhya is written in Japanese by Naoshiro Tsuji (1977: 234-257). In spite of the language barrier, Tsuji's exposition was most useful while collecting references for this paper. I am grateful to Masato Fujii who, besides pointing out Tsuji's book, helped me, at Kyoto University in the Spring of 1995, in the search of material about the Dālbhyas. Another acknowledgement goes to Asko Parpola who, among other matters, helped me to gain a better understanding of several Vedic passages referred here.

<sup>13</sup> In this article, the word sacrificer refers exclusively to the *yajamāna* (i.e. to the 'sacrifier' of Hubert & Mauss 1964: 10; 'sacrifiant' in the French original). The ritual specialists or 'priests' are here called officiants, etc. (= 'sacrificer'; Fr. 'sacrificateur' of Hubert & Mauss)

<sup>14</sup> This idea is most clearly explained by Brian K. Smith (1989: 210-216).

usually ends with a description of the success obtained through the knowledge of a given ritual secret.

The motif of losers finding a ritual way to gain victory occurs, for example, in Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa 3.312. There it is told how Keśin Dārbhya<sup>15</sup> stayed with Kabandha Ātharvaṇa, who taught him the twelve-day ritual with its metres transposed (*vyūdhachandasam dvādaśāham provāca*).<sup>16</sup> The knowledge about this ritual led the Pañcalas to success, and even though they were poor, their way of life became a desired one in the eyes of others (*tasmād anāḍhyānām api satām pañcālānām abhy evānye jīvitam dhyāyanti*).<sup>17</sup>

Kabandha Ātharvaṇa who is mentioned as Keśin's ritual informant links the name Dālbhya to the Atharvavedic tradition. There are three hymns of the Atharvaveda (AV 6.75-77) in Kabandha's name. Besides, he appears as an Upaniṣadic seer in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad: BĀU 3.7.1 tells how Kabandha possesses the wife of Patañcala Āruṇi in the form of a Gandharva and teaches Upaniṣadic secrets through her to the listeners searching for sacrificial knowledge (cf. below MS 1.4.12, where Gandharvas, correspondingly, know the secret of a powerful ritual). The main topics of Kabandha/Gandharva's message were the thread (*sūtra*) by which the two worlds and all beings are connected with each other, and the inner director (*antaryāmin*) regulating these three realms. The Gopathabrāhmaṇa, on the other hand, mentions Kabandha's son Vicāri twice: the first passage (GB 1.2.10) refers to this son as a 'hungry brahmin', and the other one (GB 1.2.18) introduces Vicāri as a ritualist pacifying the mythical iron-shod horse by using holy water (*śāntyudaka*) and mantras. The horse was one of the requirements for establishing the sacrificial fires by the *agnyādheya* ritual. Originally this horse was produced by Vāc from the frightful waters. Here we have a distant parallel to the Baka Dālbhya story of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha, in which an esoteric brahmin 'pacified' the horses vital for the Pāṇḍavas who thus got their lost *aśvamedha* stallions back from the 'earthly' sea.<sup>18</sup>

The element of rivalry between two *yajamānas*, or sometimes between the ritual experts, is a common topic in the Vedic legends about Keśin Dālbhya. In these stories Keśin has an antagonist or some other figure opposes him. The names of these opponents are usually mentioned. In some cases, legends of Keśin Dālbhya are explicitly connected with ritual groups called *vrātya* or *sattra*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In the JB the patronymic is always spelled with *r*.

<sup>16</sup> The same variation of chanting is meant in JUB 3.31.1 & 3.31.6, including a passage to be explained later in this section.

<sup>17</sup> This passage ends with two ślokas containing a ritual riddle (*brahmodya*) (see Horsch 1966: 124).

<sup>18</sup> See also Bloomfield 1899: 111-112 (for Vicārin) and Hillebrandt 1899: 176, n. 4 (for Kabandha).

<sup>19</sup> For Keśin Dālbhya and *vrātyas*, see e.g. Hauer 1927: 112-114, 177; Heesterman 1985: 15-16; Falk 1986: 55-57.



The Maitrāyanīsaṃhitā contains a story of Keśin Dālbhya and his ritual opponent Khaṇḍika Audbhāri (MS 1.4.12). Here both characters are clearly defined as *yajamānas*. One day, Gandharvas and Apsarases asked Keśin Dālbhya whether he knows how a sacrificer can reach the level of his competitor.<sup>20</sup> Keśin answered that he has that knowledge in his possession. Yet, the flying creatures were not satisfied because, in reality, *they* were the ones who possessed the ritual means to overcome a rival *yajamāna*. Finally, they performed a sacrifice with oblations for Keśin who thus defeated Khaṇḍika.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, the structure of this story is interesting, as here Keśin is, at the same time, the winner (over his rival sacrificer) and loser (with regard to ritual knowledge, if compared to that of the Gandharvas and Apsarases).

The rivalry between Keśin and Khaṇḍika is found in other sources as well. Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra 17.54 takes us, again, to an Atharvaveda-like context, as it mentions an exorcist rite (*abhicāra*) called *keśīyajña*, with the help of which Keśin bewitched Khāṇḍika (*keśī ha yatra khāṇḍikam abhicacāra*).<sup>22</sup> The Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa, on the other hand, tells a slightly different story about these two competitors (ŚB 11.8.4). There, Keśin is represented as a leading sacrificer of a *sattra* ritual (*grhapati*), and although *sattras* were performed amongst a group of ritualists, Keśin is here introduced as a *kṣatriya*.<sup>23</sup> When the *samrāj* cow of Keśin's ritual group was killed by a tiger, they needed an atonement. Yet, the only one who knew it was the leader of the opposing group, Khaṇḍika Audbhāri. Keśin decided to go and meet him and ask for the necessary atonement. Khaṇḍika appears in a quandary: if he told the secret, Keśins (*kaiśinī*; VādhS: *keśinī*) would gain this world and his own group would gain the other world; if he kept the secret, the result would be the opposite. Khaṇḍika chose the other world and so Keśin saved his sacrifice with the mantra given by Khaṇḍika (cited in ŚB 11.8.4.6). This story is said to explain why 'Keśins are still born here' (ŚB 11.8.4.6: *kaiśinīr evam ā apy etarhi prajā jāyante*).

The opposition between Keśin and Khaṇḍika is found twice in the Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa. In both passages Keśin Dārbhya and Khaṇḍika Audbhāri compete over the ownership of the Pañcāla land (JB 2.122 & 2.279: *pañcāleṣu pasprdhāte*). According to JB 2.279-280, Khaṇḍika was the more powerful of these two

<sup>20</sup> MS 1.4.12, too, uses the form Keśin Dārbhya: *keśīnam vai dārbhyam gandharvāpsarāso 'pṛchan kathā yajamāno yajamānena bhrātṛvyeṇa sadṛññ āsīti*.

<sup>21</sup> *tāsmā āhutir yajñam vyadadhus tātaḥ keśī śāṇḍikam āudbharim abhyavad*. The text reads Śaṇḍika pro Khaṇḍika (cf. Macdonell & Keith 1912: 411). This is a usual Northwest Indian mistake.

<sup>22</sup> In this passage, patronymics have been left out and the name of the opponent is not Khaṇḍika but Khāṇḍika. In the same passage, two further *abhicāras* (*vasiṣṭhayajña* and *sārvaseni-yajña*) are mentioned. According to Caland (1903: 20), all three names designate *catuścakra*, a rare variation of the new and full moon sacrifice.

<sup>23</sup> The same legend can also be found in the Vādhūlasūtra 46 (Caland 1926: 40-41). In both of these texts Keśin is without a patronymic.

(JB 2.279: *sa ha khaṇḍikāḥ keśinam abhibabhūva*). The underdog Keśin, however, resorted to Uccaiḥśravas Kauvayeya, his maternal uncle and the king of Kurus.<sup>24</sup> Here we find again the question of supremacy either in this world or in the other world, when Uccaiḥśravas asks in which world Keśin wants to obtain power. Again, Keśin was eager to obtain everything in this world. Therefore his uncle gave him a three-day soma sacrifice called *antarvasu* by which Keśin overpowered and 'sent out' Khaṇḍika.<sup>25</sup>

A similar ritual competition is involved in JB 2.122-124, where Khaṇḍika Audbhāri announced that he would perform a *sadyaḥkrī* (JB 2.122: *sa ha khaṇḍikāḥ keśinam abhiprajighāya | sadyaḥkriyayā vai syo yakṣyata iti*).<sup>26</sup> Keśin, on the other hand, was advised, this time, by his brahmins, and he performed a soma sacrifice called *parikrī*. With this ritual Keśin overcame Khaṇḍika and extinguished him 'from time ('year')'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the final result was similar to that of ŚB 11.8.4, cited above. In JB 2.122, the four brahmins of Keśin Dār̥bhya are listed: they were Keśin Sātyakāmi, Ahīnas Āśvatthi, Gaṅginā Rāhakṣita and Luśākapi Khārgali.

Of these names all except Gaṅginā can again be found in other stories about Keśin Dāl̥bhya. Kāthakasamhitā 30.2 discusses the twelve-day sacrifice (*dvādaśāha*) and its soma draughts.<sup>28</sup> The chapter ends with an example of a ritual called *vaṃśavraścana* ('incising the bamboo pole/family'). It is said to have been performed by Keśin Dāl̥bhya, and Luśākapi Khārgali appears here as the narrator telling how Keśin had managed to triplicate the number of Pañcālas by performing *vaṃśavraścana*. Furthermore, Luśākapi Khārgali is mentioned in the famous *vrātya* passage of Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa 17.4, in which he curses a group of elder (*jyeṣṭhāḥ*) *vrātya* ritualists.<sup>29</sup>

Keśin Sātyakāmi is more often mentioned in connection with Keśin Dāl̥bhya. These two Keśins appear shortly in the Taittirīyasamhitā, in a passage (TS 2.6.2.3) where Keśin Sātyakāmi officiates as a ritual specialist for Keśin Dār̥bhya. He promises to use the seven-footed *śakvarī* verse so that Keśin Dār̥bhya's rivals will be overcome with this chant. Another incidental reference to the two Keśins is in a complicated passage of MS 1.6.5 dealing with Agni and the ritual of establishing

<sup>24</sup> Cf. JUB 3.29 (see below), where the same person is mentioned with the name Uccaiḥśravas Kauvayeya.

<sup>25</sup> JB 2.279 ends with: *tasyai ha śriyaṃ jagāma*. JB 2.280 begins with the same words as JB 2.124: *tato vai sa khaṇḍikam niḥśarayāṃ cakāra | tato vai keśi dār̥bhyo 'bhavat parā khaṇḍikāḥ*.

<sup>26</sup> *Sadyaḥkrī* is a soma rite, an *ekāha* in which the soma is purchased on the same day as the actual rite is performed.

<sup>27</sup> JB 2.124: *saṃvatsarād eva tat khaṇḍikam audbhāriṃ keśi dār̥bhyo nunude saṃvatsarād antariyāya*. Heesterman (1985: 29-30, 209) refers to this story.

<sup>28</sup> The same passage can be found in the Kapiṣṭhalakāṭhasamhitā (KKS 45.5).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hauer 1927: 81. Heesterman (1962: 16) regards Luśākapi as a member of the Pañcāla group and their cursed opponents as Kuru-*vrātyas*.

the sacrificial fire (*agnyādheya*). Here their roles are not clearly specified, but Keśin Sātyakāmi speaks to Keśin Dārbhya remembering a situation when they had restricted the food-eating power of Agni to the *agnyādheya*.<sup>30</sup>

Both Keśin Sātyakāmi and Ahīnas Āśvatthi can also be found in the same legend with Keśin Dālbhya.<sup>31</sup> This happens in JB 1.285, where, surprisingly, the roles of the two Keśins are reversed. The passage tells us how two ritualists, Keśin Dārbhya and Ahīnas Āśvatthi, were competing for a kṣatriya, Keśin Sātyakāmi.<sup>32</sup> Keśin is the younger one, Ahīnas the elder one of the two brahmins, and originally Ahīnas was the *purohita* of Keśin Sātyakāmi. Yet, through his knowledge about the nature of the *anuṣṭubh* verse, Keśin Dārbhya attracted the patronage of the kṣatriya, and took it away from Ahīnas. Thus, although the roles are changed, Keśin Dārbhya is still the one who wins even if he was underdog (younger) in the beginning (cf. above JB 3.312). As ritual knowledge is again the decisive factor for success, Keśin Dālbhya's transformation from a kṣatriya (who is at first unsuccessful in his rituals) to the role of the younger ritual expert is not so radical. The fundamental structure including the miraculous change in relation to the original state is found here anyway. And the change takes place through new ritual knowledge, knowledge on the ritual which is, after all, the main subject of the story.

The flexible boundary between the brahminhood and kṣatriyahood together with the stress laid on the age difference of the two competitors, are features which can be understood better, if we look at another story featuring Keśin Dālbhya. In BŚS 18.26 there is a description of a *vrātya* expedition of the sons of Kuru brahmins to a sacrifice of the Pañcālas. The initial words of chapter 18.26 explain the double topic of the chapter as the *agniṣṭoma* for the elder ones and the *ukthya* for the younger ones.<sup>33</sup> Before the actual story, two higher models (the gods and the so-called *daiva vrātyas*) for the performers of this dual ritual are mentioned. The description of the earthly *vrātya* tells how a Kuru group lead by their *sthapati* Aupoditi Gaupālāyana Vaiyāghrapadya came to the *upavasatha* fire of Keśin Dālbhya. The next morning they interfered in the sacrifice and wanted to purify themselves with the *bahiṣpavamāna* ritual that the Pañcālas had started. Finally the Kuru party lost, as they could not answer the question concerning the basis of their

<sup>30</sup> MS 1.6.5: *etād dha sma vā āha keśī sātyakāmiḥ keśinaṃ dārbhyām annādāṃ janātāyā evām iva vayām etāsmā agnyādheyé 'nnam āvārudhma yāthaiśó 'nnam āti.*

<sup>31</sup> Ahīnas Āśvatthya is mentioned without Keśin Dālbhya in TB 3.10.9.10. The name Ahīnas can be found in Baudhāyanapitṛmedhasūtra 13 (Caland 1896: 19) and Hiraṇyakeśipitṛmedhasūtra 1.10 (Caland 1896: 43).

<sup>32</sup> JB 1.285 begins: *atha hāhīnasam āśvatthiṃ keśī dārbhyaḥ keśinaḥ sātyakāminaḥ purodhāyā aparurodha.*

<sup>33</sup> BŚS 18.26: *sa eṣa jyeṣṭhānām agniṣṭomas... eṣa eva san kanīyasām ukthyas.* For a translation and explanation of the passage, see Falk 1986: 55-57 (cf. Hauer 1927: 111-114; Caland 1903: 21-22). For a more detailed discussion about the two ritual group systems referred with the terms elder and younger, see Falk 1986: 51-55; Parpola 1983: 50-53.

*vrātya*. The ritual question to the intruders was posed by a son of a brahmin among the Pañcālas. Besides, this ritual expert called Gandharvāyaṇa Vāleya Āgniveśya cursed the Kuru group; it was exactly the thing the Kurus had been warned against by their fathers before their expedition. In the end, the Kurus, too, cursed Gandharvāyaṇa. Keśin does not have a central role here, but in this passage about the activities of a *vrātya* band he is, again, described as a Pañcāla sacrificer in opposition to one or more rival ritualists. This kind of unity of the Keśin legends makes it evident that the name Keśin Dālbhya is connected to the *vrātya* ritual groups.<sup>34</sup>

Besides legends concentrating on ritual contest, there are also quite different descriptions of Keśin Dālbhya. Although Keśin is never shown as a Sāmavedic specialist, like Baka Dālbhya, we can find some stories in which Vedic chants have a more important role than being just a ritual tool for overcoming the opponent. In PB 13.10.8, the *vāravantīya-sāman* showed itself in a human form (*sāmāvir*) to Keśin Dālbhya. The chant explained to Keśin that he lacked the tone on account of unskilled chanters. When the *sāman* asked for somebody to chant ‘him’ properly, Keśin chose Alamma Parijānata, who was lying behind the axle of the *havirdhana* cart (*alammaṃ parijānataṃ paścādakṣaṃ śayānam*), as his *udgātṛ* to sing the *vāravantīya*.<sup>35</sup>

Jaiminīya-Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa 3.29-31 has some common traits with this story of the out-of-tune *sāman*. This legend<sup>36</sup> begins with Keśin Dārbhya’s sadness after the death of his Kuru uncle Uccaiṣravas Kaupayeya (cf. above JB 2.279-280). Keśin tried to dispel his sorrow by going to the forest for a hunt. Yet, in the forest he saw Uccaiṣravas in immaterial form; he had come back into this world to remove Keśin’s sadness and to teach him the disembodying chant, or a *sāman* capable of shaking the sacrificer off from his body and sending him to the world of the gods. After the immaterial uncle had instructed Keśin about this *sāman* he ordered him to find himself an *udgātṛ*. Keśin decided to organize a twelve-day sacrifice with the metres transposed (*vyūḍhachandasā*; cf. above JB 3.312) and continued wandering until he met an esoteric brahmin called Prāṭṛda Bhālla lying on the funeral ground (*śmaśāne vā vane vāvṛtīśayānam upādhāvayāṃ cakāra*). As this enigmatic ritualist was able to sing the disembodying chant, Keśin chose him as his *udgātṛ* for the sacrifice. The brahmins of the Kurupañcālas (!) were, however, against this stranger and asked: ‘for whom is he good enough?’ (*kasmā ayam alam*). Keśin chose Prāṭṛda, anyway, and he was called ‘Good-Enough Chanter’ (*ālamyailājodgātṛ*). Here the story is similar to PB 13.10.8 where the words ‘good enough for

<sup>34</sup> Hauer (1927: 112, n. 191) formulates the position of Keśin Dālbhya as follows: ‘Er scheint also überhaupt ein Gegner des stark technisch sich entwickelnden orthodoxen Ritus gewesen zu sein’.

<sup>35</sup> Alamma Parijānata is mentioned in PB 13.4.11 in the context of chanting. For PB 13.10.8, see also Lévi 1898: 149.

<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed account, see O’Flaherty 1985: 45-49.

me' (*alam mahyam*) are given as an etymology for the name Alamma (*alam nu vai mahyam iti tad alammasyālammatvam*).

These two stories introduce a strange ritualist whom the acting brahmins of the Kurupañcālas (according to the JUB) do not accept. Thus, we have a rivalry between the ritual specialists, not between the patrons. These legends also remind us of Baka Dālbhya of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha episode: in every case there is an outsider who is a brahmin and whose ritual expertise is needed for an important sacrifice. One common theme in these stories is the curious place where the specialist was found: a remote island in the middle of the sea, a funeral ground in the wilderness and the space behind the axle of the soma cart.<sup>37</sup> Baka's secluded meditation and Prātrda's lying on the burning ground are also similar in that they are practices quite unorthodox for a Vedic specialist. It is also worth noting that all these figures were found in an inactive state: Baka was meditating with his eyes closed while both Prātrda and Alamma were lying on the ground.

Another interesting set of Keśin Dālbhya legends is the story of a golden bird and the consecration of Keśin (*kaiśinī dīkṣā*). This is told in Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa (KB 7.4), and other versions are found in JB 2.53-54 and VādhS 37.<sup>38</sup> In the Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa version, a golden bird (*hiraṇmayah śakunaḥ*) flew to Keśin Dārbhya<sup>39</sup> and said to him that he had not been consecrated (*adīkṣito vā asi*). The bird announced that he knew the secret of consecration but did not have the knowledge of how to attain the imperishableness of the offerings. Consequently, they proclaimed the secrets to each other. The bird told Keśin the consecrating formula originally introduced by some seer, possibly Śikhandin Yajñasena.<sup>40</sup> KB 7.4 gives the technical explanation of the *dīkṣā* first and then moves to the theme of imperishableness of the items offered once (*sakṛdiṣṭasyākṣitiḥ*; cf. JB 2.53 & VādhS 37: *iṣṭāpūrtasyākṣitim*).<sup>41</sup> Thus, the passage stresses the double knowledge needed for

<sup>37</sup> In the case of Alamma the most enigmatic point is that the place in general (i.e. behind the axle) is mentioned. See also fn. 11.

<sup>38</sup> For VādhS 37, see Caland 1928: 147-150. Additional comments on the legend are made by E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma (1968). Āpastambaśrautasūtra 10.10.6 and Hiraṇyakeśiśrautasūtra 10.2 mention *keśinī dīkṣā*.

<sup>39</sup> In the KB and JB the patronymic is Dārbhya. The VādhS does not give any patronymic (see also fn. 23), but introduces him explicitly as the king of Pañcālas (*keśi pañcālarājo*); cf. Weber (1850: 209; 1853: 308-309) who refers to a KB commentary that defines Keśin as a *ṛṣi*. The JB and VādhS both say that the bird was a goose (*haṃso hiraṇmayo* or *hiraṇmayo haṃso*), and the JB adds that the bird settled on Keśin's sacrificial post (*yūpa upaviveśa*), while the VādhS says that the goose settled in front of Keśin's sacrificial hut (*tasya hāgreṇa śālām upaviśya*).

<sup>40</sup> The bird was not sure about the origin of the consecration formula and mentioned also other possible names: Ula Vārṣṇivṛddha and Iṭant Kāvya.

<sup>41</sup> According to this idea, all the offerings are waiting for their sacrificer in the other world. The basis for imperishableness was said to be the confidence (*śraddhā*) (see Lévi 1898: 108-109), but also waters (*āpas*). The explanation of the secret of imperishableness connected with the

obtaining all desires through ritual, and gives an example of reciprocal exchange for obtaining both secrets.<sup>42</sup>

The two other versions of the story give us some additional details. JB 2.53 begins with the information that Keśin Dārbhya, who did not yet have the right knowledge of the consecration, performed the *dikṣā* sitting on grass and leaves (*keśi ha dārbhyo darbhaparṇayor didikṣe*).<sup>43</sup> In addition, the bird introduced himself as Sutvan Yājñasena, a former king of Pañcālas, i.e. the king before Keśin, the present ruler (JB 2.53: *aham etasyai viśas tvatpūrvo rājāsam*). This Sutvan/goose started his speech by calling Keśin a bitch (*śūnī*) because of his improper consecration, and Keśin reacted to this address by saying that he was an elder (*sthavira*) Pañcāla king and in the state of a *dikṣita*. Thereafter, the idea of exchange of secrets follows like in the KB version.

VādhS 37, on the other hand, starts by introducing Sutvan Yājñasena as a former king of Sṛñjas who knew the *dikṣā* formulas, but not the secret of imperishableness.<sup>44</sup> Thus he took the form of a golden goose and, in order to eat ritual food, he flew to Keśin who was called a younger Pañcāla king (*keśi pāñcālārājo yuvarata*). In this version, Sutvan/the goose addresses the (improperly) consecrated king with the name Keśin, and Keśin finds this as an unsuitable way of speaking to a *dikṣita*. Sutvan/the goose, however, introduces himself as a king, elder than Keśin, or as one who could be his father (*rājāno vyaṁ smas ta u tvatsthaviratarāḥ pitṛmātrās*). This legend, too, ends with the exchange of ritual secrets.

There are a few points of special importance in these two divergent versions. The first is the stress laid in both texts on the difference between elder and younger performers of the *dikṣā*, the elder being more competent. This again strengthens the connection of Keśin, and Dālbhyas, with *vrātya* rituals (cf. above PB 17.4; JB 1.285; BŚS 18.26). Another significant detail is that the name Dārbhya is connected with grass and leaves in JB 2.53. Vedic Keśin Dārbhya, who consecrated himself by sitting on leaves, can be compared with the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's Baka Dālbhya,

*dikṣā* also has common traits with the Upaniṣadic knowledge of BĀU 3.7.1 (see above), in which the connections between the two worlds and all the beings were told to ritual experts.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. also ŚB 11.8.4 (above), where both parties receive a prize due to the revelation of the ritual secret. It is possible to see this as an intermediate case in which the rivalry theme has taken a step towards the exchange theme.

<sup>43</sup> The correct sitting base should have been a black deerskin (*kr̥ṣṇājīna*).

<sup>44</sup> Thus, there is a Yājñasena mentioned in every version of this legend. Śikhaṇḍin Yājñasena of the KB seems to be a ritual specialist, but in the epics he is known as a kṣatriya; in the Mahābhārata he is a brother of Draupadī and son of the Pañcāla king Drupada Yajñasena (see also Weber 1850: 193). Also, the similarity of the meaning of the two words Keśin ('one with a long hair') and Śikhaṇḍin ('one with a tuft of hair') is worth noting. The JB version of the golden bird legend introduces Sutvan Yājñasena, the former king of Pañcālas, while in the VādhS he is a similar 'bird king' of the Sṛñja people. It seems that, as in the JB, the king, the bird and the possessor of ritual secrets of the VādhS did not live 'in this world' any more. Anyway, VādhS 37 refers to Sutvan with the attribute *ṛṣi*, too. (For bird kings in post-Vedic sources, see Section 2.3.6, especially fn. 164; cf. also fn. 119.)

who held a dry leaf above his head while meditating. Thirdly, Sutvan's address to Keśin in JB 2.53 includes an example of a Dālbhya connected with dogs (cf. Baka Dālbhya witnessing the *udgītha* of dogs in ChU 1.12).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, a ritual specialist in the guise of a bird links this whole legend (in three versions) with MS 1.4.12, in which other flying beings, i.e. Gandharvas and Apsarases, appear as ritual experts. Similarly, BĀU 3.7.1 tells how Upaniṣadic secrets were passed on through a ritualist's wife possessed by another ritual expert in the form of a Gandharva.<sup>46</sup> And, once more, the name of the Pañcālas' sacrificial specialist mentioned in BŚS 18.26 (Gandharvāyaṇa Vāleya Āgniveśya) provokes thoughts about a relationship between flying Gandharvas and possessors of ritual secrets.

We have already seen that the names Dālbhya and Keśin can refer to more than one Vedic character, and that both of these names are used to designate persons who can be kṣatriyas (sacrificers) as well as brahmins (officiants). Furthermore, both Keśins and Dālbhyas, like the individual characters Baka Dālbhya and Keśin Dālbhya, have apparent connections with *vrātya* or *sattra* ritualists in the Vedic texts. Yet, there is a clear difference in the roles of the two Dālbhyas, Baka and Keśin: while the former is cast in the role of a Sāmavedic brahmin and with connections to *sattra* rituals, the latter is predominantly a kṣatriya with connections to *vrātya* groups.<sup>47</sup> The motif of ritual competition – either between two ritual groups or between two sacrificers (who themselves have knowledge of ritual secrets) – is also dominant in the picture of Keśin Dālbhya and of the other Keśins. Usually in these rivalry situations, Keśin Dālbhya, the Pañcāla, is facing an opponent who seems to be a Pañcāla as well. This is evident in JB 2.122 and JB 2.279 where Khaṇḍika, Keśin Dālbhya's most typical rival, is clearly said to be a Pañcāla. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that in the *vrātya* legend proper (BŚS 18.26) the opposite side consists of sons of Kuru brahmins. There are, however, other cases indicating close relations between Keśin and the Kurus, especially when his uncle Ucchaiṣravas is mentioned (JUB 3.29.1; JB 2.279).<sup>48</sup>

Baka Dālbhya is said to have been a ritual expert among the Kurupañcālas, i.e. primarily in neither of these groups. The legends of Baka Dālbhya include only one clear reference to a ritual contest between two groups. This is in JUB 1.9.3, where the name Keśin again comes up, this time as an opponent of Baka's rival group who are said to have been Ājakeśins ('goat-Keśins'). Besides this story, we have seen Baka Dālbhya alias Glāva Maitreya as a loser in the 'ritual quiz' with

<sup>45</sup> About *vrātyas* and other ritual groups associated with dogs, see Falk 1986: 18-19, 108-111. Baka Dālbhya's connection with dogs and *vrātyas* is discussed by David Gordon White (1991: 96-97). According to White, the name Baka Dālbhya appears also in the *Chāgaleya-Upaniṣad*. This information is, however, incorrect.

<sup>46</sup> For the similarity between BĀU 3.7.1 and the legend of *kaiśinī dīkṣā*, see also fn. 41 above.

<sup>47</sup> Heesterman (1962: 29, n. 83) connects both names with *vrātya* rituals.

<sup>48</sup> In JB 2.279-280 the help of a Kuru relative helped to win a contest between two Pañcālas. For the political context, see Witzel 1995.

Maudgalya (GB 1.1.31-38). It should also be noted that in Vedic texts, unlike Keśin (and Glāva), the name Baka is not at all used as a proper name without a patronymic. Yet, in the second part of this article, we shall meet both Baka and Keśin as names of Asuras or Rākṣasas in post-Vedic texts.<sup>49</sup>

Both the names Dālbhya/Dārbhya and Keśin are also inherently connected with ritual through their etymology. Keśin ('one with [long] hair' (*keśa*); 'one with a mane' [= horse]) is a name charged with much symbolic energy. Long hair is a symbol of unchained power, as in the case of seers or ritualists on the border of institutionalized religion.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, it is a marker of *brahmacārins*, who perhaps are not 'unchained' in the same way, but, in any case, are outside the everyday life of householders. They are also closer to the real situation in which ritual groups were formed (Falk 1986: 66-72; Heesterman 1985: 40). Thus, although Keśin Dālbhya and ritualists close to him (like Luśākapi in PB 17.4) are shown as cursing the *vrātya* opponents, implying that they themselves are not supporters of *vrātya* ideas, it is not impossible that the name Keśin would have earlier designated the members of an early (or pre-) Vedic ritual group. Also the head-symbolism in the early phases of Indian ritualism (see e.g. Heesterman 1985: 45-58) has to be kept in mind when pondering the symbolic connotations of the name Keśin.

The etymological meaning of the word Dālbhya/Dārbhya ('son of Dalbha/Darbha', *darbha* = grass), on the other hand, is closer to Vedic ritualism. Some early legends take up the relation between the name Dālbhya and *darbha/kuśa* grass used in Vedic rituals. JB 2.100 tells about a Pañcāla king called Darbha Śātānīki<sup>51</sup>, who had as his ritual specialists the pair now familiar to us: Keśin Sātyakāmi and Ahīnas Aśvatthi. The king was not respected by his people; they called him nothing but 'grass' (*darbha*).<sup>52</sup> As in the case of Keśin Dālbhya, Darbha was saved by the ritualists (cf. above JB 2.122-124). The ritual through which new respect for the king was attained was an *ekāha* sacrifice called *apaciti* ('veneration'). After this ritual the Pañcāla people even changed the word for grass from *darbha* to *kuśa*. Also the complicated verses of BŚS 18.38-39 point to this story. Yet, in this version the sacrificer is not Darbha Śātānīki, but Keśin Dālbhya (BŚS 18.38: *keśi dālbhyo apacitikāmo*). The same passage also has an interesting addition to the Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa's version: besides changing the word for grass, the ritual cre-

<sup>49</sup> See Sections 2.3.7 and 2.4. Among the late Vedic texts, the Mānavaghyasūtra mentions the Bakas (in the plural) in the list of various terrifying or nearly demonic gods: *atha devānām āvāhanam vimukhaḥ śyeno bako yakṣaḥ kalaho bhīrur vināyakaḥ kuṣmāṇḍarājaputro yajñāvīkṣepī kulaṅgāpamāro yūpakeśi sūparakroḍī haimavato jambhako virūpākṣo lohītākṣo vaiśravaṇo mahāseno mahādevo mahārāja iti* (MGŚ 2.14.29). Baka in the Kṛṣṇa-Upaniṣad will be dealt with in the post-Vedic context (see Section 2.3.7). Also, the name Dālbhya in the Bhāradvājaghyasūtra (2.6) will be discussed later (in Section 2.2).

<sup>50</sup> Hauer 1927: 324-326. See below for RV 10.136, where Keśin is an ecstatic seer (*muni*).

<sup>51</sup> Horsch (1966: 259-260) mentions also Darbha's probable father Śātānīka Śātrājita.

<sup>52</sup> JB 2.100: *api ha smainam kumārā darbha darbheti hvayanti*.



ated a new word for hair (or the Keśins!): *śiṛṣanyāḥ* ('those on the head').<sup>53</sup> Here the connection between the name Keśin and the idea of head is a very close one.

Besides the first name Keśin (Keśin Dālbhya, Keśin Sātyakāmi), Vedic texts also include references to a patronymic Kaiśin. In ŚB 11.8.4 (see above), the word Kaiśin referred to the group and lineage of Keśin Dālbhya. KS 26.9, instead, gives an example of an individual figure with the patronymic Kaiśin; this passage dealing with the defeat of foes with the help of a soma sacrifice introduces the name Aṣāḍha Kaiśin.<sup>54</sup> In this case, the party of Kaiśin, i.e. Pañcālas, were the losers. They were defeated by Kuntis, their southwestern neighbours, whose sacrificer was Śyāparṇa Sāyakāyaṇa (*tataḥ kuntayaḥ pañcālān abhūtya jinanti*). While equating the Keśins with the Pañcālas this example, again, underlines the role of Keśin Dālbhya as a central figure among the sacrificing Pañcālas.

Finally, it is time to bring up the earliest text referring to a character called Keśin. The text is Ṛgveda 10.136, a hymn which is dedicated to Keśin, a long-haired one.<sup>55</sup> It describes the ecstatic state of god-inspired seers flying through the air (ṚV 10.136.2: *múnayo vātaraśanāḥ, vātasyānu dhrājim yanti*; 10.136.4: *antāriḷṣeṇa patati*).<sup>56</sup> Having all the above-mentioned Keśin stories in mind, it is interesting to note how many traits there are in common between the legends of Keśin Dālbhya the Pañcāla and these ecstatic flying persons of the Ṛgveda.

In ṚV 10.136.6 Keśin is spoken of as wandering the path of Apsarases, Gandharvas and wild animals and knowing the intentions [of the people] (*apsarāsām gandharvāṇām mṛgāṇām cāraṇe cāran | keśī kētasya vidvān...*). Thus, Keśin was, as early as the Ṛgveda, connected with the same flying creatures, who were later understood to be possessors of ritual secrets and who acted as advisers to make Keśin's ritual knowledge perfect (MS 1.4.12). In the Ṛgvedic context, Keśin himself is said to be the flying one who possessed the power of knowledge over the people. And besides his flying companions, he is connected with wild animals, which again hints at wild ritual practices common outside the more established circles.

<sup>53</sup> BŚS 18.39 begins: *śiṛṣanyā iti keśān ācakṣate kuśā iti darbhān*. A translation is proposed by Caland (1903: 25), who wonders if the text means that after *apaciti* Keśin Dālbhya was called Śairṣanya Kauśa. See also Witzel 1989: 101.

<sup>54</sup> The same passage is found in KKS 41.7. See also Weber 1855: 471-472.

<sup>55</sup> In ṚV 1.164.44, Agni, Sūrya and Vāyu are introduced as three Keśins (*trāyaḥ keśina[h]*). The word also refers to the horses of Indra and Agni in the Ṛgveda. Rudra is called Keśin in AV 11.2.18. See also AV 8.6.5, 12.5.48, 14.2.59 (and below Section 2.4).

<sup>56</sup> The hymn mostly speaks about one seer called Keśin, but stanzas 2 and 3 are in the plural. Thus, we have also a 'flock of Keśins', which means that Keśin, again, is only a member of the group, as in the case of Pañcālas. It is noteworthy that the use of the plural begins at the same time as the text starts its description of the flying Keśins. See also Parpola (1994: 245), who takes up the example of *múnayo vātaraśanāḥ*, or 'ascetics having ropes of the wind', while explaining the symbolism of the banyan tree and the similar early Indian idea according to which the stars are bound to the Pole Star.

The introduction of Keśin in this hymn includes some details encountered in other Keśin stories. ṚV 10.136.1 describes Keśin as carrying the fire, poison and the two worlds (*keśy āgnīm keśī viśám keśī bibharti ródasī*). The mention of poison can possibly be connected with a much-discussed attribute of the *vrātyas*, that is, being ‘poison-swallowers’ (PB 17.1.9: *garagiro vā ete...*).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the last verse of the hymn speaks of Keśin drinking poison from the same bowl with Rudra (ṚV 10.136.7: *keśī viśásya pátreṇa yád rudrénāpibat sahá*). Another significant detail is that the two worlds, heaven and earth, or this world and the other world, are supported by Keśin. It is possible that this Ṛgvedic idea has taken another shape in the Brahmanic legends; in these stories dealing with ritual-based dilemmas, Keśin has a central role, and a decision between the future in this or that world has to be made (see above ŚB 11.8.4 & JB 2.279-280).

Maurice Bloomfield has pointed out that the first half of the fourth stanza of ṚV 1.136 also occurs in AV 6.80.1.<sup>58</sup> In that case, however, it is the two dogs of Yama who are flying through the air. This is an important parallel, as it once more alerts us of the special relation between Keśin and the dogs (and further, the *vrātyas*). The main point in Bloomfield’s comment, however, is the identification of Keśin with Sūrya.<sup>59</sup> In most stanzas of this hymn this makes sense, but we have to add that the identification with the sun does not have any real continuation in other Keśin legends.

Bloomfield’s solar explanation is partly based on the fifth stanza, in which the *muni* is said to be the horse of the wind (*vátasyáśvo*) who lives in both the eastern and the western sea (*ubháu samudrāv á kṣeti yás ca púrva utáparaḥ*). Here we meet what may be the most meaningful detail for our topic in this hymn. This is a very early reference of the notion of a seer (whether symbolizing the sun or not) who lives in the sea, or on the shore of the sea.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, we have taken a long and winding path from the seer Baka Dālbhya, via his ‘relative’ Keśin Dālbhya, to the Keśin of the Ṛgveda. The starting point of this journey backward in time was an ascetic meditating on a lonely island in the middle of the sea. At one end of the many threads pursued, we found a being (or a group of

<sup>57</sup> This observation was already made by Hauer (1927: 156-159), who stressed the cosmic dimensions of the Ṛgvedic Keśin whose energy radiates into the world (Hauer 1927: 324-326). He also pointed out the other Vedic passage where gods were seen both as ‘poison-swallowers’ and shining ones (Hauer 1927: 156; Taittirīyāraṇyaka 1.9.3: *raśmayás ca devā garagiraḥ*). More comments on ṚV 10.136 can be found in Hauer 1922: 168-172. For *garagiraḥ*, see also Falk 1986: 44-46 and Heesterman 1962: 9-11.

<sup>58</sup> Bloomfield 1893: 166-168. ṚV 10.136.4: *antárikṣeṇa patati víśvā rūpāvacákaśat*; AV 6.80.1 has the same text, except *bhūtá pro rūpá*.

<sup>59</sup> Bloomfield 1893: 167: ‘it is rather a hymn in which Sūrya is praised and compared with a *muni*’. Bloomfield further explains the two dogs of Yama as sun and moon.

<sup>60</sup> Of course, it secondarily refers to the horse in the sea, too. The symbolism of the fiery seed in the waters is present here as well.

beings) able to fly from one sea to another. In between, there were several stories about a corresponding power acquired by ritual means. We continue to follow this quest for power, this time forward on the time axis. Yet, before leaving the Vedic period we have to investigate the remaining Dālbhyas of the Vedic period.

### 1.3. Other Dālbhyas

Besides Keśin and Baka, there are also other Vedic characters called Dālbhya/Dārbhya. These additional persons are Rathavīti, Rathapota, Caikitāyana (or Brahmadata Caikitāneya) and Nagarin. All of these characters are backed by some legendary material, often only by one story. Yet, it is possible to find some individuality behind the names, and also some points in common with the other Dālbhyas.

Rathavīti Dārbhya is a figure with Ṛgvedic roots. The name is mentioned in ṚV 5.61.17-19, and several commentaries provide the later exegesis of this hymn.<sup>61</sup> The Bṛhaddevatā tells the Rathavīti story under the Śyāvāśva episode (BD 5.50-81 (Macdonell ed.)/5.36-58 (Tokunaga ed.)). The Ṛgvedic version belongs to the so-called *itihāsa* hymns, and it is the last of a group of hymns dedicated to the Maruts. The text itself does not provide much information on the Dārbhya in question; three stanzas close the hymn with a wish addressed to the goddess of night. In the first of these, Śyāvāśva, the reciter, hopes that his praise would, with the chariot of praise/voice (*gīro... rathīr*), reach Dārbhya. The next two stanzas specify this Dārbhya as Rathavīti, a patron of Śyāvāśva and a soma sacrificer living in the mountains near the Gomatī river.<sup>62</sup>

According to the Bṛhaddevatā, the story behind ṚV 5.61 begins at a sacrifice of the royal seer (*rājarṣi*) called Rathavīti Dārbhya. Intending to perform a sacrifice, Rathavīti goes to Atri and chooses his son, the seer (*ṛṣi*) Arcanānas, as an officiant. Arcanānas comes for the ritual with his own son Śyāvāśva, who, however, is not an expert of producing Vedic verses (*anṛṣi*). While the ritual is going on, the two officiants set their eyes on Rathavīti's daughter: both the father and the son conceive the idea of a marriage between the princess and Śyāvāśva. The king is prone to agree to their wish, but the queen refuses the proposal because Śyāvāśva is not a

<sup>61</sup> Nītimañjari on ṚV 5.61.17; Sāyaṇa's introduction to ṚV 5.61; Kātyāyana's Sarvānukramaṇī 5.61; Śaḍguruśiṣya on ṚV 5.61. The last two commentators use the form Rathavīti Dālbhya. The partly divergent versions of the Rathavīti story are taken together in Sieg 1902: 50-64. See also Tokunaga 1997: 232-233.

<sup>62</sup> ṚV 5.61.17-19: *etām me stōmam ūrmye dārbhāya pārā vaha | gīro devi rathīr iva || utā me vocatād īti sutāsme rāthavītau | nā āmo āpa veti me || eṣā kṣeti rāthavītir maghāvā gōmatīr ānu | pārvateṣv āpaśrītaḥ*. N. N. Bhattacharyya (1991: 138, 180-181) identifies the Gomatī river with modern Gumti near Sitapur, U.P. From the Mahābhārata we learn that Gomatī flows near the Naimiṣa forest (MBh 3.93.1-2; 12.343.2).

real seer. After the sacrifice the rejected son and his father return home. On their way they meet two kings who are sons of Ṛṣi Vidadaśva, and one of them has a royal consort.<sup>63</sup> Due to all this, Śyāvāśva wants to become a seer of formulas, too. Consequently, he goes into the wilderness to meditate, and soon he is able to use the formulas (of ṚV 5.61). First he praises the Maruts who give him gold from their breasts, and finally he successfully approaches the goddess of night with the stanzas ṚV 5.61.17-19. The authority of the goddess works, and Rathavīti gives the princess to Śyāvāśva who has proved to be a seer.<sup>64</sup>

Another Vedic Dālbhya/Dārbhya with a 'chariot name' is Rathapota Dārbhya. This name occurs in a passage of the Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā providing a remedy for one who is suffering from a bad reputation (or bad smell) (MS 2.1.3). The text gives a solution for this kind of problem: one has to offer a sacrificial cake of eight portions to Agni Surabhimati. Rathapota Dārbhya is presented as an example of a sacrificer for whom this ritual was performed. The officiants were two persons referred to with the *dvandva* Kaulakāvati.<sup>65</sup> In addition to this incident, one Rathapota without a patronymic<sup>66</sup> is found in Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 15.17, where he is the overlord of the western direction. The mantras (VS 15.15-19) list the protectors of the quarters together with their 'generals and trek leaders' (*senānīgrāmaṇyau*) and two Apsarases. Thus, there are altogether five names: one for each of the four quarters, as well as the fifth, the upward direction (15.19: *upari*). This list contains also several other 'chariot names'.<sup>67</sup>

A Dālbhya with several mentions in Vedic sources is Caikitāyana, or Brahma-datta Caikitāneya. All the occurrences of these names are found in the Brāhmaṇas or Upaniṣads, and they might refer to two separate figures. ChU 1.8-9 is the only passage where the name is Caikitāyana Dālbhya, while all the other passages speak of Brahmadata Caikitāneya, further specified as Dālbhya. One possibility is, of

<sup>63</sup> The kings were Taranta and Purumīlha who are mentioned in ṚV 5.61.9-10; similarly, Taranta's consort, called Śaṣīyasī in the Bṛhaddevatā, is referred to in ṚV 5.61.4-5.

<sup>64</sup> For other Vedic references to Śyāvāśva, see Macdonell & Keith 1912, II: 400-401.

<sup>65</sup> MS 2.1.3: *...agnāye surabhimāte aṣṭākapālaṃ nīrvaped abhiśasyāmānaṃ yājayed rāthapotaṃ vāi dārbhyām abhyaśaṃsaṃś tāṃ kaulakāvatiṃ abrutām...*

<sup>66</sup> Cf. ṚV 10.60.5 and BD 7.85/7.64 referring to the Ikṣvāku king Asamāti Rathaproṣṭha. For further details, see Macdonell & Keith 1912, I: 46-47.

<sup>67</sup> ŚB 8.6.1.11-21 explains the ritual use of these *yajus* formulae in the *agnicayana*: the actual context of VS 15.15-19 is the laying down of *pañcacūdā* bricks during the building of the fifth layer of the fire altar. Each *yajus* begins with names in the following order: protector – general – trek leader – two Apsarases. The sets of five names are: Harikeśa (with the attribute *sūryaraśmi*; ŚB 8.6.1.16: = Agni) – Rathagr̥tsa – Rathaujas – Puñjikasthalā & Kratusthalā (east); Viśvakarman (ŚB 8.6.1.17: = Vāyu) – Rathasvana – Rathocitra – Menakā & Sahajanyā (south); Viśvavyacas (ŚB 8.6.1.18: = 'the yonder sun', *asau vādityo*) – Rathapota – Asamaratha – Pramlocantī & Anumlocantī (west); Saṃyadvasu (ŚB 8.6.1.19: = 'sacrifice', *yajña*) – Tārṣya – Ariṣṭanemi – Viśvācī & Ghṛtācī (north); Arvāgyasu (ŚB 8.6.1.20: = Parjanya) – Senajit – Suṣena – Urvasī & Pūrvaścitti (the upward direction).

course, that Brahmadata is the son of Caikitāyana Dālbhya.<sup>68</sup> In any case, the main topic in stories about Caikitāyana/Caikitāneya Dālbhya is the secret of Sāmavedic melodies.

ChU 1.8-9 introduces the discussion about the basis of the *udgītha*. The conversation takes place between three Sāmavedic experts: Caikitāyana Dālbhya, Śilaka Śālāvatyā and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, the last of them being a king. First Śilaka questions Caikitāyana, who concludes that the basis of the *sāman* goes back to the other world.<sup>69</sup> Śilaka, however, proposes that the heavenly world is not the final foundation for Sāmavedic melodies. He adds that the other world, in turn, goes back to this world.<sup>70</sup> Finally, King Pravāhaṇa overcomes the explanations of both ritualists by providing an Upaniṣadic solution to the question. He says that even this world is not the fundamental one, but the final basis can be found in the *ākāśa*, the space which symbolizes the idea of Brahman.

While Caikitāyana Dālbhya is represented as a figure with incomplete knowledge regarding the foundations of the *udgītha*, Brahmadata Caikitāneya seems to be a character who is reproached because of his practice of chanting: his way of singing some special *sāmans* is not always felt to be appropriate. Some of the passages about Brahmadata are difficult to understand properly, but, in any case, they contain several names met with in other Dālbhya stories. In JUB 1.38, Kurus find fault in Brahmadata's rendering of the *sāman* which he himself calls *loma*. The same chapter again mentions King Jaivali, together with a ritualist called Galūnasa Ārkṣākāyāṇa who is addressed as Śālāvatyā.<sup>71</sup> In JUB 1.59, Brahmadata Caikitāneya is addressed, again, as Dālbhya and described as a singer of the *udgītha*. This legend tells how Brahmadata goes to meet a Kuru sacrificer called Abhipratārin Kākṣaseni and neglects to address his *purohita* Śaunaka during the *madhuparka* ritual. The offended Śaunaka begins the ritual questioning about Sāmavedic knowledge, and this time Brahmadata gets through by giving excellent answers to each question. Thus, we are again back to the scheme of ritual competition, and because in both of these stories the opposing side is explicitly stated to be the Kurus, it is probable that Brahmadata Caikitāyana was a Pañcāla.

<sup>68</sup> Macdonell & Keith (1912, I: 263-264) lists the names assumed to be behind Caikitāyana and Caikitāneya, which are understood as patronymics: Caikitāyana = son of Cikitāyana or Cekita; Caikitāneya = son of Caikitāna or Cekitāna (the latter name occurring in the Mahābhārata).

<sup>69</sup> The chain of derivation explained by Caikitāyana was: *sāman* < sound (*svara*) < vital breath (*prāṇa*) < food (*anna*) < water (*āpaḥ*) < the other world (*asau loka*). For this passage, see Witzel 1987.

<sup>70</sup> I.e. the world of gods is dependent on sacrifices performed by people in this world.

<sup>71</sup> JUB 1.38.1.4 introduces Galūnāsa with a sable fur and a leaf (!): *śāmūlaparṇābhyām utthitam papraccha* (for *śāmūla*, see Falk 1993). The name Galūnasa is also found in forms Gaḷūnasa or Gaḷunas (cf. JB 1.337).

Two more references to Brahmadata Caikitāneya can be found in BĀU 1.3.24 and JB 1.337-338. The former is a short passage which does not mention the name Dālbhya.<sup>72</sup> BĀU 1.3 is a chapter concerning ritual philosophy and the nature of the *udgītha*. BĀU 1.3.24 takes up Brahmadata Caikitāneya and introduces him as a Sāmavedic specialist and a drinker of soma. The theme of this passage is similar to that of ChU 1.8-9, in which Caikitāneya Dālbhya played a role (see above).<sup>73</sup> In JB 1.337-338, too, there is a discussion about the method of chanting. In this case, the two main characters are Brahmadata Caikitāneya and Gaḷunas Ārkṣākāyaṇa, a ritualist who was mentioned in JUB 1.38, in the same chapter with Brahmadata. Now, the topic is a *stobha* sung by Brahmadata in the Śyāvāśva (!) melody (cf. above the story of Rathavīti Dārbhya). Gaḷunas makes a comment about Brahmadata's chant and, finally, he refers to the origin of this *stobha*. Here, too, Śyāvāśva is specified to be the son of Arcanānas and is said to have gone out for firewood, while at the same time his fellow ritualists (or opponents?: *pratisattrinaḥ*) 'reached heaven' through a *sattra* ritual. Calling from above, they used this *stobha* and asked him to come up, too. This story again demonstrates how the same persons appear in the various Dālbhya legends. Furthermore, this leads us back to the circles of the performers of *sattra*: first, JB 1.337-338 hints that Brahmadata Caikitāneya, the Sāmavedic singer who is also called Dālbhya, chants a *stobha* which has its origin in *sattra* rituals, and, secondly, this passage joins Śyāvāśva with the *sattra* tradition. After all this, it is not surprising that one of Śyāvāśva's patrons was a figure called Rathavīti Dārbhya.

The last Vedic Dālbhya with a first name mentioned is Nagarin Dālbhya. He appears only once in a short passage. This is in JB 1.257 where a brahmin asks Nagarin of which direction the sacrifice should be (*tad dha nagariṇaṃ dālbhyaṃ brāhmaṇaḥ papraccha kadryaṃ yajña iti*). Nagarin answers that for the prosperity of the sacrificer it should be either 'upright' (*ūrdhva eva puruṣam anvāyatta iti*) or 'coming towards' (*ya u enaṃ pratyāñcaṃ veda pratyāñ bhūtiṃ bhavati*). This short legend does not provide any further information about this ritual specialist.<sup>74</sup>

A similar source with only some meagre information is found at the end of the Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra. The *pravaras*, family and *gotra* lists, include the names Dārbhya, Dārbhi and Dārbhāyana. The only mention of the Dārbhyas is in *pravara* 22, where they (*dārbhyāḥ*) are listed among the Harita Bharadvājas. The name

<sup>72</sup> The name Caikitāneya alone is found also in JUB 1.37.7 & 2.5.2. In these cases, too, he is a Sāmavedic authority. Moreover, the name Vāsiṣṭha Caikitāneya is mentioned in JUB 1.42.1 with a Sāmavedic connection. The same name occurs also in Ṣaḍvīṃśabrāhmaṇa 4.1 and in the Vaṃśabrāhmaṇa (see Weber 1858b: 373, 384).

<sup>73</sup> BĀU 1.3.24 uses the same oath theme which results in the bursting of the contestant's head in case his knowledge over the *udgītha* is not satisfactory and he thus loses the ritual quiz (*rājā mūrdhānaṃ vipātayatāt*; cf. ChU 1.8.6 & 1.8.8: *mūrdhā te vipated iti*).

<sup>74</sup> Nagarin ('the head of the town/settlement') can also be a title for a Dālbhya whose first name has been left out.

Dārbhi is found twice: in *pravara* 17 (*dārbhayaḥ*) among the Bharadvājas, and in *pravara* 10 in the singular (*dārbhir*) among the Ayāsyā Gautamas. These lists include also the family name Dārbhāyaṇa, in *pravaras* 3 and 44 (*dārbhāyaṇāḥ*); the respective *gotras* are Vatsa Bhārgavas and Laukāṣya Kāśyapas.<sup>75</sup>

As in the cases of Baka and Keśin, the roles of these 'additional' Dālbhyas have some uniformity. Both the 'chariot Dārbhyas', Rathavīti and Rathaprotā, seem to be kṣatriyas. In the Rathavīti story the most interesting point is, however, the indefinite dividing line between the patrons and ritualists. In Keśin legends we have already seen that the same character is placed in different passages on either side of this border line. The Rathavīti story, on the other hand, takes up the close relation between *ṛṣis* and *rājaṛṣis*, or brahmins and kṣatriyas, and introduces the possibility that a royal family can obtain ritual knowledge through a marriage with a person from the other side of the border. The story of Caikitāyana Dālbhya and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali leads even further than this, as it is here that a king overcomes two brahmins in a ritual quiz.

Otherwise, Caikitāyana and Brahmadata Caikitāneya are clearly defined as Sāmavedic singers, and some of these stories include the theme of ritual contest, too. In many respects, the role of Caikitāyana/Caikitāneya is close to that of Baka Dālbhya alias Glāva Maitreya. Both of these figures are chanters of *sāmans* and they are not always victorious in ritual contests. Both of them are dealing with the philosophical dimensions of the *udgītha*; at the same time they have connections with *sattra* groups. Moreover, Brahmadata Caikitāneya is, next to Baka and Keśin, the only Dālbhya who is explicitly connected with the Kurus (and Pañcālas?).

<sup>75</sup> Vājasaneyipraśākhya 4.15, too, mentions the name Dālbhya without a first name (Weber 1858a: 73, 216).

## 2. POST-VEDIC SOURCES

In the following, I shall turn to post-Vedic texts and examine the various characterizations of the figures called Baka, Dālbhya or Baka Dālbhya. The main sources will be the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas,<sup>76</sup> but additional examples for comparison are taken from story literature, the Jātakas and from the Dharmaśāstras. This part also differs from the previous one in respect that the common denominator no longer be the patronymic Dālbhya, but more emphasis will be put on the various dimensions of the name Baka. The first task, however, is to give a closer portrayal of Baka Dālbhya, the seer. A survey of his appearances in the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas will explain some features of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha episode, but it will also bring up several additional points for the overall picture. Moreover, we have to keep in mind the Vedic legends about Baka Dālbhya in order to study the continuity of this figure.

### 2.1. Baka Dālbhya

The best known post-Vedic appearance of Baka Dālbhya is the retelling of the Dhṛtarāṣṭra story of the Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā 10.6. This legend is found in two sources: there is a quite detailed epic version in the Mahābhārata (MBh 9.40.1-25) and a somewhat shorter parallel version in the Vāmanapurāṇa (VmP 39.24-35/Sāromāhātmya 18.25-36). In both cases, the story is included in a larger section describing various *tīrthas* along the Sarasvatī river. In the Śalyaparvan, Balarāma makes a tour on his way from Dvāraka to Kurukṣetra, and in the Vāmanapurāṇa, Sage Romahaṛṣaṇa introduces *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī to a group of ṛṣis. The sacred place where Baka Dālbhya<sup>77</sup> made his *homa* offering is called Avakīrṇa, and it is said to be a place where he practised severe austerities.<sup>78</sup> It is worth noticing that in both texts the significance of the shrine goes back to past events. Besides the *tīrtha*'s

<sup>76</sup> Unless otherwise is stated, my Mahābhārata references are based on the Poona critical edition. I have mainly used the Nag Publishers' reprint series of the Venkateśvara editions for the Purāṇa references. Yet, the Matsya- and Vāyupurāṇa references are based on the Ānandāśrama editions (MtP = ĀnSS 54, Poona 1907; VāP = ĀnSS 49, Poona 1905): for the Brahmaapurāṇa references, I have used the Tübingen edition (Wiesbaden 1987) and for the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, the Motilal Banarsidass edition (Delhi 1973).

<sup>77</sup> The form Vaka Dālbhi, used in the Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā, is replaced in these post-Vedic parallels with Baka Dālbhya. The Mahābhārata version also refers to the seer by using the shorter forms Baka and Dālbhya. This passage gives the name once in the reverse form *dālbhyo baka* as well (see fn. 78).

<sup>78</sup> MBh 9.40.12: *avakīrṇe sarasvatyās*; VmP 39.29 states that the *tīrtha* was located at Pṛthūdaka: *pṛthūdake mahātīrthe avakīrṇe*. MBh 9.39: *yayau... rāmo bakasya āśramam antikāt yatra tepe tapas tīvraṃ dālbhyo baka iti śrutih*. The ascetic dimension of Baka is underlined all through the Mahābhārata passage, e.g. MBh 9.40.1: *sumahātapāḥ*, verse 2: *tapasā ghorarūpeṇa karṣayan deham ātmanah*, verse 12: *niyamaṃ param āsthitah, mahātapāḥ*.



importance for pilgrimage, the 'present' state of the place is not commented upon. This means that Baka Dālbhya is absent in these passages; he rather belongs to the mythical past – even in the context of the Mahābhārata.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of the pilgrimage framework and more explicit references to Baka Dālbhya's asceticism, the Mahābhārata's version is mostly faithful to the Vedic Dhṛtarāṣṭra legend. Ritual information does not differ much from the original while some details have been added for clarification. Baka is still connected with the Naimiṣa forest and *sattra* rituals. The ritual that the group had performed before Baka's meeting with Dhṛtarāṣṭra is now defined as a twelve-year sacrifice called *viśvajit*.<sup>80</sup> The gift of animals received from the Pañcālas (not Kurupañcālas as in the Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā) is also mentioned, although the number of calves is changed from 27 to 21 (MBh 9.40.4). The death of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's cattle is explained with the words *yadṛcchayā mr̥tā* ('died unexpectedly/accidentally'). In the epic text, too, Baka Dālbhya cuts off the flesh of the corpses and performs a sacrifice for the destruction of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom.<sup>81</sup> The rite by the Sarasvatī river is described as a cruel sacrifice in which 'the kingdom was poured in the fire' (e.g. MBh 9.40.18). The sacrificial heat and the cruelty of fire is clearly equated here with the unpredictable forces of an ascetic. Thus, both the Mahābhārata and the Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā present Baka Dālbhya as an outsider who should not be irritated because he has powerful ritual means at his disposal. The main point here is that although Baka fits into the epic mould of an angry ascetic, he still uses ritual, i.e. Vedic, means to revenge the mistreatments. Moreover, the withdrawal of Baka's 'ritual curse' is brought about with the help of a sacrifice. After Dhṛtarāṣṭra had gone to meet Baka in his hermitage,<sup>82</sup> having repented and gratified the ṛṣi with generous gifts, Baka offered a *punarāhuti*.<sup>83</sup> in order to save his kingdom (MBh 9.40.23).

<sup>79</sup> Chapter 40 of the Śalyaparvan starts with the words *brahmayonibhir ākīrṇaṃ jagāma yadunandanaḥ*. This suggests that the place was still favoured by some brahmin groups. There is also a variant reading for this verse (*brahmaghoṣair ākīrṇaṃ...*), which would refer to the Vedic chanting practised in the area.

<sup>80</sup> MBh 9.40.3: *purā hi naimiṣeyānāṃ satre dvādaśavārṣike | vṛtte viśvajito ante vai pāncālān ṛṣayo agaman*. The variant reading *naimiṣīyānāṃ* is mentioned in some manuscripts. Cf. VmP 39.27: *naimiṣeyāḥ*. In Pañcaviṃśabrahmaṇa 25.6, the inhabitants of the Naimiṣa [sic!] forest are connected with a twelve-year *sattra*, which they discontinue. The atonement for leaving a sacrificial session before its conclusion is the *viśvajit* sacrifice which involves giving away all of one's possession; it is discussed with regard to the Naimiṣīyas in Upa-grantha 1.8 (see Parpola 1996: 102-103).

<sup>81</sup> MBh 9.40.11-12: *sa utkṛtya mṛtānāṃ vai māmsāni dvijasattamaḥ | juhāva dhṛtarāṣṭrasya rāṣṭram narapateḥ purā || avakīrṇe sarasvatyās tīrthe prajvālya pāvakaṃ*.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Kāṭhakaśaṃhitā, where Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks Vaka to come to meet him again.

<sup>83</sup> This 'contra-offering' is possibly a remembrance or transformation of the Vedic *pūrṇāhuti* or a ladleful of clarified butter offered to the fire. The term *pūrṇāhuti* is, however, not unknown in post-Vedic literature, as it appears, for example, in the description of Rāma's horse sacrifice in the Padmapurāṇa's Pātālakhaṇḍa (PdP/PātKh 68.7; see Koskikallio 1999: 239). Cf. also Vedic *agnyādheya* and *punarādheya*, founding of the sacred fires and their repeated founding.

The puranic retelling of the legend is a more cursory one and leaves a few points open to various interpretations. The principal additions in the Vāmanapurāṇa's version<sup>84</sup> are two explicit teachings. The first moral is given in VmP 39.33, where it is stated that one should not disregard brahmins because this brings its own punishment. The other teaching of the Dhṛtarāṣṭra episode is part of the pilgrimage framework. At the conclusion of the passage, it is stated that the man who bathes in the Avakīrṇa *tīrtha* with faith and self-control obtains the object of his desire (VmP 39.35). There are also some other additions. For example, the short description of Baka Dālbhya's sacrificial revenge (VmP 39.25) is a problematic point.<sup>85</sup> Further confusion is caused by the description of Baka's meat offering in VmP 39.29, because it is possible to interpret the verse as meaning that Baka tore off his own flesh for the sacrifice.<sup>86</sup> Another push towards this misunderstanding is given by the fact that the prelude with the Pañcālas is totally missing from the text. Moreover, Dhṛtarāṣṭra appears here without any patronymic. On the other hand, conciliation gifts by Dhṛtarāṣṭra are mentioned: according to VmP 39.31, the king departed for Avakīrṇa with jewels. A further addition is that Dhṛtarāṣṭra was accompanied by his *purohita* during the visit. Finally, there are two alternative readings for the verse describing Baka Dālbhya's reconciliation rite. Baka either restored Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom and fame, or he did this with the help of an offering consisting of ghee and milk.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to the Dhṛtarāṣṭra legend, we meet Baka Dālbhya in a few other passages of the Mahābhārata. One momentary appearance is included in the Sabhāparvan. There Baka Dālbhya is mentioned in a long list of seers who visited Yudhiṣṭhira's new assembly hall (MBh 2.4.9). In the Āraṇyakaparvan (MBh 3.27), the same *ṛṣi* acts as a spokesman for a group of brahmins and ascetics whom the Pāṇḍavas met during their stay in the Dvaita forest. The wilderness resounded with Vedic recitation and chant, and Baka Dālbhya explained that the hour had come for their fire oblation (MBh 3.27.6: *brāhmaṇānāṃ tapasvinām homavelāṃ*). He said

84 I have used both the critical edition of the Vāmanapurāṇa published by the All-India Kashiraj Trust (1967) and the Nag Publishers' edition (1983). The verse-numbering and quotations have been taken from the latter. In the AIKT edition, the passage belongs to the 18th chapter of the Sāromāhātmya. The two versions differ from each other in several details.

85 The AIKT edition states that the intolerant Dhṛtarāṣṭra was (symbolically) offered together with his chariots (Sāromāhātmya 18.26: *yasmin tīrthe bako dālbhryo dhṛtarāṣṭram amarṣaṇam juhāva vāhanaiḥ sārđham*). VmP 39.25 proposes that his kingdom was sacrificed by Baka – together with (other) brahmins – due to the offence that the king had made in mental confusion (*yasmiṃs tīrthe bako dālbhryo rāṣṭram vaicittiyadharṣaṇāt juhāva brāhmaṇaiḥ sārđham*).

86 VmP 39.28: *krodhena mahatā māṃsam utkṛtya...* Baka tearing off his own flesh can be found e.g. in Dange 1986-90: 1234.

87 Sāromāhātmya 18.35: *sa nṛpatim rājyena yaśasā punaḥ utthāpayām āsa*. VmP 39.34: *...ājyena payasā...* The interpretation by S. A. Dange (1986-90: 265, 268) is based on the latter reading.

that brahmins of various eminent families (Bhṛguṣ, Āṅgirasas, Vasiṣṭhas, Kāśyapas, Āgastyas and Ātreyas) were now collected in the holy spot of Lake Dvaitavana and joined the Pāṇḍavas. The explanation was followed by a lesson in which Baka underlined the importance of the co-operation between the brahmin and kṣatriya classes (MBh 3.27.10-19). Finally, Baka, together with the other brahmins, praised Yudhiṣṭhira.

The Dvaitavana passage introduces a somewhat different Baka Dālbhya if compared with the more archaic Dhṛtarāṣṭra legend of the Mahābhārata. Although Baka still appears as a member of a ritual group gathering together in an uninhabited place, their rites seem to be of pure Vedic nature. Also Vedic family names are mentioned. But at the same time a lecture on the importance of the brahmin class is given through the mouth of Baka Dālbhya. The last-mentioned point indicates that the brahmanization of the character has already proceeded quite far. The brahmanized Baka appears also in the Vāmanapurāṇa's version of the Dhṛtarāṣṭra legend where brahmin morals are added to the text.

A central post-Vedic development is the connection with shrines or places of pilgrimage with the figure of Baka Dālbhya. It has to be noted that, in addition to the Avakīrṇa *tīrtha* of the post-Vedic Dhṛtarāṣṭra story, Baka also shows up on the shore in the Dvaitavana passage. Thus, he has been met 1) on an island in the middle of the northern sea (in the Jaiminīyāśvamedha), 2) along the Sarasvatī river (in the post-Vedic Dhṛtarāṣṭra versions), and 3) on the shore of a lake in the middle of wilderness (in the Dvaitavana episode of the Mahābhārata).

The last example from the epic comes from outside the critical edition proper. Chapter 193 of the Āraṇyakaparvan, according to the Bombay edition, tells how Yudhiṣṭhira, together with a group of seers and brahmins, posed a question concerning the long-lived Ṛṣi Baka to Sage Mārkaṇḍeya.<sup>88</sup> This complicated chapter brings up Baka's enormous age, the other important characteristic of Baka Dālbhya in post-Vedic texts. The huge life span of this seer is a central topic in the island passage of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha, but also Mahābhārata's Dhṛtarāṣṭra passage includes a reference to his age, as he is there called 'Baka, the old one' (MBh 9.40: *bako vṛddho*). In addition, it should be remembered that the discussion on the long-lived Ṛṣi Baka is situated only a few chapters after the Vaṭapattraśāyin episode (MBh 3.186.77-187.55; Bombay ed. 3.188.76-189.59), in which Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya appeared as an age-old character who had lived through the destruction between the *yuga* cycles (see above fn. 5).

Thus, the place of the Baka episode in the Mārkaṇḍeya session of the Āraṇyakaparvan is clearly not coincidental. The mere connection with Sage Mārkaṇḍeya underlines Baka's fame as a sort of immortal seer. In the Jaiminīyāśvamedha, Baka

<sup>88</sup> MBh/Bombay ed. 3.193.1: *ṛṣiḥ kena dīrghāyur āsīd bakaḥ*. The passage, together with critical notes, can also be found in the Appendix I.21.1 of the Poona edition (Āraṇyakaparvan).

Dālbhya mentions Mārkaṇḍeya as one of the twenty famous brahmins he had met during his life – and all of whom he has seen die.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, a reference to the age topic is made in the story of Indradyumna that follows soon after the chapter on Baka in the Mārkaṇḍeya section.<sup>90</sup>

The most surprising detail of the Baka episode of the Mārkaṇḍeya session, however, comes when Yudhiṣṭhira continues the questioning of Markaṇḍeya on Baka. According to the fourth verse of the chapter, Yudhiṣṭhira says: ‘I have heard that Baka and Dālbhya are considered as eminent and long-lived seers and friends of Indra’ (*bakadālbhyau mahātmanau śrūyete cirajīvinau | sakhāyau devarājasya tāv ṛṣi lokasaṃmatau*). The use of the dual refers to ‘Dālbhya’ as a distinct seer, but his mention has no purpose here. Because a few manuscripts have a more unambiguous reading for the verse, in the singular<sup>91</sup>, it seems that this unique reference to Baka and Dālbhya as a pair of ṛṣis is simply based on a misunderstanding or unfamiliarity with a minor character like Baka Dālbhya.

Another unique feature of this episode is the connection between Baka and Indra. The story tells how Indra, after the battle with Asuras, saw from above the fruitful land with its waters. Then he came down and reached Baka’s charming hermitage which was situated on the seaside in the east (MBh/Bombay ed. 3.193.13: *pūrvasyām diśi ramyāyām samudrābhyāśato*). This setting comes very near to the Jaiminīyāśvamedha’s description of the lonely ascetic on the shore of an island in the northern sea. Baka’s reaction to the meeting with a god is very similar in both episodes: he became glad when he at last saw Kṛṣṇa again (JA 60.12-13), and he worshipped Indra, delighted at heart, with an *arghya* offering (MBh/Bombay ed. 3.193.15). After the meeting ceremonies, Indra asked Baka about the sorrows (verse 17) and joys (26-27) of longevity. This time it is Baka who dodges the questions. His address consist of superficial moral lectures. At first, Baka describes the unjust state of the world, but his answer to the second question hits even further

<sup>89</sup> JA 60.25: *mārkaṇḍeyā lomaśāḥ katy abhuvan | teṣāṃ saṃkhyāṃ kartum alaṃ mayāpi | astamgatā brahmaṇām viṃśatir me*. There is a tinge of irony in the Āraṇyakaparvan passage, because Mārkaṇḍeya seems to be disinclined to discussion on the topic. He simply dodges the question by saying that Baka simply is a great long-lived ascetic and there is no need for further discussion (MBh 3.193.2: *mahātapā dīrghāyus ca bako rājarṣiḥ | nātra kāryā vicāraṇā*). Basically, the epic sages are sort of ageless characters because their appearances do not seem to follow any conventional chronology. This makes it possible that Mārkaṇḍeya, who ‘passed away’ during Baka’s lifetime and did not reach his age, can ‘now’ discuss about Baka in the past tense (see fn. 88) with Yudhiṣṭhira and others.

<sup>90</sup> MBh/Bombay ed. 3.199 = 3.191 of the critical edition. In this episode, Mārkaṇḍeya tells the story of Indradyumna after he has been asked if there was anyone who would have been born before him (MBh 3.191.1: *asti kaścīd bhavataś cirajātatara*). For details of the Indradyumna legend, see below Section 2.3.3.

<sup>91</sup> MBh/Āraṇyakaparvan, Appendix I.21.1 (for verse 4): *śrūyate hi mahābhāga bako dālbhyo mahātapāḥ | priyaḥ sakhā ca śakrasya cirajīvi ca sattamaḥ*. The use of this variant would clarify the meaning of the passage. Excepting the fourth verse, the sage is always called ‘Baka’ without a patronymic in this chapter.

off the target as he starts to praise the independent way of life and the merit of offering food to brahmin visitors. Here we again meet the brahmanized Baka Dālbhya who preaches Dharmaśāstric values and whose role as an outsider is limited to his remote abode only.

In the light of the Bombay edition's story of the age-old Baka, it is also possible to understand Baka Dālbhya as a later counterpart, or some sort of a rival figure, to Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya. Since in the Mārkaṇḍeya section, Baka is introduced as a character who has lived a much longer life than any other seers, he clearly takes the office of Mārkaṇḍeya. Correspondingly, the Jaiminiyāśvamedha's description of Baka Dālbhya's psychedelic memories, including the meeting with the boy on a banyan leaf in the remote past, can be taken as a variation of the epic Vaṭapattraśāyin legend in which Mārkaṇḍeya acted as the ageless cosmic traveller. At least in these examples, Mārkaṇḍeya is a model figure for a more marginal Baka Dālbhya.<sup>92</sup>

It is also possible that the Vaṭapattraśāyin legend has influenced the fact that the Jaiminiyāśvamedha's Baka Dālbhya does not meditate on the bank of a river but in the middle of the sea. In a way, an escort that travels the ocean by an amphibious chariot and meets a sage *holding a leaf above his head* repeats the theme of the Mārkaṇḍeya legend, in which the seer travels over the primeval ocean and meets a child lying on a bough of the banyan tree. The Vaṭapattraśāyin episode, or the meeting with the infant Viṣṇu in a fig tree on the interval of the cosmic cycles, can be found in several puranic sources as well.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> See Section 2.3.4 for a Śaiva version of the Mārkaṇḍeya legend which contains both the flood and a cosmic trip.

<sup>93</sup> 1) In the Brahmapurāṇa (BrP 52), Mārkaṇḍeya is the sole survivor of the *kalpāgni* fire at the end of a cycle. Devoted to meditation (*dhyānayoga*), he roamed the dry land and searched for the god Puruṣeśa. Finally, he found a shelter under the eternal fig tree called Puruṣeśa. This dry scene is followed by a flood episode (BrP 53) during which Mārkaṇḍeya tries to swim across the ocean and the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*) addresses him as a child. Mārkaṇḍeya first takes the address as an insult to his old age! After this 'age-incident', Mārkaṇḍeya can again see the banyan tree and the shining infant Kṛṣṇa who was lying on a couch on the branches. This is followed by Mārkaṇḍeya's tour inside Kṛṣṇa's limitless body (BrP 54) and theological discussions inspired by this revelation (BrP 55-56).

2) The Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa of the Skandapurāṇa (SkP/VaiKh 2.3) introduces Mārkaṇḍeya as a ṛṣi whose life span extends to seven *kalpas*. During a flood he saw Nārāyaṇa with his conch, discus and club in a *kalpavaṭa* tree. The godhead asked the seer to meet his other form, a child lying in a 'leafy vessel' above the tree (SkP/VaiKh 2.3.29: *śayānam patrapuṭake paśya kalpavaṭordhvaḡam | bālasvarūpaḡ...*). Then Mārkaṇḍeya visits inside the body. The speciality of this version is the identification of the eternal fig tree with Puruṣottamakṣetra, a holy place of pilgrimage which is said to have been unaffected by the cosmic flood.

3) According to the Brāhmakhaṇḍa of the Skandapurāṇa (SkP/BrāKh 2.8.19-29), Vāsudeva Janārdana assumed the form of a child during the flood between two *kalpas*. Lying on the leaves of a huge banyan tree, he gave an order to Brahmā to create the cosmic egg again. Brahmā was able to see this form of Viṣṇu only after performing severe penance.

4) In chapter 185 of the Varāhapurāṇa (AIKT edition, 1981), Nārāyaṇa, in the form of a boar, tells Goddess Earth about his triple manifestation as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Nārāyaṇa explains that when the world came into being due to his *vaiṣṇavī māyā*, there was water everywhere and only a banyan tree could be discerned from the primeval sea. There he sat in

In addition to the Dhṛtarāṣṭra episode of the Vāmanapurāṇa, there is one puranic passage in which the name Baka is used with the patronymic Dālbhya (in the one-word form *bakadālbhyaḥ*). The text deals with a *vrata* called *viḥayā-ekādaśī* and forms the 44th chapter of the Uttarakhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa (according to the Venkaṭeśvara edition). This chapter includes an apocryphal Rāmāyaṇa episode in which Rāma was unable to find a way across the ocean and reach Laṅkā. Here the Rāma story is used for emphasizing the importance of puranic rites. The ideological bias can already be detected when Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa for advice. He does not ask for any 'technical' solution (cf. the amphibious chariot of the JA), nor even for a miracle. Instead, Rāma wants to know if there exists any type of religious merit which would help one cross the ocean (PdP/UttKh 44.12: *kena puṇyena tīryate varuṇālayaḥ*). Consequently, Lakṣmaṇa introduced him to Sage Bakadālbhya who lived nearby on an island, which apparently was situated between Laṅkā and the mainland. The great sage (verse 16: *mahāmuni*) who had for some reason taken a human body (verse 17: *kenāpi kāraṇenaiva praviṣṭo mānuṣiṃ tanum*) lived in a hermitage with a large group of other brahmins and became – once again – very pleased when he met the embodiment of the highest godhead (verse 13: *ādideva, purāṇapurūṣottama*). Finally, the ṛṣi advised Rāma to observe the *viḥayā-ekādaśī* in the dark half of the Phālguna month. The description of the ritual (verses 21-35) mentions, among other things, various vegetable offerings, use of ghee lamps, a golden image of Nārāyaṇa and several gifts to a brahmin. According to this episode, Rāma found the solution to his problem with the help of this ritual, which was said to be equivalent to a *vājapeya* sacrifice (PdP/UttKh 44.39).

On the whole, these scattered glimpses of Baka Dālbhya in post-Vedic literature seem to share at least some points in common. Compared to the quite mobile

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the form of a child and looked upon his creation, the triple world (VrP 185.12-16). Thus, the Varāhapurāṇa passage does not underline the theme of cyclical destruction, but rather gives the Vaṭapattraśāyin form of Viṣṇu as one of the eternal manifestations of divine reality, just like Brahmā lying on the navel-lotus.

5) The Bhāgavatapurāṇa goes even further as it explains that Mārkaṇḍeya's vision of *viṣṇumāyā* took place during the present *kalpa*. This version of the legend (BhP 12.8-10) starts with Śaunaka's question to Sūta (BhP 12.8.2-5): he asked how is it possible to maintain that Mārkaṇḍeya met Vaṭapattraśāyin during the destruction between two *kalpas*, when the tradition says that this long-lived ṛṣi was born to Śaunaka's own lineage during the present *kalpa*. In his answer, Sūta tells how Nara and Nārāyaṇa once visited Mārkaṇḍeya's hermitage. They were impressed by his penance, devotion, Vedic knowledge and self-control, and granted a boon to him; Mārkaṇḍeya asked if he could have a vision of the Supreme Lord's *māyā* (BhP 12.9.2-6). Later, when Mārkaṇḍeya was meditating and, obviously, 'lost to the flood of loving devotion' (BhP 12.9.9: *premaprasarasamplutaḥ*), he received a vision including the deluge (BhP 12.9.10-19), the banyan tree and the child on its leaf (BhP 12.9.20-24), as well as the tour inside the child's body (BhP 12.9.25-30). Afterwards, Mārkaṇḍeya found himself in his hermitage again, and the next chapter (BhP 12.10) tells about his meeting with Śiva who gave him another boon, the ability to live until the end of the present *kalpa*. (For an additional paradox connected to the Vaṭapattraśāyin myth, see Hardy 1983: 285; see also Nārādīyapurāṇa 1.4.41-99, 1.5.18-20.)

ritualist of the Vedic texts, Baka has become a more settled ṛṣi, having a hermitage as his setting. In some cases, he even appears together with a group of other brahmins in more or less Vedic ritual pursuits. It is, however, noteworthy that he is still referred to as *naimiṣeya* in the Mahābhārata. The most recurrent detail in the post-Vedic stories is that the spot where Baka is met is always situated by water. Another epic/puranic contribution to the picture of Baka Dālbhya is that he is introduced as a very old sage, one surpassing even the ageless Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya. Moreover, a central topic of these Baka Dālbhya passages is the visit of an important hero or god to his hermitage. In these cases, Baka is also delighted, especially when he meets the Vaishnava godhead incarnated (Kṛṣṇa, Rāma). These meetings give an opportunity for various discussions and teachings, e.g. about the respect to be shown towards the brahmins.

## 2.2. Dālbhyas

In addition to the above-mentioned Baka Dālbhya legends, there are several more or less passing references to the patronymic Dālbhya in post-Vedic literature. Besides narrative sources, the name Dālbhya is noted by the grammarians. It already appears in the Gaṇapāṭha, or the word-lists referring to Pāṇini's sūtras. The sources based on Pāṇini give various patronymic formations including forms with both *l* and *r*.<sup>94</sup>

Somewhat more than a mere name can be found in Bhāradvājagṛhyasūtra 2.6. This late Vedic text is treated here among the post-Vedic sources as it cites a śloka which it ascribes to both Asita Dhaumya and Dālbhya. The śloka, which is preceded by information about its reciters, deals with a despised dwelling place or an abode in which one is humiliated; one is recommended to concentrate in conciliatory efforts and stay there willingly all through the seasons in spite of the contempt of other people.<sup>95</sup> The Dālbhya, who appears here together with Dhaumya, is introduced as a swift-going *muni* (or 'the *muni* of the horse') having the qualities of a

<sup>94</sup> Katre 1971: 268, 272. Dālbhya is mentioned as a patronymic derived from the name Dalbha in the *gaṇa* called *gargādi* (= Gaṇapāṭha 71.96), connected to Pāṇini 4.1.105 (cf. Siddhāntakaumudī 1107). The adjective *dālbha* ('belonging to Dālbhya') also appears in the *gaṇa* lists (*gaṇa*: *kaṇvādi* = 71(38).96, P 4.2.111). On the other hand, the name Darbha is mentioned as the origin of three patronymics: 1) Dārbhya (*gaṇa*: *kurvādi* = 58.27, P 4.1.151, cf. SiK 1175), 2) Dārbhāyaṇa, which is given in Pāṇini proper (P 4.1.151, cf. SiK 1104) as a special form denoting the descendants of Āgrāyaṇa; in other cases the patronymic 3) Dārbhi is also possible. The last form appears only in the commentaries to Pāṇini (e.g. SiK 1104).

<sup>95</sup> BhārGS 2.6: *yad vāstu garhitam [bhavet] yatra vānyaḥ paribhavet | tatrāpi sukham āsita śamayan vāstv ṛtāvṛtāv || etad dhaumyasya vacanam asitasya turaṅgasya ca muneh kāvyasya dālbhyasya naitad vidvān parābhavet*. Although this seems to be the only passage mentioning a character called Asita Dhaumya, it is reasonable to connect these words as denoting the other person in the sentence. This is because Vedic sources refer to Asita Dhānva and Asita Daivala/Devala (Macdonell & Keith 1912, I: 47-48) and the post-Vedic Dhaumya, the *purohita* of the Pāṇḍavas, is said to have been the younger brother of Devala (Mani 1975: 210, 232).

sage. The words *turaṅgasya muneḥ* can be explained by recalling the flying Keśin's attribute, 'the horse of the wind' (*vātasyaśvo*) in ṚV 10.136.5. This means that even though the Gṛhyasūtra passage does not define the Dālbhya in question here (Keśin, Baka or some other), it reinforces the connection between the different Dālbhya figures and gives one more reason to assume some sort of continuation of ideas from the flying *munis* of the Ṛgveda up to the Baka Dālbhya of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha who made the sacrificial horses emerge from the ocean.<sup>96</sup>

Epic and puranic sources also refer several times to Dālbhya without mentioning his first name. Many of these appearances are just a name in a list of seers or ascetics, and usually there are no hints that would help in further identification of the character. Often it seems that this undefined Dālbhya is one of the 'faceless' characters who have been included among other seers. In these types of lists, a name is the only sign of individuality that is needed; this sort of minimum amount of information is often chosen when a 'group of ṛṣis' enter. One of these cases is the Sāvitrī legend of the Mahābhārata in which Dālbhya has a minute role (MBh 3.282.17). He appears there as one of the ascetics (MBh 3.282.7: *vṛddhair tapodhanaiḥ*) consoling Dyumatsena and Śaibyā, the parents of Satyavat who were desperately searching for their son and Sāvitrī. The other seers mentioned were Suvarcas, Gautama, Bhāradvāja, Māṇḍavya and Dhaumya (!). All of these ṛṣis in turn assured them that Satyavat was alive.

Simple mentions of the name Dālbhya in lists of seers can be found several times in the puranic records, too. The name appears in the Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa (PdP/SṛṣKh 7.92), in the Matsyapurāṇa (MtP 9.14) and in the Skandapurāṇa (Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 3.3.10 & Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 1.317.5). The first two of the references belong to two parallel passages dealing with the different *manvantara* eras. It is said that during each of the fourteen *manvantaras* there have lived seven illustrious ṛṣis. The third *manvantara*, called *auttami* (or *auttamīya*), is named after Manu Uttama (or Auttami), and Dālbhya is mentioned among the seers of this period.<sup>97</sup> Both of the above-mentioned Skandapurāṇa references to Dālbhya appear among conglomerations of ṛṣis. In the first case, Mārkaṇḍeya requests Nandikeśvara<sup>98</sup> to reveal the most powerful *tīrtha*; while persuading him, Mārkaṇḍeya says that he is not the only one who would be grateful for the information, and he enumerates at least 130 names of seers who would be eager to hear about the holy spot. The somewhat shorter list in the last book of the Skandapurāṇa gives names of the brahmins who were performing a large sacrifice.

<sup>96</sup> It has to be added that both Baka Dālbhya and Dhaumya have important roles in the sacrificial session of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha: whereas Baka acts as an *ācārya* of the ritual (see above fn. 6), Dhaumya proves the miraculous nature of the horse and the whole ritual (JA 64.19-21).

<sup>97</sup> The lists in the MtP and the PdP give slightly different sets of seven names, but Dālbhya appears in both of them. For the other six seers, see Summary Table.

<sup>98</sup> Nandikeśa or Nandikeśvara is the chief of the attendants (*bhūtagaṇa*) of Śiva.



The Uttarakhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa contains two passages in which Ṛṣi Pulastya transmits teachings to Dālbhya. In both of these cases, the patronymic is spelled in the form 'Dālabhya'. The topic of the first discourse (PdP/UttKh 42.1-23) is the *ṣaṭtilā ekādaśī* ritual during the dark half of month Māgha. In the beginning of the chapter, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Kṛṣṇa about the observance of the *ekādaśī* day of Māgha, and Kṛṣṇa, in his turn, refers to Pulastya's lesson to Dālbhya. Pulastya was said to have explained this periodic mode of Kṛṣṇa worship to Dālbhya, who wanted to know how sins would perish by means of some small gift. The other auspicious secret revealed by Pulastya was the Vaishnava hymn called *apamarjana* (PdP/UttKh 78). Pulastya had received it from his father Brahmā, and now he taught a meditation practise including the use of this hymn to the high-minded (PdP/UttKh 78.2: *mahātmane*) Dālbhya, who was eager to know about the overcoming of suffering caused by diseases and other destructive powers. The text also states that Dālbhya spread this auspicious way of Viṣṇu worship further for the good of all beings in the three worlds (PdP/UttKh 78.89-90).

The basic structure of these two passages comes quite near the Brahmanic stories in which 1) somebody has a burning problem, 2) he goes to the holder of the secret and 3) gets a ritual solution to his problem. Of course, the problems in the post-Vedic texts have become less concrete, like dilemmas of redemption. In any case, the Dālbhya of the Brāhmaṇa texts has here turned into a man who receives 'up-to-date' solutions (i.e. Vaishnava rituals) instead of the obsolete ones (i.e. Vedic rituals).

In the Āvatyakhāṇḍa of the Skandapurāṇa there is a passage in which Dālbhya appears in the role of a teacher who helps a royal couple in their desire to get a son (SkP/ĀvaKh 1.14.7-22). The episode takes place during a former *kalpa* and tells about King Sudyumna and Queen Sudarśanā. Once the queen approached *Muni* Dālbhya and enquired how<sup>99</sup> she could give birth to a perfect son. Dālbhya answered that oceans are especially auspicious for their purpose. He advised the king to go to meet Śiva so that he would make the bath in 'the oceans' possible. So, King Sudyumna went east of the Himālaya, to Mount Gandhamādana, where he pacified Śiva. The god became so pleased that he assembled all the seas together in Kuśasthalī. There the king could bathe in the united oceans and each of the oceans was said to have left one sixteenth part of themselves there. Thus was the origin of a *īrtha* called Catussamudra ('the four oceans').<sup>100</sup> After the king's pilgrimage a son was, naturally, born to the couple.

The legend of Sudyumna and Sudarśanā has provided us one more example of (Baka) Dālbhya's close connection to water, and to ocean in particular. In addition,

<sup>99</sup> SkP/ĀvaKh 1.14.8: *kena dānena snānena vidhināthavā*.

<sup>100</sup> Kuśasthalī is the ancient name of Dvāraka. So, in a way the northern sea of the Jaiminī-yāśvamedha appears here, too. The four oceans consisted of salt water, milk, curd and sugar-cane juice.

the reference to a previous *kalpa* (SkP/ĀvaKh 1.14.7: *purā kalpe*) hints again at the fact that Dālbhya has witnessed the mythical events from time immemorial.

The Sudyumna episode also illustrates the power of a *tīrtha* as a solution to a burning problem. This theme we have already met in the puranic version of Dhṛṭarāṣṭra legend. There the ancient events also gave birth to a holy spot, the ford called Avakīrṇa which was to produce the fulfilment of desires. In the light of these examples, it is not unexpected that the word Dālbhya appears also as a name of a *tīrtha*. The places of pilgrimage called Dālbhya and Dālbhyaghoṣa are referred to in the Āraṇyakaparvan of the Mahābhārata, in the section where Dhaumya describes various sacred fords of northern (!) India. The particular verse has been omitted from the text of the critical edition,<sup>101</sup> but it can be found in the Bombay edition (3.90.12).<sup>102</sup>

In post-Vedic sources there are also some references to a character called Darbhin. The Mahābhārata (3.81.131-136) provides interesting information concerning him, as it tells that 'out of compassion for the brahmins' Darbhin created a sacred spot along the Sarasvatī river. This place was called Avatīrṇa (MBh 3.81.133). By bathing there, one could become a brahmin even without performing the necessary rites, mantras and vows. The boon of four thousand cows was promised to a pilgrim there. It seems clear that this 'Darbhin' is Baka Dālbhya, who is connected with the Sarasvatī river in the two post-Vedic versions of the Dhṛṭarāṣṭra legend, in the Śalyaparvan and in the Vāmanapurāṇa. We have already seen that the Vāmanapurāṇa locates the legend particularly in Avakīrṇa<sup>103</sup> at Pṛthūdaka. Correspondingly, the Āraṇyakaparvan's description of the Avatīrṇa and Darbhin is immediately preceded by a depiction of Kārttikeya's ford at Pṛthūdaka. A detail of further interest is the Āraṇyakaparvan's account of the origin of the power of Avatīrṇa: the text states that Darbhin 'collected the four oceans there' (MBh 3.81.136). Thus, not only do the four oceans appear again, but also a simultaneous reference to both river and sea, i.e. two watery environments typical of Baka Dālbhya. Moreover, it should be noted that the narrator of this part of the sacred fords section is Pulastya, the ṛṣi who transmitted teachings to Dālbhya in the Padmapurāṇa. We

<sup>101</sup> The omitted passage bears the number 466\* in the critical apparatus of the Poona edition (under verse 3.88.10): *nyagrodhākhyaṣ tu puṇyākhyāḥ* (Bombay ed.: *pāñcālyāḥ*) *pāñcālyo dvipadām vara | dālbhyaghoṣaś ca dālbhyaś ca dharaṇīsthō mahātmanah || kaunteyānanta-yaśāsaḥ suvratasyāmitaujaśah | āśramaḥ khyāyate puṇyas triṣu lokeṣu viśrutaḥ*. See also Hoey (1900: 84), who connects 'the spot where Dālabhya Ṛṣi spent his life' with a modern place called Dalman on River Gaṅgā near Rae Bareilly, U.P.

<sup>102</sup> An additional connection between water and the name Dālbhya is given by Gonda (1954: 118). He refers to Dālbhyeśvara, a modern deity from the Varanasi area. This divinity is associated with Viṣṇu and he is 'supposed to exercise great power on the clouds in procuring rain'.

<sup>103</sup> Even some manuscripts of the Āraṇyakaparvan gives the form Avakīrṇa. The critical apparatus of the Darbhin passage also gives two other forms: Avacīrṇa and Ardhakīrṇa.

have several times met Dhaumya and Mārkaṇḍeya in connection with the passages mentioning a figure called Dālbhya and now Pulastya joins them.<sup>104</sup>

Another reference to Darbhin is made in the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa (BḍP 3.42.36). There this ancient seer is said to have cursed the moon while it rose on the fourth day of the lunar fortnight. The cursed moon was so weak that Gaṇeśa had to take it onto his forehead. Thus, Gaṇeśa is called Bhālacandra.<sup>105</sup> The passage does not give any other information which could shed light on this aetiological myth or explain the reason for Darbhin's curse.

In the light of the above-mentioned examples, it seems evident that in most cases the post-Vedic use of the plain patronymic Dāl(a)bhya (or the name Darbhin) refers to the same character as the name Baka Dālbhya. Yet, several of these occurrences appear in simple lists of seers. This means that the name Dālbhya is often used without any particular reference to his background, only as a name of a minor ṛṣi. If we compare the post-Vedic use of the patronymic Dālbhya with the Vedic examples, the most striking result, however, is the total absence of the name Keśin Dālbhya from the post-Vedic sources.<sup>106</sup>

Although the best known Dālbhya of the Vedas is absent, Baka is not the only name connected with Dālbhya in post-Vedic sources. There is one more puranic legend about Ṛṣi Dālbhya. It can be found in both the Matsyapurāṇa (MtP 70) and in the Padmapurāṇa's Śṛṣṭikhaṇḍa (23.73-142). The two versions are quite similar, although there are some textual variations – especially in the most interesting places. Normally these texts use only the name Dālbhya, but in one sentence both of them clarify that the character in question is Dālbhya Caikitāyana.<sup>107</sup> These two names have already occurred together, in slightly varying forms, in the texts of the Jaiminīyas (JB, JUB) and in some Upaniṣads (BĀU, ChU). In all of these examples Caikitāyana/Caikitāyana was a Sāmavedic authority.<sup>108</sup>

The reappearance of Dālbhya Caikitāyana, or Caikitāyana Dālbhya, takes place in a discussion between Brahmā and Śiva. When Brahmā asks about the conduct of prostitutes, Śiva brings up the fate of the 16,000 wives of Kṛṣṇa. According to the story, the *gopīs* used to cast amorous glances towards the handsome Sāmba, the son of Jāmbavatī (and Kṛṣṇa). When Kṛṣṇa detected the passion in the hearts of his wives, he cursed them all; he said that in future they will be taken away by *dasyus* (MtP 70.7, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.80: *vo hariṣyanti dasyavaḥ*). The *gopīs* were terrified and tried to propitiate their husband. So, Kṛṣṇa made a concession. He explained

<sup>104</sup> For the link between Pulastya and Baka, see Section 2.3.7 (pp. 359-360).

<sup>105</sup> BḍP 3.42.36: *caturthyām uditas candro darbhiṇā śapta āturaḥ | anena vidhṛto bhāle bhālacandras tataḥ smrtaḥ*.

<sup>106</sup> For Keśin without a patronymic, see Section 2.4.

<sup>107</sup> MtP 70.19, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.93: *dālbhyaś caikitāyanaḥ*. It is probable that here Caikitāyana is understood as patronymic and Dālbhya is taken as the first name.

<sup>108</sup> See Section 1.3 or the Summary Table.

that some day a seer called Dālbhya will come and teach them a *vrata* which will release them from their sexual servitude to the ‘thieves’. After Kṛṣṇa’s curse, there follows a short description about times to come: the Yādavas will be destroyed and even Arjuna will be defeated by ‘robbers’; thus the curse will come true and *gopīs* will be taken away by *dāsas*. When Dālbhya then finally enters, the ladies worship him and enquire about the reason for their ending up as prostitutes in spite of their former contact with Kṛṣṇa. At this point the narrator (Śiva) starts to quote the *ṛṣi*’s words to the *gopīs*, and this new speaker is called Dālbhya Caikitāyana.

At first, Dālbhya gives a more fundamental reason for the miserable fate of Kṛṣṇa’s wives: he explains that originally they were daughters of Agni in the form of Apsarases. Once they happened to meet Nārada and asked him advice because they wanted to acquire Nārāyaṇa as their husband. This episode explains their subsequent role as Kṛṣṇa’s lovers, but also their degradation after that; in fact, it was Nārada who had first cursed them. This happened simply because the nymphs were so eager to ask the question that they forgot to salute him. Thus, the typical puranic explanation, with the help of a curse, is doubled here (MtP 70.25, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.100: *nāradaśāpena keśavasya ca*). After this account of the origin of prostitutes, there is a lengthy passage in which Dālbhya describes to these ‘ex-wives of Kṛṣṇa’ the ceremony which they should perform for their salvation. The *vrata* for the prostitutes in this world is called *anaṅgadāna*, as Viṣṇu is, in this rite, worshipped in the form of Kāma.<sup>109</sup>

Although the passage mainly concentrates on the fate of the Apsarases/*gopīs*/prostitutes, the texts give some short comments on the character of Ṛṣi Dālbhya (Caikitāyana) as well. According to the usual imagery, he is introduced as a master of austerities<sup>110</sup>, but in addition, the ladies knew that Dālbhya had formerly been instructed by Keśava himself (MtP 70.18, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.92: *ādiṣṭo ’si purā brahman keśavena ca dhīmatā*). This hint brings the figure again close to the Baka Dālbhya of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha. He is a mysterious seer who appears from

<sup>109</sup> For the ritual, see Dange 1986-90: 1130; Arya 1988: 228, 465. This *vrata* contains some interesting mantras, too. When the prostitute gives gifts to the brahmin (to whom she had ‘offered herself’ as well), she is supposed to recite some ślokas. With these mantras in the form of a simile she 1) states that she does not distinguish between Kāma and Keśava (MtP 70.52, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.128-129), and 2) compares herself to Goddess Lakṣmī (MtP 70.53, missing from the PdP; see also the bhakti simile in PdP/SṛṣKh 23.137, missing from the MtP). Besides these undoubtedly post-Vedic mantras, there is one reference to a real Vedic verse, which the brahmin should recite when he accepts the image of Kāma from the prostitute: MtP 70.54 reads: *ka idam kasmā ’dādīti vaidikaṃ mantram udīrayet* (PdP/SṛṣKh 23.130 replaces this with: *ko dāt kāmō dādīti*). There are several Vedic verses beginning with *ka idam kasmā adāt...* (e.g. AV 3.29.7; cf. also VS 7.48: *ko ’dāt kasmā adāt*). For more material on the post-Vedic use of Vedic and ‘pseudo-Vedic’ mantras, see Koskikallio 1993: 115-116; 1999: 234-235. The latter article will introduce some bhakti similes as well (Koskikallio 1999: 240).

<sup>110</sup> MtP 70.13, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.87: *yogātmā dālbhyo nāma mahātapāḥ*; MtP 70.19, 64, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.93, 141: *tapodhana*.

outside the society and uses his knowledge and power to help the devotees of Kṛṣṇa. His special abilities are partly the result of his ascetic background, but the root of his omniscience is the early meeting with Kṛṣṇa (cf. the incident with Kṛṣṇa Vaṭapattrāśāyin in the JA). Moreover, the episode with the prostitutes contains a hidden reference to Dālbhya's incredible age: the meeting between Dālbhya and the *gopīs* takes place in the distant future, after the extinction of the Yādava family; the *gopīs* have been reborn in slavery (apparently several times), but the age-old (Baka) Dālbhya (Caikitāyana) has seen their long series of rebirths, from the heavenly Apsarases to the slaves of *dāsas/dasyus*.<sup>111</sup>

It is striking that the notorious masters of the fallen Apsarases/*gopīs* are called by the names referring to the enemies of the Vedic Aryans. The word *dasyu* is used twice during the account,<sup>112</sup> and in a parallel way, these worthless men are called *dāsas*. The latter word is, however, changed to the form *dāśa* ('fisherman', 'sailor') in the Padmapurāṇa's version. In addition, they are frankly called 'thieves'.<sup>113</sup>

The role of these outsiders of the early Vedic society in a puranic legend becomes even more meaningful as it seems evident that Dālbhya's role is intertwined with their appearance in the story. I think it is possible to explain why it is Dālbhya who clarifies the situation for the ladies. For understanding this, we have to bear in mind the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's pivotal account of Baka Dālbhya. The key points of the prostitute chapter are the two occurrences of the word *dāsa/dāśa* in the story. When Śiva describes the future of the *gopīs* to Brahmā, he introduces Dālbhya by using problematic verses which have variant readings in the two sources. The Matsyapurāṇa (70.9-10) reads:

*uttārabhūtaṃ dāsatvaṃ (variant: dāsatve) samudrād brāhmaṇapriyaḥ |  
upadekṣyaty anantātmā bhāvīkalyāṇakārakam ||  
bhavatinām ṛṣir dālbhyo yad vratam kathayisyati |*

PdP/SṛṣKh 23.82, on the other hand, replaces the two first *pādas* with *uttarāśrita-dāśānām uddhartā brāhmaṇapriyaḥ*... Thus, according to both texts, Ṛṣi Dālbhya who will relate the auspicious *vrata* to the *gopīs* is the eternal soul (= old) and the friend of brahmins, but it is difficult to understand what the Matsyapurāṇa might mean by 'the slavery (*dāsatvaṃ*) that has emerged (*uttārabhūtaṃ*) from the ocean (*samudrād*)'. The problem could be solved if we read *uttārabhūtaḥ dāsatve samud-*

<sup>111</sup> The degeneration of the 16,000 women can be seen in accordance with the puranic notion of time in the frame of the Yuga system. Their Apsaras-state mirrors the harmonious age of the first Yugas. As wives of Kṛṣṇa, they experience the special period between the safe past and corrupt future (on 'simultaneous condensation of the four Yugas' on the threshold of a new Yuga, see Koskikallio 1994: 259-261). The life of these women as prostitutes is, of course, a symbol of the general wretchedness of the *Kaliyuga*.

<sup>112</sup> MtP 70.7, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.80 (cited above); MtP 70.17, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.91: *dasyubhir... paribhuktā vyaṃ balāt*.

<sup>113</sup> MtP 70.24: *caurair apahr̥tāḥ*, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.99: *corair apahr̥tāḥ*; MtP 70.12, PdP/SṛṣKh 23.85: *caurair/corair api jite 'rjune*.

*rād*. This would mean that the salvation in the slavery situation (*dāsatve*) will come with the help of the *ṛṣi* who emerged (i.e. will emerge) from the ocean. The interpretation would identify Dālbhya Caikitāyana with Baka Dālbhya of the Jaiminīyāśva-medha, who comes from an island in the northern sea.

The new reading is partly supported by the Padmapurāṇa variant. The Padmapurāṇa also makes an indirect reference to the sea, as it states that Dālbhya would have been the liberator (*uddhartṛ*) of the fishermen (*dāśānām*) living (*āśrita*) in the north (*uttara*). This linking of Dālbhya with northern *dāśas* is a very interesting one, but it is difficult to understand why the masters of the prostitutes would have been liberated by this seer. Even if this reading might be a corrupt variant of the Matsyapurāṇa original, the interpretation which mentions the northern direction together with fishermen is a remarkable adaptation: a simple variation of the primary reading (*dāsa*) has made it possible to refer to water (sea) through the meanings of the word *dāśa*.

There is also one occasion in the legend where *dāsas* are located by the seaside. The other mention of the word in the Matsyapurāṇa reveals that when the *dāsas* abduct Kṛṣṇa's wives after the defeat of the Yādavas, they take them to the seaside (MtP 70.12: *hṛtāsu kṛṣṇapatnīṣu dāśabhogyāsu cāmbudhau*).<sup>114</sup>

Among the Vedic sources, several legends were seen in which the patronymic Dālbhya was connected with *vrātya* and *sattra* rituals, i.e. he was a character who was somehow on the border of the Vedic society. Having now examined the post-Vedic material, it seems that in most of the passages the figure called Dālbhya continues to stay on the outskirts of society. For instance, in the last example this ancient *vrātya* figure is met together with prostitutes and robbers. In some other cases, there are only glimpses of the faceless Dālbhya as the name flits by, for example, in a list of seers. In the more informative passages Dālbhya also has a role of a distant figure: he is a seer who practices austerities beyond the inhabited regions. His liminal status is further underlined by the very place where he stays: a shore or a river bank illustrates Dālbhya's position between the known (land) and the unknown (water, sea). The same scheme is repeated in the post-Vedic legends containing an intermediary or a holder of a secret: as Dālbhya gives (or receives) answers to burning questions, the liberating information is transmitted from the unknown to the known world. The Vedic answers/secrets usually consisted of a suitable rite or a new *sāman*, but in post-Vedic times the correct remedy is usually some Vaishnava rite, a vow (*vrata*) or a pilgrimage to some powerful *tīrtha* – which means that we find ourselves on the shore once again.

<sup>114</sup> The Padmapurāṇa also differs here: *hṛtāsu kṛṣṇapatnīṣu dāśabhogyāsu cārbude* (PdP/SṛṣKh 23.86). So, the fishermen either enjoyed the *gopīs* for a hundred million (*arbude*) years, or on the Arbuda mountain (= Mount Abu).

### 2.3. Baka, the heron

The next task is to chart the various dimensions of the first name of our hero. The literal meaning of *baka* ('heron') guarantees that we shall remain on the brink of the water. In 1975, Paul Thieme published an article in which he disentangled the bird terminology of various crane and heron species appearing in Sanskrit literature. Besides illustrating the role of *baka* in *subhāṣitās* and story literature, Thieme (1975: 13-14) identifies the word with the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*). Thus, the often used translation 'crane' for *baka* is deemed to be erroneous.<sup>115</sup> Thieme also proposes an Indo-European etymology (*baka* < *b-aka-* 'waterwatcher') for the word.<sup>116</sup>

#### 2.3.1. The untrustworthy heron

The characterization of the heron in Indian story literature and in the Dharmaśāstras is mostly a negative one. These sources often depict *baka* as a false friend, the symbol of an untrustworthy person who pretends to have good intentions. The heron-like conduct is crystallized in Mānavadharmasāstra 4.196, which reads:

One who hangs his head,  
who is bent upon injuring others and upon his own gain,  
dishonest, and falsely modest,  
such a twice-born is said to act like a heron.<sup>117</sup>

There are several Sanskrit words which refer to this type of deceitful behaviour. It is called *bakavrata* or *bakatva*, and this sort of a person is said to be *baka-*

<sup>115</sup> According to Thieme (1975: 8-13, 15-22), the word *krauñca* refers to the crane ('Wanderkranich', not curlew!) and *balāka* to various species of egret (genus *Egretta*).

<sup>116</sup> Thieme 1975: 23. Onomatopoeic origin for the word is suggested by Mayrhofer (1963: 205) and Turner (1966: 514, no. 9115). Cf. the denominative *bakabakāy-* 'to croak'. For the possible Dravidian connections, see Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 471, nos. 5206 (Ta. *vakkā* = *Ardea nivea*) & 5204 (Ta. *vakuḷi* 'sound'). For the ornithological dimensions of the word, see Raghu Vira & Dave (1949: 427-428), who confirm that the word *baka* refers to several species of heron (genus: *Ardea*). It is, however, impossible to identify the exact ornithological referent for each use of the word. I am aware that the translation 'heron' for *baka* is, strictly ornithologically, not valid for every occasion. So, in this article the word 'heron' is used simply as a synonym for 'baka the bird'. Dave sees *baka* as a broader term which not only refers to the grey heron, but also to the white ibis (also known as *śvetabaka*), or even to stork and flamingo (Dave 1985: 231, 386, 389-396, 400-401, 409-411, 414). Lexicographic literature also gives the words *bakoṭa* and *gobaka* as synonyms of *baka* (cf. Dave 1985: 382-383, 386-387: *bakoṭa* = white ibis, *Threskiornis aethiopia*; Dave 1985: 404: *gobaka* = cattle egret, *Bubulcus ibis*).

<sup>117</sup> Manu 4.196: *adhodr̥ṣṭir naikṛtikaḥ svārthasādhanataparāḥ | śaṭho mithyāvinītaś ca bakavratācaro dvijaḥ*. The same verse with the variant reading *bakavrataparo* appears in the Viṣṇusmṛti (ViS 93.9). Nandapaṇḍita's commentary to the Viṣṇusmṛti gives the following gloss: *mithyā parapratāraṇāyaiva vinayavān bakavṛttir jñeyaḥ*.

*vratin*, *bakavratika*, *bakavratacara*, *bakacara* or *bakavṛtti*. The adverb *bakavat* and the more vivid expression *bakālīna* ('lurking/crouching like a heron') can also be found.<sup>118</sup>

The portrait of the treacherous heron is best illustrated in Indian fables. A common story of the heron and crab appears with some variation in the Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa, Kathāsaritsāgara and Jātakas. They all tell about a heron who pretends to be a saviour of the fishes living in a small pond: this *baka* promises to take the fishes one by one in his beak to a big lake, but instead devours each fish when got out of sight. Yet, the revenge comes through a crab that is not as credulous as the fishes. The heron desires the crab's flesh as well, but after a flight, the crab nips off his head.<sup>119</sup> It is interesting to note that both the Pañcatantra and the Hitopadeśa explain why *baka* had to resort to a plot: this was due to the fact that he had become old (*baka eko vṛddhabhāvam upāgato leko vṛddho bakaḥ sāmartyahīna*). The Jātaka, on the other hand, gives a human counterpart for the heron; in a parallel story, a cheating robe-maker from Jetavana is introduced as the resemblant of the heron.

Another fable of the Pañcatantra (1.29) further defines *baka*'s place in the allegorical world of animals. The story tells how a family of herons and a black adder (*kr̥ṣṇasarpa*) lived in the same tree. As the serpent used to eat up young birds, a heron stood by the lake downcast (*adhomukha*) and shed tears.<sup>120</sup> He met there a crab who now regarded the heron as the natural enemy of his kin (*ayam tāvad asmatsahajavairī*). This fact in mind the crab advised the heron to scatter pieces of fish starting from the adder's hole to the place where a mongoose (*nakula*) lived. When this was done, the mongoose killed the serpent but, when he found the tree, started in turn to eat herons. In this story, the family of herons seems to be a

<sup>118</sup> The word *bakālīna* appears at least in Böhlingk's *Indische Sprüche* (Böhlingk 1870-73, saying no. 2184 = MBh/Calcutta ed. 12.5309, not in the critical edition). The verse gives 'lurking' as the distinct characteristic of a heron.

<sup>119</sup> Pañcat. 1.8 (according to Pūrṇabhadra's version); Hitop. 4.6; KSS 60.79-90 (=10.4.79-90); Bakajātaka (= Jātaka no. 38). Dave (1985: 390) says that the description of *baka* in this fable refers to a stork rather than a heron. The crab appears in the versions of the Pañcatantra (*karkaṭaka/kulīraka*), Hitopadeśa (*kulīra*) and Bakajātaka (*karkaṭaka*). The Kathāsaritsāgara, however, gives the avenger's role to a *makara*. In KSS 60.86 it is also called *jhaṣa*, 'large fish'. In the Mahābhārata there is a similar story about an old hypocritical goose (*haṃso mithyāvṛttaḥ*) that lived on the seaside and acted against its own teachings (MBh 2.38.25-40). For the excellence of a goose compared to *baka*, see Böhlingk's sayings no. 4800 and 7358. Cf. also the Vedic legends where Keśin (Dār̥bhya) appears together with the golden goose, also known as Sutvan Yajñasena (in Section 1.2).

<sup>120</sup> Here the heron's crouching posture gets a new interpretation as the expression of sadness. Similarly, the slow motions of *baka* are said to either reveal the burden of killing or tell of compassion towards living beings (Böhlingk's sayings no. 6393 and 6394). It also seems obvious that the heron's crouch and slow motions make an important ground for the common association of the bird with old age. Probably this association is felt to be so self-evident that there is no reason to pinpoint it in the stories of old herons. See also Section 2.3.3.



victim of a plot. The fable also defines the scheme of natural enmities in the forest. Thus, the state of antagonism prevails not only between the heron and the crab but also between the adder and the heron, as well as between the mongoose and the heron. In addition, we meet here the natural enmity between herons and fishes as well as between mongooses and serpents. This story also contains an interesting detail, as the tree in which the family of *bakas* had their nest was said to be a banyan (*vaṭapādapa*).<sup>121</sup>

It is certainly the nature of a heron to eat fishes, and sometimes – especially when he has become old – *baka* is tempted to use tricks to catch fishes. Yet, the heron is only a part of the food chain; it has its natural enemies as well. The unsafe situation of every creature becomes apparent in a *subhāṣita* which states that the fish called *timi* eats its own relatives, a silent heron (*maunī baka*) devours the *timi* and a hiding hunter shoots the heron.<sup>122</sup> Thus, deceitfulness lurks for every creature. Because of this state of things, it is not so surprising that the heron-like conduct can even be recommended for a king: there is a śloka according to which a ruler should adopt a heron-like attitude towards his affairs (*bakavat cintayet arthān*).<sup>123</sup> Here this attitude seems to mean silent consideration connected with sudden acts without pity.<sup>124</sup>

Yet, heron-likeness is most often considered as a negative character trait, especially for a brahmin. The Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas contain several warnings against people classified as *bakavṛtti*: a brahmin should not earn his living by heron-like ways (Garuḍapurāṇa 1.96.36); people of heron-like behaviour should not be honoured, or even greeted (Viṣṇupurāṇa 3.18.100; Manu 4.30); a person versed in dharma is not allowed to offer even water to a brahmin who is a *bakavratika* (Manu 4.192 = ViS 93.7); images of Śiva and Pārvatī should not be handed over to a *bakavratin* (Matsyapurāṇa 95.29). In these examples, heron-like people are compared with heretics, rogues and men who follow forbidden occupations, among others. In some cases, the heron-like persons are regarded as equal to people who

<sup>121</sup> The Kathāsaritsāgara contains a short variant of this fable (KSS 60.234-236). This story, however, differs from the Pañcatantra's version as there the mongoose is not described as a threat to the herons; the natural hostility between mongooses and serpents simply helps the herons to get rid of the threatening snake (*bhujaga*). The crab appears here as a helper, which is somehow unexpected.

<sup>122</sup> Böhlingk's saying no. 2573 (= Rājatarāṅginī 5.305).

<sup>123</sup> Böhlingk's saying no. 4378 (= MBh 12.138.25; Manu 7.106).

<sup>124</sup> The heron plays an even more positive role in some apocryphal episodes of the Rāma story. W. L. Smith (1995: 164-166) takes up some examples from Assamese, Bengali and Orissa Rāmāyaṇas. These passages introduce *baka* as a 'family man' who helps Rāma. The heron informed Rāma that it had seen the abducted Sītā passing in Rāvaṇa's *vimāna*. Another example of a heron symbolizing positive characteristics is related in the Āsaṅkajātaka (= Jātaka no. 380). It contains a story of a patient and optimistic heron that wished for food and drink during its stay on a hilltop. In the end, Sakka, the king of heaven, made its wish come true by sending a flood to this area.

act like cats (*baidālavratika*, Manu 4.30, 4.192 = ViS 93.7; ViP 3.18.100). The hypocrisy of the cat recalls *bakavta* very much; only the downcast posture seems to be missing.<sup>125</sup>

Some Dharmaśāstric sources illustrate punishments for heron-like life or prescribe birth as a heron as punishment for one's sins. A dharma passage which describes heron-like behaviour ends with a statement according to which the brahmins who display the characteristics of herons or cats (*bakavratino, marjāraliṅginah*) will fall into the hell called *andhatāmisra*, 'complete darkness' (Manu 4.197 = ViS 93.10). Each crime has to be expiated by torments in the hells, and the following birth takes place in body of some lower creature. Stealing of fire (Manu 12.66 = ViS 44.35; Garuḍapurāṇa 1.225.28) or theft of milk (MBh 13.112.95) are said to be the crimes which lead into birth as a heron. The heron is also mentioned among the future births of an adulterer (MBh 13.112.66). Moreover, *baka* appears among the animals lacerating people in the hell (ViS 43.34), and one of Yama's ministers is said to be heron-faced (ViS 43.37).<sup>126</sup>

### 2.3.2. The meditative hypocrite

The crouching posture and slow motions of a heron have led to different, partly overlapping, interpretations of this bird's character. In several examples, the bird, or a human *bakavratika*, is characterized by predatory hypocrisy,<sup>127</sup> but there is also another way to explain this silent image. The *maunī baka* has also been understood as the symbol of a person who is lost in thought or who practices austerities or

<sup>125</sup> For a definition of *baidālavratika*, see Manu 4.195 = ViS 93.8; see also Doniger & Smith 1991: 92.

<sup>126</sup> Both of these ślokas use the compound *kākakaṅkabakādi*, 'crows, herons, etc.'. The word *kaṅka* is closely synonymous with *baka* (Dave 1985: 383, 392, 400). James L. Fitzgerald (1998: 257-259) identifies *kaṅka* in the Mahābhārata as the adjutant stork. He also refers to the frame story of the Virāṭaparvan in which Yudhiṣṭhira takes the 'code name' *Kaṅka* when the Pāṇḍavas stay incognito in Virāṭa's Matsya kingdom (MBh 4.1.203; 4.6.103, 133). This 'heron-Yudhiṣṭhira's' luring of the Matsya King repeats the heron and fishes motif and mirrors Yudhiṣṭhira's Yama Dharmarāja aspect (see Biardeau 1978: 101, 106-108; Hildebeitel 1988: 177-179; cf. Hildebeitel 1988: 202, on the fish-symbolism of Draupadī). – See also Vāyupurāṇa 69.263, which mentions heron-headed Piśācas as one of the sixteen varieties of Piśāca troops (*piśācānām gaṇāḥ*). For closer analysis on the Asura/Rākṣasa Baka, see Section 2.3.7.

<sup>127</sup> 'Predatory hypocrisy' is an apt expression used by Raheja and Gold (1994: xi). They note that this image of the heron is limited to the 'male performance genre' of Sanskrit sources. Contemporary folk traditions do not necessarily share this picture. Raheja and Gold (1994: xi-xii) state that in North Indian women's songs, the heron's framing speech usually tells of 'alternative moral perspectives'; he is the bold 'narrator of commonly suppressed truths', such as adulterous liaisons. It must be added that the adultery motif is connected to the heron in the Great Tradition as well. The scenery in which the heron appears in the Rajasthan examples cited by Raheja & Gold (1994: xi, 58-59) is the natural/conventional: the bird sits on a banyan by the water.

meditation. Thus, the idea of the heron's religious hypocrisy is a sort of amalgamation of the treacherous and meditative aspects of the bird. According to one saying, a heron will eat credulous fishes even if it looks like being absorbed in thought or meditation (*prakaṭitadhyāno 'pi*).<sup>128</sup>

Thus, it is possible to distinguish at least three character types which can be symbolized by a heron: 1) a treacherous villain, 2) a motionless ascetic and 3) a religious hypocrite. In addition, the appearances of *baka* are often tinged with a touch of melancholy. The heron is most often seen as an image of a brahmin, especially in the roles of an ascetic or a hypocrite. An illustrative example of a hypocritical brahmin as a heron is found in a Jātaka which introduces a variation of the heron and fish theme. This Jātaka is also called Bakajātaka. Here the Bodhisatta appears as a fish that does not fall for the silent heron's trick because he knows the nature of *baka*. In the end, the fish recites the following two stanzas:

See that twice-born bird, how white –  
Like a water-lily seeming;  
Wings outspread to left and right –  
Oh, how pious! dreaming, dreaming!

What he is ye do not know,  
Or you would not sing his praises.  
He is our most treacherous foe;  
That is why no wing he raises.<sup>129</sup>

In some sayings only the meditative aspect of the heron is taken up without any reference to cunning or hypocrisy. One positive example of this kind states that a wise man is like a heron: he should restrain one's senses and act according to the situation.<sup>130</sup> The heron is also said to be a bird devoted to meditation (*bako dhyānavān*).<sup>131</sup> One saying states that the heron lacks many lovely characteristics of birds, but it has the *vrata* instead.<sup>132</sup> Heron's silence (*mauna*) makes it superior even to the talking birds which can be guilty of false or excessive speech (*mukhadoseṇa*).<sup>133</sup> In addition, the warning against killing a heron is found in the Dharma-

<sup>128</sup> Böhrling's saying no. 2575 (= Rājatarāṅginī 6.309). Wendy Doniger calls the meditative aspect 'the heron's deceptive somnambulance or fastidiousness' (Doniger & Smith 1991: 92).

<sup>129</sup> Transl. by W. H. D. Rouse in Cowell 1895-1907, II: 162 (Jātaka no. 236). The Jātaka refers to the hypocritical brahmin with the word *kuhaka* (= Skt. *kuhaka* 'rogue', 'hypocrite').

<sup>130</sup> Böhrling's saying no. 6950: *sarvendriyāṇi saṃyamya bakavat paṇḍito naraḥ | kāladeśopapannāni sarvakāryāṇi sādhayet*.

<sup>131</sup> Böhrling's saying no. 4873. Cf. saying no. 7041, which states that there is one thing that can be learned from the heron. Dave (1985: 405) mentions the synonyms *tāpasa* and *mṛṣādhyāyī* that refer to *baka*'s habit of standing on one leg 'in contemplation'; see also Dave 1985: 391 (*bakatapavī*).

<sup>132</sup> Böhrling's saying no. 3209: *...guṇas tathāpy asti bake bakavratam*. Here *bakavrata* can be understood as a positive quality – unless the whole verse is understood ironically, i.e. the 'heronly' *vrata* (hypocrisy) is the embellishment for a heron.

śāstras. These texts often list *baka* among the animals which are not to be killed or eaten (Manu 5.14; Manu 11.136 = ViS 50.33; ViS 51.29; Garuḍapurāṇa 1.96.69).<sup>134</sup>

A special concept related to the heron and meat-eating is *bakapañcaka*. The term appears in various Smṛti digests and refers to the period of five days in the month of Kārttika during which people should abstain from flesh-eating. According to one explanation for the name, even a heron would not eat fish during these days. (Kane 1974: 335.) On the other hand, it is said that anyone who eats fish during the *bakapañcaka* days will be burdened with heron's sins.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, *baka*'s notorious craving for fish is linked with this term in several ways.

There is also a Jātaka story that seems to be connected with the concept of 'heron's fast'. The fable is called *Vakajātaka* (Jātaka no. 300), and it tells how a hideous *vaka* lived on a rock by River Gaṅgā. In wintertime, a flood came up and surrounded the rock. As the *vaka* was thus isolated without food, it decided to start a fast (*uposathakamma*). The Bodhisatta, who was at that time Sakka, the king of heaven, wanted to try the sincerity of *vaka*'s *vrata*. He took the shape of a goat and placed himself near the fasting animal. When *vaka* saw the possibility of prey, he thought: 'I shall start the fast another day'. He tried to catch the goat but did not succeed. *Vaka* consoled itself with another thought: 'I did not break my fast after all.'<sup>136</sup>

The story connects the idea of a fasting heron with the hypocritical nature of the bird. In addition, the Jātaka uses the flood theme, which recalls Baka Dālbhya/Mārkaṇḍeya surrounded by the cosmic waters.<sup>137</sup> There is, however, a problem with the *Vakajātaka*, because the text uses the form *vaka* – except two manuscripts which write *baka*. In Pāli the *v*-form is not simply a variant of *baka* ('heron'), but means 'wolf' (< Skt. *vṛka*). The fact that the *vaka* in the story cannot fly indicates that he must be a wolf.<sup>138</sup> Yet, the obvious Baka motifs behind the story, together with the hesitation of the manuscript tradition, points to the conclusion that this fable is a mixture of the heron and the wolf themes.

<sup>133</sup> Böhrtlingk's saying no. 4879: *bakās tatra na badhyante maunaṃ sarvārthasādhanam*. Dave (1985: 389) thinks that the verse refers to storks, most of which are voiceless.

<sup>134</sup> Dave (1985: 386) thinks that the word *baka* in Manu refers to the white ibis.

<sup>135</sup> This explanation is given by Rāma in Baḷarāmadāsa's Oriya Rāmāyaṇa (see W. L. Smith 1995: 166). See also below fn. 179.

<sup>136</sup> Kulāvakajātaka (= Jātaka no. 31) contains a similar episode in which Sakka, in the shape of a fish, tests a female heron (Cowell 1895-1907, I: 81-82). This *bakasakuṇikā* was one of Sakka's handmaidens, who had fallen into a bird birth. In this example the heron, however, passed the test as she ate only dead fishes.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Āsaṅkajātaka (= Jātaka no. 380), in which Sakka helps *baka* by sending a flood (see fn. 124).

<sup>138</sup> Dave proposes a solution which does not sound very convincing here. He identifies *vaka* with the adjutant stork which 'is said to be ready to attack a lamb or kid' (Dave 1985: 395, 398-399; cf. fns. 126 and 170).

### 2.3.3. The old bird

In addition to the treacherous, meditative and hypocritical aspects of the heron, there is one more characteristic which frequently shows up in *baka* legends: old age. I have already referred to the heron's decrepitude as a reason for its resorting to a trick in the story of the heron and crab. A more obvious example of an age-old heron appears in the legend of King Indradyumna. The episode introduces a *baka* called Nāḍījaṅgha ('stalk-leg'). Sage Mārkaṇḍeya also plays a central role here. This story is told in the Āraṇyakaparvan of the Mahābhārata (MBh 3.191); another version with more details can be found in the Māheśvarakhaṇḍa of the Skandapurāṇa (SkP/MāhKh 2.7-13).

The Mārkaṇḍeya section of the Āraṇyakaparvan gives the story in concise form, as told by Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya to the Pāṇḍavas. In the beginning, King Indradyumna falls from heaven after his merit was exhausted. As his fame on the earth had faded during his long stay in heaven, he started to look for someone who would be old enough to remember his ancient ruling era. During this search, Indradyumna meets several more and more aged figures who are yet unable to remember him. First, Indradyumna comes to Mārkaṇḍeya. The seer informs the king about the owl called Prākāraṅga, who is senior to Mārkaṇḍeya and lives in the Himālaya. The owl does not recognize Indradyumna either, but remembers Baka Nāḍījaṅgha, an old heron living by Lake Indradyumna (sic!). King Indradyumna, together with Mārkaṇḍeya and Prākāraṅga, goes to meet the bird, but unfortunately he is not old enough. With Nāḍījaṅgha's help they find a tortoise called Akūpāra who lives in the same lake. The tortoise is moved to tears when he sees Indradyumna. Akūpāra recognizes the king, because he was the very tortoise upon whom a fire altar was piled at Indradyumna's ancient sacrifice. Even Lake Indradyumna was created by the tread of the king's *dakṣiṇa* cattle. The statement of Akūpāra restores both dharma and the fame of Indradyumna on the earth. Finally, a heavenly chariot takes off and carries Indradyumna back to the joys of heaven.<sup>139</sup>

This legend once again ends with a touching encounter between two characters who had seen each other in the remote past. Old age is the attribute that causes the heron's appearance in the story. It is also interesting to note that the legend once again introduces a *baka* who is longer-lived than Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya. Yet, even more

<sup>139</sup> In addition to this story, Purāṇas contain two Vaiṣṇava legends about a king called Indradyumna. The Bhāgavatapurāṇa (8.4.6-13) tells how he was cursed and turned into an elephant by Sage Agastya. The Puruṣottamakṣetramāhātmya (= SkP/Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa 2) describes the feats of King Indradyumna who, among other things, performed a horse sacrifice (SkP/VaiKh 2.14-19) during the *Kṛtayuga*. For further details, see Mani 1975: 328-329. Lake Indradyumna is also mentioned in some other epic and puranic passages (e.g. MBh 1.110.45; BḍP 2.18.56; MtP 121.55; VāP 47.54; SkP/MāhKh 3/uttarārḍha 2.17; SkP/VaiKh 3.1.44).

important details are revealed in the longer version of the legend in the Skandapurāṇa, which puts forward the background of Baka Nāḍijaṅgha.

In the opening scene of the puranic version (SkP/MāhKh 2.7.12-17), Prajāpati/Brahmā approaches the king in heaven. Due to his good deeds, Indradyumna was taken to the heavenly abode in his physical body for one hundred *kalpas*. Although he still has some of his merit left (cf. the Mahābhārata's version), Brahmā orders him to return immediately to the earth to revive his forgotten fame. When Indradyumna comes down, people do not know him; they ask him to go to the Naimiṣa forest to meet Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya, who is said to be the oldest living person and able to remember the last seven *kalpas*. Then the journey continues to the Himālaya to meet Baka Nāḍijaṅgha who tells his own history (SkP/MāhKh 2.7.35-111). Next we meet Prākāraḥ, the owl, who is said to have his abode on the Kailāśa mountain (This figure's background is related in chapter 2.8). Then an additional old character, the king of vultures living on the Gandhamādana mountain, is introduced (chapter 2.9). The tortoise – now called by the name Mantharaka – is also here the one who remembers King Indradyumna. According to the Māheśvarakhaṇḍa, the tortoise lives in the Mānasa lake. When he sees the king among the visitors, he becomes frightened due to the painful memory of the fire on his shell. Mantharaka tells about his past in chapter 2.11.<sup>140</sup> This version of the Indradyumna legend also defines how long each of these antediluvian characters have lived in this world. The exponential proportions are the following: Mārkaṇḍeya – 7 *kalpas*, the heron – 14 *kalpas*, the owl – 28 *kalpas*, the jackal – 56 *kalpas*, the tortoise – 112 (?) *kalpas*.<sup>141</sup>

The Indradyumna legend of the Māheśvarakhaṇḍa is a Śaiva story. It is set in a framework that praises the Mahī river and a *tīrtha* at the meeting place of the Mahī and the ocean.<sup>142</sup> The river is said to have been created by the ancient sacrifices of King Indradyumna (SkP/MāhKh 2.13.214), and the *tīrtha* is the place for the *liṅga* called *Indradyumneśvara* (or *Mahākāla*), installed by this king (SkP/MāhKh

<sup>140</sup> A curious detail of this story is that it twice refers to the worship of Śiva with flowers called *bakapuṣpa* (SkP/MāhKh 2.11.7 & 20). For this flower (*Agati grandiflora* and *Sesbania grandiflora*), see Dymock, Warden & Hooper 1890: 472-474. In addition to this plant, the word *baka* appears in a few other terms of Indian flora and fauna: *bakasaḥavāsīn* ('lotus'), *bakavṛkṣa* (a tree), *bakadhūpa* (a perfume); *bakaciñcikā* (a fish). As a technical term, *baka* can also mean an apparatus for subliming metals or minerals (and *bakayantra* refers to a particular form of retort). Moreover, *baka* is mentioned as a special type of rosary bead in Agnipurāṇa 325.6.

<sup>141</sup> This scheme gives a 'logical' explanation for the fact that only the tortoise was able to remember Indradyumna after his heavenly stay of one hundred *kalpas*. Probably the use of this calculation has led to the addition of one more age-old animal, the jackal, to the story. There is, however, some confusion concerning the age of the tortoise; the text does not mention the expected number of 112 *kalpas*, but says that he has lived only for 56 *kalpas* in this animal form (SkP/MāhKh 2.11.45-46).

<sup>142</sup> This sacred spot called *Mahīsāgarasaṃgama* (or *Stambheśvara*) is in Gujarat at the bottom of Cambay Bay.

2.13.208-218). The story also explains that Mārkaṇḍeya and the animals met by Indradyumna were actually incarnations of the cursed *gaṇas* of Śiva (SkP/MāhKh 2.10.31). According to this version, King Indradyumna did not want a temporary position in heaven. Thus, with the help of meditation and worship of *liṅgas* he, together with *baka* and other animals of the story, attained the salvation, or *sārūpya* with Śiva (SkP/MāhKh 2.13.205-208).

Mārkaṇḍeya, on the other hand, became *jīvanmukta*, i.e. he already received liberation while alive. Śiva granted the same prize to Ṛṣi Lomaśa, too. This seer appears in the end of the puranic version (SkP/MāhKh 2.12) as an additional figure whose lifetime is of huge proportions, even compared to the tortoise and Indradyumna. He explained that once in every *kalpa* a hair falls off his body and he will die only when he is totally hairless. The appearance of Lomaśa in this story indicates that the compilers of the Māheśvarakhaṇḍa were well aware of the different dimensions of characters like Mārkaṇḍeya and Baka Dālbhya/Nāḍījaṅgha.<sup>143</sup> I have already referred to the interchangeability of Mārkaṇḍeya and Baka Dālbhya; now it seems that Lomaśa also can fit into this puranic role of a seer who has survived the destruction between the *kalpas*.<sup>144</sup> It would also be tempting to take Lomaśa as a sort of a post-Vedic counterpart of the vanished Keśin Dālbhya (cf. *lomaśalromaśa* 'hairy', *keśin* 'long-haired'). Like Baka Dālbhya, Lomaśa is sometimes said to be a sage from the north, too (Mani 1975: 458). Similarly, Baka Nāḍījaṅgha and other old animals of the story lived in the Himālaya area.

Other interesting details can be found in the story of Baka Nāḍījaṅgha which the heron himself told to Indradyumna and Mārkaṇḍeya in chapter 2.7. Nāḍījaṅgha explained that he had received the gift of old age through Śiva's grace (like the other old characters of the Indradyumna legend). Besides being the overlord of the Lord's heavenly troops, the heron had played two other roles in the past; he had been the Prince of Ānarta<sup>145</sup> as well as the mischievous son of the brahmin called Viśvarūpa Pārāśarya. The brahmin's son episode is a sort of a Śaiva variation of the legend of Kṛṣṇa the child trickster. Once the son of Viśvarūpa stole the emerald *śivaliṅga* of his father and hid it inside a pot of ghee. This happened on the *makarasamkrānti* day, and Śiva was much delighted by this new form of worship which he named *ghṛtakambalapūjā* ('*pūjā* with a ghee-covering'). Due to this special mode of worship, the brahmin's son was reborn as the Prince of Ānarta and he could remember his previous birth. He also continued to worship Śiva by smearing a *liṅga* with ghee. Finally, the pleased Lord appeared to him and let him choose a

<sup>143</sup> A digest of the puranic Indradyumna legend can be found in the Nāgarakhaṇḍa of the Skandapurāṇa (SkP/NāgKh 271.317-332). This passage is narrated by the tortoise; the characters are the same.

<sup>144</sup> The retelling of the Indradyumna legend in the Nāgarakhaṇḍa is also followed by the story of Lomaśa. Cf. JA 60.25 (cited above in fn. 89) in which Baka Dālbhya is presented as longer-lived than both Mārkaṇḍeya and Lomaśa.

<sup>145</sup> An ancient kingdom in North Gujarat, around Dvārakā.

boon. According to his wish, he became the overlord of the *gaṇas* on Kailāśa with the title *pratīpapālaka*.

Yet, the growth of merit was followed by a fall.<sup>146</sup> The unstable nature of the future Baka Nāḍijaṅgha caused him to wander everywhere, and the pride over his high status also became evident. During his wanderings he met Ṛṣi Gālava and became fascinated by the beauty of this seer's wife, and so the hypocritical prince/*pratīpapālaka* became a disciple of Gālava. After some time he tried to abduct the lady, but her cries awoke Gālava who paralyzed the deceitful disciple with his mighty words. Due to this heron-like behaviour, Gālava cursed the prince and turned him to a heron for a long time (SkP/MāhKh 2.7.94). He became a *baka* in the family of Kāśyapa, and the curse was supposed to end only when he would help King Indradyumna in his rehabilitation (SkP/MāhKh 2.7.109-110).<sup>147</sup>

The *baka*-nature of Nāḍijaṅgha is present in all of his roles. When he was the son of the brahmin, his father Viśvarūpa already used to call him by the pet name 'Baka'.<sup>148</sup> The untrustworthy hypocrite dimension is made explicit several times during the Gālava episode. When Nāḍijaṅgha narrates how he decided to become a disciple of Gālava, he says that he was already called Baka in his previous birth and now he also became a person with heron-like behaviour.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, when he is about to kidnap Gālava's wife, she refers to him as a *bakavṛtti* who is falsely clad in dharma.<sup>150</sup> There is also a hint to the motionlessness of the heron as Gālava stops his disciple by 'making him like a picture'.<sup>151</sup> Even the combination of the age-old *baka* and the fig tree is present in the story: after the seer had uttered his curse the kidnapper 'trembled like the leaves of an *aśvattha* fig'.<sup>152</sup>

This puranic story presents a surprising compilation of themes that we have already met in the heron stories, and also shares some points with the legends of Baka Dālbhya the sage. The story of Nāḍijaṅgha not only recalls the fables with a heron figure, but also represents an almost complete picture of *bakatva*; it manifests untrustworthiness, hypocrisy, asceticism (of a disciple), motionlessness, adultery and old age, all in one legend. Calling a mischievous child by the pet name 'Baka'

<sup>146</sup> The same tendency, finally leading to a terrible curse, appears in the stories of the other old animals of the legend. We had a parallel example in the story of Kṛṣṇa's 16,000 wives (see above Section 2.2). The following scheme can be detected behind these puranic stories: exceptional accumulation of merit → divine revelation + prize (boon) → rise to the category of demigods → excessive haughtiness/natural impatience → offence → curse → end of the curse when a hero is met. For a classification of curse types, see W. L. Smith 1986.

<sup>147</sup> I have already referred to the judgement of MBh 13.112.66: an adulterer will be born as a heron.

<sup>148</sup> SkP/MāhKh 2.7.46: *bālako baka ity evaṃ pratīto 'tipriyaḥ pituḥ*.

<sup>149</sup> SkP/MāhKh 2.7.83: *itthaṃ purā bakābhikhyam bakavṛttim upāśritam*.

<sup>150</sup> SkP/MāhKh 2.7.89: *bakavṛttir ayaṃ duṣṭo dharmakañcukam āśritaḥ | harate me durācāras...*

<sup>151</sup> SkP/MāhKh 2.7.92: *tataś citrākṛtir ahaṃ stambhito muninā 'bhavam*.

<sup>152</sup> SkP/MāhKh 2.7.98: *...aśvatthaparnavad bhayāt | kampamānaḥ...*



adds a new feature to the picture. The old age together with asceticism and motionlessness are the aspects which connect this puranic passage with the legends of Baka Dālbhya.

An additional detail which cannot be left without consideration is the role of the seer whose disciple the 'heron-to-be' pretends to be. The appearance of a Baka figure in the same story with a sage called Gālava can be taken as a distant recollection of the Upaniṣadic identification of Baka Dālbhya with Glāva Maitreya (see above Section 1.1). The earliest, passing references to the name Gālava are found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad and in the Aitareya-Āraṇyaka.<sup>153</sup> The puranic myth of Ṛṣi Gālava, related in several Purāṇas, provides a revealing detail about the origin of his name. He is said to have been born as a son of Viśvāmitra. The legend tells how Viśvāmitra's wife decided to sell her middle son so that she would be able to feed the other children during her husband's absence. She made a rope out of *darbha* leaves and tied it around the neck of the unlucky son, whose name is not mentioned. On the way to the market they met Prince Satyāvraṭa, later known as King Triśaṅku. The royal hero kindly promised to help the family and asked the wife to untie the rope around the neck (*gala*) of the boy. Thus the son got a new name: Gālava.<sup>154</sup>

It would be tempting to play with the words and think about the other alternative for his name: as the rope round the boy's neck was made of *darbha* grass, the other etymology of authentic puranic style would have been *darbha* > Dārbhya/Dālbhya. The main question is, of course, not why the Gālava alternative was chosen, but whether the puranic compilers of the legend have consciously hinted towards the old connection between the names Glāva/Gālava and Dārbhya/Dālbhya. If we accept the tradition-awareness of the puranic narrators, it is possible to define the story of Ṛṣi Gālava and Baka the adulterer as the secondary result produced by the great puranic myth generator. On the basis of this hypothesis, we can at least say that the name Glāva/Gālava might add a faint thread of continuity between the Vedic and puranic traditions of Baka Dālbhya.

<sup>153</sup> In the teacher lists of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad he is mentioned as a pupil of Vidarbhī-kaunḍinya (BĀU/Kāṇva 2.6.3, 4.6.3 = BĀU/Mādhyamīna 2.5.22, 4.5.28). In AiĀ 5.3.3 he appears as a ritualist. See also Macdonell & Keith 1912, I: 227.

<sup>154</sup> Harivaṃśa 9.100 & Devībhāgavatapurāṇa 7.10.42: *so 'bhavad gālavo nāma galabandhāt*; VāP 88.90 & BḍP 3.63.89: *...nāma gale baddho*; BrP 7.109: *...nāma gale bandhāt*; ŚiP 5.37.59: *abhavad gālavo nāma galabandhāt*. More about Gālava in Mani 1975: 271-272, 794. In MBh 5.104-117 Gālava appears not as the son but a pupil of Viśvāmitra. The apparent parallelism between the Gālava story and the Brahmanic Śunaḥśepa legend – in which Viśvāmitra (!) saved the boy who was to be sacrificed – would be a topic for another study.

### 2.3.4. The divine incarnation

The puranic retelling of the Indradyumna legend has added much flesh to the bones of the Mahābhārata's version. A fundamental point of the puranic story was that it used much of its length to explain how Mārkaṇḍeya and the aged animals had hidden identities as *gaṇas* of Śiva. The following example is a Śaiva story, too. There we meet again a heron, Mārkaṇḍeya and Śiva, but with a totally new assignment of roles. This legend adds one more variant to the Mārkaṇḍeya in the flood theme (see Section 2.1, especially fn. 93).

Chapter 3.8 of the Āvatyakhanda of the Skandapurāṇa, entitled *Bakakalpa-samudbhava*, tells how Śiva took the form of a heron during the dissolution preceding the *Bakakalpa* (SkP/ĀvaKh 3.8.53: *bake purā kalpe*).<sup>155</sup> The eternal Sage Mārkaṇḍeya was again overtaken by the flood between *kalpas* as he was meditating. While swimming in the water he saw a large milk-coloured heron, like a bright necklace, flying towards him.<sup>156</sup> The bird explained that he was Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu in the same form, and the dissolution was brought about by him (3.8.7). The magnificent *baka* asked the seer to ascend his wing, and a magic flight followed. From the air, Mārkaṇḍeya saw ten ladies on the margins of the water (3.8.14-16). The journey continued to even higher spheres, and the sage could see heavenly cities with brilliant scenery. He also perceived a *liṅga* that shone in different colours (3.8.24-26). Then he saw again the ten ladies who were now worshipping the *liṅga*. They were the personifications of the great rivers. One of them, Narmadā the *kalpa-vāhini*, explained to Mārkaṇḍeya the meaning of his vision (3.8. 39-47). He learned that the ladies were the ten rivers and both the *liṅga* and *baka* were different forms of the highest godhead, Śiva (3.8.43: *mahadevo liṅgamūrtir*; 3.8.49: *deveśo baka-rūpo maheśvaraḥ*). After Narmadā's account, the vision started to fade. At first, Mārkaṇḍeya found himself in a river taking a bath and worshipping the *liṅga*. When even this vision vanished, the sage was back on the firm earth.<sup>157</sup>

This passage provides one more parallel to Baka Dālbhya's psychedelic trip in the Jaiminiyāśvamedha. The idea about the interchangeability of Mārkaṇḍeya and Baka Dālbhya is further strengthened, as this story not only repeats the heavenly flight theme but also hints at Baka Dālbhya by showing Śiva in the form of a heron. It would be difficult to understand any other reason for this exceptional form of incarnation.

<sup>155</sup> This chapter is part of the section called Narmadāmāhātmya (SkP/ĀvaKh 3.3-3.29). The preceding two *adhyāyas* deal with similar events during the prelude of *Mayūrakalpa* and *Kūrmakalpa*.

<sup>156</sup> SkP/ĀvaKh 3.8.3: *...apaśyaṃ pakṣiṇaṃ param | hārakundendusaṃkāśaṃ bakaṃ gokṣīrapāṇḍuram*.

<sup>157</sup> A minor example of personified rivers connected with a heron can be found in the Nīlamata-purāṇa. There *baka* is mentioned as the vehicle of River Gaṇḍakī (Kumari 1994: 43, verse 163). See also the other Āvatyakhanda episode on the oceans and Rṣi Dālbhya (Section 2.2).

### 2.3.5. The demigod under a delusion

Following this exceptional case, the theme already encountered in the puranic Indra-dyumna legend continues. There both the heron and Mārkaṇḍeya shared the background as *gaṇas* of Śiva. They had fallen due to their excessive pride. The use of the false pride motif together with successive rebirths becomes more understandable if a close parallel from the Jātakas is taken up. This comparison will reveal that the puranic Indradyumna legend is not the sole example of a *baka* figure as a haughty demigod.

The Bakabrahmajātaka (= Jātaka no. 405) introduces Baka the heavenly demigod (*brahmā*). He had lived for several *kalpas* in different heavenly abodes (*brahmalokas*) as a prize for successful meditation on earth.<sup>158</sup> In the Ābhassara-*brahmaloka* he assumed a false notion according to which his present existence was permanent and eternal, and there was no higher salvation than the state which he had attained. Once the Buddha appeared in this *brahmaloka*. Baka welcomed him after a long separation and expressed to the Buddha his firm belief in his present existence as the absolute state. The Buddha, however, spoiled this idea by showing Baka's ignorance of his past lives. He explained Baka's true birth history and the temporary nature of even an exceptionally long life. Thus, Baka realized his mistake. By disseminating teachings in this *brahmaloka*, the Buddha finally released the minds of ten thousand *brahmās*.<sup>159</sup>

The key to Baka's awakening was the Buddha's revelation of the fact that they had met in the past, when Baka was the old ascetic Kesava and the Buddha his young disciple Kappa. This birth-story is narrated at length in the Kesavajātaka (= Jātaka no. 346). It tells how the king of Vārāṇasī asked Kesava to send his disciples to the Himālaya and spend his old age in the king's palace. This led to Kesava's illness which was cured only when the separation from his favourite disciple Kappa was ended.

Once again we meet topics like old age and a happy reunion in a Baka legend. The importance of this story is the double appearance of these themes in two different birth-stories: old age (supermundane and mundane) is a distinctive mark of both Baka and Kesava, and the meeting of Baka and the Buddha is repeated in the

<sup>158</sup> His first heavenly birth took place in the Vehapphala-*brahmaloka* and lasted for 500 *kalpas*. Next, he spent 64 *kalpas* in the Subhakiṇṇa-*brahmaloka*. When the events of this Jātaka took place, he had already passed eight *kalpas* in the Ābhassara-*brahmaloka*.

<sup>159</sup> This Jātaka story is a retelling of the Bakabrahmasutta of the Saṃyuttanikāya (1.142). A slightly different variant of the debate between the Buddha and *Brahmā* Baka can be found in the Brahmanimantaṇikasutta of the Majjhimanikāya (1.49), which gives a role to Māra, too. According to this version, the Buddha convinced the creatures of the *brahmaloka* by a trick that Baka was unable to do: the Buddha became invisible. The Brahmanimantaṇikasutta also states that Baka's long stay in the *brahmaloka* – a sort of old age – had clouded his comprehension of reality. For comparison of the two suttas, see Masson 1942: 60-62.

separation and joyous reunion of Kesava and Kappa. It is most probable that this Jātaka has been a model for the Śaiva retelling of the Indradyumna story. The use of the haughty demigod theme together with emphasis on old age, the central role of successive births and, of course, a figure called Baka, form substantial evidence for this. Correspondingly, resemblance between the Bakabrahmajātaka and the Baka Dālbhya episode of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha is considerable: the appearance of *brahmalokas* and heavenly *brahmās* in a Vaishnava text as well as a certain parallel between the meeting of Baka Dālbhya and Kṛṣṇa, on the one hand, and *Brahmā* Baka and the Buddha, on the other hand, are the most apparent indications of the Bakabrahmajātaka's influence on the Baka Dālbhya episode.<sup>160</sup> The Vaṭapattraśāyin legend, being another important model for this Jaiminīyāśvamedha passage, was treated in Section 2.1.

Of further interest is the use of Kesava as the name of the *alter ego* of a Baka figure. It would be tempting to interpret this 'Keśava' as a hidden reference to Keśin. This would mean that we have here a Buddhist legend that presents Keśin (Dālbhya) and Baka (Dālbhya) as different births of the same character.<sup>161</sup>

### 2.3.6. The bird king

In a few legends Baka appears as the name of a king. This royal character has either been a bird in his earlier birth or he is the king of birds in the story itself. The royal aspect of Baka comes close to the demigod role, but the bird king is a figure with more positive attributes. Some correspondence with the old Baka Nāḍijaṅgha can also be found.

The first example of a royal Baka is the king of Vārāṇasī in a passage of the Kuṇāljātaka (= Jātaka 536). This misogynous Jātaka at first introduces the bird king called Kuṇāla, an early birth of the Buddha. Kuṇāla was always carried and guarded by an escort of 3500 hen-birds. Finally, the royal bird felt himself distressed with this female flock which carried him aimlessly wherever the wind blew. The king scolded the hen-birds and wished that these ungrateful creatures would perish.

One of the parallel stories in the Kuṇāljātaka (Cowell 1895-1907, V: 236-240) tells about a resourceful human King Baka who fell in love with a poor and exceptionally ugly girl called Pañcapāpā. Despite her hideous appearance, she managed to charm every man with her amazingly soft touch. After many incidents, the king took the goblin girl as his chief consort. Yet, later he had to share her with King Pāvāriya

<sup>160</sup> It is worth noting that the joyous reunion theme is in many ways parallel with the end of the curse motif. Just like the visit of Kṛṣṇa/Buddha ends the long meditative/ignorant period of Baka, similarly, for example, the appearance of Indradyumna ends the long curse in the Baka Nāḍijaṅgha story.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Keśin the Asura in Section 2.4.

who lived on the opposite bank of the river. So, Pañcapāpā moved to the other side at intervals of a week – and deceived both of the kings with an old ferryman who was both bald and lame.

This story differs from most of the Baka stories because it portrays the king as a nice and noble person. He is also the only Baka figure of the Jātakas who appears in a role of the future Buddha. Besides the name Baka, the only bird-like trait in the picture of this king is his former birth as Kuṇāla.<sup>162</sup> The only ‘ignorance’ of King Baka was that he could not resist the magic touch of the woman, i.e. he could not see ‘the real nature’ of women. In this respect he, despite his future buddhahood, recalls *Brahmā* Baka who cherished the false idea about his absolute birth.

The other royal *baka* is encountered in the Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata. This extremely warm-hearted heron king (*bakarāja/bakarāj/bakapati/bakādhipal/bakendra*) appears in the legend of Gautama, the vicious brahmin (MBh 12.162.28-167.24). The story takes place in the north among the *mlecchas*. Though born into a brahmin family in Madhyadeśa, Gautama had settled down in the north. There he lived as a fowler together with his śūdra wife in a village of *dasyus*. (12.162.28-37.) Once on his way to the sea to catch birds, Gautama lost his way and ended up in a forest to the north of his route. At dusk he met there a shining bird under a banyan tree. The bird was the king of *bakas*, the son of Ṛṣi Kaśyapa and Dakṣa’s daughter, a celestial maiden (*devakanyā*). The earthly name of the bird was Rājadharmā, and he was just coming back home from a *brahmaloka* where he was known as Nāḍī-jaṅgha. (12.163.17-20.)

Rājadharmā offered the best hospitality to Gautama. He fed the guest with large fishes and took him as a friend. When Gautama explained that he was heading for the sea to gain some wealth, Rājadharmā advised him to go to his dear friend Vīrupakṣa, the Rākṣasa king, who used to give riches to brahmins on the full-moon days of Āṣāḍhya, Māgha and Kārttika. Later Gautama took so much gold from Vīrupakṣa’s Kārttika feast that he tired of carrying the load. When he came to Rājadharmā’s abode again, he killed the bird king without remorse, just because he did not have any food for his homeward journey. Afterwards Vīrupakṣa ordered his Rākṣasa forces to slay Gautama. The body of the brahmin was cut into pieces, but both Rākṣasas and *dasyus* refused to eat the flesh of such an immoral man. In the end, Goddess Surabhi revived Baka. Surprisingly enough, the bird asked Indra to restore to life his ‘dear friend’ Gautama, too. This was done, and Baka embraced the brahmin with great joy.

<sup>162</sup> The word *kuṇāla* (in Sanskrit also *kunāla* or *kunālika*) seems to refer to a bird species, too. It is usually identified with the Indian cuckoo or koel (*kokila*), but sometimes the word is connected with a snipe (Raghu Vira & Dave 1949: 377; genus *Rostratula*, e.g. the painted snipe). According to Dave (1985: 390), the word *bakarāja* can also have an ornithological meaning referring to the white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*); moreover, he states that the general term for different stork species is *bṛhadbakāḥ* (Dave 1985: 389).

This story also contains some curses. The reviving of Baka was due to a curse by Brahmā: in the *brahmaloka* Baka had once missed a meeting, and so Brahmā cursed him so that he was *not* able to die, i.e. he had to live on earth for a very long time.<sup>163</sup> Another curse was announced at the end of the story by the gods to Gautama: his numerous children sank into terrible hells for many ages. So the wicked was punished, but the text does not give any clear explanation whether the good received one's just deserts. The passage remains silent about Rājadharmā/Nāḍījaṅgha's prize for his utterly altruistic behaviour. The revival from death does not seem to be a proper recompense; the appropriate ending would, of course, have been the divine promise to restore Baka to his *brahmaloka*. According to the similar epic/puranic reasoning, we could say that Rājadharmā's unusual magnanimity towards the wicked Gautama was basically not more than the way to end the curse and the long life on earth. This would also explain the bizarre 'happy friends' reunion' at the end of the story.

This epic legend makes it even clearer that the royal heron figure does not share the negative traits of brahmin Bakas. Despite this fact, there is an obvious connection between this passage and the puranic story of the hypocritical brahmin called Nāḍījaṅgha – who also had the royal alter ego, the Prince of Ānarta. Thus, both of the Nāḍījaṅghas were old birds whose winged birth was due to a curse. Both of them were also fallen demigods, and this matter seems to have more significance for the story than the 'heronly' appearance of these figures. These Baka Nāḍījaṅghas are unmistakable counterparts of the Buddhist Baka of the *brahmaloka*, who did not have much bird in his figure either.<sup>164</sup>

The legend of Rājadharmā and Gautama is heavily linked with the sage dimension of Baka, too. Many references to the northern direction together with the simultaneous presence of *brahmalokas* and a fig tree reminds us, once again, of the Baka Dālbhya of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha. On the other hand, Gautama's low status on the fringes of the civilized world comes close to the story of Dālbhya Caikitāyana and the prostitute *gopīs* (see Section 2.2). The context of fishing and *dasyus* of the north especially contribute to the similarity of these two legends. Sage Dālbhya Caikitāyana's role as a helpful figure is analogous with the bird-like Rājadharmā/Nāḍījaṅgha; the fallen wives of Kṛṣṇa and the low-minded Gautama are not so much equivalent with each other. However, the contact with the notorious people on

<sup>163</sup> Despite heavenly Nāḍījaṅgha's sad fate to live on earth as King Rājadharmā, the story clearly mentions that the bird returned home from the *brahmaloka* in the evening when he first met Gautama. This, together with the many supermundane characteristics of the bird king, seems to refer to some sort of a partial banishment from the heavenly state.

<sup>164</sup> One possibility is that the fusion of royal and demigodly roles which gives birth to a supermundane, Gandharva-like bird figure can be traced to Vedic lore. The Vedic legend of Sutvan Yājñasena and Keśin Dārbhya, in which Sutvan was a deceased king and ritualist in the guise of a golden goose, was treated above (see fn. 44).

the margin of the society continues to be the distinctive mark of some Bakas and Dālbhyas in post-Vedic material as well.<sup>165</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned bird rulers, there is one more sovereign called Baka. The Rājatarāṅginī (Stein ed. 1.325-335) mentions him among the legendary kings of Kashmir. The text shows this Baka as a humane ruler, despite the cruel repute of his father Mihirakula (RT 1.289-325). The short passage about King Baka contains curious information about his participation in a tantric feast (RT 1.331-335). The story tells that the king lost his sense due to the captivating words of a sorceress (*yogeśvarī*) called Bhaṭṭā. She had assumed the appearance of a lovely woman, and with her captivating words she enticed Baka to take part in a magnificent sacrifice (*yāgotsavamāhātmya*) to the circle of the goddesses (*devī-cakra/mātrīcakra*). By the exploitation of Baka's royal potency in this ritual, Bhaṭṭā attained miraculous power and finally rose to the sky. Thus, the motif of a good king charmed by a sorceress appears both here and in the Jātaka story of King Baka and Pañcapāpā.

The Baka passage of the Rājatarāṅginī also lists some places named after the king. He is said to have established the *Bakeśa* Temple of Śiva and the *Bakavatī* Canal, both situated in the area called *Bakaśvabhra* (RT 1.329). Other sources add

<sup>165</sup> An additional parallel to both the Gautama story and the Dālbhya Caikitāyana legend – and especially to the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's Baka Dālbhya episode – can be found in the Kathāsaritsāgara. The 'Story of the Golden City' contains an episode (KSS 26.1-37) in which the brahmin hero Śaktideva sailed the ocean with Satyavrata, 'the king of the fishermen' (*dāśendra*). They saw a banyan tree in the middle of the sea – 'like a mountain with wings' (*paṅsagiri*) – underneath which there was a gigantic whirlpool, the mouth of the submarine fire (KSS 26.10: ...*vaṭadrumaḥ* | *asyāhuḥ sumahāvarttam adhasthād vaḍavāmukham*). Finally, the wind carried them so near the whirlpool that the ship and Satyavrata were drawn into the vortex; but Śaktideva caught a branch of the tree and climbed onto the boughs. In the evening he saw a flock of enormous vultures (*gr̥dhra*) coming to rest on the banyan. During the night, Śaktideva heard how an old bird said to the other vultures that he had just visited the Golden City and in the morning he will fly back. Later, when the birds were sleeping, Śaktideva hid himself among the backfeathers of this bird, and in the morning he reached the Golden City. – This episode has been commented on by Jarl Charpentier (1920: 353-358). He also introduces a slightly similar Jaina story from Devendragani's 11th-century commentary on the Uttarādhyayana. That passage describes mythical *bhāruṇḍa*-birds with two heads and three legs. Charpentier (1920: 357, n. 2) explains that in the Jaina canon, *bhāruṇḍa* is the symbol of watchful meditation, like *baka* standing on *one* leg. This *bhāruṇḍa*/*bhurunḍa*/*bhūruṇḍa*/*bherunḍa* is also connected with the Hyperboreans, i.e. with the north. Thus, Charpentier's material does not directly deal with *baka* and *brahmalokas* are missing, too. But several other crucial motifs are there: the fig tree amidst the ocean, (old) bird(s) on its boughs, and even fishermen and the northern dimension. Moreover, the concept of the submarine fire is usually symbolized by the submarine mare (see further, e.g. O'Flaherty 1980: 213-237). This point explains why the pair of sacrificial horses surfaced at a place which was situated by a fig tree. Naturally, there are a few problematic reversions: the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's vortex – which is not mentioned in the text – seems to be an inverted one because it throws things back from the sea. Besides, the sacrificial horse is always a stallion. Probably, the stallions, who were 'celibates', disappeared into the ocean because they were attracted by the submarine mare.

a few geographical compounds with the word *baka*: the Kathāsarisāgara (6.76, 6.166) mentions *Bakakaccha*<sup>166</sup>, a spot by River Narmadā, and a list of *tīrthas* in the Skandapurāṇa refers to *Bakeśvaratīrtha* (SkP/Āvntyakhaṇḍa 3.230.103). *Bakadvīpa* is mentioned in Nāradapañcarātra 2.2.82. This term refers to the fifth of the seven circular continents of the puranic cosmology. Yet, the compound is only a rare synonym for the *Krauñcadvīpa* ('crane-island') which is known from the Mahābhārata (6.12.3, 6.13.7, 17, 20) and from several Purāṇas. The continent is famous for its great Krauñca mountain.

Some personal names also contain the word Baka: e.g. *Bakanakha*, son of Viśvāmitra (MBh 13.40.57), and *Bakasaktha* which appears only in lexicographic literature (e.g. Siddhāntakaumuḍī 1146, commentating Pāṇini 2.4.63).

Besides kings and places, the name Baka can also refer to a tribe. This usage appears in texts that list various peoples of Bharatavarṣa. For instance, Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa 55.42 reads: *krauñcāḥ kurubakāś caiva...* Thus, Bakas are again mentioned together with Krauñcas ('cranes') – and Kurus.<sup>167</sup> Another reference to the 'heron people' can be found in the geographical portion of the Bhīṣmaparvan. Readings of these enigmatic tribe lists are so uncertain that even the printed editions show much variation in the Baka verse: the Calcutta edition mentions the Bakas (6.9, verse 369: *bakāḥ kokarakāḥ...*), the corresponding stanza of the Bombay edition refers to the mysterious 'cuckoo-herons' (6.9.61: *vyūkāḥ kokabakāḥ...*), and the critical edition ignores Bakas altogether (6.10.60: *tryaṅgāḥ kokarakāḥ...*).

### 2.3.7. The bird demon

Up to this point, the material has depicted the untrustworthiness, hypocrisy and delusion of several characters that bear the name Baka. Yet, besides these moderate forms of *bakatva*, exemplified by animal, human and demigodly figures, there are also heron-like creatures in roles of fierce Rākṣasas or Asuras. Thus, the last major aspect of the heron in Indian tradition is an explicitly demonic one.

The heron-faced minister of Yama and troops of *bakas* in hellish and Piśāca-like roles were already referred to at the end of Section 2.3.1. The primary function of these figures was to illustrate the destiny of the people who share the heron-like tendencies. Similarly, in a late Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣad, Rākṣasa Baka is defined as the embodiment of arrogance (Kṛṣṇa-Upaniṣad 14: *garvo rakṣaḥ khago bakāḥ*). The

<sup>166</sup> The variant reading of some editions is *Bharukaccha* (or *Marukaccha*), which is an ancient coastal town in the north-east. See further Dave (1985: 408, n. 1) who identifies Bakakaccha with the Rann of Kutch that is known for its flamingos.

<sup>167</sup> Of course, *Kurubakāś* is not necessarily a *dvandva* compound here. It is, however, difficult to say what can be meant by the people of 'Kuru-herons'. The word might also be a result of misspelling, or the people got their name from a flower known as *kuravakakuruvaka* (= amaranth). Cf. also Dave (1985: 12-13) who defines *ku-ravaka*, appearing in Bṛhatsaṃhitā 88.4, as a bird called tree-pie (*Dendocitta vagabunda*).



plural form of the word *baka* appears in some puranic sources as well. For example, the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa mentions a terrible and powerful Rākṣasa subgroup called the *bakas*. They were sons of Vṛtra but later served as Indra's attendants.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, there is a connection between Baka and Kubera, also known as the king of Yakṣas. The Vāyupurāṇa refers to Baka in the list of Yakṣa Maṇivara's sons (VāP 69.160). The text calls Manivara's sons *guhnyakas*, who are known as prominent members of Kubera's court on Mount Kailāśa.<sup>169</sup>

The Mahābhārata and Purāṇas also contain a few famous episodes about a specific – 'earthly' – ogre called Baka. Although this Rākṣasa/Asura appears as an individual character, his gregarious nature is still evident, since he often has a flock of relatives or other fellow-demons behind him. The fate of the nasty Baka is, naturally, to be killed by such heroes as Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa. On all these occasions, Dave's ornitological identification with the adjutant stork (*Leptoptilus dubius*) – 'monster among birds' – seems to be justified.<sup>170</sup>

The Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata contains a section entitled 'The Slaying of Baka' (*bakavadha*, MBh 1.145-152). The episode is the last incident before Draupadī enters and it is preceded by another Rākṣasa-killing (*hiḍimbavadha*). In those times, the Pāṇḍavas, together with Kuntī, wandered disguised as *brahmacārins*. They arrived at the city of Ekacakra situated by the River Gaṅgā. The city was part of the kingdom of a feeble king whose capital was called Vetrakīyaḡṛha ('the house of reed'). One day, four of the Pāṇḍavas went out for alms and Bhīma was left at Ekacakrā together with his mother. Then Kuntī found all of the host family lamenting. The father of the brahmin family explained (MBh 1.148) that their town was actually a protectorate of the man-eating (*puruṣādaka*) Rākṣasa Baka, the 'Asura king who possessed the Rākṣasa power' and lived in the forest nearby.<sup>171</sup> As the price for protection, Baka wanted a regular offering of one human together with a cartload of rice drawn by two buffaloes. The brahmin was in despair because it was his family's turn to provide Baka's meal and they were incapable of buying anybody outside the family for the Rākṣasa (148.15).<sup>172</sup> Kuntī responded that the powerful Bhīma could drive the rice-carriage there because he was the brilliant hero with the power of spells in his possession (149.14: *vīryavān mantrasiddhaś ca*

<sup>168</sup> BḍP 3.6.35-36: *jajñire asumahāghorā vṛtrasyendreṇa yudhyatā || bakā nāma samākhyatā rākṣasāḥ sumahābalāḥ | śataṃ tāni sahasrāṇi mahendrānucarāḥ smṛtāḥ*.

<sup>169</sup> Mani 1975: 301; Hopkins 1915: 144. In lexicographic literature, the word *baka* appears among Kubera's epithets, too (e.g. in Hemacandra's *Anekārthasaṃgraha* and in the *Medinīkoṣa*).

<sup>170</sup> Dave 1985: 392, 395; cf. above fns. 126, 138. Dave also notes that *bakāsura* has been called *mahābaka* (BhP 10.11.49), which sounds more like a bird species.

<sup>171</sup> MBh 1.148.4-5: *rakṣaty asurarāṇ nityam imam janapadaṃ balī | nagaraṃ caiva deśaṃ ca rakṣobalasanvitaḥ*.

<sup>172</sup> The buying of a substitute for a human sacrifice is again a possible allusion to the Śunaḥśepa legend. See above fn. 154. MBh 7.151.3 calls Baka 'the eater of brahmins' (*brahmaṇādo bako*).

*tejasvī*). Bhīma was, of course, eager to go. In the forest (1.150) Bhīma calls out Baka's name, and when the ogre approaches, the big-eater-Pāṇḍava himself starts to eat rice from the carriage. The bulky but quick-moving Baka arrives as if rending the earth; he knits his brow with three peaked lines and gnashes his teeth.<sup>173</sup> A fight follows during which Baka pulls out trees and destroys the forest. Yet, Bhīma kills him with his bare hands. Finally, Bhīma tears the screaming Rākṣasa in half. Baka's 'family and servants' are also mentioned, as they rush out of their 'house', alarmed by the screams.<sup>174</sup> When Baka is killed, his folks turn friendly. By carrying Baka's corpse to the gate of Ekacakrā and leaving it there, Bhīma proves to the people of the city that the danger is over.

Madeleine Biardeau has analyzed the Bakavadha episode and revealed several crucial factors behind the story.<sup>175</sup> Alf Hildebeitel (1988: 169-182) mostly builds on her conclusions and introduces southern folk versions based on this epic passage. Comments by Biardeau and Hildebeitel on the Bakavadha passage are of great help in focussing the overall picture of the Indian heron mythology, but on the basis of the material gathered here, it is possible to find some additional links between Rākṣasa Baka and other heron figures.

Hildebeitel's interpretation of the Bakavadha episode contains the following main points:<sup>176</sup>

- 1) The place-name Vetrakīyagrha refers to the impure marshy regions, in contrast to the safe (solid) ground of Brahmanical culture. The homeland of Rākṣasa Baka is also the natural habitat of herons.
- 2) The heron – *baka* as well as *kaṅka* – is a bird that carries a heavy symbolic load as being an impure eater of raw and dead flesh.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>173</sup> MBh 1.151.4: *mahākāyo mahāvego dārayann iva medinīm | triśikhāṃ bhṛkuṭim kṛtvā saṃdaśya daśanacchadam.*

<sup>174</sup> MBh 1.152.1: *tena śabdena vitrasto janas tasyātha rakṣasaḥ | niṣpapāta gṛhād rājan sahaiva paricāribhiḥ.*

<sup>175</sup> Biardeau 1978: 99-101. On the same occasion, she comments on several other Mahābhārata passages with heron-symbolism (see Biardeau 1978: 96-107). Her main idea is to consider the appearances of heron-figures as key passages through which Yudhiṣṭhira's identification with his father Dharma is repeatedly recalled. According to Biardeau, the Yama dimension of Father Dharma is actualized in the image of the flesh-eating heron.

<sup>176</sup> Biardeau's ideas are neatly reorganized by Hildebeitel (1988: 177-179), and I have mostly followed his wording. Entries 1 and 5 on this list seem to be Hildebeitel's own additions.

<sup>177</sup> Hildebeitel repeats Biardeau's ornithological inaccuracy as he uses the translation 'crane' for *baka* (and 'heron' for *kaṅka*). In Biardeau: *baka* = la grue; *kaṅka* = le héron. See above fn. 126 on the identification of *kaṅka*. Biardeau (1978: 99, n. 3) also cites Medinikośa's gloss for the word *kaṅka*; it contains the identification with Yama and the meaning 'hypocritical brahmin' (*chadmadvija* – which is unlikely to allude to the special case of Yudhiṣṭhira's disguise in the Virāṭaparvan, as Biardeau thinks). Biardeau (1978: 98) also refers to several Mahābhārata verses in which *baka* and/or *kaṅka* are mentioned in inauspicious omens, e.g. MBh 5.141.17-18; 6.2.7; 11.16.7.

- 3) The demonic Baka is an ideal type of a *brahmarākṣasa*, i.e. a symbol (or reincarnation) of a wretched or unsuccessful brahmin.
- 4) The power of the *brahmarākṣasa* is basically made possible by the feeble king who ruled in 'the house of reed', i.e. the disorder is due to the kṣatriyas' own weakness. (This state of affairs partly resembles the situation between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.)
- 5) Thus, Baka is a symbol of chaos or the decline towards the 'law of the fishes'.<sup>178</sup>

This means that Biardeau has answered several crucial questions concerning the symbolism of *baka*. She has explained why the heron is a suitable model for a Rākṣasa (1-2), how the special symbolic connection between the heron and the brahmins work (3), and what kind of social dimensions there are behind the motif of the heron and fishes (4-5).

The material in Section 2.3.6 clearly showed that the moral evaluation of heron-like personalities greatly depend on their social class: a brahmin called Baka is a predominantly negative character, but as a kṣatriya, Baka can be a most admirable person. The concept of *brahmarākṣasa* makes it definitely clear that the heron-likeness is a symbol for the violent potential which is an inherent part of the kṣatriyas' life, but is frightening for the brahmins. Psychologically-speaking, the heron may be a symbol that arises from the suppressed aggressiveness of the brahmin class<sup>179</sup> and which is further transformed into other reprehensible – but more harmless – characteristics, such as untrustworthiness, hypocrisy or haughtiness. It seems that the heron is a caricature of the brahmin class – mostly created by brahmins themselves.<sup>180</sup>

Hiltebeitel (1988: 179) thinks that Rākṣasa Baka is the prototype of *brahmarākṣasas* within the Mahābhārata. Rāvaṇa plays the corresponding role in the Rāmāyaṇa. On the same occasion, Hiltebeitel reminds us that, basically, all Rākṣasas are brahmins as they descend from Ṛṣi Pulastya. The fixing of the link between the Rākṣasas and Pulastya is especially important in regard to the overall

<sup>178</sup> This recalls the saying about the fish called *timi* (see fn. 122).

<sup>179</sup> The insatiable and destructive element, which sometimes flits through the other characteristics of the brahmin class, is aptly illustrated by the myth of Brahmā's transgressive fifth head – which was subsequently cut off. (For different realizations of the motif in the Purāṇas, see e.g. Mani 1975: 154-155; Dange 1986-90: 198-199.) It is interesting to see how Hiltebeitel (1988: 377-378) links the obliterated head of Brahmā with the *brahmarākṣasa* concept and even connects it with the *baka*-nature of the brahmins. Hiltebeitel refers to a folk-myth variant, according to which Brahmā's fifth head needed a thousand fishes (!) for food each day. The theme might also be in connection with the five-day *bakapañcaka* rite, mentioned in Section 2.3.2. The association between the fifth head and the fifth Veda would be a question of additional interest.

<sup>180</sup> As Biardeau (1978: 98) notes, the ambiguous potential of the word *dvija* ('brāhmaṇa', 'bird') is also utilized in these instances.

picture of Baka Dālbhya. In Section 2.2, I took up two Padmapurāṇa episodes in which Pulastya conveyed Vaishnava teachings to Dāl(a)bhya. Thus, the references to Pulastya as the teacher of Dālbhya are in accordance with the family relationship between Pulastya and Baka (and other Rākṣasas). This means that the Dāl(a)bhya of the Padmapurāṇa is most probably Baka Dālbhya. On the other hand, Pulastya's status as the forefather of the Rākṣasa tribe again bears witness to the suspicious *vṛātya*/Asura undercurrents of the patronymic Dālbhya.

Biardeau's interpretation not only clarifies the symbolic connection between the herons, Rākṣasas and brahmins but it also gives motivation to ponder more carefully the relation between the heron of the fables and the heron-Rākṣasa. According to Biardeau, the Bakavadha episode contains references to marshland, the heron's carnivorous diet and the 'law of the fishes' (a notion which comes close to *bakavṛtti*). This means that the concept of Rākṣasa Baka presupposes the idea of the heron as it is met in Indian nature, or rather in Indian fables. In other words, the Bakavadha episode seems to be a developed version of the heron, crab and fishes fable (see 2.3.1). The central motif in both stories is that *baka* devours one helpless victim (human/fish) at a time. I admit that the mighty Bhīma does not have much in common with the clever crab, but in both stories there is an urgent situation (weak king is unable to protect the dharma / the pond is about to dry up<sup>181</sup>) and the cunning *baka*, of course, uses the opportunity.

Another example from the Mahābhārata confirms that the one-victim-at-time motif is inherently connected with a heron by the water. At the end of the Āraṇyaka-parvan, there is the episode entitled *yakṣapraśna* (MBh 3.295-298), during which four of the Pāṇḍavas collapse – one after another – after having sat under a banyan tree (!) and drunk water from a lake. When Yudhiṣṭhira arrives, he stops to listen to the warning uttered by a Yakṣa from the air. The Yakṣa admits that he has knocked out the four Pāṇḍavas and he introduces himself by saying: 'I am a heron; I eat fish and aquatic plants' (MBh 3.297.11: *ahaṃ bakaḥ śaivalamatsyabhakṣo*). Finally, Yudhiṣṭhira knows all the answers to Yakṣa's riddles and the brothers are saved. One might think that it is their Yakṣa/Rākṣasa nature that makes these figures body-snatchers, but Yakṣa's words reveal that the ultimate reason why he needs victims one after another is the fact that he is a *baka*.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>181</sup> In Pañcatantra's version (Pañcat. 1.8), there was an even more concrete enemy threatening: the heron lied to the fishes saying that next day the fishermen would come and throw their net in the pond.

<sup>182</sup> For this episode, see also Biardeau 1978: 96-97; Hildebeitel 1976: 186-190. Biardeau correctly distinguishes the three overlapping identities of the riddler of the story. At first the voice introduces himself as heron, then he reveals that actually he is not an aquatic bird but a Yakṣa, and, thirdly – after Biardeau's symbolic reading – he is Yama. The problem with Biardeau's point of view is that when she concentrates on the 'ultimate' identity of herons as Yama/Dharma, she simultaneously misses the other dimensions. She forgets that the system of mythological resemblances works on the surface level as well: Yakṣa the *baka*, of course, matches Rākṣasa/Asura Baka, and the heron identity itself contains a number of allusions to

A demonic figure called Baka is occasionally encountered in puranic sources, too. Asura Baka is one of the demons killed by the young Kṛṣṇa. The theme of demon-slaying became more prominent only in later folklore and art. Thus, the Baka episode does not receive very much attention in early puranic sources. There are also versions which record the course of events differently. The killing of Asura Baka is also told in a concise way in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa (BhP 10.11.46-53). The cowherds, headed by Nanda, had recently moved to the virgin forest area of Vṛndāvana when Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and other *gopas* took their cows to a pond (*jalāsaya*) to drink, and also drank themselves. Suddenly they saw a huge creature with a sharp beak. This 'Bakāsura in the form of a heron' (BhP 10.11.48: *bako nāma mahān asuro bakarūpadhrk*)<sup>183</sup> swallowed Kṛṣṇa, but soon the bird had to vomit because the boy was like a burning fire in his throat. As Kṛṣṇa came out unharmed, Baka attacked him with his terrible beak. The young cowherd, however, grasped the two halves of the beak and playfully (*līlayā*) tore up the monster bird.<sup>184</sup>

The Uttarakhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa (245.95-100) gives a different method for slaying a bird demon. According to this version, Kṛṣṇa killed Bakāsura by hitting on his wing with a clod (245.99: *loṣṭam udyamya līlayā tāḍayāmāsa pakṣānte*). Both the puranic sources make it clear that the Vṛndāvana area was an uncolonized forest and a natural habitat for lurking Asuras (or natives). The situation recalls the Mahābhārata's Yakṣapraśna episode in which the thirsty brothers, being at the mercy of the wilderness, arrived at a pond and the 'price' for the water was the exposure to the tricks of a demon. Tearing the ogre in half with plain hands is a motif borrowed from Bhīma's *bakavadha*.

Rākṣasa, Asura and Yakṣa – the attributes referring to 'the demonic others' which lurk in the forest – are all used in connection with terrifying heron-figures. There is one more precarious mythological species – or should we say patronymic – to add to the list. The term is Daitya. I have found two passages in which a demonic Baka is called Daitya. First, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa states that when Kṛṣṇa killed Baka

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other *baka* stories. – See also Parpola 1998: 252-254 and Parpola, forthcoming, for the connection between the banyan tree and Yama/Varuṇa. These two articles also deal with the Jvālāmukha of the Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā. This brahmin ogre had an *aśvattha* tree as his abode (Parpola 1998: 287-293).

<sup>183</sup> The story of Prince Śṛṅgabhuja in the Kathāsaritsāgara (KSS 39) provides an example of a Rākṣasa who only temporarily takes the form of a heron. There a wicked but simple-minded Rākṣasa called Agniśikha was said to wander about destroying towns in the disguise of a bulky *baka* (KSS 39.60: *bako nāyam rūpenānena rākṣasaḥ | bhramaty agniśikhākyāyo 'yaṃ nagarāṇi vināśayan*). Similarly, the Yakṣa of the Yakṣapraśna episode only *pretended* to be a heron. Cf. also Yudhiṣṭhira's false identity as Kaṅka in the Virāṭaparvan (fn. 126).

<sup>184</sup> BhP 10.26.8 repeats the way in which Baka was killed. Cf. BhP 10.43.30, which mentions Baka among the Asuras killed by Balarāma. – An interesting episode imitating a demon-hunt is related in BhP 10.30: once, during Kṛṣṇa's absence, the *gopīs* missed him so that they began to act the roles of Kṛṣṇa and the demons killed by him. This episode contains also a feminine present participle of the denominative verb *bakāy-* 'to imitate Baka' (BhP 10.30.17).

and other demons, he eliminated ‘Daityas who had conquered both gods and Asuras’ (BhP 10.46.26: *daityāḥ surāsurajito hatā yena*). Another example is from the Skandapurāṇa; Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 4.20 deals with various Daityas who were killed by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with their characteristic weapons, discus and plough (SkP/PraKh 4.20.50: *saṃkarṣaṇajanārdanau | cakralāṅgalaghātena jaghnatur dānavottamān*). One of these Daityas was Baka (25: *bakaś ca... daityo bahusainya-samanvitaḥ*). Kṛṣṇa severed his head with the discus (51: *cakreṇa ca śiraḥ kāyāc cicchedāśu bakasya vai*).

Some texts mention also a demonic female in the shape of a heron. According to the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, this Bakī is Asura Baka’s sister.<sup>185</sup> The name Bakī is sometimes identified with Demoness Pūtanā. For example, BhP 3.2.23 uses the name Bakī when referring to her. This is understandable because there is a disease-demon dimension in Pūtanā’s character and she is said to wander at will through the sky (O’Flaherty 1975: 214-215). Harivaṃśa 50.20 even describes her as a bird (O’Flaherty 1980: 182). This sort of evil-doer who flies here and there and hits randomly recalls the male figure Rākṣasa Agniśikha who was a ‘part-time heron’ (see fn. 183). A plural transformation of the same idea would again come close to the Vedic flying Keśins.<sup>186</sup>

In the epics and Purāṇas, the individual Rākṣasas and Asuras usually have a family or relatives behind them. The gregarious dimension of these ogres goes well together with their role as menacing figures with vague animal traits, especially in the case of a bird demon such as Baka. The possibility of creating duplicates of the enemy, who has to be killed sooner or later, is a useful way of keeping up the story in an epic. In the later Rāmāyaṇa tradition, the need for unending narration led to copies of the original Rāvaṇa (e.g. Sahasraskandharāvaṇa, Mahirāvaṇa). These new characters were then introduced as relatives or friends of the deceased Rāvaṇa. Correspondingly, Baka, being ‘the *brahmarākṣasa* of the Mahābhārata’, has many followers for the heroes to kill.<sup>187</sup> The foremost ‘brothers’ of Baka are Kirmīra, Alambuṣa and Alāyudha. Hiḍimba is not defined as Baka’s close relative, but he often appears in *dvandva* compounds with Baka.<sup>188</sup> Āḍi is an important companion of Baka in puranic sources.

<sup>185</sup> BhP 10.12.14 states that Asura Agha was the younger brother of Baka and Bakī.

<sup>186</sup> For female flying creatures and herons, see also the Jātaka stories about King Kunāla (Section 2.3.6) and about Sakka’s handmaiden born as a heron (fn. 136). – Vettam Mani (1975: 98) also mentions a demoness called Bakā.

<sup>187</sup> I agree with Biarreau and Hildebeitel who underline Baka’s special role as a counterpart of a brahmin. Yet, this does not mean that Baka would necessarily be the model for the other Rākṣasas of the Mahābhārata, like Rāvaṇa is on the Rāmāyaṇa side. For example, Hiḍimba, who is slain before Baka, is a more important figure for the whole epic. – One could also remark that the idea of a flock of birds is in opposition with the idea of a lone heron meditating by the water. As the basically gregarious Rākṣasa figures do not make their appearance at the same time, but in succession, this problem is also avoided.

Kirmīra ('variegated', 'spotted') is a Rākṣasa encountered in the Āraṇyaka-parvan where *adhya* 12 is entitled *kirmīravadhā*. Kirmīra's appearance is depicted in MBh 3.12.6-9 with stereotypic and superficial Rākṣasa attributes: fangs, roaring, standing hair (*ūrdhvaśiroruha*), etc. A noteworthy detail is that he is compared to a monsoon cloud attended by egrets (3.12.8: *sabālakam iva ambudam*), which might hint that being 'Baka's brother' is not Kirmīra's only connection with herons.<sup>189</sup> As Kirmīra was able to lure the Pāṇḍavas with his illusory power, Dhaumya first used mantras that were designed against Rākṣasas (19: *rakṣoghnair vividhair mantrair*). Thus Kirmīra's ability to transform himself was thwarted. The wrestler of the story is again Bhīma. Kirmīra was, of course, eager to fight because he had thirsted for vengeance against the killer of his brother Baka (22: *ahaṃ bakasya vai bhrātā*) and of his friend Hiḍimba (32). In the end, Bhīma strangled the ogre 'like a sacrificial animal' (63: *paśumāram amārayan*).<sup>190</sup>

The slaying of the other two 'brothers' of Baka takes place in the Dronaparvan. Alambuṣa and Alāyudha belong to the flock of Rākṣasas that joins the Kaurava forces. These episodes describe typical combats with various weapons, wounds, arrow-showers, and Rākṣasas using their mastery of illusion. Both ogres start the battle with Bhīma but they are finally beheaded by Bhīma's son Ghaṭotkaca, who also possesses the *māyā* power because of his half-Rākṣasa origin.

The first opponent is Alambuṣa Ārṣyaśṛṅgi (MBh 7.83.13-84.40). Although he wants vengeance against Bhīma and his relatives for his 'brother's'<sup>191</sup> death, he himself does not bear any bird-like characteristics in this episode. He rather seems to be a snake-demon (*pannaga*).<sup>192</sup> In an earlier appearance, however, his role was

188 Examples of compounds and other co-appearances of the closest Rākṣasa companions of Baka in the Mahābhārata: Hiḍimba + Baka: 3.12.66; Baka + Hiḍimba: 3.154.36, 5.88.24 (not a *dvandva*); Hiḍimba + Baka + Kirmīra: 3.11.22 (not all in one *dvandva*), 7.151.6; Hiḍimba + Kirmīra + Baka: 7.155.30, 7.156.23; Baka + Kirmīra + Hiḍimba: 7.151.3 (not a *dvandva*).

189 Thieme (1975: 15-22) identifies *balākā/balāka* as 'kleiner weisser Reiher (Egretta)' and discusses the poetic image of the monsoon clouds and the egrets. – In Brahmanḍapurāṇa, the name Kirmīra is once mentioned in a section that lists Rākṣasas, Daityas, etc. living on different levels of the underworld. There he is a serpent on the fifth level (BḍP 2.20.37).

190 Kirmīra calls Bhīma *rākṣasakaṇṭhaka* 'thorn/enemy/obstacle of the Rākṣasas' (3.12.35). As the enemy and slayer of Baka, Bhīma sometimes has such epithets as *bakaripu*, *bakavairin*, *bakajit* and *bakaniśūdāna*. *Bakāri*, on the other hand, is Kṛṣṇa's attribute.

191 MBh 7.83.23: *bako nāma rākṣasapravaro balī... yad bhrātā me*.

192 This battle description contains several serpent similes: the 'river of blood' during the battle contains cut-off arms as its 'snakes' (7.83.29: *bāhupannagasamkulām*), the arrows striking Ghaṭotkaca were like angry snakes (7.84.19 *ruṣitāḥ pannagāḥ*), and Ghaṭotkaca finally seized Alambuṣa like Garuḍa taking up a snake (MBh/Bombay ed. 7.109.27: *pannagam garuḍo yathā* – the critical edition omits this verse). The patronymic Ārṣyaśṛṅgi arouses some interest as it connects Alambuṣa with the famous Ṛṣi Rṣyaśṛṅga who, among other things, appears as a powerful outsider in Daśaratha's aśvamedha (Rm 1.8-15) – just as Baka Dālbhya in the Jaiminīyāśvamedha (see Koskikallio, forthcoming, fn. 45). Yet, Rṣyaśṛṅga does not have any special connections with snakes or birds.

exactly opposite: when Alambuṣa beheaded Arjuna's son Irāvan, who was half a *nāga*, the Rākṣasa created an illusion in which he was Garuḍa (MBh 6.86.68-69; see also Hildebeitel 1988: 329-331). In Alambuṣa's case, the fundamental motif of the Mahābhārata, i.e. the antagonism between the snakes and birds, overrides the more superficial idea about the possible similarity of the 'brothers'.

In the Alāyudha passage (MBh 7.151-153), the ogre's relationship to Baka, Kirmīra and Hiḍimba is underlined several times. Alāyudha is also called Baka's brother and kinsman (153.4: *bakabhrātr*; 153.33: *bakajñāti*). During Alāyudha's fight against Bhīma, the text likens them several times to a pair of infuriated elephants.<sup>193</sup> In the magic clash with Ghaṭotkaca, there is only one simile where the fighters are compared to the monkey princes Vāli and Sugrīva (7.153.27). Thus, the polymorphous nature of Rākṣasas is stressed in the cases of both Alambuṣa and Alāyudha.<sup>194</sup>

The puranic sources practically ignore the above-mentioned 'brothers' of Baka. Instead, they bring up an additional figure with a more distinct bird background: Āḍi.<sup>195</sup> This Asura/Daitya/Dānava, who does not appear in the Mahābhārata, is said to be a brother of Baka and son of Andhaka.<sup>196</sup> The resentment motif is also present in the tale of Āḍi (MtP 156.11-37; SkP/Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.29.9-32; PdP/Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa 44.46-72) as Āḍi broods revenge against Śiva, the killer his father. As a result of extensive asceticism, Āḍi received a boon from Brahmā. The Asura asked for immortality, but Brahmā said that it is an impossibility for a living

<sup>193</sup> E.g. MBh 7.153.10, 15, 46. Before the battle Alāyudha's complexion is compared to elephant's skin (7.151.19: *vāraṇatulyavarṣmā*).

<sup>194</sup> The meaning of the two names seems to be connected with the word *alam* 'enough', 'plenty'. Thus, Alambuṣa would simply mean 'the vaporous one' (*busa* 'vapour') and Alāyudha 'the one abundant with weapons (*āyudha*)'. (The critical edition spells the name Alambusa, but I use here the more generally used variant Alambuṣa of the other editions.) There is also a pun which compares the slaying of Alambuṣa with the shaking off a ripe *alambuṣa* fruit from the tree (MBh 7.84.29: *nihatya... alambusam pakvam alambusam yathā*; possibly = *alābu(ka)* 'bottle-gourd'). Cf. also *ala-ka* 'lock', 'curly hair'. – One could also add the third 'brother' to this group. He is Alambala 'the powerful' Jaṭāsuri, killed by Ghaṭotkaca shortly before Alāyudha (in MBh 7.149). Alambala introduces himself as the son of Jaṭa who was killed by Bhīma during the forest period (MBh 3.154). The confusing point is that the Bombay and Calcutta editions do not use the name Alambala but use the name Alambuṣa for him as well. Alambala is also an epithet of Śiva. See e.g. Mani 1975: 24-26 for various Alambuṣas and Alambuṣā the Apsaras.

<sup>195</sup> According to most dictionaries, the word *āḍi/āḍī/āḍī/āḍī/āḍī/āḍī* refers to some water-bird, e.g. the starling known as the bank maina (*Turdus ginginianus*, now *Acridotheres ginginianus*). Dave (1985: 351-353, 381-384), however, identifies this bird in most cases with the black ibis (*Pseudibilis papillosa*), a bird that belongs to *bakajāti* but 'has to wander about a good deal on dry land' (Dave 1985: 381). See also Amarakośa 2.5.25 which mentions *āḍi*, *āḍi* and *śarāri*.

<sup>196</sup> Taken literally, this would mean that Bakāsura's whole name is 'Baka Āndhaka'. Dave (1985: 384) states that also the father's name might refer to a bird; he proposes that *andhaka* is a shortening for a rare word *andhakāka* (= the heron or black ibis). For Asura Andhaka, see e.g. O'Flaherty 1973: 190-192; Mani 1975: 36; Dange 1986-90: 392-393.



creature. Thus, Āḍi received 'reduced' immortality: he would not die as long as he keeps his Asura form.<sup>197</sup> When Pārvaṭī once left Śiva after a quarrel, Āḍi first took the form of a serpent in order to deceive Śiva's doorman Vīraka (= Vīrabhadra). Having wriggled into Śiva's palace, the cunning Asura once more changed his form. Now, he transformed himself into a fake Pārvaṭī and hid 'adamantine teeth' (*dantān vajropamān*) in 'her' vagina<sup>198</sup> in order to kill Śiva. Śiva, however, discovered the deceit and fixed the terrible Rudra missile (*raudrāstra*) to his phallus and killed the Daitya during intercourse.<sup>199</sup>

This story of Bakāsura's 'brother' seems to contain some familiar themes that concern several *baka* figures. Āḍi's desire for immortality can be understood as an expression of the longevity motif (Section 2.3.3). Even more obvious is the 'demigod under a delusion' theme: the Asura, so eager to kill Śiva, is a good example of the haughty demigod who forgets that his might is not on the same level with that of the higher creatures (see Section 2.3.5). The same attitude prevailed when Āḍi met Brahmā, as the god had to remind the Asura ascetic that his wish was unreasonable. An additional detail to be noted is that the serpent dimension of Āḍi parallels that of 'his brother' Alambuṣa.<sup>200</sup>

Āḍi's role as the 'brother' of Baka is a meaningful one due to the fact that these two characters appear in the same story, too. The episode called *āḍibaka* belongs to the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa (MkP 9) and the Devībhāgavatapurāṇa (DBhP 6.12-13). But this legend is not about demons; it tells about two *ṛṣis* whose hatred of each other reached the point when curses start to be hurled. The seers are the famous rivals Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra.<sup>201</sup> This time the dispute arose from Viśvāmitra's greediness at the sacrifice arranged by King Hariścandra – who also was Vasiṣṭha's

<sup>197</sup> Thus SkP/MāhKh 2.29.15-16. According to the other two sources, death will come only after the second transformation (MtP 156.20 & PdP/SṛṣKh 44.55: *yadā dvitīyo rūpasya vivartas te bhaviṣyati*).

<sup>198</sup> According to the Matsyapurāṇa, he hid the teeth in his mouth (MtP 156.26: *mukhāntare*), but the Ānandāśrama edition (p. 339) reveals that also some Matsyapurāṇa manuscripts read *bhagāntare*.

<sup>199</sup> For a closer analysis of the episode, see O'Flaherty 1973: 186-190; 1975: 251-261; 1980: 92-93, 111. O'Flaherty (1973: 189) also gives a summary of the divergent version of the Śivapurāṇa's Dharmasamhitā (10.49-55; for editions of this text, see Rocher 1986: 222).

<sup>200</sup> O'Flaherty (1973: 187) proposes that Āḍi's transient appearance in the snake form is a representation of the 'poison damsel' motif in which a young girl full of poison is sent to destroy the enemy. O'Flaherty (1973: 189) also regards the myth in which Indra kills the embryo in the womb of Diti – the mother of Daityas – as a model for the Āḍi story. Although O'Flaherty sheds light on many important parallels, she does not give any explanation of the basic question: Why is it Āḍi, the bird demon, who is the principal character of this tale? – One might also ask whether the concept of primeval serpent (*ādiśeṣa*) has anything to do with the detail that the Asura called Āḍi transformed himself into a serpent. This would further lead us to speculate on the motif of waters of dissolution because both *ādiśeṣa* and Baka (Dālbhya) float on water between the *kalpas*.

<sup>201</sup> The collected confrontations of these two are summarized by Mani (1975: 835-836). The Viśvāmitra story is told at length in the Bālakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa (*sargas* 31-64).

client.<sup>202</sup> Consequently, Vasiṣṭha cursed Viśvāmitra and turned him into a *baka*. Viśvāmitra's (or *baka*'s) countercurse, on the other hand, turned Vasiṣṭha into an *āḍi*. Further escalation of the animosity led to a cosmic fight between the two birds who grew to immense size. The earthshaking enmity was finally ended by Brahmā who effected a reconciliation and friendship between the two seers.

The Āḍibaka (DBhP: *āḍibaka*) episode fuses together two important themes from different periods. First, this story with an apparently archaic flavour includes the Vedic topic of rivalry between two ritualists who contend for a *yajamāna*'s favour (see Section 1.2 for parallel cases in Keśin Dālbhya legends). Secondly, we again encounter the post-Vedic notion of a bird whose predatory hypocrisy is linked with questions of true and false brahminhood. It is a very important detail that Vasiṣṭha (a 'true' brahmin) transforms Viśvāmitra, originally a kṣatriya (thus, a 'false' brahmin), into a *baka*. And the principal transgression committed by Viśvāmitra was, of course, the immoderate greed, the besetting sin of an imperfect brahmin. In the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, Vasiṣṭha only calls Viśvāmitra an impious brahmin-hater (MkP 9.9: *durātmā brahmadviṣ*), but the Devībhāgavata explains more explicitly why Viśvāmitra was turned specifically into a *baka*. At first, Viśvāmitra's superficial brahminhood is referred to when he is said to have approached Hariścandra 'in the garb of an old brahmin' (DBhP 6.13.32: *vṛddhabrahmaṇaveṣeṇa*). Then Vasiṣṭha accuses him of false brahminhood and defines his actions as heron-like (*bakadharmā, bakadhyānaparā*) while putting him under the curse.<sup>203</sup>

The other bird of the tale, Vasiṣṭha's alter ego *āḍi*, is a more indefinite counterpart of *baka*. Though Vasiṣṭha is a 'true' brahmin, he is not a perfect one: as the Devībhāgavata (6.12.25) states, even the exemplary seers residing on the banks of Gaṅgā<sup>204</sup> are not without jealousy and enmity. The clash between the two growing figures, both personifying the potential threats emerging from the brahmins' own minds, produce such chaos that interference by a divine umpire is necessary.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>202</sup> The Hariścandra episode is told in MkP 7-8 and DBhP 6.12.37-6.13.32. According to the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, the sacrifice was a *rājasūya* (MkP 7.25, 8.286, 9.27); The Devībhāgavata defines the ritual of the sonless king as *puruṣamedha* (DBhP 6.12.38: *anapatyaḥ sa rājarṣir varuṇāya mahākratum | pratiyajñe putrakāmo naramedhaṃ durāsadam*).

<sup>203</sup> DBhP 6.13.34-36: *kṣatriyādharma durbuddhe vṛthā brāhmaṇaveṣabhṛt | bakadharmā vṛthā kiṃ tvaṃ garvaṃ vahaṣi dāmbhika || kasmāt tvayā nṛpaśreṣṭho yajamāno mamāpy asau | aparādhaṃ vinā jalma gamito duḥkham adbhutam || bakadhyānaparā yasmāt tasmāt tvaṃ bako bhava*. Moreover, one of Viśvāmitra's sons is called Bakanakha in MBh 13.4.57.

<sup>204</sup> Both sources mention the banks of Gaṅgā as the scene for the meeting of the two *ṛṣis*. The Devībhāgavata, however, sets the fight of the birds by the Mānasa lake in the Himālaya. There they are said to have built their nests on the top of two trees (DBhP 6.13.38-40).

<sup>205</sup> K. N. Dave understands the Āḍibaka story as the allegory of the social tug-of-war between the brahmin and kṣatriya classes. He identifies *āḍi* with the black ibis, a bird that is linked with the idea of the brahmins' holy lustre (*brahmavarca*), and *baka* with the noisy species called the white ibis (Dave 1985: 384-388). Dave has a good collection of material but his association between *baka* and the kṣatriya class is a tenuous one. – The term *āḍibaka* is also

The early importance of the Āḍibaka story is supported by the fact that it was already known to Aśvaghōṣa. When the Buddhacarita gives examples of famous contests originating in delusion, the text refers, among others, to 'Eli (or Ali) and Paka between whom the enmity was increasing'.<sup>206</sup> This is an obvious allusion to Āḍi and Baka, although Johnston (1984: 119, n. 1) suggests that the figures in question are *Alāyuddha* and Baka.

Baka and his Rākṣasa relatives also make their appearance on the folk-story level. Alf Hildebeitel (1988) introduces several Bakāsura's 'folk descendants' while studying Tamil traditions of the Draupadī cult. There are several figures who do not have any counterpart in the Sanskrit tradition. These are Baka's (Pakācuran's) two hundred-headed descendants, *Acalamman* and *Rōcakan*, as well as *Malaiyukācuran*.<sup>207</sup> Alambuṣa has retained his name and his epic identity as a younger brother of Baka (Hildebeitel 1988: 329-331). All these figures strive for revenge against Bhīma.

#### 2.4. Keśin

After the detailed examination of post-Vedic occurrences of the names Baka Dālbhya, Dālbhya and Baka, it is now the final task to present an overview of references to Keśin after the Vedic period. Like Baka, Keśin appears as an Asura figure but, unlike Baka, other uses of this proper name are very rare, and the form Keśin Dālbhya is totally absent in post-Vedic sources. The threatening tone of the word *keśin* was already apparent in the Atharvaveda where, for instance, a hymn for the protection of a pregnant woman refers to a black, long-haired, tuft-born and snouted 'Asura' (= penis) that harasses her vagina and buttocks (AV 8.6.5: *yāḥ kṛṣṇāḥ keśyāsura stambajā utā tūṅḍikaḥ...*). Due to its literal meaning ('one with a long/fine hair')<sup>208</sup>, the word *keśin* can also mean 'horse' or 'lion'. The only post-Vedic Keśin without an explicitly demonic background seems to be the son of Vasudeva and Kauśalyā, to whom there is a passing mention in a genealogy of the Yādavas (BhP 9.24.48). The female form Keśinī is used of several women.<sup>209</sup>

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used for the sixth war between gods and Asuras (BḍP 2.3.72.74; VāP 97.75; MtP 47.44 – yet, all of these use the form *āḍibaka*). Cf. BḍP 2.3.63.26; VāP 88.25. It is worth noting that the eight war is called *andhaka* or *andhakāra*.

<sup>206</sup> Buddhacarita 28.32. The difference in spelling the names is partly due to the fact that this part of the text is preserved only in Tibetan and Chinese translations.

<sup>207</sup> For *Acalamman*, see Hildebeitel 1988: 79-87. *Rōcakan* is Pakācuran's grandson and *Malaiyukācuran* is Paka's son (Hildebeitel 1988: 81-82; 290 & 213, n. 1).

<sup>208</sup> See Pāṇini 5.2.109; Siddhāntakaumudī 1916 lists the synonyms: *keśavaḥ keśī keśikaḥ keśavān*. See also Pāṇini 6.4.165 commenting on the formation of patronymics.

<sup>209</sup> Some Keśinīs are demonic figures, e.g. Rāvana's mother (BhP 7.1.43) and the daughter of Khaśā, a Rākṣasī (BḍP 2.3.7.139; VāP 69.170, 177-178). For Vedic long-haired females, see AV 12.5.48, 14.2.59.

The demonic Keśin is best known from the puranic legend in which the young Kṛṣṇa battled with the horse-shaped Asura. Yet, the name appears several times in the Mahābhārata. Keśin is, for instance, included in the list of Dānavas, or sons of Ṛṣi Kaśyapa and his wife Danu (MBh 1.59.22).<sup>210</sup> But usually the epic specifies that Keśin is Kṛṣṇa's enemy. It is said that Kṛṣṇa defeated both Keśin and Kaṃsa (MBh 14.69.23, 16.7.9). The same information even appears in Aśvaghoṣa's Saundarananda<sup>211</sup>, which points to the conclusion that Keśin material belongs to the very early layer of the Kṛṣṇa story. The Mahābhārata also frequently refers to Kṛṣṇa by the attribute 'the slayer of Keśin'.<sup>212</sup> Some expressions show that there was, already in the Mahābhārata, some interest in connecting Kṛṣṇa's attribute Keśava with the name Keśin: e.g. *keśavaḥ keśisūdanaḥ* (MBh 2.30.11, 9.62.69), *keśavaḥ keśihantāram* (MBh 2.36.2), *keśavaḥ keśihā hariḥ* (MBh 13.135.82).<sup>213</sup>

The Mahābhārata contains one short episode on Asura Keśin (MBh 3.213.9-19). Keśin's opponent in this story is not Kṛṣṇa but Indra. The legend takes place in the remote past when the war between the gods and the Asuras was going on. Because of the difficult situation, Indra travelled to Mount Mānasa to search for a new commander for his army. (Skanda was conceived later on.) When he arrived at the Mānasa area, he heard a girl's cry. The girl was Prajāpati's daughter Devasenā ('Army of the gods') whom Keśin was about to abduct. He had already taken away Devasenā's sister Daityasenā ('Army of the Daityas') who had not resisted. When Indra went to rescue Devasenā, Keśin looked like a 'mountain of red ore'; he wore a diadem and carried a mace in his hand (MBh 3.213.9: *kirīṭinaṃ gadāpāṇiṃ dhātumantam ivācalam*). The battle followed. At first, Keśin hurled his mace towards Indra but the god cut the weapon in half with his thunderbolt. Next, Keśin threw a mountain peak. Indra's *vajra* splintered that, too, and the other half fell on the Asura. He was wounded and fled in great pain, without the girl.<sup>214</sup>

A passage where Keśin is beaten by Purūravas can be found in the Matsya-purāṇa (MtP 24.22-27) as well as in the Padmapurāṇa (PaP/Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa 12.65-69). This version seems to be linked with the Mahābhārata's Devasenā story because

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Section 2.3.6 where it was stated that Baka Nāḍījaṅgha, the bird-king, was the son of Kaśyapa and a celestial maiden.

<sup>211</sup> Saundarananda 9.18; see also Jaiswal 1981: 83.

<sup>212</sup> *keśihan* (MBh 12.47.72, 14.67.1, 14.89.10); *keśisūdana* (MBh 16.3.18); *keśiniṣūdana* (MBh 6.40.1); also: *kaṃsakeśiniṣūdana* (MBh 3.15.10).

<sup>213</sup> See also Mudrārākṣasa 6.1.1: *keśavaḥ keśighātī*. Some sources go one step further, stating that Kṛṣṇa is known as Keśava because he slew Keśin (ViP 5.16.23 = BrP 190.43; HV 67.63). Thus, the etymology is the following: *keśava* < *keśi-va(dh-)*. Garuḍapurāṇa 3.24.51-52 gives another puranic etymology: *keśava* < *ka-īśa-va*, i.e. Viṣṇu contains both Brahmā (Ka) and Śiva (Īśa). The 12th-century lexicographic text Trikaṇḍaśeṣa (1.1.31) lists both Keśin and Keśava among Kṛṣṇa's attributes. For the early popularity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa's name Keśava, see e.g. Jaiswal 1981: 80.

<sup>214</sup> A translation of this passage is found in O'Flaherty 1975: 105-106.

Keśin is caught dragging two girls with him. Purūravas was on his way to meet Indra while he saw Keśin carrying Citralekhā and Urvaśī. The hero started a battle and finally vanquished (*vi-nir-ji-*) Keśin with a weapon called *vāyavya*.<sup>215</sup> According to the story, Purūravas returned Urvaśī, the lost Apsaras, to Indra and thus won his favour. PaP/SṛṣKh 12.69 adds that Indra was so pleased that he presented Urvaśī to Purūravas. The texts do not say anything about Citralekhā's fate, which suggests that the parallel of Daityasenā is the reason for her appearance in the story.

The Keśin episode proper, or the fight between Kṛṣṇa and Asura Keśin, is told in several Purāṇas (ViP 5.16; BrP 190.22-38; BhP 10.37.1-9) as well as in the Harivaṃśa (HV 67). The text of the Brahmaṇḍa is practically the same as the one in the Viṣṇupurāṇa. Thus, there are three different renderings of the same story. The most verbose of them is the Harivaṃśa's version. The basic events of the episode are the following:

Keśin, who was one of the principal Asuras in Kaṃsa's team,<sup>216</sup> was, in turn, sent to kill the young Kṛṣṇa (and Balarāma). The raging horse terrified Vṛṇḍāvana but Kṛṣṇa did not lose his self-confidence. Soon Keśin came running towards Kṛṣṇa with gaping mouth and Kṛṣṇa thrust his left hand into his mouth, broke Keśin's teeth, enlarged his hand and tore the demon from inside. Keśin was helpless; he sweat, slobbered, vomited and passed urine in agony. Finally, Kṛṣṇa's hand grew so large that Keśin's body burst and fell in two symmetric halves. Kṛṣṇa was praised for his feat.

Each of the three versions underline different points and use some individual details. For example, different epithets are used of the demon. The Bhāgavata simply calls him Keśin; the Viṣṇu/Brahmaṇḍa favours the word *vājin* (*daityavājin*, *duṣṭavājin*); the Harivaṃśa uses several attributes, e.g. *vājidaityaḥ*, *keśi turagadānavaḥ*, *duṣṭo 'śvo vanagocaraḥ*, *turagadaityaḥ*, *hayādhamah* and *keśi turagataṣṭamaḥ*. In the Harivaṃśa, the description of Keśin comes close to a wild forest-Rākṣasa of the epics: he is said to be greedy for human flesh (HV 67.5), he uproots trees before his attack (67.23), and finally falls down like an elephant, cut in half. The difference with the Bhāgavata's style is clear as the corpse of Keśin is there compared with an overripe cucumber. The Bhāgavata does not mention the split of Keśin into two symmetrical halves. As Kṛṣṇa's enlarged hand is here more clearly the sole reason for the horse-demon's death, the passage recalls the Vedic ritual way of killing a sacrificial horse, i.e. choking it 'delicately'. It is also probable that the particular stress on Keśin's open mouth in the Bhāgavata (mentioned thrice: 10.37.2, 4, 6) is a distant recollection of the Vedic flying Keśins. One of the gaping images of Keśin contains a distinctive 'Vedic' tone when it is said that Keśin

<sup>215</sup> According to PaP/SṛṣKh 12.65, Purūravas saw the abduction when he drove in a heavenly chariot with Indra. The Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa also states that Keśin became a servant of Purūravas (12.54). The Matsyapurāṇa does not clearly explain whether Keśin was killed or hurt.

<sup>216</sup> See e.g. ViP 5.4.1-2 where Kaṃsa's closest henchmen are listed.

‘attacked as if drinking up the sky’ (BhP 10.37.2: *mukhena kham pibann iva abhyadravat*).<sup>217</sup>

Tearing a demon in half is a common way to finish an epic fight with a Rākṣasa. This method was used, for instance, by Bhīma in the Bakavadha episode (see Section 2.3.7). It should also be remembered that Kṛṣṇa ended the life of Bakāsura with the same ‘playful trick’. This detail suggests that the two ‘Dālbhya-Asuras’, Baka and Keśin, are parallel cases even if their common history as Dālbhyas is ignored. Despite the fundamental difference between a heron and a horse, both of these Asuras killed by Kṛṣṇa meet their death with a wide-open mouth, so open that their bodies split in two.<sup>218</sup>

A slightly different example of the two-halves-motif connected with Keśin was met in the story of Devasenā and Daityasenā (or Urvaśī and Citralekhā). The legend that takes place during the war between the gods and the Asuras introduces a situation where the whole world tends to be bipartite. In that case, the pair of heroines of the story was also ‘split’: one to the good side and the other to the bad side. The second cleavage happened when the weapons of Keśin (first the mace and then the mountain-top) were split by Indra. Similarly, the legend of Kṛṣṇa and Keśin can be taken as continuation of the Indra and Keśin legend – because the villain did not die in the first episode. Thus, the third split takes place when the ultimate godhead enters and finally bursts the horse-Keśin in half.

When the legends about the two Asuras, Keśin and Baka, are compared, the Keśin episode seems the more important one. The Keśin story is also more widely known than the quite marginal Bakāsura episode. The number of references to Kṛṣṇa as the ‘slayer of Keśin’ is reasonably high and some of these mentions belong to a very early period. Some similarities in the two stories – like killing by splitting the body from the mouth downwards – hint at the possibility that the idea of Bakāsura might have been born as a duplicate to Keśin. The ill fame of the heron in Indian mythology, naturally, was the decisive factor. The common history of the two names under the patronymic Dālbhya only added one underlying connection between horses and herons.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>217</sup> The Mahābhārata contains a problematic verse in which it is stated that Keśin run for 13 days (MBh 3.134.20: *trayodaśāhāni sasāra keśī*). Because this is a stray remark, it is difficult to say at which episode the sentence hints. I think the best suggestion is that the passage points to Keśin in Vṛṇḍāvana (as Mani 1975: 406 has proposed), because the long ‘run’ seems to allude to the Keśin who rushes around with an open mouth.

<sup>218</sup> O’Flaherty (1980: 225) states that ‘the mouth is the focus of the destructive powers of the horse’. This is even more true of a heron. O’Flaherty adds that ‘the vertical split is characteristic of the demonic androgyne’. However, the androgynous nature of Baka and Keśin is not very obvious.

<sup>219</sup> The Garuḍapurāṇa mentions Keśin on an Asura list (GaP 3.12.94). Interestingly, this list follows a ‘descending scale of evilness’ so that the most monstrous Asuras are listed at the beginning. Baka appears on the list, too, and he is rated more hideous than Keśin (GaP 3.12.89).

In addition to the appearances of Keśin, it is necessary to discuss one more post-Vedic story. The Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Nāradiyapurāṇa contain an episode on a kṣatriya figure called Keśidhvaja (ViP 6.6-6.7; NāP 1.46.35-47.82). The importance of this story lies in the fact that Keśidhvaja makes his appearance together with his paternal cousin Khāṇḍikya. This name brings to mind the Vedic co-appearances of Keśin Dālbhya and Khaṇḍika Audbhāri (see Section 1.2, pp. 309-310). When the episode is looked at more carefully, it proves to be a post-Vedic retelling of the rivalry legend in which Keśin's sacrificial cow was killed by a tiger (ŚB 11.8.4; VādhS 46). Keśin (Dālbhya) has simply turned into Keśidhvaja and Khaṇḍika Audbhāri into Khāṇḍikya, which sounds like a patronymic of the Vedic form.<sup>220</sup> This puranic version has retained the original idea of the story quite well, which means that it provides an interesting commentary on the Vedic original.

The main topic of the post-Vedic version is yoga and its relation to the study of Vedas, i.e. ritual knowledge.<sup>221</sup> The frame story quotes the lesson which was once related to Khāṇḍikya by Keśidhvaja.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, the legend of the two cousins is related, too (in ViP 6.6.6-6.7.10; NāP 1.46.36-85).

The presentation of the cousins explains that Khāṇḍikya followed the path of action. Later he was banished by Keśidhvaja, and he moved to the forest with his ritual specialist and other counsellors. Keśidhvaja, on the other hand, concentrated on the knowledge of the self because he 'wished to cross the ocean of death'.<sup>223</sup> Keśidhvaja performed rituals, too. One day, a tiger attacked during his ritual and killed his cow. The brahmins did not know the atonement for this fault. They asked Keśidhvaja to go to Kaśeru who sent him further to Śunaka. He explained to Keśidhvaja that the only one who knows this ritual secret is Khāṇḍikya. Keśidhvaja decided to go and meet his cousin at the risk of his own life. Clad in a deerskin (*kṛṣṇājīnadhara*), the *yajamāna* ascended a chariot and entered the forest.

As was expected, there he met Khāṇḍikya with eyes reddened with anger. The banished cousin drew his bow and said that the deerskin will not protect him as it did not protect the deer. Keśidhvaja explained that he did not come to kill him but to

<sup>220</sup> The genealogical line of these characters is traced from King Janaka. Keśidhvaja's father is called Kṛtadhvaja. Kṛtadhvaja's brother Amitadhvaja (or Mitadhvaja) was the father of Khāṇḍikya. (ViP 6.6.7-9; NāP 1.46.37-38. The lineage is also given in BhP 9.13 (see verses 19-21). The list does not contain any name resembling 'Udbhāra'.

<sup>221</sup> ViP 6.6.1-3; NāP 1.46.31-33. It is stated here that *yoga* and *svādhyāya* are like two eyes; both are necessary for the proper discerning of Brahman.

<sup>222</sup> In the Viṣṇupurāṇa, Parāśara conveys Keśidhvaja's teachings to Maitreya and in the Nāradiya, Sanandana is the narrator and Nārada the questioner. Some verses before the yogic teachings, it is announced that Keśidhvaja also gave an explanation concerning the eternal Vāsudeva's name to Khāṇḍikya (ViP 6.5.81; NāP 1.46.24). This is probably a later addition because the episode of the cousins does not deal with bhakti.

<sup>223</sup> ViP 6.6.9: *karmamārgeṇa khāṇḍikyaḥ pṛthivyām abhavat pati | keśidhvajo 'py atīvāsīd ātmavidyāviśāradaḥ*. Cf. BhP 9.13.21 which introduces Khāṇḍikya as *karmatattvajñō* and explains that the reason for his defeat was that he was afraid of Keśidhvaja.

ask for advice. The hesitating Khāṇḍikya wanted to know his counsellors' opinion. They advised him to kill his cousin and take back the kingdom. At this point, Khāṇḍikya understood that the choice will decide whether he will gain this world or the other world. Like in the Vedic model, Khāṇḍikya chose the other world. As he revealed the ritual secret, Keśidhvaja's ritual was saved but Keśidhvaja himself 'lost' the other world.

Afterwards, Khāṇḍikya had to make the same choice once more because his cousin came to the forest again. Keśidhvaja wanted to give the *gurudakṣiṇā* to his old enemy who had saved his ritual. Khāṇḍikya could choose anything he wanted, which meant that he could have asked for the kingdom again. But according to his opinion, only people who are content can ask for something like that.<sup>224</sup> Because Khāṇḍikya was not fully satisfied, he requested a rite for the alleviation of distress (ViP 6.6.50; NāP 1.46.77: *kleśapraśamāyālam yat karma*). Keśidhvaja was surprised because Khāṇḍikya did not ask for the kingdom. In any case, he taught his cousin about 'the nature of the ignorance' (ViP 6.7.10; NāP 1.46.86: *avidyāyāḥ svarūpaṃ*). This yogic lesson takes up the rest of the episode and finally makes Khāṇḍikya impressed with his cousin's broad knowledge.

The main topic of this story is the harmonizing of the relation between the outward ritual life (*karman*) and the inward speculation (*jñāna*). In addition, the two cousins illustrate the old difference between the orthodox and the unorthodox practices. It has to be remembered that Khāṇḍikya, who withdrew to the austere circumstances of the forest, was specialized on the ritual path. Thus, it is not difficult to see the marks of a *sattra* or *vrātya* figure in him, especially because he is pictured as a red-eyed and violent character carrying a bow. Together with the 'counsellors', Khāṇḍikya appears as a leader of an independent group of ritualists who once had to abandon the generally accepted, settled way of life. When secluded, they developed marginal ritualistic means for survival. Keśidhvaja, on the other hand, has turned into a more orthodox figure who takes the middle course with a slight Upaniṣadic flavour. Although Keśidhvaja 'loses' the other world, his world has higher authority. He is a partial winner of the 'contest' as he finally manages to convince his old enemy with his yogic teachings. Thus, the situation recalls the other Vedic story of these two figures, i.e. the one of MS 1.4.12 where Keśin was the winner and loser at the same time.

The dilemma between *karman* and *jñāna* is present also in the Jaiminīyāśva-medha's Baka Dālbhya episode. Baka Dālbhya is a meditative figure who finally makes an appearance as a ritualist in Yudhiṣṭhira's horse sacrifice. The shift from asceticism and meditation (*jñāna*) to rituals (*karman*) is, however, not the final solution in this text. In Baka Dālbhya's case, the fundamental balance is attained by the help of the third way, *bhakti*. The early vision of Kṛṣṇa Vaṭapattraśāyīn and the

<sup>224</sup> I have chosen the reading of the Nārādīya here (NāP 1.46.72: *kṛtibhiḥ prārthyate rājyam*), because fits better together with Khāṇḍikya's final request. ViP 6.6.45 reads *śatrubhiḥ*...



happy reunion on the island were the main events through which a glimpse of 'the ultimate truth' was revealed to Baka.

Keśidhvaja, on the other hand, represents the solution in which both ways are followed simultaneously (yet, more stress is put on *jñāna*); Khaṇḍikya's choice is the path of *karman*, first in the generally acceptable Vedic form of rituals and, after the banishment, in a more esoteric, *vrātya*-like forest-ritualism. But even after these experiments, the final response remains unformulated. Thus, the story demonstrates the irreconcilable situation and repeats the old solution of the Vedic ritualism, which I would call 'the epoxy glue model'. According to this idea, the absolute truth consists of two pieces which cannot be stored together, but when the ultimate solution is needed, the two half-secrets, which are preserved separately, can be exchanged and temporarily mixed together. The fact that the main characters of the Keśidhvaja episode are *kṣatriyas* has, of course, some influence on the tone – or should we say, the uncompromising attitude – of the story.

## CONCLUSIONS

The commentary on an odd sage in a Jaiminīyāśvamedha episode ultimately grew into a copious treatise on Vedic and post-Vedic lore. One lesson of this tour is that even a minor character in a puranic text can conceal a surprising amount of subtle references behind a sketchy-looking profile. The character of Baka Dālbhya has made it possible to follow a continuum of ideas starting from the early (or pre-) Vedic times up to the late puranic period. This continuum begins from the flying Keśins of the Ṛgveda and the *sattra* and *vrātya* ritualists on the margins of society and continues – through figures like an ascetic seer, a fabulous bird, an arrogant demigod and a monstrous bird-demon – up to a puranic founder of *tīrthas* and a spokesman for traditionalist ideas of the exemplary status of the brahmins and their teachings.

Vedic ritual texts contain a large number of passages on figures whose patronymic is Dālbhya. Yet, the individual portraits of the Vedic Dālbhyas (Baka, Keśin, Caikitānyana, etc.) remain quite superficial because the material mostly consists of cursory scenes dealing with ritual competition, often between the Kurus and the Pañcālas. Baka Dālbhya (alias Glāva Maitreya) and Caikitāneya/Caikitāyana Dālbhya usually appear in roles of Sāmavedic experts (*udgātr*). Keśin Dālbhya, on the other hand, is normally a sacrificial patron (*yajamāna*), i.e. a *kṣatriya* figure. The common feature of the various Dālbhya legends is that they frequently deal with rituals of esoteric *sattra* or *vrātya* groups. Although Keśin Dālbhya is the most famous of the Vedic Dālbhyas, post-Vedic texts do not contain a single reference to this name combination. Despite this fact, the name Keśin has a very important part in disentangling the complex background of the character called Baka Dālbhya. In

the last section of this article, I outlined a hypothesis suggesting that the common feature of the post-Vedic episodes on Asura Keśin is that they lean on the motif of bipartite splitting. Finally, one unmistakable post-Vedic counterpart for Keśin Dālbhya was found. In puranic sources, this figure bears the name Keśīdhvaja.

The image of the flying Keśins of the Ṛgveda, together with the Dālbhyas' link with the *vrātya* rituals, explain many features in post-Vedic Baka Dālbhya's character. I have proposed that the psychedelic trip of the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's Baka Dālbhya can be traced back to the Ṛgvedic Keśins. Between these two sources, there are some related examples which help to detect Bakas'/Dālbhyas' close connection with the flying demigods: in some Vedic passages on Keśin Dālbhya, Gandharvas and Apsarasas appear as possessors of ritual secrets; the Jātakas, on the other hand, introduce an arrogant demigod called Baka who visits several heavenly worlds, just as the Jaiminīyāśvamedha's Baka Dālbhya.

Dālbhyas' esoteric background has been one reason for the transformation of Baka and Keśin into Rākṣasa/Asura figures in post-Vedic texts. An additional impetus behind this degradation has surely been the adjutant stork (*baka* or *kanka*), a frightful-looking bird that has made the implicit connection between Baka and Yama incarnate. The literary meaning of the word *keśin* ('the long-haired one') has also facilitated the transfiguration from a ritualist into an ogre. Moreover, epic and puranic sources deal with several 'brothers' and other relatives of the demonic Baka. The idea of Baka's 'flock' is probably a result of the equation between the universal image of swarming evil spirits and the gregarious nature of birds.

The examination of the notion *baka* ('heron') revealed that the post-Vedic Baka Dālbhya is not simply a recycled version of the Vedic Baka Dālbhya. The post-Vedic Baka Dālbhya is rather a conglomeration of various 'heronly' aspects which are, in turn, linked with the old 'flying image' related to the patronymic Dālbhya. In addition to the demonic aspect, the heron is a joint embodiment of untrustworthiness, hypocrisy, meditateness and old age. Sometimes the bird appears in the role of an arrogant demigod, but Baka can also be a righteous 'bird-king' or even a flying incarnation of Śiva. The meditative hypocrite of the fables might faintly mirror the Vedic brahmins' attitude towards the precarious ritual practices of the *vrātya* ritualists, too. In any case, the heron is a caricature of the brahmin class. As such, *baka* imagery is an interesting reflection of the suppressed aggressiveness and collective fears of the brahmins. Because the heron appears both in a flock and as a solitary figure, it aptly symbolizes the problematic situation of an individual brahmin who is supposed to be a member of a brahmin group (= a ritualist), on one side, and a lone ascetic who carries out the meditative ideal, on the other.

The fact that post-Vedic sources also contain stories about royal *bakas* does not negate the idea that the heron is basically a symbol for the definition of the brahmins' place in the society. Since the royal *bakas* are manifestly positive characters, the heron-like behaviour (*bakatva*, i.e. violence hidden under a calm surface) is

something that suits a king *but is a danger to a brahmin*. It is worth remembering that Vedic Dālbhyas are also either brahmins or kṣatriyas.

The natural habitat of herons by the water is an important factor behind the portrait of the ascetic called Baka Dālbhya. There are plenty of post-Vedic examples in which not only herons or human/demigod figures called Baka, but also a ṛṣi called Baka Dālbhya or Dālbhya, live by the water: on an island, by the seashore, by a lake or on a riverbank. Sometimes these spots were *tīrthas*, or at least they later on became such due to the memory of the seer. Usually, the banyan tree has a more or less central role in the stories about *bakas*, both the ascetics and the herons.

Puranic texts have sometimes linked the image of an age-old ascetic meditating on the shore with the dissolution scene. In those stories, the flood finally takes over and the meditating seer floats in the ocean which fills the whole world. The root of these episodes is the concept of old age which makes Baka Dālbhya analogous with the more widely known age-old figure, Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya. Since the Purāṇas relate how Mārkaṇḍeya survived the dissolution between two *kalpas*, it is natural that also Baka Dālbhya, who is said to be older than Mārkaṇḍeya, shares this motif – especially because water is the natural atmosphere of this ‘heron’. In addition to Mārkaṇḍeya, Baka Dālbhya is several times linked with such sages as Pulastya, Dhaumya, and Lomaśa who is said to be even longer-lived than Baka.

The Jaiminīyāśvamedha’s Baka Dālbhya episode is the result of combining a wide variety of Baka, Dālbhya and Keśin themes. The most influential prototypes behind the story are the puranic legend of the floating seer Mārkaṇḍeya and the Bakabrahmajātaka which has given the model of a tour through heavenly *brahmalokas*. Other Jātaka stories, too, contain themes in common with the post-Vedic Baka Dālbhya imagery. One post-Vedic alter ego of Baka Dālbhya is encountered when Dālbhya Caikitāyana appears in puranic sources as the saviour of Kṛṣṇa’s 16,000 wives. This story joins together an impressive collection of Baka Dālbhya motifs.

Such topics as deep meditation, old age and floating on the water link together quite smoothly if meditation is taken as a means of crossing the ‘ocean of time’. The ability to ‘attain the other side’ is the central objective of Indian seers. In the image of Baka Dālbhya, this transient aspect is put forward very clearly: he is able to cross waters (he is a ‘wader’), time (he is age-old), air (he is a ‘bird’/*keśin*) and heavenly worlds (he is an ardent ascetic). This means that Baka is a liminal figure par excellence: as a heron he stays between land and water; as an age-old ascetic his constant position is between life and death and he is able to ‘float’ between two *kalpas*; he also lives on an island amidst the waters. He is not a famous sage, but not totally unknown – he is the perfect secondary character.

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## SUMMARY TABLE

## 1. Vedic sources

Passage + (form of the name) (abbreviated form = no variation)	Title	Appearing with	His/her/their role
<b>1.1. Baka Dālbhya/Glāva Maitreya</b>			
KS 10.6 (Vaka Dālbhi)	<i>sattra</i> ritualist ( <i>naimiṣīyah</i> )	Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya	reluctant patron (king)
PB 25.15.3/BŚS 17.18/ BGS 3.10 (Glāva)	<i>prastotr</i> at the <i>sarpasattra</i>	serpents	co-ritualists
ŚB 1.4.6 (G. M.)	<i>udgātr</i>	—	—
JUB 1.9.3 (B. D.)	<i>udgātr</i> (of syllable <i>Om</i> )	Ājakeśins	rival ritualists
JUB 4.6-8 (B. D.)	learned among the Kurupañcālas/ <i>udgātr</i>	Bhageratha Aikṣvāka	asks about ritual / later a patron (king)
GB 1.1.31 (G. M.)	Sāmavedic expert (loser of the quiz)	Maudgalya	Sāmavedic expert (winner of the quiz)
ChU 1.2.13 (B. D.)	<i>naimiṣīyānām udgātā</i>	—	—
ChU 1.12 (B. D./G. M.)	Vedic student	dogs	imitators of the <i>bahiṣpavamāṇastotra</i>
<b>1.2. Keśin Dālbhya, etc.</b>			
ṚV 1.164.44 ( <i>trāyaḥ keśinaḥ</i> )	Agni, Sūrya and Vāyu	—	—
ṚV 10.136 ( <i>Keśin/keśinaḥ</i> )	flying <i>muni</i> (s)	—	—
AV 8.6.5 ( <i>kṛṣṇāḥ keśyāsura</i> )	penis	pregnant woman	to be protected
AV 11.2.18 (Keśin)	Rudra	—	—



KS 30.2/KKS 45.5 (K. D.)	sacrificer of the <i>vaṃśavraścana</i> ritual	(Luśākapi Khārgali	narrator)
KS 26.9/KKS 41.7 (Aṣāḍha Kaiśin)	Pañcāla sacrificer (loser)	Śyāparṇa Sāyakāyaṇa	Kunti sacrificer (winner)
MS 1.4.12 (K. Dārbhya)	<i>yajamāna</i> (winner of the ritual quiz)	Ṣaṇḍika Audbhāri Gandharvas and Apsarases	rival <i>yajamāna</i> (loser) ritual specialists (winners over Keśin)
MS 1.6.5 (K. Dārbhya)	sacrificer (?)	Keśin Sātyakāmi	ritual specialist for K. D. (?)
TS 2.6.2.3 (K. Dārbhya)	sacrificer	Keśin Sātyakāmi	ritual specialist ( <i>udgātr</i> ?) for K. D.
KB 7.4 (K. Dārbhya)	sacrificer ( <i>adikṣitaḥ</i> , holding one secret)	<i>hiraṇmayah śakunaḥ</i>	holder of the secret of <i>dikṣā</i>
VādhS 37 (Keśin)	<i>pāñcālarājo yuvatara</i> (with a secret)	<i>hiraṇmayo haṃso</i> / Sutvan Yājñasena	late king of the Sṛṅjas (& 'rṣi', with a secret)
ŚB 11.8.4/VādhS 46 (Keśin)	<i>grhapati</i> (kṣatriya!)	Khaṇḍika Audbhāri	leader of the rival <i>sattrins</i> (holder of the secret)
PB 13.10.8 (K. D.)	sacrificer	<i>sāman</i> in a human form Alamma Parijānata	asking for advice <i>udgātr</i> for Keśin
JB 1.285 (K. Dārbhya)	younger ritualist (winner)	Ahīnas Āśvatthi	Keśin Sātyakāmi's <i>purohita</i> (elder, loser)
JB 2.53-54 (K. Dārbhya)	Pañcāla king (with improper <i>dikṣā</i> + a secret)	<i>haṃso hiraṇmayo</i> / Sutvan Yājñasena	deceased king of the Pañcālas (with a secret)
JB 2.100 (Darbha Śātānīki)	Pañcāla king (nonentity, 'darbha')	Keśin Sātyakāmi Ahīnas Āśvatthi	ritual specialists of Darbha
JB 2.122-124 (K. Dārbhya)	Pañcāla sacrificer (winner)	Khaṇḍika Audbhāri Keśin Sātyakāmi, Ahīnas Āśvatthi, Gaṅginā Rāhakṣita, Luśākapi Khārgali	rival sacrificer (loser)  Keśin's ritual experts
JB 2.279-280 (K. Dārbhya)	Pañcāla sacrificer (underdog)	Khaṇḍika Audbhāri Uccaiḥśravas Kauveyeya	rival sacrificer (the more powerful Pañcāla, loser)  Keśin's uncle, Kuru king (holder of the secret)

JB 3.312 (K. Dārbhya)	Pañcāla patron (or ritualist?)	Kabandha Ātharvaṇa	ritual informant
JUB 3.29-31 (K. Dārbhya)	Pañcāla king	Uccaiḥśravas Kaupayeya	'immaterial' uncle (Kuru)
		Prāṭṛda Bhālla	esoteric <i>udgāṭṛ</i> (master of the disembodied chant)
		brahmins of the Kurupañcālas	opposers of Prāṭṛda
BŚS 17.54 (Keśin)	performer of an <i>abhicāra</i> ( <i>keśīyajña</i> )	Khāṇḍika	the bewitched one (loser)
BŚS 18.26 (K. D.)	Pañcāla sacrificer	Aupoditi Gaupālāyana Vaiyāghrapadya	leader of the Kuru <i>vṛatyas</i> (loser)
		Gandharvāyana Vāleya Āgniveśya	son of a brahmin among the Pañcālas
BŚS 18.38-39 (K. D.)	Pañcāla king	—	—
<b>1.3. Other Dālbhyas, etc.</b>			
RV 5.61 (Rathavīti Dārbhya)	soma sacrificer	Śyāvāśva	reciter of the hymn
BD 5.50-81/5.36-58 (Rathavīti Dārbhya)	sacrificer ( <i>rājaṛṣi</i> )	Arcanānas	ritual officiant ( <i>ṛṣi</i> ), son of Atri
		Śyāvāśva	another officiant ( <i>anṛṣi</i> ), son of Arcanānas
MS 2.1.3 (Rathapota Dārbhya)	sacrificer	<i>Kaulakāvati</i>	two ritualists
VS 15.17 (Rathapota)	commander of the western direction	(see fn. 67)	
JB 1.257 (Nagarin Dālbhya)	ritual specialist	an anonymous brahmin	asks about ritual
JB 1.337-338 (Brahmadatta Caikitāneya, 'Dālbhya')	Sāmavedic singer (of the Śyāvāśva melody)	Gaḷunas Ārkṣākāyana	ritualist commenting on Brahmadatta's <i>stobha</i>
JUB 1.37.7 (Caikitāneya)	Sāmavedic authority	—	—
JUB 1.38 (Brahmadatta Caikitāneya, 'Dālbhya')	<i>udgāṭṛ</i> , a Pañcāla (?)	Kurus	criticizing Brahmadatta's <i>sāman</i>
JUB 1.59 (Brahmadatta Caikitāneya, 'Dālbhya')	<i>udgāṭṛ</i> , a Pañcāla (?) with knowledge	Abhipratārin Kākṣaseni	Kuru patron
		Śaunaka	<i>purohita</i> of Abhipratārin (asking on ritual)
JUB 2.5.2 (Caikitāneya)	Sāmavedic authority	—	—

BĀU 1.3.24 (Brahmadatta Caikitāneya)	Sāmavedic authority	Ayāśya Āṅgīrasa	<i>udgātr</i> in Brahmadatta's example
ChU 1.8-9 (Caikitāyana Dālbhya)	Sāmavedic brahmin (loser of the quiz)	Śilaka Śālāvātya Pravāhaṇa Jaivali	Sāmavedic brahmin (loser of the quiz) king (winner of the quiz)

## 2. Post-Vedic sources

Passage + (form of the name) (abbreviated form = no variation)	Title	Appearing with	His/her/their role
<b>2.1. Baka Dālbhya</b>			
MBh 2.4.9 (B. D.)	<i>ṛṣi</i> (in a list)	a group of other seers	visitors in Pāṇḍavas' assembly hall
MBh 3.27 (B. D.)	sage in a group of brahmins (spokesman for the unity of brahmins and kṣatriyas)	the Pāṇḍavas	listeners
MBh 9.40.1-25 (B. D./ <i>dālbhyaḥ bako</i> )	brahmin ascetic, also a <i>sattra</i> ritualist ( <i>naimiṣeya/naimiṣīya</i> )	Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīryin	reluctant patron (king)
MBh/Bombay ed. 3.193 (Baka) (also <i>bakadālbhyau!</i> )	long-lived ascetic	Indra (Mārkaṇḍeya)	visitor asking questions narrator
VmP 39.24-35 (B. D.)	powerful brahmin ( <i>naimiṣeya</i> )	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	intolerant king
PdP/UttKh 44 (Bakadālbhya)	sage living on an island	Rāma	asking for advice
JA 60.6-64 (Bakadālbhya)	old ascetic	the escort: Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, etc.	listeners
JA 63.39, 50; 64.46 (Bakad.)	ritual expert ( <i>pitāmaha</i> )	Vyāsa, Pāṇḍavas, etc.	in other ritual roles
GaS 10.55.29, 57.17 (Bakad.)	ritual expert ( <i>vidhi</i> )	Vyāsa, etc.	in other ritual roles

2.2. Dālbhyas, etc.			
BhārGS 2.6 (Dālbhya)	swift-going sage, reciter of a śloka ( <i>turaṅgasya muneḥ kāvyasya dālbhyasya</i> )	Asita Dhaumya ( <i>dhaumyasya... asitasya</i> )	the other ṛṣi behind the śloka
MBh 3.81.131-136 (Darbhīn)	ṛṣi who created the Avatīrṃa tīrtha	(Pulastya)	narrator)
MBh 3.282.17 (Dālbhya)	one of the ascetics consoling Satyavat's parents	Suvarcas Gautama Bhāradvāja Māṇḍavya Dhaumya	the other ascetics of the group
BdP 2.3.42.36 (Darbhīn)	ṛṣi who cursed the moon	—	—
MtP 9.14 & PdP/SṛṣKh 7.93 (Dālbhya)	a seer during the <i>auttamimanvantara</i>	Kaukuruṅḍi/Kaukabhiṅḍi Śiva/Kutuṅḍa Śaṅkha Pravahāṇa/Pravāhita Sita/Miti Sasmita/Saṃmiti	the other sages of the group of seven
MtP 70 (Dālbhya Caikitāyana)	ṛṣi, teacher of liberating knowledge	prostitutes/ Kṛṣṇa's 16,000 wives (+ <i>dāśas/dasyus</i> )	ask explanation for their lot
PdP/SṛṣKh 7.93 (Dālbhya)	(see above MtP 9.14)		
PdP/SṛṣKh 23.73-142 (Dālbhya Caikitāyana)	ṛṣi, teacher of liberating knowledge	prostitutes/ Kṛṣṇa's 16,000 wives (+ <i>dāśas/dasyus</i> )	ask explanation for their lot
PdP/UttKh 42.1-23 (Dālbhya)	ṛṣi, listener of teachings	Pulastya	teacher
PdP/UttKh 78 (Dālbhya)	ṛṣi, listener of teachings	Pulastya	teacher
SkP/MāhKh 3.3.10 Dālbhya)	a sage mentioned in a long list	(Mārkaṇḍeya)	listing the names)
SkP/ĀvaKh 1.14.7-22 (Dālbhya)	ancient <i>muni</i> , advisor	King Sudyumna Queen Sudarśanā	royal couple in need of a son
SkP/PraKh 1.317.5 (Dālbhya)	one of the sacrificing brahmins	—	—

<b>2.3. Bakas</b> (only the most important appearances are listed here; for references to herons in general, see text)			
MGŚ 2.14.29 (Bakas)	terrifying gods	—	—
Samyuttan. 1.142: Bakabrahmasutta	age-old demigod under a delusion (= Kesava, the old ascetic)	the Buddha = Kappa	explained the root of the misconception Kesava's disciple)
Majjhiman. 1.49: Brahmanimantānikasutta	age-old demigod under a delusion	the Buddha	taught a lesson about reality
Jātaka no. 31: Kulāvakajātaka	handmaiden/heron ( <i>bakasakuṇikā</i> )	Sakka/fish (= the Buddha)	tested the nature of the bird
Jātaka no. 38: Bakajātaka	treacherous heron (= robe-maker)	fishes <i>makara</i>	victims the avenger
Jātaka no. 236: Bakajātaka	silent heron (= brahmin)	clever fish (= the Buddha)	knew the trick of the heron
Jātaka no. 300: Vakajātaka ( <i>vaka</i> )	wolf	Sakka/goat (= the Buddha)	knew the hypocrisy of <i>vaka</i>
Jātaka no. 380: Āsaṅkajātaka	hungry but patient heron on a hilltop	Sakka	sent a flood
Jātaka no. 405: Bakabrahmajātaka	age-old demigod under a delusion (= Kesava, the old ascetic)	the Buddha = Kappa	explained the root of the misconception Kesava's disciple)
Jātaka no. 536: Kuṇāljātaka	king of Vārāṇasī	Pañcapāpā	ugly wife with a soft touch
	(= Kuṇāla, the bird-king)	3500 hen-birds	his attendants)
	(= the Buddha)	women	are a hindrance)
MBh 1.148-152	Rākṣasa, <i>asurarāj</i>	Bhīma	kills Baka by tearing up his beak
MBh 3.191 (Baka Nāḍijaṅgha)	old heron	King Indradyumna Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya Prākāraḥkaṇḍa the owl Akūpāra the tortoise	other old figures
MBh 3.297.11	Yakṣa as a <i>baka</i>	The Pāṇḍava brothers	stunned by the Yakṣa (except Yudhiṣṭhira)
MBh 12.162.28-167.24 (Rājadharmā/Nāḍijaṅgha)	warm-hearted heron king	Gautama	vicious brahmin from a village of <i>dasyus</i>

Kṛṣṇa-Upaniṣad 14	Rākṣasa ( <i>rakṣa</i> ) bird, embodiment of arrogance	—	—
Pañcat. 1.8	treacherous old heron	fishes crab	victims the avenger
Pañcat. 1.29	heron family	crab black adder mongoose	natural enemies of the heron
Hitop. 4.6	treacherous old heron	fishes crab	victims the avenger
KSS 39.58-70	Rākṣasa Agniśikha (disguised as a <i>baka</i> )	Prince Śṛṅgabhuja	hurted the <i>baka</i> by an arrow
KSS 60.79-90	treacherous heron	fishes <i>makara</i>	victims the avenger
KSS 60.234-236	heron family	snake crab mongoose	enemy of the heron adviser to the heron natural enemy of the snakes
VāP 69.160	Yakṣa/Guhyaka, son of Mañivara	—	—
BḍP 3.6.35-36 (Bakas)	Rākṣasas, sons of Vṛtra	Indra	their master
BhP 10.11.46-53	Asura	young Kṛṣṇa	kills Baka by tearing up his beak
PdP/UttKh 245.95-100	Asura	young Kṛṣṇa	kills Baka by hitting him with a clod
SkP/MāhKh 2.7-13 (Baka Nāḍījaṅgha)	old heron	King Indradyumna Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya Prākāraḥkaṇa the owl king of vultures Mantharaka the tortoise Ṛṣi Lomaśa	other old figures

SkP/MāhKh 2.7.44-111 ('Baka')	child/trickster	Viśvarūpa Pārāśarya	the father whose <i>liṅga</i> was concealed
(?)	son of <i>ānartarāja</i> /overlord of <i>ganās</i>	Ṛṣi Gālava	teacher
(Baka Nāḍījaṅgha)	heron	Ṛṣi Gālava	cursed the adulterer
SkP/ĀvaKh 3.8	Śiva in bird-form ( <i>bakarūpo maheśvaraḥ</i> )	Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya	was saved from the deluge a heavenly flight
SkP/NāgKh 271.317-332 (Baka Nāḍījaṅgha)	old heron	King Indradyumna Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍa owl king of vultures tortoise Ṛṣi Lomaśa	other old figures
SkP/PraKh 4.20	Daitya	Kṛṣṇa	kills Baka by severing his head with the discus
RT 1.325-335	virtuous king of Kashmir	Bhaṭṭā	beautiful sorceress
<b>2.4. Keśin</b>			
MBh 1.59.22	Dānava	—	—
MBh 3.213.9-19	Asura	Indra	wounded him
HV 67	Asura	Kṛṣṇa	splitted him in half
ViP 5.16	Asura	Kṛṣṇa	splitted him in half
ViP 6.6-6.7 (Keśidhvaja)	king	Khāṇḍikya	the banished cousin
MtP 24.22-27	Asura	Purūravas	vanquished the abductor
BrP 190.22-38	Asura	Kṛṣṇa	splitted him in half
BhP 9.24.48	son of Vasudeva and Kauśalyā	—	—
BhP 10.37.1-9	Asura	Kṛṣṇa	splitted him in half
NāP 2.46.35-47.82 (Keśidhvaja)	king	Khāṇḍikya	the banished cousin
PaP/SṛṣKh 12.65-69	Asura	Purūravas	vanquished the abductor

