

## The *Jāpakopākhyāna* (MBh 12.189-93) or “Japa – old or new?”

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[Since the circulation of our papers is restricted initially, I am being more informal in both style and references to others than would be appropriate for publication.]

I have been intrigued by the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (MBh 12.189-93) for well over a decade but without investigating it in any real depth until now. I made some very brief remarks about it in my *Sanskrit Epics* (1998: 246), subsequently repeating and slightly expanding them in a paper in which I looked at the issue of whether there was a discernable structure to the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*. Jim earlier had made some similarly brief comments on the passage at various points in his thesis. But there is virtually nothing in the way of detailed study. All that I have found is the obvious article by V.M. Bedekar (Bedekar 1963) and one in Hindi by Rāj Kumārī Trikhā on *japa* in the *Mahābhārata* (Trikhā 1987), to which I have not yet had access but in which (to judge from the list of quoted passages given in the online EPB) she appears to deal with a wide spread of passages in a relatively brief article. After that the next most relevant material relates to the practice of *japa* in the major Pāñcarātra text, the *Jayākhyasamhitā*, such as the articles by André Padoux (1987a and 1987b) and by Marion Rastelli (2000), and this may well be significant; indeed Padoux’s introduction to his second article includes a brief look at the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (Padoux 1987b: 119-20).

Let me start with the point that I have made before and indeed quote the relevant part of my article (Brockington 2000: 75):

Following this Sāṃkhya passage [as I then termed the *Adhyātmakathana*, 12.187], the next *adhyāya* is the *Dhyānayoga* passage (12.188) on the fourfold Yoga of meditation, which gives one of the fullest descriptions from the standpoint of suppression (*nirodha*). There then follows, however, the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (12.189-93), where, as in some other passages, different approaches are deliberately contrasted. Here the importance of *japa*, the murmuring of Vedic verses, and of the *jāpaka* is stressed; Bhīṣma declares that *japa* constitutes an independent discipline belonging to the Vedic sacrificial tradition and differing from Sāṃkhya and Yoga; from the concluding laudatory description of the *jāpaka*, the passage is obviously intended to meet the challenge of Yoga by presenting *japa* as a viable alternative, while at the same time incorporating various elements associated with Yoga. In this series of *adhyāyas*, then, we find not a sequential development but something nearer to a set of contrasts; while it is not uncommon to find passages on Sāṃkhya and on Yoga juxtaposed, the relationship is as often one of opposition as complementarity.

Not only do these three passages seem to have been deliberately juxtaposed (for whatever reason), but they also share another common feature that Jim pointed out in his thesis (Fitzgerald 1980: 320-28): they and the preceding *adhyāya* 186, the *Ācāravidhi*, form a sequence of four among the 18 texts throughout the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* not attributed to any authority beyond Bhīṣma (i.e. that he recites on his own authority). If it were only the *Jāpakopākhyāna* involved, I would have been tempted to point to Bhīṣma and Brahmā (who is prominent in the passage) sharing the description *pitāmaha* and indeed the aspect of giving impartial advice: Brahmā to *devas* and *asuras*, Bhīṣma to Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, as

Greg has noted (Bailey 1983: 123 n.40; cf. Sullivan 1990: 96); however, Brahmā is totally absent from the other three passages. The reason is not indeed clear – Jim examined but discarded the possibility that they belonged to the final redaction phase or otherwise were attributable to a single author – but the fact is indisputable; nevertheless, when the *Adhyātmakathana* (12.187) is repeated – with some significant variations – at 12.239-41, it forms part of the *Śukānuprasna* or *Vyāsaśukasamvāda* (12.224-47), Vyāsa’s discourse to his son Śuka. In addition, the first of these four *adhyāyas* (the *Ācāravidhi*) is one of the few *adhyāyas* dealing with issues of correct behaviour, *ācāra*, without any obvious reference to *mokṣa*. I aim to come back to these contextual or relational issues in due course.

In the meantime, before working round to an examination of the *Jāpakopākhyāna* itself and what it says, I want to follow a different tack, based mainly on vocabulary, where the obvious term to begin with is √*jap* and the related nominal forms. If *japa* does consist only of the (murmured) recitation of Vedic texts as part of the traditional Vedic ritual, as seems to be the natural way to understand early use of the term, we might expect it to occur mainly in passages that were older (so very broadly in narrative rather than didactic parts) or, within religiously oriented passages, in those devoted more to ritual than to newer practices. If so, why is the next largest, though admittedly much smaller, number of occurrences of forms from √*jap* to be found in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (MBh. 12.321-39)?<sup>1</sup> And why does Kṛṣṇa declare in the *Bhagavadgītā*: *yajñānām japayajño ’smi* at 6.32.25c / BhG.10.25c?<sup>2</sup> Still, let me next explore some further points about this cluster of words before moving on to others. The term *jāpaka* itself seems to be unique to this passage; certainly it occurs nowhere else in the *Mahābhārata* (nor in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and BR refers only to Hemacandra’s *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* besides this passage.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it contains only one instance from √*jap* of the “best of ...” type of stock phrase that I have commented on elsewhere (Brockington 1998: 113-5): *prabrūhi japatām śreṣṭha* at 12.192.11c – curiously, the only example from a prior *pāda*, whereas x x x *japatām vara(h)* occurs 14 times elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, as well as being quite common in the *Bālakāṇḍa* only of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (9 times, in all but one instance following Vasiṣṭha’s name).<sup>4</sup>

While the understanding of *japa* as the (murmured) recitation of Vedic texts as part of traditional Vedic ritual does fit a good many of the contexts in which it and its cognates are used in the *Mahābhārata*, there are some contexts which at least suggest different nuances.

<sup>1</sup> There are 104 such forms in total in the *Śāntiparvan*, 63 of which occur in the *Jāpakopākhyāna*, and 10 out of the remaining 41 are found in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. To put these figures in context, there are another 85 instances in the whole of the rest of the *Mahābhārata* text and the next highest totals are 24 in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, 12 in the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, 10 each in the *Ādi* and *Śalya parvans*, and 9 in the *Udyogaparvan*.

<sup>2</sup> Why too does Manu – a text which is probably not too different in date – declare that *japayajña* is ten times better than the sacrifice consisting of ritual actions and a hundred times better if done mentally (*vidhiyajñāj japayajño viśiṣṭo daśabhir guṇaiḥ | upāmsuḥ syāc chataguṇaḥ sāhasro mānasaḥ smrtaḥ*, MDhŚ 2.85), although this is within the context of reciting *om* and the *Sāvitrī* verse (as *japa* standardly is in the *dharmasūtras*).

<sup>3</sup> Other forms limited in the *Mahābhārata* to this passage are: *japana* at 12.189.7b (BR only gives an *Amarakośa* reference besides this one), *japyaka* at 12.192.49b and *jāpya* at 12.192.59b.

<sup>4</sup> As an appendix to this paper, I will add a listing of all occurrences of √*jap* etc. in both epics.

For a start, it is worth noting that compounded forms of √*jap* are used in a non-religious sense of simply speaking *sotto voce* and that this also applies occasionally to the simple verb, for example *ye dambhān na japanti sma* (“They who whisper no lies” as Jim translates it) at 12.111.3a. More significantly, what is muttered or recited can be other than Vedic texts, it seems: Kuntī murmurs the spells previously given her by Durvāsas (*jajāpa japyam vidhivad dattam durvāsasā purā*, 1.114.2cd), brāhmins mutter *rākṣasa*-killing *mantras* (*rakśoghnāṁś ca tathā mantrāñ jepuś cakruś ca te kriyāḥ*, 3.144.16cd – recapitulated in the next line as *paṭhyamaneṣu mantreṣu* – these *mantras* could be drawn from the *Atharvaveda* but probably are not), and – less certainly but suggestively – Nārada mutters various *mantras* directed to Nārāyaṇa (*jajāpa vidhivan mantrān nārāyaṇagatān bahūn*, 12.332.25ab), while Upamanyu gives Kṛṣṇa himself a *japya* by which he will see Śiva (*japyam ca te pradāsyāmi yena drakṣyasi śaṁkaram*, 13.15.2ef). Presumably also, the secret text that Kṛṣṇa recites (*japtvā guhyam*, 12.53.7c) is not Vedic.

Another clue to the possible range of meanings of *japa* is the other practices with which it is linked or the purposes for which it is being used (I exclude for the moment the *Jāpakopākhyāna* itself). Most often, of course, it is linked with various rituals (as shown for example by the compound *japahoma* and the like, including *mantrahomajapa* at 12.136.148c and *japyahomavrata* at 13.16.61a) but we also find listed in one verse *vedāntas, prāṇāyāma* and *japa* at 13.16.44 (*yaṁ ca vedavido vedyaṁ vedānteṣu pratiṣṭhitam | prāṇāyāmaparā nityam yaṁ viśanti japanti ca*).<sup>5</sup> It is linked with issues of the after-life (perhaps of *mokṣa*) in *prthūdake japyaparo nainaṁ śvomaraṇaṁ tapet* at 3.81.126cd = 9.38.29cd (the two *tīrthayātrās*) and explicitly with release from *saṁsāra* at 12.346.3, where an unnamed brāhman seeking *mokṣa* (cf. 342.2-3) is described as *japyaparāyaṇa*, and at 13.135.4ab, *kiṁ japan mucyate jantur janmasaṁsārabandhanāt* (where interestingly in the next verses the verb used changes to √*stu*). Within the *Nārāyaṇīya* the practice of *japa* is also linked with onepointedness of the mind (*ekāgramanas / °tva*) at 12.323.32 and 325.2-3, in the first of these being also described as mental (*mānaso nāma sa japo japyate tair mahātmabhiḥ* 323.32cd) as occasionally elsewhere, and on three occasions is alluded to as sung or chanted (*jaḡau* at 324.27c, 326.123c and 335.33e) in a way that definitely suggests devotional hymns.<sup>6</sup>

Another term which may possibly link the *Jāpakopākhyāna* with the *Nārāyaṇīya* is *parameṣṭhin*, found only once in the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (192.118b) but ten times in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (321.34a, 322.6a[l.v.](iic), 326.17b(°ja), 331.13b(°ja), 16b(°ja), 333.1b(°ja), 6b, 335.3f, 20c, 337.29b) out of 34 in total in the *Mahābhārata*, where it regularly qualifies or designates a supreme being, most often Brahmā but occasionally Viṣṇu (cf. Gonda 1985, which notes that in later Vedic literature *Parameṣṭhin* is often either identified with or linked with but separate from *Prajāpati*).<sup>7</sup> Another relatively common term, *brahmabhūta*,

<sup>5</sup> The readings here are less than certain, admittedly, and the whole passage is in effect a hymn to Śiva, which Kṛṣṇa narrates as being told by Upamanyu as recited by Tandī; the preceding verse mentions followers of Sāṁkhya.

<sup>6</sup> The occasion when Yudhiṣṭhira declares that he can see all the worlds of reciting *Vaikhānasas* (*sarvāṅl lokān ... vaikhānasānām japatām*, 3.114.15a+c) may also be relevant.

<sup>7</sup> All the occurrences of *parameṣṭhija* are in the form *nāradaḥ parameṣṭhijaḥ* (or acc.) and the form is limited to the *Nārāyaṇīya*.

found at 192.122c in the *Jāpakopākhyāna*, is found also three times in the *Bhagavadgīta* (5.24d, 6.27d and 18.54a), though only twice in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (329.13C,44E);<sup>8</sup> its use in those two early *bhakti* contexts seems designed to build bridges with (or “steal the clothes” of) more impersonal approaches. On the other hand, there is rather more rare vocabulary within this passage than I would expect, which perhaps indicates that it is rather more distinct from any other passage in the *Mahābhārata* than my last comments suggest.

The significance of this lexical data is of course variable. The occurrence of *kuṅkuṇī* at 193.17c is the only one in the *Mahābhārata* and the word is rare enough not to be recorded in BR, although Arjunamiśra’s gloss of *brahmanāḍī yām āhuḥ suṣumneti* looks plausible for the context (placing the mind in the two *prāṇas*, holding them by the mind at the tip of the nose below the eyebrows, easily controlled, at the *kuṅkuṇī*) and the v.l. *bhrukutyā* is fairly clearly a *lectio facilior*, as well as repetitive. The occurrence two *ślokas* later (at 193.19a) of *tālu* is no doubt conditioned simply by the rarity of need to refer to the palate (the only other occurrence within the *Mahābhārata* is at 14.19.35a), if indeed there is such a need here; the oddity is that the flame of light splits or pierces the palate area of the *brāhman* and in fact Nīlakaṇṭha glosses *tāludeśam* with the rather more obvious location of the *brahmarandhra*. The same factor is no doubt valid for the reference to the two tramp-like figures – Virūpa and Vikṛta, Ugly and Deformed – as *kucela* at 192.83d (otherwise occurring only at 5.34.38c(°*taḥ*) and 12.237.7b). The fact that *ātmabuddhi* (189.21a) and *śāntībhūta* (189.21b, with v.l. *śītībhūta*) occur only in the *Jāpakopākhyāna* within the *Śāntiparvan* may well be coincidental but equally the occurrence of these two religiously charged terms in one stanza may be significant, especially when we note the occurrence later of *śītībhūta* (192.122b, with v.l. *śāntībhūta*), occurring otherwise in the text only at 12.306.10a (with *śītībhaviṣyati* at 12.306.9d), in the final *adhyāya* of the *Yājñavalkyaśaṅkṣā* (12.298-306), which contains a theistic version of Sāṃkhya, propounding a total of 26 *tattvas* – the last a supreme being, as Yājñavalkya makes clear (12.306.27-55).<sup>9</sup> What too is meant by the *mahāsmṛti* (193.28a; the compound occurs only here in the CE), especially in view of the possible reference to reading (*mahāsmṛtiṃ paṭhed yas tu tathavānusmṛtiṃ śubhām*, 28ab)? The commentators offer varying and to my mind not particularly illuminating identifications.

Other rare but not obviously significant vocabulary items are: *vāgvajra* at 12.192.45a and 13.70.7b only, *dr̥dhīkāra* at 12.192.105c and 258.15c only, and *tritaya* at 1.146.21a, 2.64.6c, 9.35.39d(iic), 63.21c, 12.192.28b, 13.112.17b and 15.35.9a. However, it is perhaps worth noting that all of them occur here in the (admittedly longest) *adhyāya* 192, since this

<sup>8</sup> The term occurs at 1.1.12d, 3.82.58d, 145.30c, 181.12c, 202.14c, 6.27.24d, 28.27d, 63.16a, 64.1b, 7.172.55b, 12.12.24c, 49.19b, 192.122c, 210.28c, 261.3c, 316.52a, 329.13C,44E, 13.26.41f, 56.17c, 118.7a, 119.22d and 14.26.26c. Similarly, *brahmabhūyāya kalpate* at 6.36.26d, 40.53d, 12.154.25d, 208.19d, 243.7d, 13.128.31d, 130.33d, 131.56d and 14.47.8d (cf. e.g. *kalpate brahmabhūyase* 12.231.18d, 234.8d; *brahmabhūyaṃ gamiṣyasi* 12.242.17b).

<sup>9</sup> But this is then seen in more impersonal terms in Bhīṣma’s summary of Yājñavalkya’s views at 107cd (cf. also 12.187.37-39), so there may be no link with theistic attitudes. The term *śītībhūta* is not uncommon in Buddhist texts, as also is *brahmabhūta*, on which I commented above and will do again later.

distinctness of vocabulary underlines the separateness of 192 from 189-191.<sup>10</sup> There is also a distinctly puzzling use of *ekākṣara* at 192.63abcd, since it can hardly mean “monosyllabic” as elsewhere (1.1.20c, 3.133.8b[l.v.], 6.30.13a, 9.45.24a, 12.211.13a, 291.18d, 320.24a and 14.26.8c, this last = *om*) but seems to need to be construed as “one and undecaying” (cf. *ekam akṣarasamjñakam* at 192.123b); indeed several mss, followed by the Kumbhakonam edition, substitute *ekaṃ param*.

The passage is indeed complex in more ways than one. It is very uneven both in style, which is not entirely due to its being a synthesis of at least two texts (one largely a narrative dialogue) and more probably of three, and in the length of its *adhyāyas*: well over half its total length of 204 verses comes in *adhyāya* 192 with 127 verses. This is enough in itself to suggest that 192, which narrates several emboxed disputes in a mythological format, is a later addition to 189-91, consisting of relatively straightforward instruction on the practice of *japa*; *adhyāya* 193 seems in some respects to go with 189-91 but mainly to be a continuation of 192. The considerable parallelism of wording between 189.6 and 192.1-2 reveals part of the way these two parts have been cobbled together. Again, the end of *adhyāya* 192 (especially the final verse 192.127, *evam eṣā mahārāja jāpakasya gatir yathā | etat te sarvam ākhyātam kiṃ bhūyaḥ śrotum icchasi*) looks very like the end of the whole passage, employing as it does the usual formula to indicate the transition to a new topic (used again, for example, at the end of *adhyāya* 193 at 32d); this inevitably raises a question about the relationship of *adhyāya* 193 to the rest of the passage, in particular to *adhyāya* 192, and suggests that it may be a third component in compositional terms, added only after the bringing together of 189-91 and 192.

The most difficult wording is that with which the passage begins. Yudhiṣṭhira’s prompt to Bhīṣma seems to ignore the immediate context, offering instead some generalities about Bhīṣma’s instruction, and then abruptly raises the issue of the results attained by *jāpakas*. Only in his amplification of his question does Yudhiṣṭhira seem to acknowledge what Bhīṣma has just been saying but this comes in what is perhaps the hardest wording to construe satisfactorily occurring anywhere in the passage. He says (189.4cd-5ab):

*jāpakā iti kiṃ caitat sām̐khyayogakriyāvidhiḥ ||  
kiṃ yajñavidhir evaiṣa kim etaj japyam ucyate |*

which I take to mean: “‘*jāpakas*’ – what is that: is it the rules for the practice of *sām̐khya* and/or *yoga*? or is it in fact the rules of sacrifice? How is that muttering/reciting called?” The opening *śloka* of Bhīṣma’s response on the surface starts to provide a narrative answer: “In this connection indeed they narrate the following ancient story about what happened of old between Yama, Time, and a brāhman (189.6)”, but in fact this has no relation whatsoever to what he then goes on to say in the rest of the *adhyāya* and up to the end of

<sup>10</sup> Another word which registered with me as late, since it occurs mainly in the third stage of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (13 occurrences in the *Bāla* and *Uttara kāṇḍas*, against just 6 in the *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddha kāṇḍas*), is *vānī*, occurring also in 192 (44b and 57a), as well as at 1.188.4b, 2.110.25b, 3.112.7c[l.v.], 132.3c, 189.18a, 5.13.15b, 141.49c, 7.121.18c, 9.15.21c, 41.31c, 43.22c, 55.39c, 12.126.51b, 176.8a, 327.42c, 13.2.74a, 41.14d, 54.10a(iic), 75.7d, 132.20a,26a(iic) and 14.92.18c – a distribution that suggests that in the *Mahābhārata* too the word became commoner later, although it is not decisive in that regard.

191, which soon becomes relatively straightforward teaching on the practice of *japa*, its results and limitations; the verse looks very much like a plug inserted as a pointer to the later insertion of the lengthy narrative in *adhyāya* 192. Certainly, after Yudhiṣṭhira reminds him at 192.1 about this story that he had mentioned, Bhīṣma introduces it with almost the same – but slightly fuller – wording at 192.2-3ab, the whole of the first line being a very common stereotyped expression of the *Mahābhārata* (especially of the *Śāntiparvan*) and identical to 189.6ab: *atrāpy udāharantīmam itihāsaṃ purātanam* (cf. Hara 1993-94).

Bhīṣma’s very next words in 189 are indeed “With regard to recitation, when renunciation which is the goal of the Veda is practiced” (*saṃnyāsa eva vedānte vartate japaṇaṃ prati*, 189.7ab), which simultaneously links *japa* both with the Vedic tradition and in effect with the concept of *mokṣa*, especially when he continues that this produces “tranquillity resulting from the declarations of the Veda” (*vedavādābhinirvṛttā śāntir*, 7c). However, the final *pāda* of this verse, “fixed in Brahman” (*brahmaṇy avasthitau*), has to be construed with his statement next that “Both these ways are connected and <also> unconnected” (*mārgau tāv apy ubhāv etau saṃśritau na ca saṃśritau*, 7ef), which is rather opaque. I have taken the terms *saṃnyāsa* and *vedānta* in 7a as qualifying each other but nonetheless being the two ways referred to in 8. However, Belvalkar in the Crit. Notes takes the two ways as being Vedānta and Vedavāda, understood as silent *japa* (MBh CE vol.16: 2161-62), while Bedekar cites Nīlakaṇṭha in support of his view that they are the Sāṃkhya and Yoga mentioned by Yudhiṣṭhira in 4d (Bedekar 1963: 64-65 fn.1). I have problems with both of these interpretations: *vedavāda* is standardly statements or declarations contained in or about the Vedas (e.g. *BhG* 6.42c *vedavādaratāḥ*), not *japa*,<sup>11</sup> and the interval between 4d and 7e is excessively long (which is no doubt why many N mss insert 511\* *sāṃkhyayogau tu yāv uktau munibhir mokṣadarśibhiḥ* after 6 or after 7cd), as well as including a change of speaker. But I am none too happy with my own interpretation. A further point is that *vedānta* will undoubtedly mean either the goal of the Vedas or the Upaniṣads in the epic context and not the school of the Vedānta, which emerges considerably later (cf. Bronkhorst 2007: 279-308).

What Bhīṣma then goes on to list are typical *yoga* practices: first the *pravṛttaka dharma* (8c-10c), then those for the reciter seeking release (*yathā nivartate karma japato brahmacāriṇaḥ*, 11ab), beginning with an obsessive use of *kuśa* grass and including meditation on Brahman (*tad dhiyā dhyāyati brahma*, 14a). It is interesting that Brahman, more usually linked with *pravṛtti* (cf. Bailey 1983 *passim*), is here made to subordinate that to *nivṛtti*. The practices for the active *dharma* are “concentration of the mind (*manas*), subduing of the senses, truth, maintenance of the fire, and cultivation of solitary <places> (?), meditation, *tapas*, restraint, forbearance, non-envy, abstemiousness, withdrawal from sense objects, restricting chatter, also quiescence” (8cd-10ab in my rough and fairly literal translation). Bhīṣma divides the inactive *dharma* into a threefold way: manifest,

<sup>11</sup> The term *vedavāda* occurs at 5.138.7b, 6.24.42c(iic), 12.8.28d, 10.20c, 12.4e, 19.17a, 63.10b[l.v.], 189.7c, 224.25a, 58a, 68d, 227.2a, 230.11a, 252.7c, 255.6c, 260.39c(°vid), 261.16c(iic), 40a, 55c, 57e, 290.12c, 45a and 315.16d(iic), so almost exclusively in the *Śāntiparvan* (both the other instances being in utterances by Kṛṣṇa).

unmanifest and supportless (*vyaktāvyaktam anāśrayam*, 11f).<sup>12</sup> His description of the individual following the unmanifest way is: “With self purified by *tapas*, restrained, having aversion and desire ceased, without passion and delusion, free of the pairs <of opposites>, he does not grieve nor is he attached. He is not the doer of what is not to be done nor of what is to be done; such is his state. Nor through the workings of egoism should he fix his mind anywhere. Not attached to the possession of self, not disdainful, and not inactive, <but> intent on the activity of meditation, disciplined, possessing meditation, determined to meditate, producing concentration (*samādhi*) in his meditation, he abandons even that by stages.” (15cd-18cd). I need hardly enumerate the similarities to descriptions of *yoga* practice, which are clearly deliberate. But the culmination of all this is that “In that state, indeed, having achieved the abandonment of everything, blissful, free from longings, he abandons his breaths <and> resorts to (→ achieves) a brāhmic body (*brāhmīm saṁśrayate tanum*)” (19). Alternatively, disdaining that (presumably, that is, choosing the supportless option), after ascending through several stages “he obtains a self <which is> immortal <and> purified from stain” (*amṛtaṁ virajaḥśuddham ātmānaṁ pratipadyate*, 21cd).

This prompts Yudhiṣṭhira to ask whether this ultimate attainment (*uttamā prāptiḥ*, 190.1a) is the only goal of *jāpakas* or whether they can go to another or inferior one (*aparā*, 1d). Bhīṣma devotes the rest of this and the following *adhyāya*, with occasional brief interjections from Yudhiṣṭhira, to outlining the lower goals for those motivated by egoism and the like, which he firmly identifies as hells (*niraya*), even the various abodes of the older gods. He returns at the end to a eulogy of the place of the supreme self (*sthānasya paramātmanaḥ*, 191.6d), which is the master of Time and lord of heaven (*sa kālasya prabhū rājan svargasyāpi tatheśvaraḥ*, 191.9cd). This statement is perhaps what reminds Yudhiṣṭhira about the dispute involving Time/Kāla, i.e. gives the redactor the peg on which to hang his introduction of the “ancient story” which Bhīṣma then narrates at length in *adhyāya* 192.

Bhīṣma immediately announces that it is about what happened between Sūrya’s son, Ikṣvāku, and a brāhman and what happened with Kāla and Mṛtyu (192.2cd-3ab); the brāhman is soon identified as a *jāpaka*, Paippalādi, a Kauśika. His continual *japa* attracts the attention of Sāvitrī who grants his wish to be increasingly immersed in *japa* but also declares “You will go to the state of Brahman” (*yāsyasi brahmaṇaḥ sthānam*, 15a) and predicts the appearance of Dharma, Kāla, Mṛtyu and Yama. However, Dharma’s pronouncement is that “All the divine and human worlds have been won by you; you will go transcending all the hells (v.l. abodes) of the gods” (20). This ambiguity about the ultimate goal persists throughout the passage.<sup>13</sup> The next term to be used – and used

<sup>12</sup> The only other occurrence of *anāśraya* in the Śāntiparvan is at 12.247.7c (in the final *adhyāya* of the *Śukānupraśna*; cf. my comment above about *śītībhūta*). It may be worth noting that variant readings replace *trividhaṁ* with *virataṁ* or even *dvididhaṁ*, some of the mss involved also replacing *anāśrayam* with *anāmayam* or *anāśramam* (both clearly a *lectio facilior*).

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting therefore to note that E.W. Hopkins chose 192.14-15, along with 77, to illustrate his remark (Hopkins 1901: 185-6): “In various passages it is taught that a good man should aim at attaining to heaven. This too is not put forth as a half-view with a reservation, as in the case of the Upanishads. But in other cases it is expressly just such a half-view. Heaven is here a good place for good but unintelligent people, but it is scorned by the philosopher. ... ‘Heaven is where priests go,’ it is said rather bluntly, ib. 14-15”.

repeatedly – is *svarga*, offered by Dharma and rejected by the brāhman in favour of continuing his *jāpa* bodily (i.e. on earth – could this be a trace of older ideas ignoring an afterlife?).<sup>14</sup> Thereupon Kāla, Mṛtyu and Yama arrive, rapidly followed by king Ikṣvāku, with whom the brāhman is soon squabbling over which should give his merit to the other.

Part of the brāhman’s argument comprises an encomium of *satya* (192.63-72, with a preamble beginning at verse 53), which has similarities to other passages in both epics, e.g. MBh 3.203.41-42 ≈ 12.316.12-13, 12.156, 169.26-27, 183.1-5, 251.10, 13.74.28-33 and Rām. 2.101.12-19.<sup>15</sup> It is here that we find the puzzling use of *ekākṣara* that I mentioned before, which seems to need to be construed as “one and undecaying”. This encomium is just one (though the most extensive) of the proverbial or clichéd statements that the king and the brāhman trade with each other. We then have what looks remarkably like a parody (it certainly has burlesque elements) of this dispute in the arrival of two down-and-outs – called Ugly and Deformed, but later revealing themselves as Desire and Anger – disputing about the merit earned by one of them through the gift of a cow. After the dénouement, Bhīṣma seems to provide a rounding-off of the whole passage (192.117-127), starting “I have now expounded to you the obtaining of fruit by *jāpakas* and the way and the state and the worlds won by a *jāpaka*” (*jāpakānām phalāvāptir mayā te samprakīrtitā | gatiḥ sthānam ca lokāś ca jāpakena yathā jitāḥ*), then summarising the possible goals, and ending with his offer to talk about something else.

But there is still *adhyāya* 193, which starts with Yudhiṣṭhira wanting to know how the squabble between the brāhman and the king was resolved. Bhīṣma accordingly declares that they agreed to go half shares in their respective merit, whereat all the gods approach to praise them; the list of the gods and others (193.9-12) culminates with a fulsome description of Viṣṇu (*viṣṇuḥ sahasraśīrṣaś ca devo 'cintyaḥ samāgamat*, 12ef), which contrasts with the predominance so far in the *Jāpakopākhyāna* of Brahmā. However, the next developments again highlight Brahmā: the king and the brāhman practice the successive stages of *yoga* (withdrawal from sense objects, controlling their breaths and placing their *manas* in their *prāṇa* and *apāna*) and a great flame of light rises from the brāhman and enters Brahmā; Pitāmaha welcomes that brilliance, declaring that “There is equality of fruit of *jāpakas* with <followers of> *yoga*” (*jāpakais tulyaphalatā yogānām nātra saṁśayaḥ*, 22cd), which is echoed by the assembled gods, “The very great reward of both *jāpaka* and *yoga*<-practitioner> has been seen today” (*yogajāpakayor drṣṭam phalam sumahad adya vai*, 27cd), and amplified by Brahmā himself in the next couple of verses (28-29). Yet it is not merely equality: “But the difference for *jāpakas* <was> the standing up <from his seat by Brahmā and> joining them; saying ‘Please dwell in me’ he gave consciousness again; then the brāhman, freed from anxieties, entered his mouth” (23cd-24).

<sup>14</sup> The term *svarga* occurs at 23c,24a(iic)d,26d,30c,67b,76a,77ab, as well as at 191.9d and 193.3d,14a. It is in fact commoner in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* than we might expect, occurring over sixty times.

<sup>15</sup> The only identical wording is *sarvaṁ satye pratiṣṭhitam* at 192.64d = 251.10d = 13.74.30d, but cf. *satye sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam* at 12.156.5d and also *satye lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ* Rām. 2 App.18.24 post.; however, with *satyena vāyur abhyeti satyena tapate raviḥ || satyena cāgnir dahati svargaḥ satye pratiṣṭhitāḥ* at 192.66cd-67ab may be compared *satyena sūryas tapati satyenāgniḥ pradīpyate | satyena māruto vāti sarvaṁ satye pratiṣṭhitam* at 13.74.30).

The parallelism between the description of the flame emerging from the brāhman and rising to the triple heaven (*jyotirjvālā sumahatī jagāma tridivam tadā*, 193.19cd) as a manikin measuring just a hand-span (*prādeśamātram puruṣam*, 21c) and descriptions of the deaths of *yogins* – and of great warriors – is very obvious (cf. Brockington 1986, Schreiner 1988). The welcome by Brahmā, ‘Please dwell in me’ (24a), and the entry into his mouth point in the same direction of a goal conceived in broad terms as merging with the ultimate. But the frequency of mention of Brahmā,<sup>16</sup> combined with an ambiguity at times between Brahmā and Brahman,<sup>17</sup> suggests a move away from more impersonal conceptualisations towards more personal ones. I am reminded in this respect of the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*; although it is similar in its theme of Brahman to the second chapter, its exaltation of Brahman as both the goal of *yoga* and as an external agency is much more emphatic but in an overall context which is nevertheless theistic. There the self-discipline of *yoga* culminates in being established in Brahman and we may note that the term *brahmabhūta*, used at 5.24d and at two other places in the *Bhagavadgītā* (6.27d and 18.54a), occurs several times elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, including in particular both the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (at 192.122c) and the *Nārāyaṇīya* (at 329.13C,44E).<sup>18</sup>

This prompts me to further speculation – and I must acknowledge that it is basically speculation – about the character of the *Jāpakopākhyāna* and its place in the evolution of thought. It is clear that in the opening *adhyāya* 189 the picture of *japa* and its practitioners that Bhīṣma starts with is close to the standard one of (muttered) recitation of Vedic texts, which is by almost any reasonable assessment most probably its original sense, but already at the end of the *adhyāya* we find the statement that the *jāpaka*, “free from longings, abandons his breaths <and> resorts to (→ achieves) a brāhmic body. Or else he does not want the acquisition of a brāhmic body then and he ascends, standing/remaining on the way, and is not born indeed anywhere. After establishing himself in his own *buddhi*, having become tranquil, free from disease (? → distress), he obtains a self <which is> immortal <and> purified from stain.” (19cd-21). This is much closer to the language of the Upaniṣads, as is the emphasis in the next *adhyāya* on the undesirability of all lower goals that the deluded *jāpaka* performing *jāpya* from attachment reaches (190.8ab, cf. 6ab) and the mention there of “that unmanifest, located in Brahman, which is the supreme causeless <state> (190.12ab, in one of Yudhiṣṭhira’s single-verse interjections). Then in *adhyāya* 191 Bhīṣma speaks of the place of the supreme self, which is the master of Time (*sthānasya paramātmanaḥ* 191.6d; *sa kālasya prabhū rājan* 9c). All this looks rather like a deliberate re-orientation of the *jāpaka*’s practice and goal, perhaps his acceptance of newer ideas from Greater Magadha in contrast to Mīmāṃsā’s deliberate ignoring of them.

<sup>16</sup> Brahmā or Brahman occurs at 189.7d,14a,20b, 190.12b, 192.15a,63a,118a,122c(iic),123a(iic), 193.20c,28[speaker]; also *brāhma* at 189.19d and 192.6a. I might add at this point that Brahmā or Brahman is surprisingly frequent in the *Nārāyaṇīya* (over a hundred occurrences).

<sup>17</sup> For example, should *yāsyasi brahmaṇaḥ sthānam* at 192.15a be translated as “You will go to the state of Brahman” or “You will go to Brahmā’s place”?

<sup>18</sup> The term also occurs at 1.1.12d, 3.82.58d, 145.30c, 181.12c, 202.14c, 6.63.16a, 64.1b, 7.172.55b, 12.12.24c, 49.19b, 210.28c, 261.3c, 316.52a, 13.26.41f, 56.17c, 118.7a, 119.22d and 14.26.26c.

Although *adhyāya* 192 looks like a regression from that towards the more mythological (an impression that is reinforced by the sheer length of this *adhyāya*), Bhīṣma’s closing peroration includes “Obtaining immortality after immortality, becoming calm, free from self, become Brahman (*brahmabhūta*), free from duality, happy, tranquil, diseaseless, he gains that state which is the state of Brahman, from which there is no return, one/unique, called the undecaying” (192.122-123ab). Within this chapter indeed references are to Brahman rather than to Brahmā but, as I have already noted, overall we find relatively frequent mention of Brahmā and a degree of ambiguity between Brahmā and Brahman. Indeed, do any of the mentions of Brahman carry any element of the use of the term to denote the Vedas, in which respect *japa* as a discipline might be more appropriate than elsewhere?

Is a third stage in this development (following on from Vedic recitation and then more Upaniṣad-style concepts) then the homologation with *yoga* techniques which we find to a limited extent at the beginning (but perhaps only as a transition from the *Dhyānayoga* passage) and much more fully in the description of the brāhman’s ascent to union with Brahmā and the explicit equating of *japa* with *yoga* and even an assertion of its superiority (193.22cd + 27cd and 23cd, all quoted above)? That is, do we find here a transition phase consisting of a pre-*bhakti*-type worship of Brahmā, in which *japa* is natural,<sup>19</sup> giving way by the period of the *Nārāyaṇīya* to full-blown worship of Hari Nārāyaṇa? Certainly the relative frequency of *japa* and its cognates in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, along with the use of  $\sqrt{gā}$  in relation to it, suggests that *japa* of a somewhat different character was significant to the earliest Pāñcarātra, while the continuing use of the term *japa* within the developed Pāñcarātra system, as shown by the *Jayākhyasamhitā* and related texts, is well attested and quite possibly relevant.

The suggestion that I am putting forward may seem to be at odds with Greg’s assessment that the evidence for Brahmā as a *bhakti* deity is rather weak and his view that *pravṛtti* values are central to his mythology (Bailey 1983: 35-36) — I shall be interested in Greg’s reaction. But it is specific to Brahmā’s role in the *Jāpakopākhyāna*, which seems in many respects to stand on its own, so I do not see them as being in real conflict. The evidence of the *Jāpakopākhyāna* is for forms of religious practice (*japa* combined with techniques more characteristic of *yoga*) that are not especially directed towards Brahmā, though implicitly overseen by him in the light of his prominence in the passage, but in part of the passage are pursued by the *jāpaka* for their own sake, as his request to Sāvitrī and his rejection of Dharma’s offer of ascending to heaven show. The contrast presented within the *Nārāyaṇīya* between Brahmā’s embodiment of the *pravṛtti* aspect and Nārāyaṇa’s association with *nivṛtti* (perhaps most obviously at 12.326.55-67) could be read as reflecting the final stages in a process by which Nārāyaṇa superceded Brahmā as the focus of devotion.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The extent to which Brahmā is associated with *japa* is well illustrated by the fact that later he is regularly shown iconographically holding a *japamālā* in one of his four hands.

<sup>20</sup> Another formulation of this contrast is of course to be found in the Purāṇas, where Viṣṇu “becomes” Brahmā when he acts as the creator, as Paul Hacker noted half a century ago (Hacker 1960: 350).

What has previously been lacking is any direct link between Vedic *japa* and Pāñcarātra *japa*. Does the *Jāpakopākhyāna* go any of the way towards providing that link, just as the figure of Brahmā and his relatively short-lived prominence seem to have provided a transition between the more impersonal Brahman of much Upaniṣadic thought and the *bhakti* directed towards Viṣṇu/Hari/Kṛṣṇa/Nārāyaṇa of a slightly later period?<sup>21</sup> Or, to put it another way, are the slightly differing relationships to *japa* of Brahmā in the *Jāpakokhyāna* and of Nārāyaṇa in the *Nārāyaṇīya* analogous to the way in which Brahmā as the boar rescuing the earth gives way to the Varāha *avatāra*, not to mention the *matsya* and *kūrma* myths? Is *japa* only old or also new?

<sup>21</sup> This transitional aspect is further illustrated, if we accept Bruce Sullivan's arguments (Sullivan 1990) that the *Mahābhārata* depicts Vyāsa in some passages as Brahmā's earthly counterpart and in others as a portion of Nārāyaṇa (primarily in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, e.g. *kṛṣṇadvaipāyanam vyāsam viddhi nārāyaṇam prabhum* at 12.334.9ab and *nārāyaṇasyāṁśajam* at 337.4c), with the later decline of Brahmā supplying a plausible reason for the lack of subsequent recognition of Vyāsa's correspondence to him.

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## Appendix

### √jap and cognates in the Mahābhārata

upa + √jap 4.63.52b, 12.69.36b

upajapa 12.108.14b(su-)

upajāpa 12.58.11a, 59.49c(ific), 138.93a(ific)

ṛtajapya 1.1.13d, 30.18c, 2.42.53c, 5.47.61a, 7.121.38a, 9.49.18a(iic), 12.58.30b[l.v.](iic),  
221.8b, 14.93.10a(iic), 15.3.8b

√jap 1.1.200a, 13.2b, 92.1d, 104.17a, 107.13d, 114.2c, 3.43.20c, 47.12d[l.v.], 80.15b,  
83.84c,104b, 97.23f, 114.15c, 144.16d, 218.46d, 289.12b, 5.142.30a, 177.22c, 6.114.112c,  
7.58.12a, 69.39d, 9.41.11d,26b, 47.17b,58b, 49.17d, 12.49.23d,25d, 53.7c, 61.18a,  
63.5a[l.v.](bis), 93.5b, 111.3a, 123.21a, 132.13c, 148.26b, 186.5c, 189.3c,11b,14b, 190.11b,  
192.6b,11c,16a,17c,26a,47b,48b,51b,78d,112a, 193.5d,6c,7b, 207.13d, 214.6d, 253.41b,  
254.1d, 323.32bd, 329.23B, 332.25a, 13.4.18d, 16.44d, 24.28a, 26.53b,63c,65c, 54.20d,  
57.14b, 79.4a, 80.31d,40b, 126.11b, 135.3c, 141.13b, 145.21a, 14.37.16f, 52.25b, 76.24d,  
16.3.13b

(x x x japatām varaḥ 1.13.2b, 107.13d, 3.83.104b, 289.12b, 9.41.11d, 47.58b, 12.49.23d,25d,  
93.5b, 253.41b, 254.1d, 13.4.18d, 126.11b, 14.52.25b)

(x x x japatām śreṣṭhaḥ 12.192.11c)

japa 3.25.14c(sa-), 186.28a(a-)b(iic), 188.22c(a-), 189.11c(iic), 5.138.24c, 139.34c, 6.32.25c,  
7.172.84c, 9.29.19b, 12.28.35b, 136.148c(ific), 147.7d(nir-), 189.4a, 228.5d(a-), 230.12d(iic),  
323.32c, 13.24.23c(a-), 102.8c(iic), 107.3b

japahoma 1.64.38c(iic), 3.222.6d, 5.140.8c(iic), 7.124.12c, 12.103.4b

japana 12.189.7b [BR only gives an Amarakośa ref. besides this one]

japya 1.114.2c, 2.2.10c(imc), 3.2.11a, 43.20c, 81.65b(ific)d,126c(iic), 239.20e(imc), 259.18b(iic),  
286.17c(iic), 5.92.6a(ific), 142.28c(iic), 177.22c, 6.22.7c[l.v.], 7.58.12a, 9.38.29c(iic), 47.17b,  
49.17d, 12.189.5b, 190.6a,8a,11b, 192.7c,8d,9a(ific),10d,12c,19c,30a,43d,47b,50b,54ac,  
71a(iic),80b, 292.21c, 324.27c, 325.2c(iic), 326.122c(iic),123c, 335.33e, 346.3d(iic),  
13.14.38a[l.v.](iic), 15.2e, 16.61a(iic), 17.18c, 26.65a, 15.5.12a(iic)

japyaka 12.192.49b

jāpaka 12.189.3ad, 190.1b,2b,3b,4c,7b,8a,10b,11b,12c,13c(\*tva), 191.1a,  
192.4a,105c,117ad,127b, 193.7d,22c,23c,26c(iic),27c(ific),32a, 514\* 4 post., 5 post.,  
517\* 1 post. [BR only gives Hemacandra's Abhidhānacintāmaṇi besides this passage]

jāpya 12.192.59b

sam + √jap 4.4.23b

**Note** yajñānām japayajño 'smi 6.32.25c (= BhG.10.25c)

[japayajña also 12.230.12d, 13.102.8c]

mānaso nāma sa japo japyate tair mahātmabhiḥ 12.323.32cd (ekāgramanastva in e)

kiṃ japan mucyate jantur janmasaṃsārabandhanāt 13.135.3cd

**Note** frequency in Nārāyaṇīya (12.321-39) – 10 occurrences out of 104 total in Śānti (63 in Jāpakopākhyāna, so only 41 elsewhere in Śānti, i.e. virtually a quarter in Nārāyaṇīya)

## √jap and cognates in the Rāmāyaṇa

(Note the frequency in \*/App. I)

√jap 1.22.3d, 26.22a, 51.1d,6c,20b, 54.6b,26b, 55.13a,20b,21a, 64.16b,18d, 2.6.6d, 70.18b,  
3.64.34d, 6.87.33a, 7.31.37b, 34.17c,28b

1.700\*44, 71\*2,4, 1161\*8, 2.1096\*2, 1210\*6, 1211\*1, 1812\*66, App.31.20,21,  
6 App.55.74, App.56.159, App.56.23\*1, App.65.8,57, App.75.55, 7 App.1.302,303

abhi + √jap 2.22.15d

upajapta 6.93.11b

japa 1.22.3d, 50.27d(iic), 73.19b(iic), 3.5.5a(sa-)

2.1210\*6, 3.84\*1(sa-)

jāpya 2.50.19b(iic), 98.2c, 7.30.12b(iic), 31.37b

1.641\*3(ific), 2.2137\*2(iic), 2140\*4(iic), 3.171\*19, 7.660\*2(iic), App.1.346

jāpya 1.733\*2

vasiṣṭham japatām varam 1.51.1d, 54.6b, 55.20b, 64.18d

vasiṣṭho japatām varaḥ 1.51.20b, 54.26b, 64.16b

vasiṣṭhe japatām śreṣṭhe 1.55.13a

x x x japatām śreṣṭha 1.55.21c