

# Vedic terms denoting virtues and merits

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# VEDIC TERMS DENOTING VIRTUES AND MERITS

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## *Abstract*

In an other publication (BODEWITZ, 2007a) I have discussed the lists of cardinal sins and vices, their specifications in the Veda and their parallels in the Western and Christian tradition. Now I will treat their positive counterparts (the virtues and merits), which do not have such clear enumerations (and partial parallels outside the Veda).<sup>1</sup> Here the meaning of a few terms used to denote virtues and merits will be discussed, and an attempt will be made to get some information on their actual contents and background.

There are five Sanskrit equivalents for virtue or merit: *guṇá*, *dhárma*, *sukṛtám*, *púnyam* and *śobhanám*<sup>2</sup>, but only *sukṛtám* and *púnyam* are regularly found in the Vedic ritualistic and philosophical texts. They especially refer to meritorious actions or their resulting merits.

The adj. *śobhaná* ('excellent, auspicious, virtuous') and the neuter noun *śobhanám* ('something auspicious, virtue') resemble *púnya* and *púnyam* with their meaning and function, but are post-Vedic in this respect and therefore will not be treated here. In his commentaries on Vedic texts Sāyaṇa sometimes uses these terms to explain the Vedic concepts of *sukṛtá(m)* and *púnya(m)*. See the following quotations made by GONDA, 1966: 116, n. 6 and 117: *śobhanayāgādīnām kartā yajamānah; śobhanadānayuktāya yajamānāya* and *śobhanasya kartāram*.

The term *guṇá* seems to characterize the human qualities, pregnantly the good qualities, excellences, merits, virtues. However, with these meanings it is

- 1 The cardinal virtues according to Plato are four: wisdom or prudence (*sofia*), fortitude (*andria*), temperance (*sofrosune*) and justice (*dikaioisune*), to which the Christian tradition has added faith, hope and love or charity.
- 2 See MYLIUS, 1992 (s.v. "Tugend"), who s.v. "Verdienst" again mentions *sukṛtám* and *púnyam*, and then adds *pūrtám*, which clearly is a mistake, since it does not denote the concept of merit as such but refers to a specific merit (namely reward, gift). See the Dvandva compound *iṣṭāpūrtám* which denotes two specific merits (see e.g. GONDA, 1965: 237). In Pāli "Tugend" and "Verdienst" are i.a. denoted by *puñña*. See MYLIUS, 2008, s.v.

almost exclusively post-Vedic and especially found in the epics and Manu. Therefore it will be left out of account here.

The duties of man, his prescribed virtuous conduct as well as its religious merits are denoted by the noun *dhárma*. As such it is likewise mainly post-Vedic (especially if the Vedic dharmasūtras are left out of account).

The virtues or merits called *sukṛtám* and *púnyam* play a role in contexts dealing with the aim of reaching heaven (and immortality). They will be discussed in the next sections.

## 1. The merit of *sukṛtám*

The *sukṛtám* (or *sukṛtyā*) is accomplished by the *sukṛt* (the virtuous or meritorious man) who on account of this *sukṛtám* mostly wins the world of *sukṛtám* or of the *sukṛts*. Gonda, 1965: 129, correctly observes: “The *sukṛtaḥ* are those who have acquitted themselves well of their religious duties, earned the merits thereof and enjoy the reward of their ritual meritorious deeds in the other world.” See also p. 123 where “the world of religious merit” is indeed the required translation.

However, in a later publication (GONDA, 1966: 115–143) he changed his ideas. Now the *sukṛtám* is interpreted as something (especially or almost exclusively a ritual) which has been correctly or accurately carried out. The resulting merit would be based on the good quality of the performance and the root *kar* would refer to the ritual work. The *sukṛt* would be someone who is “doing (sacrificial) work well” (p. 118). The negative counterpart of the *sukṛt*, the *duṣkṛt*, then would be someone who makes mistakes in the performance of the sacrifice, but Gonda only once mentions him (p. 121). His rather helpless observation on these ‘bad performers’ is: “who in any case are demeritorious people who may be burdened with the sins and inauspicious deeds of the others”.

His treatment of *duṣkṛtám*, the negative counterpart of *sukṛtám*, is referred to a mystifying meganote (p. 126–128), which makes it clear that Gonda here has to admit that *duṣkṛtám* in fact means something like sin, vice or demerit. For a criticism of Gonda’s interpretation of *sukṛtám* and of TULL, 1989, who followed Gonda, see BODEWITZ, 1998 (588, n. 11 and 590 f.) with further references (i.a. BODEWITZ, 1993).

It is quite clear that *sukṛtám* denotes the merit which qualifies man for life after death in heaven. It is also evident that in the ritualistic literature of the

Veda the best way for gaining merit is the ritual, but this does not imply that the activity expressed by the root *kar* in *sukṛtām* would exclusively refer to the performance (by priests) of rituals of which the quality were to be expressed by *su*<sup>3</sup>. This means that more information on the nature of the merit denoted by the term *sukṛtām* (to be distinguished from the adjective *súkrta*, which has a different accentuation and means ‘well made’) is required.

### 1.1 *What has to be done for obtaining merit (sukṛtām) and by whom?*

The term *sukṛtām* often or even mostly denotes the reward for particular positive actions or behaviour stored in heaven for the human beings whose positive activity receives merits which produce a continuation of life after death in the heavenly world. This world is called the place, world or *loká* of the *sukṛtām* (the earned merit) or of the *sukṛts* (the meritorious human beings who are already living there), but the earth is the place where this merit can be produced. See RV 10, 61, 6, where in a description of the myth of cosmic incest the seed falls on the surface (of the earth), in the source (or womb) (*yóni*) of *sukṛtām*. In the introduction to this hymn, GELDNER, 1951, observes on this verse: “Der Inzest wird ausdrücklich als Guttat bezeugt.” The pouring out of seed may also be interpreted as a sacrifice in which the seed as an oblation is poured on the earth regarded as the sacrificial place where the future benefits are produced. Cf. RV 3, 29, 8, where Agni is asked to place the sacrifice (*yajñá*) in the birthplace of merit (*sukṛtásya yónau*). GONDA, 1966: 143, prefers the translation “birth-place of the meritorious act”. However, the *yóni* is the place out of which merit is produced (by an activity which is meritorious). That the result of a sacrifice is denoted by *sukṛtām* also appears from a verse in TS 7, 3, 11, 2, where the sacrifice is said to produce merit (*sukṛtām*) (i.e. continuation of life in heaven), cattle and offspring.

The reward for positive activity looks like the doctrine of *karma*, which, however, is not restricted to a life after death in heaven, but also refers to rebirth on earth (directly after death or after a limited stay in heaven). Moreover, life

3 See HORSCH, 1971: 127: “Besonders aufschlussreich ist in diesem Zusammenhang der Terminus *sukṛtá*, ‘Guttat’, da er bereits eine moralische Nuance enthält. [...] Sicherlich ist dieses Handeln noch vorwiegend rituell bestimmt, so dass der Ausdruck ‘Tugend’ für *sukṛtá* nur beschränkt zutrifft.” His approach is rather confusing. I prefer to interpret *sukṛtām* as merit, a more general term than virtue, which moreover may include items outside the sphere of morals like sacrifices.

after death in heaven where one enjoys some sort of continuation of the earthly life, is not the ultimate aim of the doctrine of *karma* which is associated with the theory of *mokṣa* (missing in the oldest phases of Vedic religion). So at best one may regard the ideas about *sukṛtām* (meritorious activity and the resulting merit stored in heaven) as predecessors of the doctrine of *karma*.<sup>4</sup> Rebirth on earth is not based on merits, but qualified by the moral or ethical good or bad nature of one's behaviour. Release from this rebirth is not produced by merits or ethics and only plays a role in late Vedic texts.

The connection of *sukṛtām* with Vedic ritual is not to be denied and is even to be expected in Vedic texts, which mainly deal with ritual. Now the following questions remain to be answered. Does the meritorious behaviour exclusively concern the ritual? Are the *sukṛts* who obtain the merit of their activities (the *sukṛtām* in heaven) the sacrificers (Yajamānas) or the priests in case the heavenly *sukṛtām* would be obtained by means of sacrifices denoted as *sukṛtām*? Does Gonda's interpretation of *sukṛtām* as 'well and accurately performed ritual' exclude the role of the Yajamānas, who hardly carry out actions in the ritual?

There are not many passages in the Vedic literature in which the concepts of *sukṛtām* and *sukṛts* evidently do not concern the performance of rituals. In most contexts these terms explicitly refer to the ritual or at least do not exclude their association with rituals. The following examples form an exception.

### 1.2 *The non-sacrificial sukṛtām*

In BĀU 6, 4, 3, a man appropriates the *sukṛtam* of a woman with whom he has sexual intercourse, if he has a particular knowledge about the symbolism of this act and of the role of women in this connection. GONDA, 1966: 121, n. 30, refers this passage to a note and does not explain what is "the 'merit' of the women" here. It is clear that this merit cannot have been accumulated by sacrifices, since

4 See BODEWITZ, 1998: 589 ff. BOLLÉE, 1956: 38, even translates *sukṛtam* with "good karma" in ṢaḍvB. 1, 6, 1. GONDA, 1966: 129, accepts this rendering more or less and states that it "may do duty for practical purposes", but also observes: "The only question [...] is that as to the character of the 'good karma', how and by what activities it was acquired. The context itself points, of course, in the direction of ritual performances." It is true that the context of this passage is ritualistic and deals with expiatory measures against ritualistic mistakes which may deprive the deceased in heaven from enjoying their merits (*sukṛtam*), but the passage does not state that the mentioned merits had been obtained by the discussed ritual (with its faults) or by ritual at all.

women do not carry out sacrifices or organize them, as the Yajamānas do; they are only present.

The text continues (6, 4, 4) with the statement that the men concerned leave this world at death without merits (*visukṛtas*), if they miss the knowledge required for this situation, since they lose it to the women concerned. Gonda (who translates *visukṛtas* with “devoid of merit”) observes: “The very occurrence of the compound *vi-sukṛt-* corroborates the view that *sukṛt-* was a fixed, more or less ‘technical’ term.”<sup>5</sup> This may be correct (apart from the wrong analysis *vi-sukṛt-* instead of *vi-sukṛta-*; see n. 5), but would imply that *sukṛtām* primarily means ‘merit’ and that the exact nature of the origin of this merit need not be the accurate performance of a ritual.

See also BĀU 6, 4, 12, where the Dvandva compound *iṣṭāsukṛte* (referring to the sacrificed material or the sacrifice as such *and* the merit which are taken away from someone) implies that *sukṛtam* need not be identical with the sacrifice. All translators of this place distinguish *sukṛtam* from the merits earned by sacrifices. The Dvandva compound *iṣṭāsukṛte* looks like a variation of *iṣṭā-pūrtam* and this means that *sukṛtam* here is identical with *pūrtam*, the merit of giving to human beings instead of offering to the gods.<sup>6</sup> The liberality expressed by *pūrtam* is not limited to giving presents to individuals (i.e. *dānam*) but may also refer to benefactions like establishing resthouses where all travellers might eat from one’s food (as king Jānaśruti did according to ChU 4, 1, 1). So *pūrtam* is like *sukṛtam* a form of doing good.

A woman also plays a role in connection with *sukṛtām* in RV 10, 95, 17, where Purūravas asks for Urvaśī’s return and then says: *ūpa tvā rātiḥ sukṛtāsya tiṣṭhān nī vartasva*, which GELDNER, 1951, translates “Auf dass der Lohn der Guttat dir zuteil werde, kehre um”. GONDA, 1966: 125, n. 49, interprets *rātiḥ sukṛtāsya* as “the gift of the well-prepared offering” and observes that the mortal Purūravas warns Urvaśī: “if she departs without more, the fruits of her deeds may not await her”. However, Urvaśī is an Apsaras and a woman and does not sacrifice and therefore cannot wait in vain for the merits of sacrifices stored for her in heaven. Probably her *sukṛtām* is her return to Purūravas and the reward

5 Gonda makes the impression of analysing *visukṛt* as *vi-sukṛta* (‘without *sukṛta*’), which is not possible, since the prefix *vi-* is followed by *sukṛt* and not by the noun *sukṛtam*. However, it is evident that the correct reading of the compound in the plural should be *visukṛtās*. See BĀU 6, 4, 12 and KauṣU 1, 4, where *visukṛta* occurs in the singular and means ‘without *sukṛtam*’.

6 See n. 2.

would be given by him in the form of a nice renewal of their association (perhaps with sexual implications).

The fact that *sukṛtam* occurs together with two other terms of which the one refers to (i.a.) the sacrifice (*iṣṭāpūrtam*) and the other to asceticism (*tapas*) in JB 1, 97 may be an indication that *sukṛtam* does not simply mean the correct performance of a ritual. The sentence *asmin vā ayam loke puṇyam jīvitveṣṭāpūrtena tapasā sukṛtenāsmān anvāgamiṣyati* admits of various interpretations in as far as the construction is concerned. CALAND, 1919: 20, may be right in taking the three instrumentals with *anvāgamiṣyati* and translating “dieser wird, nachdem er auf dieser Welt [...] gut gelebt hat, durch Opferverdienst, Askese, Guttat uns nachfolgen.” My own translation (BODEWITZ, 1990: 111) runs: “Having lived a meritorious life in this world with sacrificing and liberality, asceticism and good deeds he will follow us (and reach heaven)” and assumes that the *puṇya* way of life in general is decisive. Anyhow, the context (1, 98) makes it clear that good behaviour rather than perfectly performed ritual is at stake. The gods introduce evil or bad behaviour in this world for man in order to prevent his rising to heaven. They even appoint Agni to obstruct the successful attempts to reach heaven of him who has overcome the innate, evil traits given to him by the gods and wants to behave in a virtuous way (*yas [...] asmin loke sādhu cikīrṣāt*). I am convinced that *sādhu* (*kr*), *puṇyam* (*jīv*) and *sukṛtam* more or less belong together in this passage and refer to good behaviour, whereas correct performance of the sacrifice does not play a role here.<sup>7</sup>

7 The parallelism of the *sukṛt* and the *puṇyakṛt* had to be admitted by GONDA, 1966: 120, who nevertheless translates *sukṛtas* with “those who have acquitted themselves well of their ritual duties” and *puṇyakṛtas* with “those who do right-good-pure deeds”. It is obvious that both have a meritorious behaviour and that the correctness of the performance of rituals hardly plays a role. The ritual as such rather than its exact performance produces the merit. For *sādhukṛtyā* representing *sukṛtam* see also JB 1, 18, where after having reached the *sukṛta-rasa* the deceased gives the *sādhukṛtyā* to the Pitṛs. In this late Vedic passage the deceased does not need any more his *sukṛtam*, since by knowledge of his identity with the highest god he has become released. On the other hand, KāthU 2, 24 does not regard knowledge alone as sufficient and states that *duṣcaritam* (= *duṣkṛtam*) forms a hindrance. That this *sādhukṛtyā* (= *sukṛtam*) refers to virtuous behaviour in general appears from the parallel passage JB 1, 50, where the deceased gives to his forefathers whatever *puṇyam* he had done in his life and this *puṇyam* is in the same passage denoted by the term *sādhukṛtyā*. His enemies receive his *pāpakṛtyā*. This opposition between relatives and enemies who receive one’s merits and demerits in general (without any clear association with good and bad sacrifices) is expressed by KauṣU 1, 4 with an opposition between dear relatives and enemies (or relatives who are not dear) who receive *sukṛtam* and *duṣkṛtam*. The transfer of merits has a counterpart in a

The agreement of *sukṛtam* and *puṇyam* also appears from the fact that the essence or fluid form (representing food in life after death?) (*-rasa*) of meritorious behaviour (i.e. the merit in heaven) may be preceded in a compound by *sukṛta-* as well as by the genitive of *puṇyakṛtyā*. See JB 1, 18 and JUB 3, 3, 4, 6, where the deceased comes to the *sukṛtarasa* in heaven and JUB 1, 9, 3, 4, where the “sap of good action” (*puṇyakṛtyāyai rasah*, see OERTEL, 1894) is situated beyond the sun.

Even a human being may be denoted by the term *sukṛtam*. In AĀ 2, 4, 2 the deities refuse to enter a cow or a horse arguing that these living beings are not good enough for them. They approve of man and say *sukṛtam bata* and the text explains this with *puruṣo vāva sukṛtam*. I think that the first *sukṛtam* means ‘Well done!’ and the second ‘something meritorious’ or ‘the origin of merit’ (just like the place of the sacrifice is the place where merits are produced). There seems to be a wordplay of *sukṛtam* (= *sú kṛtām*) and *sukṛtām* in this passage, which unfortunately has no accentuation.

In ŚB 4, 1, 4, 5, two persons (a king and his Purohita) are associated with *duṣkṛtām* and *sukṛtām* in case one of the two is without special merits and their cooperation would be unsuccessful. EGGELING, 1885, translates: “[...] let not a Brāhman desire to become the Purohita of any one Kshatriya (he may meet with), as thereby righteousness and unrighteousness unite; nor should a Kshatriya make any Brāhman (he may meet with) his Purohita, as thereby righteousness and unrighteousness unite.” GONDA, 1966: 126 f., n. 53, criticizes Eggeling and observes: “The *sukṛtam* in all probability consists in having, or being, a (competent) purohita, the *duṣkṛtam* in making someone a purohita who may prove unfit for this profession or in serving an unworthy kṣatriya. If this interpretation is not beside the mark the *sukṛtam* results from the correct observance of the social and religious rules, of the dharma, the *duṣkṛtam* from their disregard.” Gonda overlooks the fact that not the choice of a Purohita or his acceptance of the invitation as such are *sukṛtām* or *duṣkṛtām*, but that one of the two persons may represent *sukṛtām* and the other *duṣkṛtām*. These two persons are qualified as merit and demerit (*sukṛtām* and *duṣkṛtām*). It seems that Gonda was misled by the neuter form of the two nouns, which here definitely refer to

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transfer of demerits. The merits expressed by *sukṛtam* may partially consist of sacrifices but need not exclusively be produced by sacrifices let alone by the quality of their performances.

persons. The possible *sukṛtām* associated with a king has nothing to do with his ritual experience, nor does his possible *duṣkṛtām* with his inability in rituals.<sup>8</sup>

The localisation of *sukṛtām* mostly is heaven (the destination of merit earned on earth) or (on earth) the place of sacrifice. There are some exceptions. In RV 10, 85, 24 the bride becomes separated from the house of her parents and placed in the womb of order (*ṛtasya yónau*) and the world of merit (*sukṛtasya loké*) together with her husband; i.e. she becomes lawfully married. GONDA, 1966: 142, rightly criticizes the translation of (i.a.) GELDNER, 1951, in which the world of *sukṛtām* is interpreted as heaven, but does not deny that the sacrifice on earth cannot be meant here. He supposes that the localisation should be taken as “the married state regarded as a manifestation of ṛta and of (the merit gained by) right action”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed lawful marriage (i.e. started according to Ṛta) is a stage of life in which the bride (on account of her association with her husband) may gain merit (*sukṛtām*). However, the winning of merit by sacrifices hardly plays a role here.

On the same page Gonda deals with AV 14, 1, 59, where the bride leaves the house of her parents and the gods should place her in *sukṛtām* (in the future home?). He concludes: “Here the term practically comes to ‘happiness’. [...] *Sukṛtam* used here without any reference to ritual activities and merits seems to have acquired a more or less fixed character, but we should remember that marriage too is a ritual act.” So it is not clear whether Gonda regards the *sukṛtām* in which the bride is placed as the “married state” (see above) or as a marriage ritual. His remark on *sukṛtām* having *developed* (from the bliss of merit obtained in heaven and based on perfectly carried out rituals) to a “more or less fixed character” of happiness in general, raises some questions, since the AV is not a very late Vedic text. I suppose that married life is *sukṛtām* because it potentially

8 After this unconvincing treatment of ŚB 4, 1, 4, 5, Gonda continues his note with comments on several passages in which *duṣkṛt* and *duṣkṛtām* are discussed and the association of these terms with the ritual becomes more and more vague. At the end of his note 53, Gonda discusses AB 2, 7, 12, where the formula “O slayers, whatever shall here be well done, to us that; whatever ill done, elsewhere that” is used in addressing the slayers of the sacrificial victim. Gonda assumes that the correct or wrong performance is meant here. Indeed, the prose context seems to explain it in some way like this. However, the killing as such may be associated with merit and demerit. The slayers receive the demerit of the cruel action, the priests and the sacrificer the merit. The correctness of the ritual does not play a role in the formula.

9 On such a non-physical, non-cosmographic ‘world’ see also GONDA, 1966: 68, discussing the *bhadrasya loka* and referring to “English phrases such as ‘the scientific world, the sporting world’” by way of comparison.

provides the opportunity of gaining merit (especially in comparison with the state of being an unmarried woman). There is no implication of rituals, let alone of sacrifices, and certainly not of their accurate and correct performance.

In RV 7, 35, 4 the *sukṛtāni* of the *sukṛts* are invoked for the human beings and RENO, 1959: 40, rightly translates “Heur nous soient les bienfaits des (dieux) bien-faisants”, because rituals and deceased sacrificers cannot play a role here.

### 1.3 *The role of the Yajamāna as the sukṛt*

Man and wife are both called *sukṛt* in AV 12, 3, 44. Both are indeed involved in an Atharvavedic ritual in which a meal is offered as a Dakṣiṇā. The epithet translated with “performing pious deeds” by BLOOMFIELD, 1897: 191, is rather general and hardly refers to the correctness of their ritual activities (i.e. the cooking of the meal), but concerns their willingness to organize such a ritual and to give the meal to the priest. The accurateness of their contribution to this simple ritual does not play a role.

Two *sukṛt*'s are mentioned in RV 3, 31, 2. The one seems to be the maker or producer of the sacrificial fire (i.e. the priest), the other he who takes the profit (i.e. the Yajamāna). The hymn is rather obscure. If the given interpretation is correct, the Yajamāna may be the one who obtains the *sukṛtām* (the merit) as an Āhitāgni, whereas the priest is the one who carries out the meritorious action (the Agnyādhāna). GONDA, 1966: 118, criticizes Geldner's translation “Guttäter”. It is possible, however, that two meanings of the term are used in this obscure hymn. As ‘skilful’ it applies to the priest who produces fire, as ‘doing good’ it denotes the organizer of the Agnyādhāna, the sacrificer. The priest does not win the *sukṛtām* in heaven. This merit is for the sacrificer.<sup>10</sup>

In several passages the Yajamānas are explicitly called the doers and winners of *sukṛtām*. The participle *ijānā* is used with the noun *sukṛt* and then indicates that the *sukṛt* has been a Yajamāna. See e.g. AV 9, 5, 8 and 12 occurring in a hymn dealing with the offering of a goat and five rice-dishes. Here the world of the *sukṛt*'s is that of men who have organized sacrifices, paid the offerings and given Dakṣiṇās to the Brahmin priests. The priests are not the *sukṛt*'s. It is the Yajamāna who meets after death with the merit of what he has sacrificed to the gods and given to human beings (especially priests). See e.g. TS

10 See JAMISON, 1991: 19, who observes that the priests do the actual ritual work and that the Yajamāna derives all the benefit from the ritual.

3, 3, 8, 5 where he comes together with his *iṣṭāpūrtá* (i.e. what he has offered and given). Therefore GONDA, 1966: 131, is wrong in translating *sukṛtām* occurring in AV 9, 5, 8 in apposition with *ījānānām* with “who have performed the ritual well”, since the Yajamānas are not the performers. According to AV 11, 1, 17, the cooker of the rice-dish goes to the world of the *sukṛt*'s and therefore is a *sukṛt* himself. This cooker, however, is not a priest, but a Yajamāna who makes his wife cook the Brahmaudana for the Brahmins. His merit is the giving of the meal and the quality of the cooking is rather irrelevant.

On these Yajamānas see further AV 18, 3, 20, where ancient sacrificers are described as *iṣṭāvantas* (having offered to the gods), *rātiṣāco dādhanāḥ*<sup>11</sup> (givers of presents), *dākṣiṇāvantas* (givers of Dakṣiṇās), *sukṛtas* (meritorious men). It is clear that the *sukṛt* is a *sukṛt* because he gives goods to gods and priests and that his doing good has nothing to do with the correctness of the performance of the ritual.<sup>12</sup> See also RV 10, 122, 3, where Agni is addressed, and GONDA, 1966: 116, mistranslates *dāsād dāsūṣe sukṛte* with “when thou givest to the giver who performs (his ritual) work well”. The Yajamāna<sup>13</sup> is someone who does good by giving and therefore Agni gives to him.

The hymn RV 1, 125 consists of a conversation between a rich host and his guest, who is an itinerant singer and wants to have Dakṣiṇās or presents in general from his host. Liberality rather than a great sacrifice (which cannot be organized *ad hoc*) let alone the correctness of its performance plays a role. Here Gonda, 1966: 117) is aware of this fact and does not refer to the accurateness of

11 WHITNEY, 1905, misinterprets these two words as “attached to giving [...] bestowers”. See also GONDA, 1966: 117, who translates them with “dispensing gifts [...] bestowing”. These persons make (*dhā*) other people (in general, or Brahmins) receivers (*sāc*) of gifts.

12 The correctness of the performance of the sacrifice and its opposite are expressed by *sviṣṭam* and *duriṣṭam*. A *duriṣṭam* may consist of the offering of a barren cow. According to ŚB 4, 5, 1, 7 (see GONDA, 1966: 126, n. 53) Varuṇa receives the ill-offered part of the sacrifice, makes it well-offered (*sviṣṭam*) and returns the cow to the sacrificer as his own *yājña* (offering) and as his own merit (*sukṛtām*). This indicates that *sukṛtām* here does not mean ‘well-performed (sacrifice)’ but ‘merit’, as even Gonda has to admit. Following EGGELING, 1885, he translates “his own sacrifice, his own *sukṛtam*, i.e. ritual merit.” The faults, for which the priests are responsible, are redressed by the gods and the sacrificer keeps his merit.

13 Sāyaṇa is quoted several times by GONDA, 1966: 116 f., who nevertheless keeps misunderstanding the texts which he discusses. See the introductory remarks of my article in which Sāyaṇa’s commentary is quoted (from Gonda) and the Yajamāna is explained as someone who is the doer of good (*śobhanam*), of meritorious (*śobhana*) items like sacrifices etc. and as someone who is engaged in the meritorious (*śobhana*) activity of liberality (*dānam*). There is no reference to the accuracy of the ritual performance.

a ritual, but observes that in verse 3 the singer “comes in search of the *sukṛt*- (i.e. the man who knows how to acquit himself of his social and ritual duties, the reception of a guest being a socio-religious affair...)”. However, in verse 5 this *sukṛt* primarily appears to reach heaven on account of his liberality (*yáḥ pṛṇāti sá ha devéṣu gachati*). See also RV 10, 107, 2, where in a hymn dedicated to the Dakṣiṇā we read “Hoch oben im Himmel haben die Dakṣiṇāgeber ihren Stand, die Rosseschenker, die sind bei der Sonne. Die Goldschenker werden der Unsterblichkeit teilhaft, die Kleidschenker verlängern ihr Leben, a Soma” (tr. GELDNER, 1951).

On the AV I have observed (1999a: 113): “Actually, in almost all the hymns in which life after death in heaven plays a role, items are given to Brahmins or deposited in or with them by way of oblation.”

In AV 18, 4 it is perfectly clear that the *sukṛt*'s are the Yajamānas. See AV 18, 4, 1, where the *ījāná* is placed in the world of the *sukṛt*'s; AV 18, 4, 2, where the *ījānās* are said to go to heaven; 18, 4, 3 where their predecessors, the Aṅgirasas, are called *sukṛt*'s; 18, 4, 7, where the *yajñakṛt*'s, the sacrifice-makers (i.e. the organizers of the sacrifices, the Yajamānas), are called *sukṛt*'s ; AV 18, 4, 14, where the deceased who is laid on the funeral pile is called *ījāná* as well as *sukṛt*. In this hymn the term *yájamāna* occurs in the verses 4–7. The Yajamāna is the real *sukṛt*, the maker of *sukṛtám*, which mostly means the maker (i.e. organizer) of a sacrifice, the *yajñakṛt*.<sup>14</sup>

At the end of a sacrifice in which thousand cows are given as Dakṣiṇās the last cow is asked to announce the sacrificer to the gods as a *sukṛt* in TS 7, 1, 6, 8; PB 20, 15, 15; JB 2, 267 and ŚB 4, 5, 8, 10, and here it is clear that the Yajamāna is called thus because he has given an enormous amount of cows. The quality of the sacrificer and his ritual is the quantity of his liberality.

14 GONDA, 1966; 129, n. 57, comments on AV 18, 3 54, where a bowl filled with drinks is called the food of *sukṛtám*, which WHITNEY, 1905, translates with “a draught of what is well done”. Gonda observes: “The commentary supplies *yajñasya* to *sukṛtasya*: ‘of the act of worship (sacrifice) which has been correctly executed’.” In my view the commentary does not qualify the sacrifice as well done, but equates the merit (*sukṛtám*) with the sacrifice without explaining this as having a correct performance. The food (sometimes in fluid form: *sukṛtarasa*) of the deceased in heaven which consists of his merits may indeed have been stored by the oblations, though other forms of merits are not excluded. Anyhow the term *sukṛtám* just means merit here and does not refer to the nature of the performance of a ritual.

#### 1.4 *The sukṛtam in late Vedic texts*

The world in heaven won by (sacrificial or other) merits (the *sukṛtasya loka*) is the final and highest destination of man in the older Vedic literature. The obstruction to that goal is formed by demerits (*duṣkṛtam*, *pāpakṛtyā*).<sup>15</sup> In some late Vedic texts the highest aim is no longer a continuation of life in a world of merit (*sukṛtasya loka*) and therefore one wants to get rid of one's *duṣkṛtam* as well as one's *sukṛtam*.<sup>16</sup> The obstruction to a higher state in heaven in the form of some sort of deliverance (*mokṣa*) now consists of a lack of the right knowledge.

The oldest evidence is to be found in a late stage of the JB (JB 1, 18; 1, 46; 1, 50). In JB 1, 46, the failure of man after death is described. He misses the right knowledge and is obstructed by the doorkeepers, i.e. he cannot shake off his *sukṛtam* and his *duṣkṛtam*. His *sādhukṛtyās* disappear tripartitely. The doorkeeper of the highest world takes one third, one third disappears in the air, and with one third the deceased falls back in the direction of the earth, but stops in the world which has been earned by him with gifts (*dānajita*). This means that the *sādhukṛtyā* (i.e. *sukṛtam*) of which two thirds had been lost, consists of *dānam*, a specification of the concept of merit which does not refer to the ritual as such, though in the form of *dakṣiṇās* may have connections with sacrifices. Again an indication that a world obtained in heaven need not be exclusively won by the correct performance of rituals.

## 2. The merit of *pūṇyam*

The adj. *pūṇya* and the neuter noun *pūṇyam* have some differences and agreements with the nouns *sukṛtam* and *sukṛt*. In comparison with them they are late-

15 The opposition of *sukṛtam* and *duṣkṛtam* has a better parallel in *sucaritam* and *duṣcaritam* (see ŚB 3, 3, 3, 13, where wrong behaviour is opposed to good behaviour and the opposition has no moral aspects, but refers to social etiquette) than in *sviṣtam* and *duriṣtam* (see n. 12 on ŚB 4, 5, 1, 7), since it refers to religious behaviour and its merits rather than to the good and bad performance of a ritual. For *duriṣtam* and *sviṣtam* see also AB 3, 38, where otherwise than in ŚB 4, 5, 1, 7 (see n. 12) Varuṇa guards the *sviṣtam* of the sacrifice and a comparison is made with a field which is ill-plowed (*duṣkṛṣṭa*) and then made *sukṛṣṭa*. Here the correct performance (*sviṣṭa/sukṛṣṭa*) rather than the meritorious activity (*sukṛtam*) plays a role (in spite of the attractive similarity of *-kṛṣṭa* and *-kṛta*).

16 See n. 7.

comers in Vedic literature. The term *puṇya*, occurring as an adjective, a neuter noun and in the beginning of compounds, hardly plays a role in the mantras of the Vedic Saṃhitās. Though *sukṛt* and *sukṛtam* explicitly refer to actions and these actions often have some associations with the ritual, whereas *puṇya(m)* originally (and even later) sometimes denotes what is good, positive or auspicious in general, even the ritualistic Brāhmaṇa texts more often use *puṇya*, *puṇyam* and their compounds. In the Vedic Upaniṣads *puṇya* more frequently occurs than *sukṛta*.

It is clear that the position of these terms dealing with merits has changed. The noun *puṇyam* seems to have taken over the role of *sukṛtam* or at least have become equal to this denotation of something meritorious, which again may be an indication that *sukṛtam* does not express the correctness or accurateness of the ritualistic activity. It is possible that *puṇya* may ultimately have obtained moral and ethical connotations. In the Upaniṣads its associations with the theory of *karma* definitely play a role.

The etymology of *puṇya* is disputed. Its basic meaning seems to refer to something which has a positive role and is auspicious, especially promising something good for the future. As such it need not have any moral implications. It is positive in that it points to future situations which are associated with happiness, prosperity, luck, success etc.<sup>17</sup> This looks like the situation of *sukṛtam* which is the merit earned on earth which secures a future happy life in heaven.

On the moral aspects of the term OLDENBERG, 1919: 195, observes: “*puṇya* ist später in der Karmanlehre mit ihrem scharfen Gegensatz von lohnbringendem und strafebringendem Handeln das hervortretendste Schlagwort auf der Seite des Guten”, and assumes as its original meanings: “mit Glück, Wohlsein, Gedeihen begabt; ferner: Glück bringend, das Wohlsein vermehrend.” See also p. 196: “Man sieht, dass mit *puṇya* von Haus aus nicht eigentlich das Gute als Gegensatz des Bösen gemeint ist.” However, the development from economic prosperity to moral good cannot be traced in the terminology as accompanying the origin of the *karma* doctrine, since this occurs rather late in the Vedic literature, which in most texts associates doing good, meritorious work with a good future in heaven and does not pay much attention to the demerits and their results. The opposition between *puṇyam* and *pāpam* is found already before passages dealing with the *karma* doctrine, as will be shown in the following subsection 2.1.

17 See e.g. RV 2, 43, 2 where luck is announced by the sound of a bird. On the other hand it may also qualify a characteristic which predicts such a luck. See AV 7, 115, 4 on a *puṇyā lakṣmī*.

KEITH, 1925: 469 f., states that the Brāhmaṇa texts did “not develop any theory of morality”, but further on (p. 479) observes that the term *puṇya* “slowly develops, in lieu of its purely unethical sense of ‘fortunate’ or ‘lucky’, the implication of goodness” and that it became “used in those passages of the Upaniṣads which touch on the essential connexion of the position of man in life as affected by the merit of his previous birth.” One may doubt, however, whether the merits (*puṇyam* = *sukṛtam*) qualifying for a stay in heaven in the Brāhmaṇas are entirely different from the merits determining the nature of a rebirth on earth in the Upaniṣads. According to HORSCH, 1971: 100, the rebirth would be determined by “vorwiegend ethisch qualifizierten [...] Taten”. Did the merits of the ritual texts develop into virtues in the later Vedic texts?

The agreements of *puṇyam* and *sukṛtam* appear in the parallellism of *puṇyam* + *pāpam* and *sukṛtam* + *duṣkṛtam*, which will first be treated.

## 2.1 *puṇyam* = *sukṛtam* and *pāpam* = *duṣkṛtam*

The opposition of merits and demerits, virtues and sins, especially plays a role in passages dealing with life after death. One should get rid of demerits or sins in order to be qualified for a *loka* in heaven, but of demerits or sins as well as of merits or virtues in later Vedic texts in which the idea of *mokṣa* occurs for the first time.

In post-Vedic texts in which *puṇyam* is mentioned together with *pāpam*, good and bad actions in general (and their resulting merits and demerits) are definitely meant. See e.g. the proverbs edited and translated by BÖHTLINGK, 1870–1873, verse 2642 (= 1074 first ed.), where the effects, i.e. the merits and demerits, of very good and bad actions are enjoyed already on earth. Böhtlingk rightly translates *atyugrapuṇyapāpānām ihaiva phalam aśnute* with “Den Lohn für ungewöhnlich gute oder schlechte Thaten kostet man schon hier”. In verse 134 (= 53 of the first ed.) the opposition is formulated with *puṇyam* and *duṣkṛtam*, which implies that *puṇyam* and *sukṛtam* are regarded as equal. The guest who is not well treated with hospitality, takes away the merits (*puṇyam*) of the host and gives his own demerits (*duṣkṛtam*) to his host. According to Manu 8, 91 the deity residing in one’s heart observes one’s good and evil deeds (see OLIVELLE, 2004): *puṇyapāpekṣitr*.

Now, I will treat the use of the opposition between good and bad in the Vedic texts, start with the ritualistic Brāhmaṇas in which the *karman* doctrine is still

missing and then continue with the Vedic Upaniṣads in which the first traces of this doctrine become playing a role.

From ŚB 2, 5, 2, 8 it appears that the good deeds denoted as *pūnyam* need not refer to sacrifices even in a ritualistic text like a Brāhmaṇa: *tād yāthā pūnyam cakrūṣe pūnyam kuryād evām tāt* “as one returns a good deed by doing good to the one who has done that deed”. It is not clear whether *pūnyam* as the object of the verb *kar* here has any moral implications. The implied but not expressed opposition between *pūnyam* and *pāpam* here seems to belong to the sphere of profit and damage and *quid pro quo*.

Though in the above discussed passage the use of the verb *kar* with as object *pūnyam* does not necessarily imply that this object has a moral connotation, mostly the use of this verb has this moral implication or at least refers to merits. See JB 1, 15, where the opposition of *sādhu* (instead of *pūnyam*) *ṛtam* and *pāpam ṛtam* agrees with that of *sukṛtam* and *duṣkṛtam* in the question *yaj jīvan puruṣaḥ karoty eva sādhu karoti pāpam kā tayor duṣkṛtasukṛtayor vyāvṛttir*. In JB 1, 18 *sādhu* is likewise used instead of *pūnyam* in the opposition with *pāpam*, in a passage in which the lifebreath announces to the gods how much good and how much evil has been done on earth by the dead person (*sa heyattām devebhya ācaṣṭa iyad asya sādhu ṛtam iyat pāpam iti*)<sup>18</sup>. For such an announcement compare JUB 1, 5, 1, where the doorkeeper of heaven judges *idam vai tvam atra pāpam akar nehaisyasi yo ha vai pūnyakṛt syāt sa iheyād iti* and *pūnya* forms an opposition with *pāpa* in connection with the verb *kar*. The opposition of the *pūnyakṛt* and the *pāpakṛt* is also found in JB 1, 291, where it is observed that here on earth *pūnyakṛtas* as well as *pāpakṛtas* are active, whereas in yonder world only *pūnyakṛtas* are found. This opposition (like that of *sukṛtas* and *duṣkṛtas*) is too general to be limited to sacrificers.

In ŚB 13, 5, 4, 3 we find an opposition between *kārma pāpakam* and *pūnyam kārma*, in which the good (*pūnya*) activity is associated with a particular ritual and the bad (*pāpaka*) with sinful activity: *Pārikṣitā yajamānā aśvamedhaiḥ parovarā ajahuh kārma pāpakam pūnyāḥ pūnyena kārmaṇā*. HORSCH, 1966: 140, translates the last three words with “als Fromme mit frommer Tat”, *kārma pāpakam* with “die böse Tat” and takes both singulars *kārman* as “Tat”, but in a note observes: “*karman* hier erstmals in ethischer Bedeutung?” I think that the bad *karman* should be interpreted as the collective bad activity and its results, but doubt whether this *kārman* has any relation with the doctrine of transmigra-

18 See BODEWITZ, 1973: 57, n. 12–13, referring to the weighing of good (*sādhú*) and wrong deeds in ŚB 11, 2, 7, 33.

tion. Anyhow a moral aspect is possible, but the substitution of the ethical *kārman*<sup>19</sup> by the ritualistic *kārman* points to the opposition of merits and demerits rather than of virtues and sins.

JUB 1, 60, 1 and 2, 3, 6 state that with the mind (*manas*) one thinks what is good and what is evil (*puṇyam cainena dhyāyati pāpaṁ ca*). The difference between thinking (*dhyāy*) and doing or committing (*kar*) is only gradual. So here again a moral opposition is expressed.

PB 11, 5, 11 opposes the *puṇya* person to the *pāpīyas* as one person in two different situations. Here it is evident that no moral distinction is made. CALAND, 1931, correctly translates: “Therefore, he, who having been formerly successful, afterwards fares worse, should take the ākṣāra(sāman) as the Brahman’s chant. Unto him it (this sāman) causes to flow (‘to return’) valour, strength (and) pith.” So here we see *puṇya* and *pāpa* with the meanings ‘prosperous’ and ‘economically or physically weak’. This is rather exceptional.

On the situation in the Upaniṣads RODHE, 1946: 34, correctly observes that there “we find *pāpa* constructed with *karoti*, consequently having the sense of wrongdoing” and that “[a]s its contrast often *puṇya*, good, is mentioned”.

The BĀU mentions some examples of the opposition of *puṇya* and *pāpa*. In BĀU 1, 5, 20 the deceased after having transferred his vital powers to his son<sup>20</sup> now receives the cosmic or divine counterparts of three of these vital powers and becomes a god (i.e. Prajāpati). From the divine or cosmic waters and the moon the central vital power in the form of a new, divine lifebreath enters him. The conclusion runs (in the translation of RADHAKRISNAN of 1953): “Whatever sufferings creatures may undergo, these remain with them. But only merit goes to him. No evil ever goes to the gods.” So *puṇyam* goes to the divinized deceased and *pāpam* does not reach him, since *pāpam* never reaches divine beings. If Radhakrishnan is right in taking *puṇyam* as merit, then its opposite, *pāpam*,

19 On the non-ritual *karman* in the Veda see BODEWITZ, 1993, where some more examples of bad *karman* are treated. For the compensation of bad *karman* by the ritual see ŚB 1, 6, 1, 21, where the identification of the sacrificer with Prajāpati implies that he who knows thus “whether he has a sacrifice performed for him while he is far away, or while he is near, the sacrifice is performed in the same way as it would be performed if he were near; and he who knows this, even though he do much evil, is not shut out from the sacrifice” (tr. EGGELING, 1882).

20 The context clearly does not point to the *karma* doctrine of transmigration, but the cosmification of the deceased and his identification with Prajāpati looks like a forerunner of the idea of *mokṣa* from this transmigration.

would be demerit or sin. Most translations are not very explicit in this respect. However, this passage reminds us of JB 1, 15, where someone who dies with a particular knowledge rises up as the vital breath with his good deeds (*sukṛtam*, i.e. whatever *sādhu* he has done) and leaves his bad deeds (*duṣkṛtam*, i.e. whatever *pāpam* he has done) with his body. On the other hand one might also take the suffering which is left with the creatures (*yad u kim cemāḥ prajāḥ śocanti, amaivāsām tad bhavati*) as the opposite of *puṇyam* and in that case the opposition would be that of good luck and distress.

BĀU 3, 2, 13 *puṇyo vai puṇyena karmanā bhavati pāpaḥ pāpena* definitely refers to good and bad activities and their results. However, it is unclear whether here a doctrine of *karma* and *mokṣa* is treated, because in the same context (3, 2, 10) the outdated concept of overcoming redeath<sup>21</sup> is mentioned. See DEUSSEN, 1897: 431, on the rather undeveloped ideas of this passage and HORSCH, 1971: 112, who speaks of a “Nebeneinander der zwei gegensätzlichen Eschatologien” which continued “bis in die Upaniṣaden” and then refers to the present passage.

BĀU 4, 3, 15; 4, 3, 22 and 4, 3, 34 have *puṇyam* and *pāpam* as the objects of an other verb than *kar*, namely the verb ‘to see’. In the state of dreams one sees (i.e. experiences) good and evil, which have nothing to do with moral distinctions but refer to pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Therefore RODHE, 1946: 34, is wrong in mentioning (one of) these places together with other Upaniṣadic passages in which the opposition of *puṇya* and *pāpa* is found.

In BĀU 4, 4, 5 (and its context), however, *puṇya* and *pāpa* occur together with the root *kar* and the noun *karman*. Here the two terms definitely refer to moral and immoral behaviour and the doctrine of *karman* and transmigration: *yathākārī yathācārī tathā bhavati [...]* *puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmanā bhavati pāpaḥ pāpena*.

The much later PrU (in 3, 7) connects *puṇyam* and *pāpam* with life after death in a rather strange way: *atha [...]* *udānaḥ puṇyena puṇyam lokam nayati pāpena pāpam ubhābhyām eva manuṣyalokam* “Now [...] the upbreath leads, in consequence of good (work) to the good world, in consequence of evil to the evil world, in consequence of both to the world of men” (tr. RADHAKRISHNAN, 1953). The third option probably refers to transmigration and rebirth on earth which depends on the mix of good and bad *karman*. The merit expressed by *puṇyam* results in the old conception of a world in heaven, which has nothing to do with the *karma* doctrine of the Upaniṣads. The demerit (*pāpam*) may result in a stay in hell. There is no reference to *mokṣa*.

21 See BODEWITZ, 1996: 34.

This *mokṣa* can be obtained according to MuṇḍU 3, 1, 3 by shaking off (*vidhūya*) good and evil, merit and demerit (*puṇyam* and *pāpam*). This more advanced view about the relative value of *puṇyam* is already found in KauṣU 1, 4 (*tad sukṛtaduṣkṛte dhunute*), which shows that *puṇyam* and *pāpam* continue the opposition of *sukṛtam* and *duṣkṛtam*. Even in a Brāhmaṇa text like the JB we find in 1, 18 and 1, 50 that not only demerits but also merits are given up. JB 1, 50 states that the deceased says to his Piṭṛs: *yat kiṃ ca puṇyam akaram tad yuṣmākam* and then these Piṭṛs receive his *sādhukṛtyā* (= *puṇyam*) and his enemies his *pāpakṛtyā* (apparently = *pāpam*).

So the opposition of *puṇyam* and *pāpam* with moral implications was not first created by the Upaniṣads in connection with the introduction of the *karma* doctrine of transmigration. The world of merits (*sukṛtaloka*) has a parallel in the world of the *puṇyakṛt*'s in the Upaniṣads, in which, however, just as in some late Brāhmaṇa passages the ideas about rebirth on earth and release from transmigration became developed in Vedism.

## 2.2 *The loka obtained by puṇyam*

In his publication on world and heaven in the Veda GONDA, 1966: 104, rightly observes that the term *loka* does not always denote a world (in heaven) but may also mean “position, situation, state, status” and in this connection refers to ChU 8, 1, 6 *tad yatheha karmajito lokah kṣīyate evam evāmutra puṇyajito lokah kṣīyate*. It is clear that at least one of the two *lokas* here refers to a particular position and probably both, since *loka* here concerns one person and not a group.<sup>22</sup>

Such a *loka* is evidently obtained by doing *puṇyam*. See e.g. TB 3, 3, 10, 2 *puṇyam karma sukṛtasya lokah*; JUB 1, 5, 1 *yo ha vai puṇyakṛt syāt sa iheyāt*; PrU 3, 7 *udānaḥ puṇyena puṇyam lokam nayati*. Now it is remarkable that not only the meritorious actions undertaken on earth are called *puṇya* but that the resulting *loka* in heaven is also called *puṇya*. The compounds *puṇyaloka* and

22 However, Gonda's interpretation of the text does not convince in all respects. He observes that “the good fruits of karman, whether they are gathered in this life or in the other world are not inexhaustible”. The gathering of the results of both activities takes place in one and the same world, namely on earth, but the fruits are enjoyed in two different worlds. The *karmajita loka* is the powerful position on earth obtained by profane or normal activities (*karmajita* has nothing to do with the *karma* doctrine), whereas the *puṇyajita loka* is enjoyed in heaven but obtained on earth by particular merits (*puṇyam*).

*pāpaloka* are misinterpreted by GONDA, 1966: 53, who translates *pāpalokas* in AV 12, 5, 64 with “‘worlds’ of evil (or, rather, ‘of demerit’)” and assumes a Karmadhāraya noun *pūnyalokam* in PrU 3, 7 which does not exist and is based on a wrong reading instead of *pūnyam lokam*<sup>23</sup>. The compound *pāpaloka* is likewise interpreted by GRIFFITH, 1895–1896, as a Tatpuruṣa (“the worlds of sin”), whereas WHITNEY, 1905, assumes a Karmadhāraya (“the evil worlds”). The very few occurrences of the noun *pāpaloka* do not support the interpretation of a Tatpuruṣa.

The compound *pūnyaloka*, which likewise is not current, is an adjective meaning “whose *loka* is *pūnya*”. See PB 12, 11, 12 *svargyam vā etat sāma svargalokaḥ pūnyaloko bhavaty aurnāyavena tuṣṭuvānaḥ* “Conducive to the attainment of heaven is this sāman; he who applies in lauding the aurnāyava (-sāman) shares the world of heaven, the world of bliss” (tr. CALAND, 1931).<sup>24</sup> The term *pūnya* here is an adjective. See also ŚB 3, 6, 2, 15 *pūnyaloka ījānā iti* “He who has sacrificed shares in the world of bliss” (tr. EGGELING, 1885, which apparently was followed by Caland in PB 12, 11, 12). In ŚB 2, 2, 3, 6 the adjective *pūnyaloka* is turned into a noun by the suffix *-tva* (occurring in the instrumental *-tvā* instead of *-tvena*): *sá jyótir evēhá śriyá yásasā bhavati jyótir amútra pūnyalokatvá* “and – the latter becomes a light of prosperity and glory in this, and a light of bliss in yonder, world” (tr. EGGELING, 1882). Some hesitations about the reading *pūnyalokatvá* and its interpretation have been expressed<sup>25</sup>, but it is quite clear that *ihá* and *amútra* as well as the two instrumentals *śriyá* and *yásasā* (prosperity and renown on earth) and *pūnyalokatvá* (the fact that one has become someone whose *loka* in heaven is *pūnya*) correctly sketch the situation of a successful sacrificer.

The three places treated above in which a person is called *pūnyaloka* (“whose *loka* is *pūnya*”), deal with a destination based on a merit (*pūnyam*)

- 23 This misreading is also found with RADHAKRISHNAN, 1953, who translates *pūnyena pūnyalokam nayati pāpena pāpam* with “leads, in consequence of good (work) to the good world, in consequence of evil to the evil world.”
- 24 GONDA, 1966: 81, n. 41, interprets this sentence as “shares the ‘world’ of heaven, the ‘world of virtue’ (or ‘holy world’), i.e. the world of merit”, which obscures the exact analysis of the compound *pūnyaloka*, since it looks like “whose world is the world of *pūnya*, i.e. *pūnyasya loka*”, whereas in the compound *pūnyaloka* the first member is an adjective qualifying *loka* and not a noun forming the equivalent of *sukṛtasya*. For Gonda’s doubtful interpretation of the turn of phrase *sukṛtasya loka*, in which *sukṛta* is not taken as merit in general but too exclusively associated with ritual, see p. 115.
- 25 See MINDARD, 1949: paragraph 542 b, who mentions the suggested reading *pūnyalokátra* and observes that of the transmitted “le sens obtenu est médiocre”.

which is ritualistic. The situation is different in the following two textplaces from the ChU.

In ChU 2, 23, 1–2 the adjective *puṇyaloka* qualifies persons who are not exclusively concerned with ritual, but whose way of life is based on the three-fold *dharma* (1. sacrifice, study and liberality; 2. austerity; 3. staying permanently in the house of the teacher). This means that their *puṇyam* consists of three options and that sacrificing only represents one third of the first of these three options. Obtaining such a *puṇya loka* is opposed to the immortality of someone who is steadfast in Brahman, i.e. someone who obtains *mokṣa*. OLIVELLE, 1996: 116, translates *trayo dharmaskandhāḥ yajño 'dhyāyanam dānam iti prathamā, tapa eva dvitīyo, brahmacāry ācāryakulavāsī tṛtīyaḥ [...]* *brahmasamsthō 'mṛtatvam eti* as follows: “There are three types of persons whose torso is the Law (*dharma*). The first is one who pursues sacrifice, vedic recitation, and giftgiving. The second is one who is devoted solely to austerity. The third is a celibate student of the Veda living at his teacher’s house. [...]”<sup>26</sup>. All these gain worlds earned by merit<sup>27</sup>. A person who is steadfast in *brahman* reaches immortality.”<sup>28</sup>

ChU 5, 10, 10 states *śuddhaḥ pūtaḥ puṇyaloko bhavati ya evaṁ veda* and the knowledge required for obtaining the *puṇya loka* concerns the doctrine of the five fires which together with the doctrine of the two paths describes life after death of the human beings. Just as in ChU 2, 23, 1 this *puṇya loka* is not the destination of those who become released but is superior to the destination of the sinners mentioned in the preceding verse in ChU 5, 10, 9, who *patanti*, i.e. go to hell. The adjective *puṇya* qualifying the *loka* in the possessive compound *puṇya-*

26 In a probable insertion in the text it is explained that someone who permanently lives with his teacher is meant here.

27 On p. 335 Olivelle leaves open the possibility that “the term *puṇya*, here translated as ‘earned by merit’ can also mean ‘pure’ or ‘pleasant’” without explaining the difference between ‘earned by merit’ (referring to a *loka*) and ‘producing merit’ (referring to a particular activity).

28 In a note on p. 334 Olivelle observes: “My translation of this passage is based on taking *dharmaskandhāḥ* as a possessive compound (*bahuvrīhi*).” Indeed, there is an opposition between two types of persons, those who win a *puṇya loka* and those who reach immortality, but this need not imply that *trayo dharmaskandhāḥ* refers to three types of persons who follow *dharma*. The third category is expressed with a noun denoting a person (*brahmacārin*), but the first and the second categories are institutions. Here Olivelle’s translation changes these into types of persons, which is grammatically untenable. However, the compound *puṇyalokās* should be taken as denoting the persons involved in the mentioned three institutions, the three divisions of religious merits.

*loka* has been variously translated in this connection.<sup>29</sup> This adjective does not only occur in the compound *puṇyaloka* but is also found as a separate adjective qualifying *loka*.

The goat which is offered and goes to heaven is addressed in AV 9, 5, 16 with [...] *tváyā lokám aṅgirasah pr, ājānan tam lokám pūnyam prá jñeṣam* “[...] by thee the Aṅgirasas foreknew [their] world; that pure (*pūnya*) world would I fain foreknow” (tr. WHITNEY, 1905). The translation “pure” of *pūnya* (probably based on an etymology) does not convince, since evidently *puṇya* here refers to the human activities (in this case the organizing of a sacrifice), as also appears from 9, 5, 1, where the world which will be reached by the goat is called the *sukṛtām loká* (translated by Whitney as “the world of the well-doing”). The translation of *pūnya* by GRIFFITH, 1895–1896, is “holy”, but GONDA, 1966: 135, n. 21) correctly observes that the person praying desires to have foreknowledge which refers “to the ‘world to come’ [...] to the ‘world of merit’ awaiting him.”<sup>30</sup> However, the *pūnya loká*’s obtained by giving hospitality to a Vrātya in AV 15, 13, 1 ff. are translated as “pure (holy: *puṇyāḥ*)” by GONDA, 1966: 57. The translators of the AV render *pūnya* occurring in AV 19, 54, 4, which qualifies a plural *lokāḥ*, with “pure” or “holy”, but GONDA, 1966: 149, observes that the commentary here explains “*puṇyān lokān* as *puṇyakarmabhir arjitān lokān* ‘the “worlds” acquired by meritorious (good, virtuous, pure) deeds’.”

GONDA, 1966: 81, explains his interpretation of PB 18.3.4 of *puṇya loka* translated as “holy world” in his note 41, in which he refers to PB 12, 11, 12 where *puṇyaloka* is translated as someone who “shares the ‘world’ of heaven,

- 29 See the following renderings of the compound in ChU 2, 23, 1 and 5, 10, 10: DEUSSEN, 1897, “bringen als Lohn heiligen Welten” and “bleibt er [...] in der Welt der Reinen”; HUME, 1931, “become possessors of meritorious worlds” and “becomes possessor of a pure world”; SENART, 1930, “mènent aux séjours purs” and “il est [...] digne du monde des bienheureux”; RADHAKRISHNAN, 1953, “these attain to the worlds of the virtuous” and “he [...] obtains a virtuous world”; GONDA, 1966, “they gain access to the lokas of merit”; OLIVELLE, 1996, “these gain worlds earned by merit” and “attains a good world”. The adjective means holy, pure, meritorious, fortunate, good and virtuous. Most translators assume a relation between virtues and merits and the obtained *loka*’s, but are not very consistent in their renderings. The merit by which in ChU 5, 10, 10 the future *loka* is earned, seems to be based on a particular knowledge, but since the obtained stay in heaven is limited, we may connect the people concerned with those mentioned in 5, 10, 3, who offer to the gods, give fees to the priests and perform charity. So merits (*puṇyam*) here is represented by ritual and doing good.
- 30 On p. 141 in note 47 Gonda deals with the parallel of this verse in VS. 20, 25 and 26 and then translates *lokām pūnyam* as “pure or holy ‘world’”.

the ‘world of virtue’ (or ‘holy world’), i.e. the world of merit<sup>31</sup>. Gonda’s approach is rather intangible, since he changes his translations time and again and sometimes tries to show that they mean the same.<sup>32</sup> See his treatment of MuU 1, 2, 6 (1966: 122; 130–131), in which, on the one hand, he translates *eṣa vaḥ puṇyas sukṛto brahmalokaḥ* as “this is your holy *loka*-which-is-oneness-with-brahman, prepared by your merit” (p. 130), on the other hand as “this is your pure (‘holy’, and meritorious) world of brahman, well made, i.e. gained by well performed deeds” (p. 131) and “This is your holy (or meritorious, *puṇyaḥ*) world of brahma, (‘well made’, i.e.) fashioned (prepared, gained) by merits (*sukṛtaḥ*)” (p. 122).<sup>33</sup>

In PB 19, 10, 4 and 19, 11, 8 someone who has a particular knowledge about a Stoma called Pakṣin (“having wings”) *puṇyān lokān* (i.e. worlds or positions in heaven) *sañcarati*, which CALAND, 1931, translates as “Winged [...] he [...] frequents the pure worlds.” I would prefer to interpret *sañ-car* as “to come into contact with, to reach” and doubt whether these worlds, to which one can fly with wings obtained with knowledge about the winged Stoma, are pure. By one’s merit obtained through a particular ritualistic knowledge one reaches worlds which are associated with merits.

In the Upaniṣads the adjective *puṇya* qualifies *loka* not only in MuU 1, 2, 6 (see above), but also in PrU 3, 7, where reaching a *puṇya loka* depends on the merit (*puṇyena*) obtained on earth. This agrees with ChU 8, 1, 16, where such a *loka* is not called *puṇya* but *puṇyajita*, which supports the assumption that the adjective *puṇya* which qualifies a *loka* does not mean ‘holy’ or ‘pure’ but means ‘based on, or acquired with, merits’. The nature of these merits depends on the contexts, but there is no reason to assume that the merits mentioned in the

31 See n. 24.

32 See his publication on *loka* (1966: 108), where the *puṇya* world is, on the one hand, translated as “holy”, on the other hand, explained as “won by good deeds (MuU 1, 2, 6) or ritual methods (TB 3, 1, 5, 6; PU. 5, 5)”, an observation which is followed by a note (8) referring to ch. XI. in which mainly the interpretation of merits is associated with the correct performance of the ritual.

33 It is evident that here *puṇya* is more or less identical with *sukṛta* and means ‘produced by merits’, that it does not mean ‘holy’ or ‘pure’ and that *sukṛta* has no associations with a correct performance. OLIVELLE, 1996, interprets MuU 1, 2, 6 as “built by good deeds and rites well done”. His translation of *puṇya* is correct, but of *sukṛta* untenable, since *sukṛta* does not exclusively refer to rituals, let alone to the correctness of their performance.

ritualistic texts were exclusively obtained by rituals whereas in later and non-ritualistic texts all kinds of merits became mixed up for the first time.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.3 *The persons who are called puṇya*

Even gods may be called *puṇya*. See ŚB 4, 5, 4, 1, where it is said that originally all the gods were the same and *puṇya*, translated with “good” by EGGELING, 1885. Since later they wanted to become superior to each other, this being *puṇya* seems to refer to merits or qualities<sup>35</sup>. In this case the merit has not been obtained in a former life on earth.

The group of the *puṇyajana*’s is first mentioned in the AV 8, 8, 15 and 11, 9, 24 as some sort of semi-divine beings together with Gandharvas, Apsarases, Devas, serpents and Piṭṛs. They are translated with “Holy Men” and “Holy Beings” by GRIFFITH, 1895–1896, with “pure-folks” by WHITNEY, 1905, with “holy men” and “pious men” by BLOOMFIELD, 1897. The last mentioned scholar observes in a note (on p. 585) that “the *puṇyajanaḥ* are the *sukṛtaḥ*, ‘pious deceased’”, which is correct. These semi-divine or divinized human beings have a position below the gods and above the Piṭṛs.<sup>36</sup>

The human beings who will become members of the group of *puṇyajana*’s are called *puṇya* because they are *puṇyakṛt*’s (‘doers of *puṇya*, producers of merit’) and therefore need not be called ‘pure’ or ‘holy’. The nature of their being *puṇya* depends on the nature of their *puṇya* activities or behaviour.

As qualification of human beings *puṇya* does not often occur. Sometimes it does not mean ‘meritorious’ (let alone ‘pure’ or ‘holy’). See PB 11, 5, 11 (treated above in section II.1), where it means ‘prosperous’. See also PB 18, 8, 66 *ātmanā vā agniṣṭomena r̥dhnoty ātmanā puṇyo bhavati*, which CALAND, 1931, translates as “He himself (the Sacrificer) thrives through the agniṣṭoma, he himself gets spiritual merits”. This rendering may be correct, but the thriving of the sacrificer (the king) may also be connected with his becoming *puṇya*. In PB 18, 9, 21 the *puṇya* king who is called ‘full of sweet milk’, may be *puṇya* on account

34 See GONDA, 1966: 150, n. 3: “Outside the ritualist circles no fundamental difference is made between the sources or origins of merit.”

35 OLDENBERG, 1919: 21, n. 2, rejects Eggeling’s translation and prefers “glückvoll”.

36 For such a group of which the name ends in *-janās*, see BODEWITZ, 1973: 97 f., n. 23, where it is shown that the Devas may also occur as the Devajanas just like the Sarpas as the Sarpajanas. Such Janas form a group without individuals discerned by names.

of his liberality in giving sacrificial fees (like cattle), but *punya* may also indicate that he is able to do so, i.e. that he is prosperous.

According to TS 1, 6, 11, 4 someone whom Prajāpati knows becomes *punya*, translated with “pure” by KEITH, 1914. However, in this context the sacrifice is described as a cow to be milked. Therefore prosperity rather than purity seems to play a role here. In TS 7, 2, 7, 3 the most significant terms in the translation of KEITH, 1914, are “prosperity”, “becoming worse”, and “misfortune” and then we find at the end “whose father and grandfather are holy, and who yet does not possess holiness”. It is evident that *punya* here has nothing to do with being holy, but refers to prosperity.

This does not imply that everywhere *punya* should mean ‘prosperous’, but it may imply that holiness and purity are not essential in the meaning of *punya*, which seems to refer to every kind of good investment including merits which have good results in a life after death.

Two textplaces in the BĀU show that one becomes *punya* by *punyena karmanā* (3, 2, 13 and 4, 4, 5). On the one hand, it is clear that becoming holy by a holy deed hardly suits the information on people being or becoming *punya*. On the other hand, becoming prosperous by prosperous activities is rather trivial. The correlation between *punya karman* and becoming *punya* here evidently is based on the doctrine of *karma* and refers to the nature of the rebirth on earth rather than to the merits obtained for a continuation of life in a *punya-loka* in heaven.

In a verse quoted by ŚB 13, 5, 4, 3 the Pāriṣṭas are said to have overcome their *kārma pāpakam* by means of *pūnyena kārmanā*. These Pāriṣṭas are said to be *yājamānā aśvamedhaiḥ* and to be *pūnyāḥ*. EGGELING, 1900, translates: “The righteous Pāriṣṭas, performing horse-sacrifices, by their righteous work did away with sinful work”, whereas HORSCH, 1966: 140, takes *pūnyāḥ* with *pūnyena kārmanā*<sup>37</sup> and renders: “Die opfernden Nachkommen des Parikṣit überwandten mit Pferdeopfern die böse Tat [...], als Fromme mit frommer Tat”. The meaning of *punya* which denotes persons (i.e. Yajamānas) as well as their meritorious activities (i.e. the sacrifices organized by them) here refers to items which procure or have obtained merits and may be compared with *sukṛt* and *sukṛtam*, whereas renderings like “righteous” and “fromm” start from the persons involved. The fact that the sacrificers who become *punya* by their activities

37 He refers to BĀU 3, 2, 13 *punyo vai punyena karmanā*, but there the *punya karman* is the cause of becoming *punya*, whereas here this is less clear and the instrumental may be taken as an apposition with *aśvamedhaiḥ*.

which are *puṇya* and qualify them for becoming *puṇya* in heaven here are already called *puṇya* on earth, is not surprising, since in this verse the *karma* doctrine rather than the winning of a *loka* in heaven forms the central theme.

We may conclude that the adjective *puṇya* qualifying human beings refers to their merits. The nature of these merits still forms a problem.

#### 2.4 What is the *puṇyam* done by the meritorious?

Often *puṇyam* is associated with derivations of the root *kar* (e.g. *puṇyakṛt* and *puṇyam karma*) and then a ritualistic meaning has been assumed. This may be correct and even to be expected in ritual texts, but sometimes this is uncertain. Moreover associations with other verbs than *kar* play a role in other texts.

In JB 1, 97 (see section I.2) *puṇyam jīva* denotes good behaviour in life and perhaps is specified with the directly following instrumentals *iṣṭāpūrtena tapasā sukr̥tena*, which would imply that apart from rituals also the giving of presents or fees (and perhaps of hospitality) and asceticism are *puṇyam*. The *puṇyam* which one has done on earth and which is given to the Pitṛs in JB 1, 50 is also called *sādhukṛtyā* and opposed to the *pāpakṛtyā* given to one's enemies and obviously refers to doing good in general<sup>38</sup>, unfortunately left unspecified.

AV 15, 13, 1 ff. promises *puṇya loka*'s to someone who receives a Vṛātya in his house. Since the *puṇya loka*'s are obtained by *puṇyam* done on earth, we have to conclude that hospitality is a possible *puṇyam*.

In ChU 2, 23, 1 besides sacrifice other items qualifying for obtaining a *puṇyaloka* are mentioned, i.a. liberality (*dānam*) and asceticism (*tapas*)<sup>39</sup>.

The *puṇyam karma* may be a sacrifice<sup>40</sup>, but other activities may also be denoted here. See BĀU 3, 2, 13 and 4, 4, 5, where the opposition between *puṇya* and *pāpa* more or less excludes the meaning sacrifice for *karman*, since bad sacrifices are not to be assumed here.<sup>41</sup> In BĀU 1, 4, 15 the treated *puṇyam karma*

38 See n. 7.

39 See n. 29, where also ChU 5, 10, 10 has been treated.

40 See ŚB 13, 5, 4, 3 discussed in section 2.3, where a *puṇyam karma* in the form of a sacrifice destroys the *karman* which is called bad. Here the one singular refers to a specific rite and the other to the activity in general of the *karma* doctrine, but the two aspects become more or less mixed up.

41 See section 2.1. In BĀU 4, 4, 5 the context (i.c. 4, 4, 6) makes it definitely clear that the *karman* doctrine is meant, since the text states that after having reached the end of this *karma*, i.e. of the results of whatever he has done in this world, he returns back from yonder world.

is called *mahat* and some translators misinterpret these passages and take *mahat puṇyam karma* as a great and holy work or rite.<sup>42</sup> Evidently the *karman* treated here is not a sacrifice but the technical term used for expressing the merits or demerits collected by a human being. The singular does not refer to a single act let alone to a ritual and the verb *kar* does not mean here ‘to perform’ but ‘to produce’. Even if one has produced, i.e. collected, an enormous (*mahat*), positive or meritorious (*puṇyam*) amount of *karma*, this will become exhausted at the end.

On the other hand sometimes *puṇyam karma* can only refer to rituals. See AĀ 2, 1, 7, where the moon produces the bright and the dark halves of the moon *puṇyāya karmane* (i.e. for the half-monthly rituals) and the waters give *śraddhām* [...] *puṇyāya karmane* (i.e. the longing for organizing a meritorious act in the form of a sacrifice).<sup>43</sup> See also 2, 5, 1, where the son is born as the father’s second birth *puṇyebhyaḥ karmabhyaḥ* (for rituals which accumulate merits for him in yonder world).

In post-Vedic texts the adjective *puṇyakarman* often has nothing to do with rituals and denotes somebody whose behaviour is meritorious or virtuous. That doing *puṇya(m)* can mean ‘doing good’ in the sense of hospitality, liberality or charity appears from the post-Vedic compounds *puṇyagrha* and *puṇyaśālā* which denote ‘a house of charity’.<sup>44</sup>

So *puṇyam* means meritorious work such as sacrifices, hospitality, charity. Merits (rather than morality) play an essential role, since the aim of *puṇyam* is obtaining a particular position, especially in life after death. As an adjective

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OLIVELLE, 1996, translates “Reaching the end of this action”, but the singular *karman* here does not denote an action but refers to the result of all one’s actions stored in heaven.

42 See e.g. RADHAKRISHNAN, 1953: “Even if one performs a great and holy work, but without knowing this, that work of his is exhausted in the end”, and OLIVELLE, 1996: “If a man who does not know this performs even a grand and holy rite, it is sure to fade away after his death”.

43 KEITH, 1909, translates with “for good deeds”, rightly observes in a note that probably this refers to sacrificial acts, but misinterprets *śraddhā* as “faith”.

44 Compare *dharmāśālā* “charitable asylum, hospital, esp. religious asylum” (tr. in MONIER-WILLIAMS’ dictionary 1899). These compounds show that charity was associated with virtue, duty, merits and religion and that expenses made by the rich in the sphere of charity continued to be meritorious since Vedic times, in which ChU 4, 1, 1 illustrates this liberality and charity by referring to king Jānaśruti, who was *śraddhādeyo bahudāyī bahupākyah* (“totally devoted to giving and used to give a lot, a man who gave a lot of cooked food”) and who *sarvata āvasathān māpayām cakre sarvata eva me ’tsyantīti* (“had hospices built everywhere, thinking ‘People will eat food from me everywhere.’”, tr. OLIVELLE, 1996).

*punya* qualifies the activities which produce merits as well as the persons who carry them out and therefore deserve their rewards. As a qualification of these rewards (in the form of a particular world or position in heaven) the adjective *punya* may be interpreted as ‘deserved’ or as ‘good’.

### 3. What are the qualifications for life after death in heaven?

In the preceding sections and subsections I have discussed two general terms denoting virtue or merit, *sukṛtam* and *punya*. It appeared that these two terms were especially used to denote general qualifications for life after death in heaven, at least in the oldest stages of Vedic literature. Both terms were associated with the meritorious survivors after death in special, heavenly worlds. This means that merits rather than moral virtues played a role in the discussed contexts. Moreover in many cases the worlds of the meritorious people were almost exclusively reserved for those who had organized sacrifices. The merit consisted of sacrifices and accompanying liberality in the form of Dakṣiṇās.

However, liberality in general and hospitality which is not confined to special persons like Brahmins, might (unlike the sacrifice and its fees<sup>45</sup>) have a moral connotation. They were the moral merits in which doing good or well-doing could be interpreted as virtues.

The entrance to heaven, however, was not restricted to human beings who were distinguished by meritorious activities like organizing sacrifices, giving sacrificial fees, liberality in general and hospitality, i.e. spending one’s property on behalf of gods, Brahmins or even human beings in general. There were also other categories of candidates, as we will see.

In the oldest Vedic text, the Ṛgveda Samhitā, life after death was not mentioned in its oldest layers.<sup>46</sup> The discovery of heaven for and by human beings took place in the course of the development of this text. So we shall first examine the data of this oldest text and what has been written on this topic by modern scholars.

45 JOLLY, 1896: 104, observed: “[S]chon in der vedischen Literatur spielt der Opferlohn (*dakṣiṇā*) wie überhaupt die Beschenkung der Brahmanen eine grosse Rolle. Je wertvoller das Geschenk, desto schöner der Himmelslohn.”

46 See BODEWITZ, 1994.

### 3.1 *Obtaining heaven in the R̥gvedasamhitā*

In his history of Vedic religion, OLDENBERG, 1917: 512, observed: “An den nicht gerade häufigen Stellen, an denen im Veda [...] vom Jenseits die Rede ist, steht bedenklich im Vordergrund das Motiv vom Himmelslohn dessen, der den Priestern reichlich spendet.” We do not find much information on moral or ethical qualifications for life after death in heaven from the oldest Vedic text in this publication. See p. 5: “Von den Abgründen der Not und Schuld weiss diese Poesie wenig.” In his comparable handbook, KEITH, 1925: 409, remarked: “The idea of judgement of any sort is foreign to the R̥gveda as to early Iran.” GONDA, 1960, hardly dealt with the qualifications for reaching heaven according to the oldest text in his handbook on Vedic religion. On p. 41 he observes: “Diese gegenseitige Abhängigkeit von Menschen und *Devas*, [...] diese wesentlich amoralische, auf einem Austausch von Diensten beruhende Beziehung ist eines der wichtigsten Fundamente der altindischen ‘Religiosität’.”<sup>47</sup> As we have seen above, his treatment of this topic in his study on *loka* (1966) was almost exclusively limited to the ritual merits qualifying for life in heaven especially as far as the oldest Vedic texts are concerned.

In his handbook on the religious system of the R̥gveda, OBERLIES, 1998: 464–487, treats “Die r̥gvedischen Jenseitsvorstellungen” in an excursion of his interpretation of the Somaraus. On p. 467 f. he observes: “Wenn [...] von einer (erfreulichen) postmortalen Existenz im Himmel gesprochen wird, wird die Erlangung zumeist in unmittelbarem Zusammenhang mit dem Vollzug von Opfern und/oder dem Trinken des Soma gestellt.” However, there is a rather great difference between the organizing of a Soma sacrifice for the gods and the becoming intoxicated by drinking oneself the Soma. Indeed, Soma represents one of the regular offerings given to the gods and drunk by (i.a.) the priests, but in connection with immortality in heaven for the human beings it is only exceptionally mentioned in the oldest Vedic text. The only hymn extensively treated by Oberlies (8, 48) is found on the pages 449–454 (preceding the mentioned excursion) and 493–497 (following this excursion on the “Somaraus”). Here the drinking of Soma does not have the function of an offering qualifying the sacrificer for heaven, but it gives a preview of life in heaven by producing visions<sup>48</sup> or hallucinations.

47 GELDNER, 1951, writes in a note on 4, 24, 9: “Das Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Sterblichen wird öfter als ein Handelsgeschäft dargestellt.”

48 See BODEWITZ, 1991: 19.

Such visions may be explained in the context of mysticism, if their contents refer to a central concept of their religion. Light and the sun are the central aims which one wants to obtain in this hymn after drinking Soma. KUIPER, 1983: 56–89, in the reprint of an article originally published in *I-IJ* 8 (1964), p. 96–129, treated the association of light and sun with life after death and with the concept of *Ṛta* (“cosmic order”) in the Vedic religion and its Old Iranian counterpart and tried to show that these items belong to old Aryan common ideas on mysticism. I quote: “Irrespective of whether, in a visionary state of mind, the poet here aspires to see the bliss of the blessed dead or rather prays for a place in the ‘immortal world’ in afterlife, this much is clear that this is the traditional picture of the blissful life in Yama’s realm” (1983: 82, commenting on *ṚV* 9, 113, 7–11); “This Old Aryan mysticism is also directly reflected in Zarathustra’s phraseology” (p. 86); “It is hoped [...] that the preceding remarks are sufficient for proving that, when Zarathustra professes that he will speak of ‘the bliss of Aša which manifests itself together with the lights’ he is using the traditional terminology of Aryan mysticism” (p. 87). As has been correctly observed by OBERLIES, 1998: 463, n. 52, unfortunately he hardly pays attention to the role of the “Soma-Rausch”. It is clear that the drinking of Soma by some persons may have influenced mysticism concentrated on light and the *Ṛta* (cosmic order) in life after death<sup>49</sup>.

The *Ṛta* is also mentioned in *ṚV* 10, 154 together with some other terms which refer to qualifications for life after death in heaven. GELDNER, 1951, translates *ṛta* with “Wahrheit” in 10, 154, 4, but in a note observes that this verse refers to the ascetics, since it also mentions *tapas*. Probably the *Ṛta* has to be interpreted in the context of mysticism, as was done above.<sup>50</sup>

This hymn mentions several types of human beings who have reached heaven through merits or virtues: brave warriors, liberal patrons, ascetics, mystics. On the one hand we find men in the world who bravely fight or give rich *Dakṣiṇās* at a sacrifice, on the other hand people who perform asceticism and have mystic experiences with the *Ṛta* (cosmic order) in heaven. The first category wins its aim by the virtue of braveness which looks like Plato’s cardinal virtue *andria* (see n.1) and by the merit of liberality in the sacrificial sphere which was well-known as a *puṇyam* or *sukṛtam*, and the second temporarily tries

49 The fact that references to life after death are missing in the oldest layers of the *ṚV* and that in later layers Old Iranian parallels for the described mysticism are assumed, might look strange. However, one may start from the assumption that this mysticism belongs to other circles than those represented in the oldest, ritualistic books.

50 See also BODEWITZ, 1994: 36.

to place itself outside the sphere of life on earth by ascetic exercises or the drinking of Soma (not explicitly indicated as such in this hymn). Since *tapas* and Soma also play a role in the ritual, it is uncertain whether different groups of Vedic human beings are meant in this hymn. Anyhow it is evident that Ṛtam here does not refer to the moral virtue of speaking the truth and that *tapas* is not a regular species of *sukrtam* or *puṇyam*.<sup>51</sup>

The traditional association of immortality with merits like hospitality or liberality is incidentally found in layers of the Ṛgveda which do not belong to the latest. See 1, 31, 15 and 1, 125, 5 and Bodewitz (1994: 33). In 1, 154, 5, one wants to reach heaven where human beings who love the gods are staying. This rather vague qualification (*devayū*) probably refers to pious ritualists.

In 1, 164 (an admittedly rather late hymn in this early layer) we find some different references to qualifications for immortality in heaven (see BODEWITZ, 1994: 34). Though some verses (23; 30; 33) in this riddle hymn full of enigmas contain references to immortality and the soul and seem to refer to visionary experiences, knowledge and philosophy, the hymn is evidently connected with ritual or even one specific ritual.<sup>52</sup> This makes its interpretation difficult in as far as the qualification for life after death in heaven is concerned.

There are some hymns in the late tenth book in which immortality in heaven is mentioned. However, apart from 10, 154 (see above) hardly any hymn refers to other qualifications for immortality than the merits of sacrifice, giving Dakṣiṇās and other forms of liberality. Morals and mysticism do not play an important role in this connection.

### 3.2 *Qualifications for heaven in the Atharvavedasamhitā*

In a publication on life after death in the Atharvavedasamhitā (BODEWITZ, 1999a), I observed (on p. 117, n. 20):

It is remarkable that those portions of the *Atharvavedasamhitā* which resemble the older layers of the ṚV and make a *śrauta* impression, hardly show traces of life after death in heaven. Just as in the ṚV heaven is indicated as *sukrtāsya/sukrtām lokā* [...]. However, in the ṚV we find this designation of heaven only in the 10<sup>th</sup> book and no more than once or

51 However, in some Vedic prose texts *tapas* seems to be on a line with other forms of *puṇyam*. In JB 1, 97 (see sections I.2 and II.4) it may even be a specification of *puṇyam*. In ChU 2, 23, 1 (see section 2.2) *tapas* does not belong to the same group as sacrifice and liberality, but it still qualifies for a *puṇyaloka* and therefore may be regarded as *puṇyam* itself.

52 See HOUBEN, 2000.

twice, whereas in the AV just as in some Brāhmaṇas the world of merit or of the meritorious is frequently mentioned. [...] winning the world of merit in the AV is reserved for people who organize very simple rituals with emphasis on liberality towards the Brahmins.

The qualification for heaven may also be inferred from the disqualification based on sins and their punishment. In five text places (AV 5, 18, 13; 5, 19, 3; 12, 4, 3; 12, 4, 36; 12, 5, 64), disrespectful behaviour towards Brahmins plays a role. See o.c., p.109 f. and p. 117, n. 9. The qualification for heaven forms its corresponding counterpart.

Actually, in almost all the hymns in which life after death in heaven plays a role, items are given to Brahmins or deposited in or with them by way of oblation. [...] We are in the sphere of the *grhya* or the specific Atharvavedic ritual in which the Brahmins more or less replace the gods. (o.c., p. 114)

The merits have nothing to do with moral virtues.

### 3.3 *How is heaven to be obtained in Vedic prose texts?*

Since the mantras of the Yajurvedic Samhitās do not give much additional information, I will now concentrate on the pre-Upaniṣadic ritual prose texts (and also treat some Upaniṣadic parallels). As is to be expected, these texts mainly deal with reaching heaven by means of sacrifices. Incidentally, we find references to moral issues. See e.g. TB 3, 3, 7, 10, where in a context which several times mentions reaching heaven, the opposition of *rjukarmām* (sic), *satyām*, *súcaritam* and *vṛjinám*, *anṛtām*, *dúscaritam* is found, be it not explicitly as a qualification for immortality in heaven. These virtues are honesty in speech and action. Here ethics evidently play a role. However, such information is rather scarce in the ritualistic Brāhmaṇa texts.

In 3, 12, 9, 7–8 of the same text it is said that a Brahmin who knows the Ātman does not become polluted by evil *karman*. Here neither ethics or morals nor sacrificial merits play a role, but only knowledge, especially concerning the Ātman, and we are in the sphere of the Upaniṣads, in which the doctrine of *karma* is associated with aims about liberation.

In the Brāhmaṇas we expect the earliest enumerations of virtues or merits corresponding to similar enumerations of sins or even cardinal sins.<sup>53</sup> Indeed some enumerations (without much comment) are found.

TB 3, 12, 8, 5 mentions together *satyam*, *śraddhā*, *tapas* and *dama*.

In TĀ 7 (= TU 1) we find the following enumeration of duties: *ṛtam*, *satyam*, *tapas*, *dama*, *śama*, *agnayas*, *agnihotram*, *atithayas*, *mānuṣam* (?), *prajā*, *prajana* (?), *prajāti* (TU 1, 9). To each of these 12 items the text adds *svādhyāya* and *pravacanam* and then concludes this passage by quoting three authorities of whom the one prefers only *satyam*, the other only *tapas* and the third only *svādhyāya* and *pravacanam*, because these items would be equal to *tapas*. The twelvefold enumeration seems to consist of the duties for three types of men: the first five items concern the ascetic type, the next four perhaps the ritualist, whose merits also consist of hospitality, the last three the simple householder. I assume that we should read *prajananam* instead of *prajanas* and *mānasam* instead of *mānuṣam*. The addition of *svādhyāya* and *pravacanam* means that perhaps general duties and not those of separate phases of life are treated here. This emphasis on study and teaching suits the context of TU 1. Further on, in 1, 11, the pupil who is leaving his teacher, is urged to dedicate his attention to *satyam*, *dharma*, *svādhyāya*, *prajā*, *kuśalam*, *bhūti*, *svādhyāya* and *pravacanam*, *devakāryam* and *pitṛkāryam*. This enumeration, in which *tapas*, *dama* and *śama* are missing, seems to be limited to the duties of the householder.

In an other Upaniṣad of the TĀ (TĀ 10 = MNU) an enumeration similar to the one of TU 1, 9 is found: *tapas*, *satyam*, *dama*, *śama*, *dānam*, *dharma*, *prajananam*, *agnayas*, *agnihotram*, *yajña*, *mānasam*, *nyāsa* (MNU 505–516, ed. VARENNE, 1960). Again 12 items, but here the last is explicitly said to be the most important, which might mean that *saṁnyāsa* here (but not in the whole text of this Upaniṣad) is the main subject.<sup>54</sup> MNU 196–197 equates all the items of the following series *ṛtam*, *satyam*, *śrutam*, *śāntam*, *dama*, *śama*, *dānam* and *yajña* with *tapas*, which might indicate a preference for asceticism. These Taittirīya texts, of which the MNU is the latest, show an increasing interest in asceticism and austerity, though the traditional merits of sacrifice and liberality receive some attention. Explicitly or implicitly all these approaches qualify for immortality in heaven, but the latest passages tend to have a special interest in *mokṣa* rather than aiming at a continuation of life after death.

53 For enumerations of these sins see BODEWITZ, 2007a: 324–328.

54 For the interpretation of this passage see BODEWITZ, 1973: 297 ff.

In the Āraṇyaka-like Jaiminīya text JUB 4, 25, 3 the three items *satyam*, *śama* and *dama*, which are also found above in the Taittirīya texts, occur together: *vedo brahma tasya satyam āyatanam śamaḥ pratiṣṭhā damaś ca*, translated by OERTEL, 1894, as “The Veda is the *brahman*, truth is its abode, tranquility and restraint its foundation.” In its Upaniṣad, KenaU 4, 8, this is formulated as follows: *tasyai* [a genitive referring back to *brahmīm* [...] *upaniṣadam*, the mystic interpretation of the Brahman] *tapo damaḥ karmeti pratiṣṭhā vedās sarvāṅgāni satyam āyatanam*.

This partial parallel proves that Oertel was wrong in taking *vedas* instead of *brahma* as the subject in JUB 4, 25, 3. In the KenaU *karman* is added to *śama* (here replaced by *tapas*) and *dama* as one of the three items representing the basis<sup>55</sup> of the interpretation of Brahman. This interpretation is based on three approaches, of which *karman* here is one, not to be taken as ‘work’ or ‘action’ but as ‘ritual’, as was correctly done by OLIVELLE, 1996.<sup>56</sup> The term *āyatanam* is mostly interpreted as abode, as was even done by GONDA, 1975: 347, in his translation of this sentence, but for a correct interpretation see GONDA, 1975a: 204: “That means that the doctrine is firmly founded on austerity, etc., and it aims at, or leads to, truth which is identical with Brahman.” In the same publication Gonda sometimes takes *āyatanam* as “destination”. If now the aim or destination is Brahman which is *satyam* at the same time, this concept of *satyam* has nothing to do with a moral or ethical virtues like speaking the truth (as a qualification for immortality in heaven), but rather has to be interpreted as cosmic order or reality (*satyam* = *ṛtam*). The passage from the KenaU ends (in 4, 9) with the conclusion that he who knows thus this (*brahmī upaniṣad*), will become established in an endless heavenly world. Knowledge (about Brahman) obtained by ascetic practices (*tapas* and *dama*) and also based on studying the Veda and its ritual here give entrance to heaven and this knowledge is not a merit or a moral virtue.<sup>57</sup>

The above treated texts form a strange mixture of asceticism and traditional, partly ritualistic values. Even in an old text like the AB we find a similar combination: *devā vai yajñena śrameṇa tapasāhutibhiḥ svargam lokam ajayams* (3, 13, 6). It is true that here the gods and not the human beings obtain heaven, but these gods simply produce the example to be followed by the human beings.

55 Mostly *pratiṣṭhā* represents the two feet and is twofold.

56 See also GONDA, 1975a: 204, who translates with “socio-ritual activity”.

57 In the late Vedic Upaniṣad MuU 3, 1, 5, knowledge and asceticism are mentioned together without ritual (*satyam*, *tapas*, *saṃyagjñānam*, *brahmacaryam*), but the aim is liberation rather than continuation of life in heaven and the persons concerned are ascetics.

Here sacrifice and its oblations are playing a role together with the ascetic elements *tapas* and *śrama* as parts of the sacrifice.<sup>58</sup> See also ŚB 12, 1, 3, 23, where even *satyam* is added to the enumeration and these more or less non-ritualistic elements refer to the *dikṣā* of the Yajamana which precedes the actual performance of the ritual.<sup>59</sup>

In GB 1, 1, 34 (an Upaniṣad-like portion of this late Brāhmaṇa) the following items occur together: *prajā, karman, tapas, satyam, brahman*, which indicates that traditional and innovating or at least originally non-ritualistic concepts became mixed up. There is no reason to assume that here *satyam* should refer to the ethical category of speaking the truth.

#### 4. Vedic, late-Vedic, post-Vedic and non-Vedic lists of virtues or rules of life

Without any direct connection with the early Vedic concepts of *sukṛtam* and *puṇyam* there are also some enumerations of virtues or rules of life, which mostly concern the non-ritualists or at least are not especially focused on men inside society.<sup>60</sup>

In ChU 3, 17, 4, five moral virtues (*tapas, dānam, ārjavam, ahimsā* and *satyavacanam*) occur in the context of a symbolic sacrifice in which they are equated with the Dakṣiṇās. Here *satyavacanam* is found instead of *satyam*. The term *tapas* need not refer to asceticism of the renouncer, because *dānam* and renunciation exclude each other. It is true that *ahimsā* was associated with renunciators, but it occurred in rather late Vedic dharma texts and the ritualistic Vedic texts do not mention *ahimsā* as a rule of life before the Upaniṣads, in which only ChU twice refers to it. In 3, 17, 4, the symbolic sacrifice should not be confused with the interiorisation of Vedic sacrifices out of which renunciation would have developed according to some scholars.<sup>61</sup>

In VāsDhS 30, 8, “meditation, truthfulness, patience, modesty, *ahimsā*, contentment and *abhaya* represent the purely ascetic substitutes of sacrificial entities. Is this, however, really the interiorisation of an actual, specific ritual, or

58 See BODEWITZ, 2007: 156.

59 See BODEWITZ, 2007: 156, n. 270.

60 On the problem of what is “in- or outside Vedism” see BODEWITZ, 1999: 21.

61 See BODEWITZ, 1999: 27.

should not one rather interpret this as the substitution of the ritualistic religious way of life by asceticism and renouncement? (BODEWITZ, 1999: 28, n. 19).”

The five rules of ChU 3, 17, 4 have a partial parallel in Jainism, where *ahimsā* and *satyam* (= *satyavacanam*) likewise occur in a list of five which further consists of *brahmacaryam*, *asteyam* and *aparigraha* and originally may have represented a list of prohibitions for monks which later became relaxed for laymen.<sup>62</sup> Buddhism likewise has a slightly different list of five rules and the same may be observed about the rules for Yogins in Hinduism. It is clear that originally these lists were prescribed for ascetics and that the occurrence of the item *ahimsā* seems to exclude the possibility that the Vedic tradition, focused on the merits of ritual with its bloody sacrifices, can be taken as their starting-point.

The earliest Vedic references to *ahimsā* as one of the rules of life are found in ChU 3, 17, 4 and in ChU 8, 15. In both cases a householder is concerned. In 8, 15 (a late addition forming the conclusion of this Upaniṣad) the prescripts consist of study of the Veda, procreation, concentration on the Ātman and being *ahimsant* towards all living beings except at Vedic sacrifices. This evidently is a late attempt to fit an ascetic rule of life in the Vedic tradition of ritualism. These rules of life are also characterized by a concentration on the Ātman and the reaching of a goal which does not concern immortality after death in heaven but reaching (the world of) Brahman and being freed from rebirth. An evident attempt to combine tradition with late developments at the end of the Vedic period.

The five rules of life are prescripts, which in the Jaina version are prohibitions where the negation *a-* is used (*ahimsā*, *aparigraha* and *asteyam*) before sins. Such a correlation of virtues opposed by sins may also be assumed in lists of major sins. In ChU 5, 10, 9 we find a list of five (or rather four) major sins: *stena* (theft of gold), drinking of *surā*, having sex with the wife of the Guru, killing a Brahmin, and having contact with the performers of these sins. Three corresponding virtues are found in the list of Jaina rules (*asteyam*, *brahmacaryam*, *ahimsā*), but here the specifications of ChU 5, 10, 9, where the stealing of gold, sexual intercourse with a specific woman and the killing of a Brahmin are mentioned, are missing.

The fivefoldness of the list in the ChU looks rather forced and points to borrowing from existing other lists. The specifications seem to concern Brahmins as sinners, as also appears from the item of abstention from alcohol, which

62 See BODEWITZ, 1999: 35.

is missing in the Jaina list, but may have been taken from the corresponding Buddhist list, and can only apply to Brahmins.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear that the list of ChU 5, 10, 9 represents an adaptation of lists from outside the Vedic tradition, where they originally applied to ascetics. A really fivefold list (not concerning householders) is found in the late Dharmatext passage BaudhDhS 2, 10, 18, 2–3 and consists of *ahimsā*, *satyam*, *astainyam*, *maithunasya varjanam*, *tyāga* (= *aparigraha*), which almost completely agrees with the Jaina list and is too late for being a source for the Jains (see BODEWITZ, 2007 a: 325).

## 5. Conclusions

The noun *sukṛtām* has been sometimes misinterpreted as the well performed sacrifice, but actually it denotes the merit which is mostly (but not exclusively) obtained by organizing a sacrifice. It may also refer to liberality, i.e. it denotes the giving of goods to gods in heaven and to the Brahmin priests, the gods on earth. It is an investment made by a sacrificer in order to reach heaven after death. It may even be associated with liberality in general and hospitality. As such ethics and morality hardly play a dominant role in this system of producing merits, though charity looks like a form of virtue, especially if one compares the enumerations of virtues in other cultures and takes a German term like “Wohltätigkeit” into account. The person who is called a *sukṛt* is the wealthy sacrificer or a wealthy giver in general who buys his own future. The negative counterpart of this noun, *duṣkṛt*, means evil-doer, but is not frequently found in Vedic literature.

Just like *sukṛtām* the noun *pūnyam* denotes merit rather than moral virtue, and it is used in similar contexts. The adjective *pūnya* means meritorious rather than pure or holy, as some translators have assumed. The noun seems to have taken over the role of *sukṛtām* and in later texts to have adopted some moral associations. On the other hand the adjective *pūnya* (and perhaps even the noun *pūnyam*) sometimes seems to denote what is valuable or prosperous or fortunate rather than what is morally good. However, the opposition of *pūnya(m)* and *pāpā(m)* mostly is based on a moral judgement. Both *pūnyakṛt* and *pāpakṛt* do not frequently occur in Vedic texts and seem to be late. The successful sacrificer

63 See BODEWITZ, 1999: 36 and 2007 a: 324 f.

becomes *pūnyaloka* “whose world in heaven is *pūnya* or obtained by *pūnyam*” (in PB 12, 11, 12 and ŚB 3, 6, 2, 15), which excludes any association with ethics and only refers to merits. These merits often, but not exclusively, concern sacrifices just as in the case of *sukṛtam*.

The merits or virtues denoted by the general terms *sukṛtam* and *pūnyam* qualify the human beings for heaven. Their specifications are not fixed in lists of enumerations in the oldest texts which are mainly ritualistic. RV 10, 154 forms an exception in this respect. This hymn mentions together the sacrificer who has given many fees to his priests, the brave warrior who has died in a battle, the ascetic who will reach heaven by *tāpas* and the mystic who concentrates his attention on cosmic truth or order (the *Ṛtá*). This looks like an enumeration of different approaches followed by different categories of human beings.

The Taittirīyas show the following development of prescripts, rules of life or approaches. In TB 3, 12, 8, 5: *satyám, śraddhā, tāpas, damá* (for ascetics?); in TU 1, 9: *rtam, satyam, tapas, dama, śama* (for ascetics and mystics?) + *agnayas, agnihotram, mānasam, prajā, prajananam, prajāti* (for the sacrificing, hospital and procreating householders); in MNU 505–516: again twelve items *tapas, satyam, dama, śama + dānam, dharma, prajananam + agnayas, agnihotram, yajña, mānasam + nyāsa*. The last text has an enumeration of rules for ascetics and householders and culminates in the life of *saṁnyāsins*. Similar lists are found in other Vedic prose texts (Brāhmanas and Upaniṣads).

A clear distinction between duties or rules of life of different types of human beings or stages of life occurs in ChU 2, 23, 1–2 (see Section 2.2), where the carrying out of these duties produces a *pūnya loka*, which means that, in fact, these duties are merits. They are a) sacrifice, study, liberality; b) asceticism; c) staying permanently in the house of the Guru.

As one might expect, sometimes there is a correspondence between the cardinal sins and the principal virtues, in which the prohibition of the sins represents the virtues. See e.g. ChU 5, 10, 9, where four cardinal sins (stealing gold, drinking alcohol, sleeping with the wife of the Guru and killing a Brahmin) are mentioned, of which the positive counterparts consist of their prohibitions found in Jain and Buddhist texts. The difference is that the sins of ChU 5, 10, 9 concern the Brahmins as committers or victims of the sins, whereas in the mentioned non-Vedic religions prohibitions like non-stealing (*asteyam*), not killing (*ahimsā*) and positive prescripts like chastity (*brahmacaryam*) or abstention from sexual intercourse in general are rules of life which primarily concern the ascetics or monks and only in a mitigated form the laymen and the married people.

Five virtues or merits are mentioned in ChU 3, 17, 4: *tapas*, *dānam*, *ārjavam*, *ahimsā* and *satyavacanam*, a mixture of general rules for all kinds of human beings and prescripts originally concerning the ascetics. They occur in a section in which man's life is interpreted as a symbolic sacrifice and then these five items are the Dakṣiṇās.

The three items *satyám*, *śraddhā*, and *t'apas*, which were already mentioned in TB 3, 12, 8, 5 (see above) together with *damá*, also occur as items in a symbolic sacrifice elsewhere. See e.g. ŚāṅkhB 2, 8, where such a sacrifice has been treated.<sup>64</sup> They are also found in the passages of ChU 5, 10, 1 and BĀU 6, 2, 15 on the *pitryāna* and *devayāna*, where in their common source *satyam*, *śraddhā* and *tapas* are associated with the *devayāna* and the staying in the *aranya* and the ordinary sacrifices with the *pitryāna* and the staying in the village.<sup>65</sup>

Apparently the three mentioned items in one or the other way were associated with asceticism, and in some contexts an attempt was made to make a compromise between different approaches of aims in life and attempts to obtain results in life after death. The enumerations of items in the sphere of merits or virtues which are associated with different ways of life may illustrate this, as appears from lists consisting of purely ritualistic and apparently ascetic approaches.

Our final conclusion can only be that the ideas about merits and virtues and their results have enormously changed and developed in the course of Vedic literature. Reaching heaven by merits is only found in the last stages on the RV Saṁhitā. Merits and reaching a continuation of life in heaven lost their relevance, when at the end of the classical Vedic period the theories of *karma* (producing only a temporary life in heaven and a rebirth on earth depending on the quality of one's *karman*) and of *mokṣa* (having the release from this rebirth as its highest aim) came into existence. The merits of sacrifices and liberality gradually were replaced by asceticism and knowledge about one's identity, but attempts

64 See BODEWITZ, 1973: 240: "The passage ends with *tad yathā ha vai śraddhādevasya satyavādināḥ tapasvino hutam bhavati evam haivāsya hutam bhavati ya evam vidvān agnihotraṁ juhōti.*" See also p. 235: "Speaking the truth is regarded as the offering of an oblation in the internal fires in ŚB 2, 2, 2, 19" and p. 236 on ŚB 11, 3, 1, 1 ff., where the identification of the flame of the fire with *śraddhā* and the oblation with *satyam* occurs: "The truth doctrine is not a real mental sacrifice [...], it is rather a special way of life implying the speaking of truth and the meditation on truth, to be compared with *tapas*."

65 See BODEWITZ, 1973: 250 f.

to combine the rather divergent approaches were found in all kinds of Vedic texts.<sup>66</sup>

## References

### (A) *Abbreviations*

AĀ	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AV	Atharva Veda
Baudh Dh S	Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra
BĀU	Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad
ChU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
GB	Gopatha Brāhmaṇa
JB	Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa
JUB	Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
KaṭhU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
KauṣU	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
Ken U	Kena Upaniṣad

66 In an interesting publication, BRONKHORST, 1998, deals with the development of Indian asceticism and discerns two sources: the Vedic asceticism associated with ritualism and the non-Vedic asceticism. On p. 65 he first observes: “There is no reason to doubt that Vedic asceticism developed [...] out of certain aspects of the Vedic sacrifice. It is certainly not impossible that this development was aided by the simultaneous existence of non-Vedic forms of asceticism, but this seems at present beyond proof.” To some extent I agree with Bronkhorst, but I have some doubts about the exclusive connection with Vedic ritual. According to RV 10, 154, one could reach heaven by asceticism without any clear association with sacrifices. Ascetics and mystics did not receive much attention in the oldest Vedic text, but they seem to have been present and accepted already in the earliest period.

Then Bronkhorst remarks on rebirth and *karma*: “We have seen that many of the earliest passages that introduce these ideas contain themselves indications that they had a non-Brahmanic origin. What is more, there are numerous passages in early Indian literature [...] which show that the ideas of rebirth and karman were associated in the Indian mind with non-Vedic currents of religion and asceticism.” Indeed, it is evident that orthodox Vedism underwent an important change in as far as ideas on life after death are concerned. The merits obtained i.a. by rituals lost their importance. External influences may have played an important role.

MNU	Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad
MuṇḍU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
MuU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
PB	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa
PrU	Praśna Upaniṣad
PU	Praśna Upaniṣad
ṚV	Ṛgveda
ṢaḍvB	Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa
ŚāṅkhB	Śāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
TĀ	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS	Taittirīya Saṃhitā
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
Vās DH S	Vāsiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra
VS	Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā

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