

BALARĀMA'S PILGRIMAGE TO THE SACRED SITES ALONG THE SARASVATĪ

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The famous Kurukṣetra War is rightly considered as one of the greatest mythological conflicts in world literature. All the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* came together on Kuru's field to fight with each other. But one of the great warriors was absent. He was Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's brother, who alone refused to take part in the war and went on a pilgrimage. In this paper I aim to present Balarāma's travel during the epic battle. My research is based on an Epic sub-*parvan*, namely the *Sārasvata-parvan*. This book is a detailed catalogue of the sacred sites along the Sarasvatī. Having studied this text I examine how the importance of these places changed through the ages. Some of them (like Somnāth, Thānesar) are among the most popular places of pilgrimage, while others have lost their significance. This paper may provide an insight into the history of this sacred area along the mysterious river.

Key words: pilgrimage, Balarāma, Sarasvatī, *Mahābhārata*.

Introduction

In this paper I aim to present what happened to Balarāma while the other epic heroes were fighting on Kurukṣetra.

My main source for this research has been an Epic sub-*parvan* about Balarāma's pilgrimage. By this work I have also tried to make a detailed analysis of the places of pilgrimage which were found on the banks of the Sarasvatī.

Balarāma's Anti-Gītā?

As it is fairly well known, Balarāma, unlike his divine brother Kṛṣṇa, refused to participate in the Great War on Kurukṣetra. As a matter of fact, he seemingly ignored the

teaching of *Bhagavad Gītā*. According to Kṛṣṇa's argument warfare was a religious duty for a warrior (*kṣatriya*).¹ If any one of them missed even a single occasion of fight, he would commit a serious crime.

Yet we see that Balarāma failed to execute this and still he is always praised among the best *kṣatriyas* in the *Mahābhārata* even after this event. Later interpreters usually passed over this paradox, but we also find such text-examples which pay serious attention to the *Bhagavad Gītā* and criticise Balarāma.

For instance the southern *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* suggests that Balarāma led only an *alibi-tīrthayātrā* (pilgrimage).² In another work, namely Kṣemendra's *Bhāratamañjarī*, Balarāma was depicted as a failed Arjuna who was not able to get the mastery over his emotions.³

In my opinion it is also remarkable that Kṛṣṇa's brother not only displayed a non-*kṣatriya* behaviour, but he also conducted a typically peaceful religious activity, a pilgrim's tour.

The origin of the *tīrthayātrā* is obscure. According to some scholars this religious practice has Vedic roots, others refuse this idea and think that it had already been found in India before the arrival of first *ārya* tribes. In any case, when the first texts about the *tīrthas* appeared in the Epic sources, we find an almost perfectly evolved idea of the worship of sacred places.

Although the institution of *tīrthas* was almost fully developed in the Epic era, the common opinion about it was quite divided and their social judgement also seems very uncertain. Even Bhīṣma, one of the most prominent among the Epic heroes, expressed his doubt about this custom.⁴ Then he became convinced by Pulastya who related to him the most extended Epic catalogue of various *tīrthas*.⁵ Thus we may suppose that the pilgrimage needed to be popularised through the Epic age. From this point of view, Balarāma's effort might also have been a kind of promotion of this kind of religious piety.

Furthermore, the pilgrimage often appears as an alternative to expensive Vedic rituals.⁶ It is a popular idea to understand the great Epic war as a monumental cosmic

¹ *atha cet tvam imam dhārmyaṃ saṅgrāmaṃ na kariṣyasi | tataḥ svadharmam kṛtiṃ ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi* || (*Bhagavad Gītā* 2.33).

² *śrutvā yuddhodyamaṃ Rāmaḥ Kurūṇām saha Pāṇḍavaiḥ | tīrthābhiṣekavyājena madhyasthaḥ prayayau kila* || (*Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 10.78.17).

³ *antarāntare Haladharaḥ Kuru-Pāṇḍavasamkṣaye | bandhunāśabhayodvignas tīrthayātrā-gataḥ śanaiḥ* || (*Bhāratamañjarī* 10.24).

⁴ *yadi tv aham anugrāhyas tava dharmabhṛtām vara | vakṣyāmi hṛtsthaṃ saṃdehaṃ tan me tvam vaktum arhasi | asti me bhagavan kaś cit tīrthebhyo dharmasamśayaḥ | tam ahaṃ śrotum icchāmi pṛthak samkīrtitaṃ tvayā* || (*Mahābhārata* 3.80.26–27).

⁵ *Mahābhārata* 3.80–156.

⁶ *na te śakyā daridreṇa yajñāḥ prāptum mahīpate | bahūpakaraṇā yajñā nānāsambhāra-vistarāḥ || prāpyante pārthivair etaiḥ samrddhair vā naraiḥ kvacit | nārthanyūnopakaraṇair ekātma-bhīr asaṃhataiḥ || yo daridrair api vidhiḥ śakyah prāptum nareśvara | tulyo yajñaphalaiḥ puṇyais taṃ nibodha yudhiṣṭhira || ṛṣṇāṃ paramaṃ guhyam idaṃ bharatasattama | tīrthābhigamaṇaṃ puṇyam yajñair api viśiṣyate || anuṣṣya trirātrāṇi tīrthānyanabhigamya ca | adattvā kāñcanaṃ gās ca daridro nāma jāyate || agniṣṭomādibhir yajñair iṣṭvā vipuladakṣiṇaiḥ | na tat phalam avāpnoti tīrthābhigamanena yat* || (*Mahābhārata* 3.80.35–40).

sacrifice (Brockington 1998, p. 16). According to this view, Balarāma's pilgrimage can also be interpreted as a replacement of this great ritual of warriors. Although at first sight Balarāma did not execute his religious and social duty, yet probably he did not sin, because he could substitute the rite with another virtuous deed.

The Sārasvataparvan and Its Religious Background

The description of Balarāma's pilgrimage is found in the ninth book of great epic. This part of the *Mahābhārata* is commonly known as the *Śalyaparvan*. According to the Pune critical edition, it consists of four sub-*parvans*, namely *Śalyavadha* (1–16), *Hradapraveśa* (17–28), *Tīrthayātrā* (29–53) and *Gadāyudha* (54–64) (Dandekar 1961, p. XLIII). Among them the *Tīrthayātrāparvan* is a detailed account of Balarāma's deeds during the war. This sub-*parvan* obviously has several titles in the various recensions of the epic. For example, the text is named as *Sārasvataparvan* in most of the southern manuscripts. In this paper I also prefer this latter appellation to distinguish it from the other, above-mentioned expansive Epic *tīrthayātrā*-description narrated by Pulastya, which is also named as *Tīrthayātrāparvan*, but which is found in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*.

The *Sārasvataparvan*, as an Epic sub-*parvan* is a very complex text similarly to other parts of the *Mahābhārata*. By means of this *parvan* many religious groups found their way into the Epic tradition. I think it could be fruitful to examine briefly the text from this point of view.

If we wanted to name the major religious doctrine of the epic, the concept of *dharma* might be the most proper answer for this question (Brockington 1998, p. 242). *Dharma* determines the behaviour of several Epic heroes. The sources of conflicts are usually caused by various interpretations of *dharma*. As we have already seen in this text, we can first and foremost recognise Balarāma's individual way of perceiving *dharma*.

It is also a characteristic feature that several Epic texts aim to connect themselves to the Vedic tradition. The *Mahābhārata* is often referred to as the fifth Veda (Brockington 1998, p. 7). According to a popular idea, the most important turning points of the Epic plot are based on Vedic rituals. For instance, Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice serves as the frame story of the *Mahābhārata*. Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya* also has an important role in the plot, because after this occasion the Pāṇḍavas had to move to the forest (Brockington 1998, p. 16). According to these examples there is another Vedic sacrifice which is often assumed as the Vedic basis of Balarāma's pilgrimage.

The name of this rite is *sārasvatasattra*, and it stood in the centre of interest of numerous scholars. Its most famous specialty is that this was a so-called moving sacrifice. It means that the sacrificers had to perform different rites at various places (Bigger 2001, p. 158). If we compare this activity with Balarāma's *tīrthayātrā*, we find some very conspicuous resemblances.

I think it is worthwhile to emphasise that both religious acts are closely connected to the river Sarasvatī. But there is a remarkable difference between them.

According to the *brāhmaṇa* texts, the place where the Sarasvatī disappeared in the desert was designated as the start of the *sārasvatasattra*.⁷ In contrast to this, Balarāma started his journey from Prabhāsa, just from the seaside.⁸ It should also be mentioned that the point of disappearance, Vinaśana also remained an important place in the context of the *Sārasvataparvan*. In any case we see that this designation was used as a common noun in the Vedic corpus, but it became a proper noun during the next centuries.

According to the bhramanical tradition, after reaching Plakṣa Prasravaṇa, the source of the Sarasvatī the sacrificers had to move further and perform a ritual bath in the neighbouring river Yamunā.⁹ This ending is markedly parallel with Balarāma's pilgrimage. He also had a bath in the Yamunā, after he had reached the source of the Sarasvatī.¹⁰

The interpretation of this connection between the Vedic sacrifice and the Epic pilgrimage is very controversial. Some scholars exclude the relation between the two rituals, and they suggest that Balarāma's journey is one of the numerous *tīrtha*-catalogues of the *Mahābhārata* (Einoo 2000, p. 612).

Others, even though they do not identify the pilgrimage with Vedic ritual, still think that Balarāma's pilgrimage possesses Vedic roots and this Vedic frame could provide legitimation for the pilgrimage as a new religious trend (Bigger 2001, p. 158).

Excepting this *Brahmanical* frame, further reminiscences of Vedic religion are also found in the tradition of the *Sārasvataparvan*. Many of the *tīrthas* visited by Balarāma became holy places in consequence of pristine sacrifices which were performed there by several deities or ancient sages.

Among the various rites the *rājasūya* is represented most of the time. In addition the *vājapeya* and the *aśvamedha* are often mentioned as the causes of the sacredness of the *tīrthas*. The common thing in these three rituals is that all of them are closely connected to the *ṣṣatriya varṇa*, like the central subject of *Mahābhārata*. It is also remarkable that these sacrifices were originally performed by deities, thus the warriors could probably be regarded as the earthly images of gods.

According to another idea, only these *ṣṣatriya* rituals existed in the Epic period. Although we can find other (non-*ṣṣatriya*) sacrifices, especially in the *Śānti*- and *Anuśāsanaparvan*, still they are commonly regarded as the products of *Brahmanical* redactors (Brockington 1998, p. 237).

⁷ *Sarasvatyā vinaśane dīkṣyante* | (*Pañcaviṃśa-brāhmaṇa* 25.10.1), *teṣāṃ Sarasvatyā upamajjane dīkṣā* | (*Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa* 2.297).

⁸ *evaṃ saṃdiśya tu preṣyān Baladevo mahābalaḥ | tīrthayātrāṃ yayau rājan kurūṇāṃ vaiśase tadā | sarasvatīṃ pratisrotāḥ samudrād abhiagmivān* | (*Mahābhārata* 9.34.18).

⁹ *Plakṣam Prāsraṇam āgamyāgnaye kāmāyeṣṭim nirvapante | tasyām aśvāṃ ca puruṣīm ca dhenuke dattvā | Kārapacavaṃ prati Yamunām avabhṛtham abhyavayanti* | (*Pañcaviṃśa-brāhmaṇa* 25.10.22–23).

¹⁰ *prabhavaṃ ca Sarasvatyāḥ Plakṣa Prasravaṇam balaḥ | samprāptaḥ Kārapacanaṃ tīrthapravaram uttamam* | *Halāyudhas tatra cāpi dattvā dānaṃ mahābalaḥ | āplutaḥ salile śīte tasmāc cāpi jagāma ha | āśramaṃ paramaprīto Mitrasya Varuṇasya ca* | *Indro ḡnir Aryamā caiva yatra prāk prītim āpnuvan* | *taṃ deśam Kārapacanaḍ Yamunāyāṃ jagāma ha* | (*Mahābhārata* 9.53.11–13).

It should also be mentioned that these typically *Brahmanic* rites, like the several *Soma*-sacrifices, were never performed under normal circumstances in the *Sārasvataparvan*. Trita, an obedient Brahmin, performed the rituals regularly. But having been left in a cave by his evil brothers, he had to visualise the rite to accomplish his daily duty (*Mahābhārata* 9.35.30–47).

According to another story, Baka Dālbhya's sacrifice transformed into dangerous black magic, because of the improper donations (*Mahābhārata* 9.40.6–14). These stories could perhaps refer to the rethinking of traditional rites.

In parallel with Vedic orthodoxy, the traces of ascetic religion are also widely represented. The other great group of *tīrthas* situated on the bank of the Sarasvatī achieved unequalled importance because of the asceticism of several *ṛṣis*.

Furthermore, we can also notice a kind of rivalry between these two characteristic religious practices. The most typical example for this is the story about Asita Devala and Jaigīṣavya (*Mahābhārata* 9.48.23–64) which praises the priority of ascetic tradition.

Other episodes, like the Vṛddhakanyā-story, espouses the Vedic tradition alone. In this tale Kuṇi Gārgya's daughter was doing penance in vain, because she was not able to achieve perfection without the fulfillment of her social duties, namely marriage.

Finally, the initial features of later sectarian pieties are sometimes also discernible. The *Mahābhārata* is commonly known as a *Vaiṣṇava* writing. But in fact it contains numerous *śaiva* elements too (Brockington 1998, p. 256). In contrast to the Vedic Rudra, Śiva appears as a more complex deity in the Epic tradition (Bisschop 2009, p. 743).

The appearance of this new religious tradition in which Śiva became a central figure is usually dated to the 5th century (Sanderson 2013, p. 213). The initial elements of Śaivism are already noticeable in the *Mahābhārata*. Śiva's figure is first of all connected to destruction (Bisschop 2009, p. 744). Although it is noticeable in other parts of the epic, this aspect of Śiva is less important in the *Sārasvataparvan*.

In connection with the *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī, Śiva is usually presented as the main deity, the only God. The most obvious example for Śiva's this kind of precedence is a hymn sung by a sage named Mañkanaka (*Mahābhārata* 9.37.43–46). This eulogy shows Śiva's special priority. He is not only the head of the gods, like Indra, but he is superior to all creatures by his unique nature.

We can also recognise the outline of the later *śaiva* mythological cycle in Balarāma's journey. For instance, the most extended narration among the several *tīrtham* myths explains Skanda's birth. In another tale Śiva tried to obstruct the religious efforts of an ascetic woman named Arundhatī, masking himself as a Brahmin. This motif became a very popular topos in later *śaiva* literature (cf. *Skanda-purāṇa* 12.1–27).

Śiva never appears as the ultimate source of *tīrthas*. Almost all these places of pilgrimage are the results of the Vedic sacrifices or ascetic efforts, but Śiva's appearance always seems secondary. For example, although Skanda's birth is explained in great detail, the main cause of this *tīrtha* is that Soma and Sthānu performed asceticism here.

Thus, although many elements of Śaivism are presented, the features of *Vaiṣṇavism* are still dominant. This is not typical of the *Sārasvataparvan*. In contrast to the presence of *śaiva* piety, the *Sārasvataparvan* does not contain the specific features of *Vaiṣṇavism* at first sight. It is true that both Paraśurāma and Rāma Dāśaratha are known as Viṣṇu's incarnations (*avatāra*), but the connection with Viṣṇu is not found in this text.

The Sarasvatī River

The *Sārasvataparvan* is probably the most important source of those *tīrthas* which were situated on the bank of the Sarasvatī River.

There cannot be a more mysterious river than the ancient Sarasvatī which is commonly known as the invisible river of the Subcontinent. It is also often noted in connection with the Sarasvatī that it might have been the most sacred river in the Vedic period. According to several Vedic hymns, the Sarasvatī appears as a supernatural, celestial river.¹¹ Therefore some scholars identified the Sarasvatī with the Milky Way, which manifested on the Earth (Witzel 1995, p. 16).

So the religious importance of this river has been observable since the Vedic period. Beside the above-mentioned *Sārasvatasattra*, the Sarasvatī was known as the place which was especially suitable for performing several sacrifices. This area might have been the centre of Vedic religion.

Furthermore, there are many references to the features of the Sarasvatī.¹² From these allusions the Sarasvatī appears as a rapid-flowing, impetuous stream, like the modern Satluj (Bhattacharyya 1991, p. 270).

In later periods desiccation became determinant in the history of the Sarasvatī. As we have seen in the description of *Sārasvatasattra*, the Sarasvatī dried up somewhere in Thār Desert in the late Vedic period.

This desiccation might have intensified further through the Epic age. We read about the disappearance and reappearance of the Sarasvatī at every turn in Epic sources. At that time the Sarasvatī might not have been a continuous river, it rather appears to have been a network of numerous backwaters and wadis.

There is an important distinction between the Vedic and Epic conception of the Sarasvatī. According to the later Epic tradition and contrary to the *brāhmaṇas*, the Sarasvatī reached the sea at Prabhāsa. Consequently, even though the Sarasvatī disappeared in the Great Indian Desert, according to the *Mahābhārata* it reappeared and ran into sea. That the cult of the Sarasvatī survived here for the longest time. It is supported by a late local *purāṇa*, called the *Sarasvatī-purāṇa*, which contains a detailed description of the sacred places of Gujarāt.

¹¹ *ambitame nadītame devitame Sarasvatī* | (*Rgveda* 2.41.16ab).

¹² *iyam śuṣṃebhir bisakhā ivārujat sānu girīṇām taviṣebhir ūrmibhiḥ* | (*Rgveda* 6.61.2ab), *amaś carati roruvat* | (*Rgveda* 6.61.8c).

Though the mass flow rate of the stream was decreasing gradually, the religious ideas which surrounded it survived in the next periods. Thus the vanishing of the river did not cause the decay of this cult, but opened the way to new interpretations.

For example, in Gujarāt a river that originated from Mount Abu became identified with the Sarasvatī (Dey 1979, p. 181). According to a more common Hindu idea, Prayāg is known as the meeting point of three holy rivers: the invisible Sarasvatī along with the Ganges and the Yamunā.

Having become a kind of symbol, the Sarasvatī lived and lives on further. The great holy river of the Vedic period, like the Vedic texts, survived in later ages to provide legitimation for new ideas.

On the basis of this, it may not be accidental that one of the most archaic texts about the places of pilgrimage, namely Balarāma's journey, was connected to the *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī.

Balarāma's Pilgrimage

The Invisible Sarasvatī: Saurāṣṭra, Gujarāt, Thār Desert

Balarāma's pilgrimage could be divided into three great parts. Balarāma started his tour from Prabhāsa, where the Sarasvatī met the ocean. So the text first displays the places which were found between Prabhāsa and Vinaśana. The second section presents the area which was prescribed as a convenient ritualistic region by the *brāhmaṇas*. This area essentially coincides with the Epic Kurukṣetra. Finally, the last part presents the river's spring and its neighbourhood.

One of the most important innovations of the *Sārasvataparvan* is that the sacred area of the Sarasvatī was extended to those places which were beyond Vinaśana. According to both the *Sārasvata-* and the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, the disappearance of the Sarasvatī was due to non-*ārya* tribes. So the presence of the Sarasvatī was originally closely connected with Āryāvarta (the land of the *āryas*).

From Balarāma's travel it can be reasoned that *ārya* or *ārya*-following cultures could appear in South-Rājasthān and Gujarāt during the Epic era. As it can be remarked, beyond Vinaśana the river disappeared because of the presence of the pagan tribes (like *śūdras* and *ābhīras*), but later it became again visible in the neighbourhood of Prabhāsa, because that area was inhabited by *āryas*.

As I have already mentioned, the cult of the Sarasvatī played an important role in the local religious culture of Gujarāt. The above-mentioned *Sarasvatī-purāna* seems as a kind of counterpart of the *Sāravataparvan*. Even if the account of Balarāma's travels enumerates the sacred places of Gujarāt, it concentrates first and foremost on the Kurukṣetra region. In contrast to it, the *Sarasvatī-purāna* skips the more traditional area of the Sarasvatī, and presents Gujarāt in detail, as the only territory of the river (Rohlman 2011, p. 144).

The most significant *tīrtha* of this region was probably Prabhāsa which was the place where the river met the ocean. It corresponds to modern Somnāth in Gujarāt.

In connection with this *tīrtha* a popular origin myth about lunar eclipse is told by Vaiśampāyana.¹³ According to this story, Candra, the Moon was cursed by his father-in-law, Dakṣa, because he did not take care of his wives (*nakṣatras*) equally. The Moon could only release himself from consumption caused by Dakṣa through a ritual bath at Prabhāsa. Candra finally got rid of his illness, but he had to experience the decrease again and again.

The origin myth of Prabhāsa told by the epic is a very universal tale which could easily be accepted by any religious groups of India. We can also find this story in another famous part of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Nārāyaṇīya* (*Mahābhārata* 12.329.45–46). This version of the myth pays a little more attention to define Prabhāsa geographically. The nearness of the sea is emphatic here, but surprisingly there is no mention of the Sarasvatī. This form of the story might be more archaic, because the presence of the sacred river seems to be an innovation of the *Sārasvataparvan*. According to the Vedic hymns, the Sarasvatī reached the sea, but the location of confluence is not defined in the early sources. Furthermore, as we have already seen in the *brāhmaṇas*, it dried up before reaching the sea.

Otherwise we would find another epic reference excepting the *Sārasvataparvan* (*Mahābhārata* 3.80.77–79) certifying that the confluence of the Sarasvatī and the sea was at Prabhāsa. In my opinion the presence of the Sarasvatī in Gujarāt, especially in Prabhāsa is quite remarkable and symbolic.

If we check the mentions of this *tīrtha* in the *Mahābhārata*, we can easily recognise that the place is in special connection with the Yādavas of Dvārakā. First and foremost it is known as the place where the elimination of the Yādava clan occurred (*Mahābhārata* 16.9.8). So Kṛṣṇa and his brother Balarāma passed away here.

After the Vedic period, when the main religious centre had been the Kurukṣetra, the *ārya* civilisation probably conquered new regions. From this view, Prabhāsa almost looks like the Kurukṣetra of the Yādavas, and the Sarasvatī links symbolically these two *ārya* areas.

In the later period a few new ideas were connected to Prabhāsa. It is not surprising that the place was highly honoured by *Vaiṣṇavism*, because of Kṛṣṇa and other Yādava heroes.¹⁴ On the other hand, it also possessed a special importance for Śaivism. According to the inscriptions discovered in the area, Prabhāsa could be a very notable centre of the Pāśupata sect (Bisschop 2006, p. 219). The Pāśupata tradition kept account of twenty-eight incarnations (*avatāra*) of Śiva. These incarnations were attached to various places and periods. The last member in this list is Lakulīśa who is known as the master of the Pāśupata doctrine (Bisschop 2006, p. 41). Lakulīśa's ancestor, namely Somaśarma, was born here according to Pāśupata texts (Bisschop 2006, p. 210).

¹³ In the *Mahābhārata* the *parvans* of battle are commonly narrated by Sañjaya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's charioteer. So it is a peculiar feature of *Sārasvataparvan* that it is recounted by Vaiśampāyana, the main narrator of the epic.

¹⁴ *devadeśāt Prabhāse sa dehaṃ tyaktvā svayaṃ Hariḥ* | *Indraloke Brahmaloce pūjyate svargavāsibhiḥ* | (*Agni-purāna* 15.4c–5b).

Not only the Pāśupatas, but other *śaivas* also accepted the religious significance of Prabhāsa. The *pañcāṣṭaka*-system which was current among *śaiva* sects, enumerates all the sacred places of Śaivism including Prabhāsa (Bisschop 2006, pp. 27–28).

The worship of *jyotirlingas* had a similar notability among *śaivas*. This cult has not lost its importance and remained important until today (Fleming 2009, p. 52). One of the twelve exceedingly honoured *jyotirlingas* is found in Prabhāsa (Bisschop 2006, p. 219).

Besides the Epic and the Purāṇic sources, there are some inscriptions which show the religious peculiarity of the place. An inscription of a *śaka* ruler named Ṛṣabhadata from the 2nd century AD tells us that the king visited Prabhāsa as a pilgrim (Sircar 1961–1962, p. 243). From this period the history of the *tīrtha* is well documented in the epigraphical sources. The arrival of the first Muslim invaders seemingly caused a break in the life of the prosperous centre. Though Mahmūd Ghaznī destroyed all the *liṅgas* of the sacred town (Kane 1953, p. 830), the Hindu cults resurrected soon in the next centuries. Inscriptions from the 13th century found in the territory prove the presence of both Śaivism and Jainism. According to these sources, there were five valued *liṅgas* (Bühler 1892b, p. 271), and a sanctuary of the eighth *tīrthan̄kara* (Jaina master), named Candraprabha, was also found here (Joharapurkar 1959–1960, pp. 117–118). The presence of Candraprabha may also be connected to the original Moon-myth of Prabhāsa, because this *tīrthan̄kara* is famous, as the son of the Moon (Shah 1987, p. 142).

After the detailed description of Prabhāsa the presentation of the next place, namely Camasodbheda, is rather concise. The geographical location of this place is very uncertain, because there are only three mentions of this *tīrtha* in the *Mahābhārata*.¹⁵

Some scholars localise the place as a part of the Kurukṣetra (Dey 1979, p. 158), while according to others, it could be found in the neighbourhood of Vinaśana (Mani 1993, p. 168). In my opinion, these ideas could easily be refuted. There is a clear reference to this *tīrtha* which proves that the place was located in Saurāṣṭra, like the above-mentioned Prabhāsa.¹⁶ It might have been close to that important religious centre, and it might have merged into Prabhāsa in later centuries. It is important to remark that Kṣemendra's résumé from the 11th century did not mention the place among the stations of Balarāma's journey.

In another part of the *Mahābhārata* a reference to Camasodbheda alludes to this place of pilgrimage as one of the three *udbheda*-type *tīrthas*. There are three so-called *udbhedas* along the Sarasvatī.¹⁷ The *udbhedas* could be those places where the

¹⁵ *Mahābhārata* 3.80.118c–119b (these *ślokas* appear also in *Padma-purāṇa* 3.25.18–19b), 3.86.16–17b, 3.130.5.

¹⁶ *Surāṣṭreṣv api vakṣyāmi punyāny āyatanāni ca| āśramān saritaḥ śailān sarāṃsi ca narā-dhipa|| Camasonmajjanam viprās tatrāpi kathayanty uta| (Mahābhārata 3.86.16–17b).*

¹⁷ *gacchaty antarhitā yatra maruṣṭhe Sarasvatī| Camase ca Śivodbhede Nāgodbhede ca drśyate|| snātvā ca Camasodbhede agniṣṭomaphalam labhet| (Mahābhārata 3.80.118c–119b).*

invisible river somehow became discernible again. In the *Sārasvataparvan* we have a clear reference only to Camasodbheda, but not to Śivodbheda, or to Nāgodbheda.

However, the third station of Balarāma's pilgrimage, namely Udapāna, fits the definition of *udbheda* fairly well. Therefore it could perhaps be identified with Śivodbheda, the second member of this list of *udbhedas*.

The description of this *tīrtha* is as detailed as the myth of Prabhāsa. According to this account, Udapāna could be a well (as its name indicates) somewhere in the Great Indian Desert. Hindu reasoning identified this peculiar well with an appearance of the invisible Sarasvatī.

The story told by Vaiśampāyana is about the origin of Udapāna. The foundation of this well is connected to an ancient Vedic sage called Trita. The tale about Trita and his evil brothers, Ekata and Dvita is already found in several forms in the *R̥gveda* (1.52, 1.105). In essence there are two fables about Trita, and we find the combination of these two Vedic stories in the *Sārasvataparvan*. According to this, Trita's brother stole the sacrificial donations and left Trita alone in a hollow. The troubled Trita was worried, because he was not able to fulfill his religious duty, namely the daily Soma-sacrifice. Finally Trita could perform the ritual with the help of visualisation. In consequence of the successful ceremony, the goddess Sarasvatī herself appeared before the eyes of the sage and saved him from the hollow with her celestial water.

The religious importance of Udapāna, similarly to the other *udbhedas*, was decaying gradually after the Epic era. Both the *Bhāratamañjarī* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* mention the place under the name of Tritakūpa (*Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 10.78.19b, *Bhāratamañjarī* 10.32.d). The *Vāmana-purāṇa* refers to the *tīrtha* as a place where both Śiva and Viṣṇu possess sanctuaries (*Vāmana-purāṇa* 31.91, 57.6).

There are some ideas for the geographical localisation of Udapāna. Among them maybe the most plausible one identifies the place with modern Udasar located in Rājasthān (Bhargava 1986, p. 83).

Having left behind Trita's well, Balarāma's next station is the above-mentioned Vinaśana. As we have seen, this *tīrtha* was located at the frontier of Āryāvarta (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 21). The main cause of the disappearance of the Sarasvatī was the presence of those barbarian, probably indigenous tribes that were not part of the *ārya* civilisation.

According to the *Sārasvataparvan*, *sūdras* and *ābhīras* lived in the territory beyond Vinaśana. This corresponds to Ptolemy's description who also mentioned the *ābhīras* as the inhabitants of the area (Bhattacharyya 1991, p. 235).

This boundary-function of Vinaśana remained in the next centuries, although the margins of Āryāvarta were changing. We can see an example for the re-interpretation of this role in the *Manusmṛti* (2.21). According to Manu's famous lawbook, Vinaśana was not on the border of Āryāvarta, but at the western frontier of Madhyadeśa.

Vinaśana also appears in several Purāṇic lists of the places of pilgrimage (*Agni-purāṇa* 109.13, *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa* 2.13.69, *Kūrma-purāṇa* 2.36.27). Among the *purāṇas* the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* ascribes a new, special significance to the *tīrtha* (*Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 10.79.23). In this text Vinaśana is known as the place where the mace-

fight between Duryodhana and Bhīma occurred (in the *Mahābhārata* they fought at Dvaipāyanahrada) (*Mahābhārata* 9.29.53).

There have been numerous attempts for the localisation of Vinaśana. According to some, Vinaśana might be the ancestor of Sirsā (Hariyāṇa), others identify it with Hanumāngarh (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 22), but in the absence of sufficient sources none of these ideas seem convincing.

After Vinaśana a couple of very obscure *tīrthas* are listed in the *Sārasvata-parvan*. There are no references to these places in any other sources I know about, excepting Kṣemendra's work which usually follows the structure of the *Sārasvata-parvan* very closely.

Subhūmika and the *tīrtha* of Gandharvas seem fabulous places rather than real geographical spots. Following them the next *tīrtha* is Gargasrotas which is reminiscent to the great Indian astronomer Garga. It should be noted, however, that this connection is a little confusing, because Kṣemendra mentioned this place by the name of Durgasrotas.

The next station, Śaṅkhatīrtha was famous for an extraordinary tree. The name of Śaṅkhatīrtha is often found in numerous lists about places of pilgrimage (*Brahmapurāṇa* 156.1–11, *Nārada-purāṇa* 1.104.52, *Narasimha-purāṇa* 66.23). But it seems quite improbable that these lists actually refer to this Śaṅkhatīrtha, because they do not fit into the context of the other *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī.

In contrast to the above-mentioned three *tīrthas*, Balarāma's following station is a fairly well known place in Hindu mythology. Dvaitavana is famous as the forest where the Pāṇḍavas emigrated after the unsuccessful dice-game. The place is also honoured as the birthplace of Jaimini (Dey 1979, p. 58).

Dvaitavana is commonly identified with modern Devband found in Uttar Pradesh (Dey 1979, p. 58). But from the perspective of the *Sārasvata-parvan* this identification seems quite doubtful. It seems probable that Balarāma moved northeastwards during his pilgrimage. After Dvaitavana he arrived at Pṛthūdaka and Sthāṇutīrtha which are evidently situated in the western direction from Devband. In my opinion, it would not be surprising if the original Dvaitana was moved to Uttar Pradesh after the desiccation of the Sarasvatī. It is also worth mentioning that the southern version of the *Sārasvata-parvan* mentions this *tīrtha* by the name of Munitīrtha.

The last *tīrtha* among these obscure places is Nāgadhanvan which calls to mind the cult of the *nāgas*. On the other hand, the word *dhanvan* at the end of the name could refer to another *udbheda*-type *tīrtha*. It is very tempting to identify the place with Nāgodbheda, but we cannot be certain without sufficient data.

The Kurukṣetra Region

Having left the Thār Desert Vaiśampāyana started to introduce the sacred places of Kurukṣetra. In essence this area was identified with the ritualistic space of ancient Āryāvarta. Kurukṣetra has never lost its importance during the various periods of Hinduism. Today it is honoured as the place where the doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

was taught by Kṛṣṇa. Additionally the festivals organised on the occasions of solar eclipses are currently a popular custom. We find the first references to these occasions in the Epic sources.

The first station of this section is the often-mentioned Naimiṣakuñja. Naimiṣa is frequently identified with a small township called Nimsar found in the neighbourhood of modern Lucknow (Dey 1979, p. 135). Similarly to the case of Dvaitavana, this identification seems unlikely. We find numerous Purāṇic and Epic references suggesting that Naimiṣa had originally been in the eastern part of Kurukṣetra, from where it was moved eastwards to modern Uttar Pradeś in later periods (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 134), as the confluence of the river was also transferred from Prabhāsa to Prayāg.

This *tīrtha* was probably located somewhere at the meeting of the Sarasvatī and the Dṛṣāvātī (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 134), the place which was designed as Brahmāvarta by the *Manusmṛti* (*Manusmṛti* 2.17) and the *Vāmana-purāṇa* (*Vāmana purāṇa Saromāhātmya* 12.9).

According to the *Sārasvataparvan*, Naimiṣakuñja could be a kind of swamp (*jalapihitasthala*) (Arjunamīśra ad 9.36.51). The origin of this place is connected to the story of the twelve-year sacrifice of the sages, which is a very popular, central topos among the myths of the Sarasvatī. In the course of this ceremony so many sages came together that there was not enough space for everyone on the riverbank. The holy river took pity on the devoted ṛṣis, and made some curves at Naimiṣa to produce enough place for all the sacrificers. The *Sārasvataparvan* emphasises that the river turned westwards here (*Mahābhārata* 36.34.52).

Following the course of the Sarasvatī, Balarāma's next station was Saptasārasvata. The unique feature of this *tīrtha*, as its name suggests, is that the pilgrims can partake in the sacredness of seven Sarasvatīs here.¹⁸ According to a popular belief, there were in fact seven Sarasvatīs.¹⁹ All the seven rivers are paired with particular sacrifices and sacrificers.²⁰

An additional story is also linked with this place of pilgrimage. According to this, a young Brahmin named Mañkaṇaka lived here. On the one hand he was honoured as the progenitor of Maruts,²¹ on the other hand he became famous among *śaivas* because of his vehement dance.

Once upon a time Mañkaṇaka cut his finger with a blade of *kuśa*-grass and then vegetable juice flowed from the wound. Having perceived this miracle, the young ascetic started to dance ecstatically. The gods were afraid of Mañkaṇaka, and they thought that his impetuous dance would destroy the world. Therefore they asked

¹⁸ *ekībhūtās tatas tās tu tasmimś tīrthe samāgatāḥ | Saptasārasvatam tīrtham tatas tat prathitam bhuvī || (Mahābhārata 9.37.27).*

¹⁹ This concept perhaps derived from Vedic tradition. In one hymn (*Rgveda* 6.61.10.) the sacred stream is addressed as seven sisters (*saptasvasar*).

²⁰ Cf. Appendix.

²¹ The Maruts were known as the children of Rudra and Pṛṣni in the Vedic corpus (MacDonell 1897, p. 78). In contrast to it, the *Sārasvataparvan* gives another explanation about their birth. According to it, Mañkaṇaka had perceived a wonderful *apsaras*, and his seed accidentally fell into Sarasvatī. From this union the forefathers of Maruts were born, namely Vāyuvega, Vāyubala, Vāyuhān, Vāyumaṇḍala, Vāyujvāla, Vāyuretas, and Vāyucakra.

Śiva, the greatest lord, to restrain him. After that Śiva visited Mañkaṇaka and showed him how he could produce ashes from his own fingers. Having recognised the lord of the world, Mañkaṇaka became very ashamed and sang a eulogy to the god.²² This hymn is one of the most noteworthy examples of the presence of early Śaivism in the Epic tradition. The myth of Mañkaṇaka also remained popular after the Epic era, we can find numerous re-interpretations in several sources.²³

It is worth mentioning that a *tīrtha* by the same name was also found on the bank of another sacred river, the Narmadā (*Skanda-purāṇa Revākhaṇḍa* 19.1–20), though its origin-myth is wholly different from the primary Epic tale.

At Balarāma's next stop we can get acquainted with Auśanasa. The name of the place calls the sage Uśanas to mind. He is known as a member of Bhṛgu's *gotra*,²⁴ and previously he practised asceticism here and in consequence of this he became adept at political science.

Although the name of the *tīrtha* echoes the name of Uśanas, the main importance of the place is connected to another event. A sage called Mahodara could get rid of the head of a demon stuck to his leg only here. Therefore the place is also named as Kapālamocana ("releasing the skull").

These *kapālamocana*-stories were very popular among the Hindus. This tale was for example adopted in the form of a famous Bhairava-myth by the *śaivas* (Mani 1993, p. 115). Furthermore we find another version of this story in the *Sārasvataparvan*, as we will see later.²⁵

The memory of Auśanasa has been preserved up to this day. There is a pond in Bilaspur which is regarded as the Epic Auśanasa (Bakker 2014, p. 168). Although Bilaspur is indeed situated in Kurukṣetra, this identification does not correspond to the presumed geography of the *Sārasvataparvan*, because according to Balarāma's pilgrimage, Auśanasa should be located to the east from Sthāṇufūrtha (modern Thānesar). Another town, namely Sadhaura (Hariyāṇa), also claims Auśanasa (Dey 1979, p. 90), but this is not verified by the *Sārasvataparvan* because of the same reason as Bilaspur.

After Auśanasa the *Sārasvataparvan* introduces one of the most prominent *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī, namely Pṛthūdaka. The *Sārasvataparvan* presents many her-

²² *nānyam devād ahaṃ manye Rudrāt parataraṃ mahat| surāsurasya jagato gatis tvam asi Śūladhrk| tvayī srṣtam idaṃ viśvaṃ vadantītha manīṣinaḥ| tvām eva sarvaṃ viśati punar eva yuga-kṣaye| devair api na śakyas tvam parijñātuṃ kuto mayā| tvayī sarve sma drśyante surā brahmādayo 'nagha| sarvas tvam asi devānāṃ kartā kārayitā ca ha| tvatprasādāt surāḥ sarve modantīhākutobhayāḥ|* (*Mahābhārata* 9.37.43–46). We can find this laudation in a more detailed form in the Southern *Mahābhārata* (*Southern Mahābhārata* 9.33.49–59b). This version of the hymn is quite noticeable because of its very archaic feature: *tvam prabhuh paramaiśvaryād adhikaṃ bhāsi Śaṅkara| tvayī Brahmā ca Śakraś ca lokān samdhārya tiṣṭhataḥ|* (*Southern Mahābhārata* 9.33.53). As we can remark, there is Indra in the well-known triad instead of Viṣṇu.

²³ See *Kūrma-purāṇa* 2.34.44–56, *Skanda-purāṇa* 6.40.27–52, 7[1].270.1–46 (cited by Törzsök 2003, pp. 6–7), *Vāmana-purāṇa Saromāhātmya* 16.17–17.23.

²⁴ It seems that the place might be closely connected to the Bhārgavas (cf. *Mahābhārata* 3.81.116–117), but the *Sārasvataparvan* presumably did not pay enough attention to it. Perhaps the short introduction about Uśanas could be a later insertion added by Bhārgava redactors.

²⁵ Cf. *Mahābhārata* 9.42.27–37.

mitages and sacred places in the neighbourhood of Pṛthūdaka. But according to such later sources as the *Bhāratamañjarī* or the *Saromāhātmya*, these originally independent places were merged into Pṛthūdaka which consequently attained unique respect in the Kurukṣetra region.

First of all, Pṛthūdaka seems to be such a place where the dying could finish their life in auspicious conditions. That is why an old sage by the name of Ruṣaṅgu asked his sons to take him to Pṛthūdaka, because he wanted to die there. This death cult is a little different from the one belonging to Benares, because the emphasis was not on the funeral, but on those ceremonies which were performed before one's death.

This place of pilgrimage was worshipped as the spot where Brahmā created the world. Furthermore, this *tīrtha* is also known as a place where the people (in practice the *kṣatriyas*) could acquire the status of Brahmins. Vaiśampāyana enumerates those heroes who became *brāhmaṇas* here.²⁶ Among them Ārṣṭiṣeṇa's story²⁷ bears witness to the rivalry between the Vedic and the ascetic traditions. Ārṣṭiṣeṇa became disappointed, because he studied the *Vedas* in vain and he could not attain superior wisdom. As a result of his disappointment, Ārṣṭiṣeṇa started to practise asceticism, and finally this *tapas* entitled him to the highest wisdom. Thus this tale illustrates explicitly the priority of asceticism over Vedic sacrifices.

Among these exceptional *kṣatriyas* Sindhudvīpa represents the dynasty of the Sun, Devāpi the dynasty of the Moon. The most famous member of this group of *kṣatriyas* is undisputedly Viśvāmītra. This well-known sage is also respected as one of the eight *gotra*-founder *ṛṣis*.

Viśvāmītra's myth also praises the excellence of asceticism, because he is an unsuccessful, fallen king who became an outstanding Brahmin thanks to his dreadful asceticism.

In my opinion these tales demonstrate well how the importance of warriors increased in the religious life of the Epic era. The status of Brahmins became obtainable for *kṣatriyas* through asceticism which religious activity was closely connected to this social group.

Among the hermits who possessed ashrams here, Baka Dālbhya is also worth mentioning. This sage asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the greatest king, to give him sacrificial gifts. But the Kuru king did not respect the sage and gave him carcasses. Therefore, the furious Baka Dālbhya decided to perform the sacrifice with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's improper donation. In consequence of this, the ceremony became a kind of destructive ritual which ruined Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom. Because of the series of various disasters, the Kaurava king regretted his irreverence and conciliated the sage to save his empire.

The use of impure ingredients during the rites was also found in Vedic sources. According to them, these rituals were able to prevent the assaults of evil beings (Hille-

²⁶ *sasarja yatra bhagavāṃḥ lokāṃḥ lokapitāmahaḥ | yatrārṣṭiṣeṇaḥ Kauravya brāhmaṇyaṃ saṃśitavrataḥ | tapasā mahatā rājan prāptavān ṛṣisattamaḥ || Sindhudvīpaś ca rājarṣir Devāpiś ca mahātapāḥ | brāhmaṇyaṃ labdhavān yatra Viśvāmītro mahāmuniḥ | mahātapasvī bhagavān ugratejā mahātapāḥ || (Mahābhārata 9.38.31–32d).*

²⁷ It is important to note that Ārṣṭiṣeṇa is considered as a real Brahmin by birth according to the southern recension.

brandt 1897, p. 179). Perhaps this tale represents the advancement of this concept. Impure sacrifices not only propitiate the demons, but they can also have harmful results.

In any case, Baka Dālbhya's ambiguous sacrifice needed to be legitimised by another story: in the days of old Bṛhaspati, the guru of gods had sacrificed meat here to subjugate the cruel *asuras*.

Yāyātīrtha might also belong to Pṛthūdaka. This *tīrtha* is named after king Yayāti who was an offspring of the lunar race of kings (Dandekar 1961, p. 493). He was also known as a great sacrificer for whom the river Sarasvatī produced milk while the king was performing the sacrifice here.

The final spot which had special significance within Pṛthūdaka is called Aruṇā-saṃgama. This place was at the confluence of the Sarasvatī and its tributary stream named Aruṇā, situated northeast from the centre of Pṛthūdaka (Dey 1979, p. 11).

There are a few stories narrated by the *Sārasvataparvan* in connection with this conflux. First of all, the Sarasvatī carried away Vasiṣṭha here. The enmity between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmītra is a well-known topos of Hindu mythology. According to the *Sārasvataparvan*, Viśvāmītra lived in Pṛthūdaka and Vasiṣṭha dwelled in the neighbourhood of Sthāṇuṭīrtha (Thānesar, Balarāma's next station). They continuously vied with each other, and eventually Viśvāmītra decided to kill his enemy. He asked the river Sarasvatī to bring him Vasiṣṭha. The river goddess was afraid of Viśvāmītra's anger, and she fulfilled this impious request. But when the Sarasvatī together with Vasiṣṭha reached Viśvāmītra's hermitage, she did not hand over the sage to the evil Viśvāmītra, but carried him away.

Therefore the furious Viśvāmītra cursed the river. As a result, the Sarasvatī had to carry blood instead of water. Because of the presence of blood, numerous *rākṣasas* and other terrifying creatures got together along the stream. Ultimately the poor Sarasvatī was rescued by some pious sages who were on a pilgrim's tour. The disappointed *rākṣasas* were also compensated and they could obtain heaven by means of a ritual bath at Aruṇāsaṃgama.

This confluence is honoured as a *kapālamocana*-place, too, because the above-mentioned second *kapālamocana*-myth is connected with it. The initial form of this tale about the friendship of Indra and Namuci is already found in the Vedic corpus (MacDonell 1897, p. 161). Indra killed Namuci with deceitful means and that is why Namuci's skull stuck to his body. Finally he obtained release from his punishment through a purifying bath at the confluence of the Sarasvatī and the Aruṇā.

It is not surprising that Pṛthūdaka did not lose its importance and popularity after the Epic period. The *tīrtha* is an often-mentioned place in many *purānas* (*Brahma-purāṇa* 25.35, 228.88–90, *Liṅga-purāṇa* 1.92.128, *Matsya-purāṇa* 22.51). Among them the most remarkable is the *Saromāhātmya* of the *Vāmana-purāṇa*. This text repeats in detail the stories of the *Sārasvataparvan* (*Vāmana-purāṇa Saromāhātmya* 18.16–19.43), and we find only a few less notable variants here. For instance, according to the *Vāmana-purāṇa* (and unlike in the *Sārasvataparvan*) Viśvāmītra became a Brahmin in Auśanasa, and not in Pṛthūdaka (*Vāmana-purāṇa Saromāhātmya* 18.14–15). Furthermore, the *Vāmana-purāṇa* refers to the place where Baka Dālbhya sacrificed by the name of Avakīrṇatīrtha (*Vāmana-purāṇa Saromāhātmya* 18.25).

The religious importance of Pṛthūdaka is also certified by historical inscriptions. The stone slab erected by horse-dealers (from the 9th century) informs us that Pṛthūdaka was a quite prominent centre of *Vaiṣṇavism* (Bühler 1892c, p. 186). Another inscription from the 9th–10th century confirms on the one hand this *Vaiṣṇava* significance, and on the other hand, commemorates that the great Epic battle on Kurukṣetra happened in the neighbourhood of the town (Bühler 1892a, pp. 242–244).

The former Pṛthūdaka is generally identified with modern Pehā (Hariyāna) (Dey 1979, p. 160) and these days it is one of the most visited places in the Kurukṣetra region. First of all, it is honoured as a place where the *śraddhā*-rite can be performed (Punia 1994, p. 55). But the memory of the Sarasvatī is also vivid in this small town. The most obvious example for this is a pretty temple of Sarasvatī in the middle of Pehā (Punia 1994, p. 55).

The introduction to the next stage of Balarāma's journey, Sthāṇuṭīrtha is a little confusing. We have to face some philological problems here.²⁸ Having left Pṛthūdaka, Balarāma visited that place where Śiva's son, Skanda had been born and had been anointed as the general of the gods. Skanda's birthplace can be localised fairly well, it is commonly identified with Thānesar, King Harṣa's early capital. But it is very important to note that the description of this place does not mention anywhere the name of Sthānuṭīrtha, it calls this place of pilgrimage as Somatīrtha or Aujasa. We have only one reference to Thānesar, because somewhat earlier it is said that Vasiṣṭha lived in the outskirts of Sthānuṭīrtha, and it is added that this was the place where Skanda was anointed (*Mahābhārata* 9.41.4).

Thus, it seems plausible that Balarāma went to Sthānuṭīrtha from Pṛthūdaka, because Thānesar is situated about 25 km east of Pṛthūdaka, and this location fits well the hypothetical map of the Sarasvatī.

The real problem concerns the name of Somatīrtha (*Mahābhārata* 9.42.38d). The *śloka* containing this appellation appears later again in the *Sārasvataparvan* between Āditya- and Sārasvatatīrtha;²⁹ in the *Sārasvataparvan*, however, this verse is only partially repeated. This might have been the original position of the Somatīrtha together with the accompanying Skanda-myth, and the redactors of the *Sārasvataparvan* might have transposed the *tīrtha* just after Pṛthūdaka when Sthānuṭīrtha became famous as Skanda's birthplace.

Finally, we can have a look at the legends of this place. The *tīrtha* is named after Sthānu who might be identical with Śiva. According to the Epic tradition, Sthānu is known as Brahmā's son and the father of eleven *rudras* (Mani 1993, p. 743).

Its second name, Somatīrtha, refers to the Moon-god who performed a sacrifice here. Finally, the third name, Aujasa, is often considered to be a different place where Varuṇa was anointed (Brockington 1998, p. 204). Even if Aujasa was ever

²⁸ Cf. Appendix.

²⁹ *avāpya dharmam param āryakarmā|| jagāma Somasya mahat sa tīrtham| yatrejivān Uḍupa-
tī rājasūyena Bhārata| tasmīn vṛtte mahān āsīt saṃgrāmas Tārakāmayah||* (*Mahābhārata* 9.49.65c–
50.1). It almost equalled to the introducing verse of Sthānuṭīrtha (*Mahābhārata* 9.42.38c–39a). The first two *pādas* are the same, there is a little difference in the third: *yatrājayad rājasūyena Somah*, and the last one is omitted.

separate from Sthāṇufīrtha, the *Sārasvataparvan* certainly uses the two names as synonyms. This is supported not only by the *Sārasvataparvan*, but also by *Tīrthayātraparvan*.³⁰

The *tīrtha* was highly honoured because of Skanda. We find the popular Skanda-myth in various forms in the two Sanskrit epics.³¹ According to the *Sārasvataparvan*, Śiva's seed fell into the Fire (Agni), but the Fire could not bear it and took it away to Gaṅgā. The holy river was also not able to contain it in herself and brought it to the Himalayas. In the great mountain range a group of smaller goddesses took care of the young Skanda and brought him up.

When he grew up, all the deities assembled in the Himalayas and visited Śiva's offspring. Each of the gods and other creatures (like rivers, mountains, etc.) honoured him and offered various gifts to the future general.³² Finally, Skanda was appointed as the commander of the deities, and he subdued Tāraka and his demon-army.

It need not to be emphasised how important role the myth of Skanda has in later Indian literature. Thanks to Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, the story about Skanda's birth became reasonably well known for Western readers, too.

The importance of Skanda's anointment is downplayed in the *Sārasvataparvan*, because Sthāṇufīrtha is also known as the place where Varuṇa was consecrated as the lord of waters. This episode may refer to the revising activity of Brahmins. The parallel story about a Vedic deity tries to relativise the non-Vedic *śaiva*'s importance of the *tīrtha*.

As I have already mentioned, it might be the influence of later redactors that the location of these places became identified with Sthāṇufīrtha or Thānesar. As it is well known, this small town had a remarkable role in the history of North India. The importance of the Skanda-myth could be rather great in Harṣa's years. Bāṇa in his famous *Harṣacarita* named the place of Harṣa's anointment as Thānesar. If we compared the description of these two events, we would find numerous parallels between Skanda's and Harṣa's consecration (Bakker 2014, p. 162).

According to the *Harṣacarita*, the kingdom of the Puṣpabhūtis was devoted to Śiva (Bakker 2007, p. 2). About Harṣa's father, Prabhākaravardhana Bāṇa remarked that he believed in *śaiva* magical practices (Bakker 2007, p. 4). Consequently, it seems a plausible idea that the town was an important centre of the Pāśupata-movement which had spread from Gujarāt in about the 5th–6th centuries and moved to Kānyakubja, Harṣa's capital (Bakker 2007, p. 2).

In the Muslim period Thānesar preserved its religious significance. The works of Moghul authors report that numerous pilgrims regularly visited Thānesar to see the

³⁰ *Aujasaṃ Varuṇaṃ tīrthaṃ dīpyate svena tejasā| yatra Brahmādibhir devair ṛṣibhiḥ ca ta-podhanañ| senāpaṭyena devānāṃ abhiṣikto Guhas tadā||* (*Mahābhārata* 3.81.143).

³¹ See *Mahābhārata* 3.213.1–221.80, 13.83.38–86.32; *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.35.6–18, 1.35.19–36.31.

³² According to *Sārasvataparvan*, the most important *tīrthas* also visited Śiva's son; the adoption of *Vāmana-purāṇa* gave more detailed information about these places. It names several of these places of pilgrimage, being well-known *tīrthas* of the Sarasvatī, like Prabhāsa, Udapāna, Saptasārasvata, Auśanasa, Brahmayoni, Indratīrtha and Kurukṣetra (*Vāmana-purāṇa* 31.91–94).

solar eclipse (McCarter 2013, p. 190). This natural phenomenon observed at this place is known from ancient times. Although the *Sārasvataparvan* passes over the solar eclipse at Sthāṇutīrtha in silence, another part of *Mahābhārata*, namely the *Tīrthayātraparvan*, speaks about a *tīrtha* by the name of Saṃnihiti, where pilgrims assembled to see the solar eclipse (*Mahābhārata* 3.81.166–170).

Later people identified this place with Rāmahrada which was a famous place of pilgrimage from the Epic era. It is also probable that Rāmahrada used to be different from Sthāṇutīrtha, because Rāmahrada was known as one of the four points that demarcated Kurukṣetra (McCarter 2013, pp. 165–166). But the Indians did not forget this role of Rāmahrada even after the above-mentioned identification. Consequently the borders of Kurukṣetra were also changing in parallel with the new location of Rāmahrada. Thus, the prominent Sthāṇutīrtha and the conception of Kurukṣetra became closely fused through the ages (McCarter 2013, p. 40).

This fusion was so influential that although local inhabitants usually name their town as Thānesar, the official name of the town is Kurukṣetra (McCarter 2013, p. 39). In any case, the place plays a very active role in the religious life of the modern Kurukṣetra region. The prestigious Sthāṇvīśvar Mahādev temple brings to mind the ancient Sthāṇutīrtha or Sthāṇvīśvara. On the other hand, the festivals organised on the occasions of solar eclipses (*Sūryagrahaṇa Melā*) regularly attract many pilgrims to the town.

After these two important centres Balarāma arrived at Agnitīrtha. This *tīrtha* was honoured as the place where the gods had found the missing Agni. Agni's disappearance was a result of Bhṛgu's curse. This myth is not explained in detail by the *Sārasvataparvan*, but it is a fairly known story which is found in the *Ādiparvan* among others (*Mahābhārata* 1.5.11–7.26). The innovation of the *Sārasvataparvan* is to attach the original story to a real geographical place. The description of this *tīrtha* adds that there was an *aśvattha*-tree (*ficus religiosa*) here, where Agni could survive.

Having left Agnitīrtha³³ Kṛṣṇa's brother moved to Kauberatīrtha. In days of old Kubera he practised asceticism here and on account of his efforts he obtained mastery over all treasures. In my opinion Kubera's relationship with the Bhāradvāja *gotra* is emphatic here. The god of riches and treasure is called Ailibila in the *Sārasvataparvan*. This is actually Kubera's matronym. Kubera's mother, namely Ilibilā, is known as the daughter of the clan-founder sage, Bharadvāja (Mani 1993, p. 317).

The presence of the Bhāradvājas is also noticeable at Balarāma's next station, Badarapācana. There are two stories about cooking the *badara*-fruit (jujube tree, *zizy-*

³³ There is a little philological problem with these places. To understand this problem we should have a look at the closing stanzas of the description of Agnitīrtha: *tatrāpy āplutya matimān Brahmayoniṃ jagāma ha|| sasarja bhagavān yatra sarvalokapitāmaha|| tatrāplutya tato Brahmā saha devaiḥ prabhuh purā|| sasarja cāmnāni tathā devatānām yathāvidhi||* (*Mahābhārata* 9.46.20c–21). It is very problematic why the earlier explained Brahmayoni emerges again. We can find a very good invention to solve this problem in the Kumbakonam-edition of the epic which is chiefly based on southern manuscripts. This edition omits verse 9.46.21ab, and reads *brahmaśāpān mumoca ha* instead of 9.46.20d. Subsequently the epithet *matimān* does not pertain to Balarāma, but to Agni. It seems to be supported, because the *Sārasvataparvan* does not use this epithet referring to Balarāma in any places.

phus jujuba) connected with this place. The first tale is about Srucāvātī, another daughter of Bharadvāja. Srucāvātī fell in love with Indra. Therefore, she practised dreadful penance to conquer Indra's heart. The king of the gods was satisfied with Srucāvātī's efforts, but he wanted to put her to the test once more. That is why he masked himself as the sage Vasiṣṭha, then visited Srucāvātī, offered her some *badaras*, and asked her to cook him these fruits for dinner. The problem was that the jujubes were made impossible to cook by Indra's magic. Even so the maiden tried to cook the fruits assiduously until she ran out of firewood. After that she did not despair and give up cooking, but fed the fire with her own body. This deed finally made Indra sure of Srucāvātī's devotion, and he promised to marry her.

The second tale about *badara*-cooking is narrated to Srucāvātī by Indra. In essence this story is the *śaiva* version of the previous one. Before Srucāvātī's cooking at this place another virtuous woman, Arundhatī, had continuously cooked *badaras* for Śiva who had dressed as a Brahmin at the time of the twelve year drought.

Although this place of pilgrimage is treated in detail in the *Sārasvataparvan*, I could not find any remarkable allusion to Badarapācana in any later sources, but there is a *tīrtha* named Badrināth which often occurs. It is tempting to identify this place with Badarapācana, but the longest Epic description of *tīrthas* reported about both places of pilgrimage separately, and it seems well established that they were quite different places (*Mahābhārata* 3.81.156–157, 83.13–14).

It is also remarkable that Kṣemendra did not mention Badarapācana, although he closely followed the Epic tradition. So this *tīrtha* might have lost its importance very soon after the Epic period.

After that Balarāma visited Indratīrtha which was situated close to Badarapācana. This place is also mentioned in connection with Balarāma's previous station, because Indra was waiting for the *badaras* here. Incidentally Indra formerly performed hundred sacrifices here, so that is why the king of gods is also called Śatakratu.

The descriptions of the next two places of pilgrimage, namely Rāma- and Yamunātīrtha are based on a similar scheme. At the former place Bhārgava Rāma sacrificed after the elimination of the warriors. It is remarkable that he created five ponds from the blood of slayed *kṣatriyas*, thus this area was named as Samantapañcaka. Probably as a result of the activity of the Bhārgava redactors, this space became a synonym of Kurukṣetra (Sukthankar 1944, p. 282). At the other *tīrtha* Varuṇa sacrificed with *rājasūya*. Similarly to Paraśurāma, he also performed the rite after a military success.

After these three short descriptions the text becomes again less concise at Ādityatīrtha. The origin of this place is similar to the previous ones, so the *tīrtha* is named after the god of Sun (Bhāskara) who sacrificed here.

But the *Sārasvataparvan* adds a couple of further notable things about the place. Beside Āditya, some other deities and saints are also mentioned who performed religious activities here. First of all Viṣṇu had a purifying bath at this place, because he had slayed two demons called Madhu and Kaiṭabha using trickery. The names of Vyāsa and Śuka are also mentioned in connection with the *tīrtha*, but all these are less important than the final central myth of *tīrtha*, which is about two sages, namely Asita Devala and Jaigīṣavya.

In my opinion this tale is one of the best examples of the rivalry between Vedic cults and asceticism. Asita Devala, whose hermitage was situated at Ādityatīrtha, is depicted as the perfect *grhastha*, while Jaigīṣavya embodies the ideal ascetic (*saṃnyāsin*).

Both sages possessed extraordinary magical power, but having gone after Jaigīṣavya, Asita Devala realised that his witchcraft was not as strong as Jaigīṣavya's, because he was not able to enter Brahmaloaka, unlike Jaigīṣavya. The embittered *grhastha* finally asked Jaigīṣavya to teach him the *mokṣadharmā*.³⁴ The *Sārasvataparvan* illustrates Asita's dilemma very well. On the one hand, Asita Devala's forefathers argued for *gārhasthyadharmā*, because they needed an offspring who could nourish them. On the other hand, the various plants argued for the *mokṣadharmā*, because the rituals could only be performed using violence. In the end Asita Devala was convinced about *mokṣadharmā*, and he decided to practise *ahimsā* (non-violence) in the future.

The next station, namely Sārasvatatīrtha, might aim at compensating for this eulogy of asceticism. The story of this *tīrtha* is also connected to the above-mentioned twelve year drought which might have been an important event in the history of the river.

At that time all the Brahmins left the territory of the Sarasvatī and ran away to save their lives. There was a young Brahmin called Sārasvata who was born from the Sarasvatī. He was fathered by a Brahmin called Dadhīca whose seed fell into the stream because he had perceived a beautiful *apsaras*. When he saw the other refugee Brahmins, Sārasvata was also thinking about leaving. But then Sarasvatī appeared before his eyes and promised to take care of him if he did not leave the place. Sārasvata of course stayed there at the request of his mother. He performed the rituals and recited the *Vedas* during the terrible drought. When this tormenting period was over, the Brahmins returned to the area. They were very surprised, because they heard *Veda*-recitation there. As a consequence of their running away, they forgot the recitation, thus they asked Sārasvata to teach them the *Vedas*. Dadhīca's son of course granted this request, and the Brahmins were a little ashamed, because they, the old sages had to learn from a young man.

The memory of this event is surprisingly vivid. In connection with the *Taittirīya-saṃhitā* two types of recitation are distinguished, namely the *kāṇḍānukrama-pāṭha* and the *sārasvata-pāṭha*. The latter one is still alive, and its origin is explained with this Sārasvata-myth (Dandekar 1961, p. 496).

The story about Sārasvata might be a popular myth which we can find in several later versions. Dadhīca and his son are usually known as Bhārgava Brahmins, but we can see some attempts to link them to another *gotra*. The *Tīrthayātraparvan* also reports the place, but it names the *tīrtha* as Dadhīcatīrtha (*Mahābhārata* 3.81.163–164). In this sub-*parvan* Sārasvata occurs as Sārasvata Āngiras. In this appellation Sārasvata should rather be interpreted as an epithet, which means the person who is attached to the Sarasvatī. His second name, Āngiras, refers to the Āṅgirasas, another

³⁴ It seems that this expression refers to *saṃnyāśindharma* (Dandekar 1961, p. 496).

famous clan of Brahmins. Beside them, the clan of the Aitreyas also created their own Sārasvata-myth (Mani 1993, pp. 694–695).

We can see that Sārasvata had great importance among Brahmins, but the localisation of the *tīrtha* is quite uncertain. In the *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa wrote about his birthplace, Prītikūṭa, and he also remarked in connection with it that this town was famous as the place where Sārasvata had been brought up (Bakker 2014, p. 156). It seems that Prītikūṭa was situated somewhere in the neighbourhood of modern Akbarpur (Uttar Pradesh) (Bakker 2014, p. 88). This identification does not seem very convincing from the view of the *Sārasvataparvan*. In any case, it is remarkable that we can find another interpretation of the myth at Bāṇa's birthplace.

The story of the Vṛddhakanyātīrtha, the final *tīrtha* of the Kurukṣetra region, emphasises further the importance of Vedic piety. In connection with this place of pilgrimage we get acquainted with the myth of Kuṇi Gārgya's daughter. This woman practised dreadful penance throughout her mortal life, yet she was not able to attain *mokṣa*, because she did not fulfil her dharmic duty, i.e. she did not get married. Having realised this fault, the old maiden asked the *ṛṣis* to take her as wife.

Finally, only Gālava's son, Śṛṅgavat, was willing to fulfil her request on condition that he would spend only one night with the maid. Kuṇi Gārgya's daughter of course accepted this stipulation, and she turned into a wonderful young girl with the help of her ascetic power. Having seen her, Śṛṅgavat became very sad because of his unconsidered terms, and the former old maid obtained *mokṣa* after their wedding night.

The story does not question the values of asceticism, but it suggests that ascetics (especially women) also had to conform to numerous conventions of society.

Having enumerated all *tīrthas* of the region the *Sārasvataparvan* finally explains the origin of Kurukṣetra. The unequalled sacredness of the area is due to King Kuru who ploughed this field to make a ritual place, so that warriors who died here could attain heaven immediately.

Indra and other gods did not sympathise with Kuru's effort, because they were afraid that the number of sacrifices would decrease. Thus Indra continuously tried to perplex Kuru's work. Finally, Indra ascertained the nobility of the king and gave him a great boon. As a result, those *kṣatriyas* could obtain heaven who were killed in a battle here and beside them all those beings who performed ascetic activity here.³⁵

The End of Balarāma's Journey

After the Kurukṣetra we are acquainted with the last station of the Sarasvatī, namely the area around its source called Plakṣa Prasavaṇa. Before visiting the spring, Balarāma went to Viṣṇu's hermitage where beside him Śāṅḍilya practised penance. Afterward he moved to Plakṣa Prasavaṇa, then had a ritual bath in the neighbouring Yamunā, in accordance with the closing part of the *sārasvatasattra*.

³⁵ *mānavā ye nirāhārā dehaṃ tyakṣyanty atandritāḥ| yudhi vā nihataḥ samyag api tiryag-gatā nṛpa|| te svargabhājo rājendra bhavantv iti mahāmate|* (*Mahābhārata* 9.52.13–14b).

We can find references to the spring from the late Vedic period. There have been many attempts to localise the place, and according to the generally accepted idea it was probably situated somewhere in the Śivalik Hills (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 13). The word *plakṣa* may refer to a kind of tree (*ficus infectoria*) (Bharadwaj 1986, p. 13). Its presence would be quite unusual in this highland, so its uniqueness could correspond well to the ideas attached to the sacred stream.

Conclusion

Having studied the text of the *Sārasvataparvan*, a very complex picture unfolds. Probably it is not accidental that Balarāma's pilgrimage was attached to the most sacred place of Vedic religion as a propagation of a new religious tendency.

The vivid religious life of Kurukṣetra is connected with the great Epic battle in the first place, but it is certainly indebted to numerous other impulses, too. We cannot exclude that the area was a significant place for the pre-*ārya* Indian religion. The festivals organised on the occasions of solar eclipses could derive from a very archaic tradition.

We should not forget Gujarāt either as the second important area where the memory of the Sarasvatī is also living, although it is very doubtful if there was a real connection between Prabhāsa and the river.

As it is well known, the Sarasvatī dried up in the course of time. The deified river even lost its geographical delimitations, it became a universal symbol. These days numerous watercourses are identified with the legendary Sarasvatī everywhere in India.

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Appendix

<i>Tīrtha</i>	Pune edition	Vulgate (Nīlakaṇṭha)	Madras edition	Kumbakonam edition
Prabhāsa	34.36–77	35.41–86	30.42–86b	35.42–36.43
Camasodbheda	34.78–79	35.87–88	30.86c–88d	36.44–45
Udapāna	34.80–35.53b	35.89–36.54d	30.88e–31.54	36.46–37.53b
Vinaśana	35.53c–36.3b	36.54e–37.2	32.1–2	37.53c–38.2b
Subhūmika	36.3c–10b	37.3–9	32.3–9	38.2c–9b
Gandharvatīrtha	36.10c–13	37.10–13b	32.10–13	38.9c–13b
Gargasrotas	36.14–19b	37.13c–19b	32.14–19b	38.13c–19b
Śaṅkhatīrtha	36.19c–26b	37.19c–26	32.19c–26b	38.19c–26b
Dvaitavana	36.26c–28b	37.27–29	omitted	omitted
Munīrtha	omitted	omitted	32.26c–28	omitted
Naisargika	omitted	omitted	omitted	38.26c–28
Nāgadhanvan	36.28c–34b	37.30–36b	32.29–35b	38.29–35
Naimiṣakuṅja	36.34c–56	37.36c–60b	32.35c–59	38.36–59b
Saptasārasvata	36.57–38.3	37.60c–39.3	32.60–34.3d	38.59c–40.3b
Auśanasa	38.4–21b	39.4–24b	34.3e–22b	40.3c–24b
Pṛthūdaka	38.21c–42.38c	39.24c–43.46c	34.22c–38.41c	40.24c–44.46c
Sthāṇuīrtha	42.38d–46.12b	43.46d–47.13b	38.41d–42.13	44.46d–48.13b
Agnīrtha	46.12c–20c	47.13c–22c	42.14–22c	48.13c–24b
Brahmayoni	46.20d–22b	47.22d–24	42.22d–24b	omitted
Kauberatīrtha	46.22c–28b	47.25–32b	42.24c–31b	48.24c–32b
Badarapācana	46.28c–47.61b	47.32c–48.68b	42.31c–43.69b	48.32c–49.66b
Indratīrtha	47.61c–48.6d	48.68c–49.6	43.69c–44.6d	49.66c–50.6
Rāmatīrtha	48.6e–10c	49.7–11c	44.6e–11c	50.7–11c
Yamunātīrtha	48.10d–15	49.11d–16	44.11d–16	50.11d–15
Ādityatīrtha	48.16–49.65c	49.17–50.69c	44.17–45.64c	50.16–51.67c
Somatīrtha	49.65d–50.2b	50.69d–51.2b	44.64d–46.2b	51.67d–52.2b
Sārasvatatīrtha	50.2c–50.51b	51.2c–53a	46.2c–53b	52.2c–53b
Vṛddhakanyātīrtha	50.51c–51.25b	51.53b–52.28b	46.53c–47.27b	52.53c–53.28b
Kuruṣetra	51.25c–53.1b	52.28c–54.1b	47.27c–49.1b	53.28c–55.1b
Viṣṇu's āśrama	53.1c–9d	54.1c–9	49.1c–9	55.1c–10b
Plakṣaprasavana	53.9e–37	54.10–41	49.10–40	55.10c–40

<i>Tīrtha</i>	Tīrthayātrāparvan (Āraṇyakaparvan)	Bhāratamañjarī
Prabhāsa	80.77–80, 130.7	10.29–32c
Camasodbheda	80.118c–119b, 86.16–17b, 130.5	omitted
Udapāna	82.94	10.32d–34
Vinaśana	80.118a–d, 82.96, 130.3c–4	10.35
Subhūmika	omitted	
Gandharvatīrtha	omitted	10.36
Gargasrotas	omitted	10.37a
Śaṅkhatīrtha	omitted	10.37a
Dvaitavana	omitted	10.37b

Continued on next page

<i>Tīrtha</i>	Tīrthayātrāparvan (Āraṇyakaparvan)	Bhāratamañjarī
Nāgadhanvan	80.120ab (?)	10.37cd
Naiṃiṣakuñja	80.92–94b, 82.53–57	10.38
Saptasārasvata	81.97–115	10.39–42
Auśanasa	81.116–118	10.43–45b
Pr̥thūdaka	81.120–136	10.45c–48b
Sthāṇuṭīrtha	81.141–144, 81.162	10.48c–49b
Agniṭīrtha	81.119–120	10.49c–50b
Kauberatīrtha	omitted	10.50c
Badarapācana	81.156–159	omitted
Indratīrtha	omitted	10.50c
Yamunātīrtha	129.13	10.50d
Ādityatīrtha	81.160–161	10.51
Sārasvatatīrtha	81.163–164	10.52–56a
Vṛddhakanyātīrtha	81.165	10.56b–58b
Plakṣa Prasraṇa	82.5–6	10.58c–59

<i>Tīrthas of Kurukṣetra</i>		
Hypothetical succession of <i>tīrthas</i>	Redaction of the Sārasvataparvan	Current succession of <i>tīrthas</i>
Naiṃiṣakuñja	Naiṃiṣakuñja	Naiṃiṣakuñja
Saptasārasvata	Saptasārasvata	Saptasārasvata
Auśanasa	Auśanasa	Auśanasa
	<i>Brahmayoni</i>	
	<i>Pr̥thūdaka</i>	<i>Pr̥thūdaka</i>
	Aujasa/Sthāṇuṭīrtha	
	Somatīrtha	<i>Sthāṇuṭīrtha</i>
Agniṭīrtha- <i>Brahmayoni</i>	Agniṭīrtha	Agniṭīrtha (<i>Brahmayoni</i>)
<i>Pr̥thūdaka</i>		
<i>Aujasa/Sthāṇuṭīrtha</i>		
	Kauberatīrtha	Kauberatīrtha
Badarapācana	Badarapācana	Badarapācana
	Indratīrtha	Indratīrtha
	Rāmatīrtha	Rāmatīrtha
	Yamunātīrtha	Yamunātīrtha
Ādityatīrtha	Ādityatīrtha	Ādityatīrtha
<i>Somatīrtha</i>		(<i>Somatīrtha</i>)
Sārasvatatīrtha	Sārasvatatīrtha	Sārasvatatīrtha
Vṛddhakanyātīrtha	Vṛddhakanyātīrtha	Vṛddhakanyātīrtha

Saptasārasvata		
Sarasvatī	Name of sacrificers	Place of sacrifice
Suprabhā	Brahmā	Puškara
Kāñcanākṣī	wises	Naimiṣa
Viśālā	Gaya	Gayā
Mānasahradā (Manovṛtā)	Auddālaki	Uttara Kosala
Oghavatī (Oghamālā)	Vasiṣṭha	Kurukṣetra
Suveṇu (Suveṇi)	Kuru	Rṣabhadvīpa (Kurukṣetra)
Vīmalodakā	Dakṣa	Gaṅgādvāra