

## Vedic *kilbiṣa* ‘obligation’

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### Abstract

The word *kilbiṣa* is an important word in the lexicon of ancient India. It occurs only a few times in the Rig Veda and is of more frequent occurrence in the Middle Vedic literature. In this article, I argue that the word has been commonly misunderstood as having either a term with an ethico-moral sense (‘sin’) or a negative sense (‘offence’). However, a more coherent and convincing case can be made that the word *kilbiṣa* carries the positive meaning of ‘obligation, responsibility’. Passages from several Middle Vedic texts bear out this interpretation. Understanding this word in this way also sheds light on the process behind the early formation of the brāhmaṇa varṇa as a distinct class, which is illustrated in the excursus on verses from the Atharva Veda Paippalāda 8.15.

### 1. Introduction

The word *kilbiṣa*- is commonly translated as ‘fault, offence, sin, guilt’.<sup>1</sup> Mayrhofer glosses the word with ‘Vergehen, Sünde’<sup>2</sup>; Hoffman<sup>3</sup> translates as ‘Verschulden’. In an important article on this word, Lubotsky translates with ‘offense’.<sup>4</sup> Suryakanta glosses *kilbiṣa* with ‘offense, fault’.<sup>5</sup> The word occurs 5 times in the RV<sup>6</sup> mainly in the 10th maṇḍala, 7 times in the AVŚ<sup>7</sup> and 9 times in the AVP.<sup>8</sup>

However, there is an interesting passage in the AVŚ where the above glosses simply do not make good sense with these possible translations. This situation leaves us to question whether the above renderings are indeed correct, and instead prompt a reconsideration as to the meaning of this word.

AVŚ 12.3.48ab [not in AVP]

*ná kilbiṣam átra nádhāró ásti ná yán mitraiḥ samámamāna éti /*

When he goes forth [for the year] without swearing oaths with [his] Oath-partners (*mitraiḥ*), (then for him) there is neither *kilbiṣa*, nor *ādhāra*.

This verse is referring to an oath-taking situation. We are indebted to Hoffmann for his lucid exposition

<sup>1</sup> MW s.v. *kilbiṣa* (<https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>; (accessed 24 March 2020)

<sup>2</sup> EWA I.354.

<sup>3</sup> Hoffmann (1969: 200).

<sup>4</sup> Lubotsky (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Suryakanta (1953: 71).

<sup>6</sup> RV 5.34.4, 10.71.10, 10.97.16, 10.109.1, 10.109.7.

<sup>7</sup> *kilbiṣa* 5.19.5; 12.3.48; 6.118.1-2 (plu.); *devakilbiṣa* 6.96.2; *nikilbiṣa* 5.17.11; *brahmakilbiṣa* 5.17.1

<sup>8</sup> AVP 1.65.1; 8.15.1, 2.4.6, 8, 10, 11, 13.

on the verb *am-* ‘to swear (an oath)’.<sup>9</sup> He translates *sam + am* ‘gemeinsam schwören, zusammen schwören, eidlich binden’ and *samama-* ‘Vertragseid’.<sup>10</sup>

Here we have a situation in which an individual who is not entering into agreements or alliances with others, i.e. with his *mitra*-s ‘Oath-partners’ for the coming year.<sup>11</sup> Because he does not swear oaths with them, he has neither a *kilbiṣa* nor an *ādhāra*. Hoffmann translates *ādhāra* as ‘Unterstützung’. Thus, a person who does not enter into agreements sealed by oaths can expect neither assistance/support, nor *kilbiṣa* from the *mitrás* ‘Oath-Partners’. Translating *kilbiṣa* here with any of the suggested meanings ‘offense, guilt, sin, impurity’ does not yield a good sense. The context here implies that *kilbiṣa* would represent some sort of loss, i.e. the absence of the agreement not only leaves the individual without ‘support’ (*ādhāra*), but its absence also leaves him without a *kilbiṣa* from the *mitrás* ‘Oath-partners’. Thus, the situation characterized by *kilbiṣa* here seems to represent the opposite of ‘support’ (*ādhāra*) in an individual’s relationship to his *mitrás* ‘Oath-partners’.

I suggest we find such an antonym in the meaning ‘obligation, responsibility’. Thus, the verse can be translated:

When he goes forth [for the year] without swearing an oath with (his) oath-partners, (then for that person) he has neither an obligation (*kilbiṣa*) (to them) nor (will he receive any) support/assistance (*ādhāra*) (from them).

This makes sense within an oath-swearing situation where, in the absence of the oath, no obligation is incurred while, at the same time, neither can the person expect or demand any assistance/support.

## 2. AVP 8.15

There is another very important occurrence of *kilbiṣa* in AVP 8.15, a hymn that is dedicated to the rights of the brahmin. The word occurs 11 times in verses 1-8, 10-11, and 13. This hymn was the subject of a significant article by Lubotsky.<sup>12</sup> He translates the word *kilbiṣa* with ‘offense, abuse’. However, it can be shown that the translation ‘offense, abuse’ is problematic, and that the meaning ‘obligation, responsibility’ when translating these verses yields a much better sense.

*1. yo jāmādagnya kauśiko ya  
ātreya uta kāśyapo yaḥ/  
bharadvājā gotamā ye vasiṣṭhās  
tebhyaḥ pra bruma iha kilbiṣāṇi*

Who is from the Jāmādagnya (*gotra*), the Kauśika (*gotra*), the Atreya (*gotra*), and the Kaśyapa (*gotra*); those who are Bharadvāja-s, Gotama-s, and Vasiṣṭha-s. To them (all) we declare here (their) obligations/responsibilities.

<sup>9</sup> Hoffmann (1969).

<sup>10</sup> Hoffmann (1969: 202).

<sup>11</sup> Hoffmann translates “wenn man sich nicht mit Verträgen (bzw. Vertragspartnern) eidlich zu binden pflegt” (Hoffmann 1969: 200).

<sup>12</sup> Lubotsky (2007).

The translation of the phrase *tebhyaḥ pra bruma iha kilbiṣāṇī* with ‘to them we will declare their offenses/sins’ seems odd. The hymn itself never specifies what the ‘offenses’ are or why these ‘offenses’ would be ‘proclaimed’. I suggest that, instead, the poet will declare the ‘responsibilities/obligations’ of the newly formed priestly *gotras* within the Atharvan community.

2. *agastyayah kaṇvāḥ kutsāḥ prasravaṇā*  
*virūpā gargā mudgalā yaskāḥ śūnakāḥ*  
*saṃkṛtayo brāhmaṇā ye na drugdhās*  
*tebhyaḥ pra bruma iha kilbiṣāṇī*

The Agastis, the Kaṇvas, the Kutsas, the Prasravaṇas, the Virūpas, the Gargas, the Mudgalas, the Yaskas, and the Śūnakas, the Saṃkṛtis, these *brāhmaṇas*, who have not violated (their oaths/agreements), to them (all) we declare here (their) obligations/ responsibilities.

Lubotsky translates pada c with: ‘to Brahmins who are not deceitful’ and pada d “...to them we announce here the offenses”.<sup>13</sup>

The same question remains: why would they declare their offenses? This brings up another question as to who is doing the ‘declaring’: “We declare ...” I think that we see in these verses the incorporation of the established brahminical *gotras*<sup>14</sup> into the Atharvan community, and that members of the established *gotras* are the ones who are declaring to the members of the newly formed brahminical *gotras* their new obligations as brahmins. The reference in 2c to the fact that they have not violated their oaths would also seem to argue against a meaning ‘offense’. If they haven’t done anything wrong, including violating the conditions of an oath, then what would be their ‘offenses’?

There are altogether 17 *gotras* mentioned in verses 1-2. Thus, we have the complete list: 1. Jāmadagnyas, 2. the Kauśikas 3. the Atreyas (RV V), 4. the Kaśyapa-s 5. the Bharadvājas (RV VI), 6. the Gotamas, 7. the Vasiṣṭhas (RV VII), 8. the Agastyas, 9. the Kaṇvas (RV VIII), 10. the Kutsas, 11. the Prasravaṇas, 12. the Virūpas, 13. the Gargas, 14. the Mudgalas, 15. the Yaskas, 16. the Śūnakas, 17. the Saṃkṛtis. The brahminical *gotras* in verse 1 belong to the original foundational seven *ṛṣis*.

*Viśvāmitro jamadagnir bharadvājo 'tha gautamaḥ*  
*Atrir vasiṣṭhaḥ kaśyapa ity ete saptā ṛṣayah*<sup>15</sup>

Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Kaśyapa: these are the (original) seven *ṛṣis*.

The second group as named in verse two is further mentioned along with verb *druh-*, which, in this verse, should be understood within an oath-taking or agreement-making context and not having the later classical

<sup>13</sup> Lubotsky (2007: 24).

<sup>14</sup> It seems clear that we can consider the *gotra* as the equivalent of a lineage. This issue will be discussed further elsewhere.

<sup>15</sup> From Puruṣottama-panḍita cited by Brough (1946: 42)

meaning ‘to injure, harm’. It is to these priests who have not violated their oaths/agreements that their obligations/responsibilities (*kilbiṣa*) are declared.

The second group of *gotras* are *gotras* who are descended from the first group. There is some sort of concern over an oath/agreement violation with this group. The question is what would be the nature of that violation? I suspect that the violation must deal with marriage relations and caste purity and the concern is for those *gotras* who most likely tolerated marriages outside of the now expected caste endogamy. That is, we are seeing at this time the establishment of not only *gotra* exogamy, but caste endogamy.<sup>16</sup> The *druh*-‘violation’ that is probably referred to here is the toleration by this second group of Brahmins to marriages outside of the brahmin caste, an acceptance which is increasingly frowned upon as the principle of caste endogamy becomes increasingly codified.<sup>17</sup>

3. *syo nottiṣṭhād brāhmaṇe nādhamāne*  
*māndyena dṛpta uta dhairyena ¥*  
*viśve devā upadraṣṭāro 'sya*  
*tasmin viṣaṃ saṃ nayān kilbiṣyam ¥¥*

Who does not interrupt (*ut+sthā*) [a ritual celebration] when a brahmin [arrives] and imposing (*nādh*) himself [at the ritual celebration], due to slowness [in reaction] (*māndya*) or obstinacy (*dhairya*) in [his] pride (*dṛpta*), all the *devas* [who] are his [sc. the brahmin’s] witnesses shall return (*saṃ+nī*) the obligating (*kilbiṣyam*) poison on him [the ritual celebration sponsor].<sup>18</sup>

This verse stipulates that a brahmin is to be immediately acknowledged and greeted when he appears at a ritual celebration (*yajña*). *Ut+sthā* is usually translated as ‘to break off (esp. a sacrificial session, a *sattra*)’. I suggest a meaning ‘to interrupt’ or ‘to suspend’ where the ritual celebration is not brought to an abrupt ending, but only a temporary cessation which will allow for the visiting brahmin to now participate, after which the ritual will resume. I translate *nādh* as ‘to impose’, and it refers to the expectation of the brahmin to be properly received at the ritual. This verse indicates the increase in status that someone who can be identified as a brahmin now expects to be acknowledged vis-à-vis his person and his right to participate in any ritual celebration (*yajña*). If the patron does not recognize the brahmin in a timely fashion, the ‘obligating poison’, will not affect the guest, but revert to the host. The use of the term poison (*viṣ*) refers to the obligation which participation at the ritual celebration will entail of a guest. By eating the host’s food, he is, effectively, eating ‘poison’, that is, incurring an obligation and also becoming indebted to the host. Failure to recognize the rights of the brahmin to attend the ritual unannounced and uninvited will lead to the ‘poisonous’ obligation to fall back onto the sponsor (*yajamāna*) and not on the guest.

4 *yā ropayaḥ kilbiṣe brāhmaṇasya*  
*yāni caināṃsi bahudhā duṣkṛtāni ¥*

<sup>16</sup> Bodewitz (1990) notes the concern for the lineage of the mother in JB 1.148, see p.84 and fn. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Horsch (1965: 227ff.) “ascribed the spread of proper names of the type *Gautamīputra*- at the end of the Vedic period to the desire to make it clear that one is also of one’s mother’s side, of brahminical descent.” (Gonda 1971: 221)

<sup>18</sup> “Who will not rise, being confused by sloth and by presumption, when a Brahmin is in distress, the All-Gods, who witness this, will pour the poison of the offense into him.” Lubotsky (2007: 26).

*anu[t]iṣṭhān<sup>19</sup> prokta ātmani taṃ ni d<sup>h</sup>atte  
tat<sup>h</sup>ā tad devā uta veśayanti ॥*

When there is the obligation to [receive] a brahmin,

1. the abdominal pains which [occur], [and]

2. the various offenses (*enas*) which are due to faulty ritual actions (*duṣkṛta*),

he [sc. the sponsor], not suspending [*anuttiṣṭhān*] [the ritual celebration],

even though [the brahmin has been] announced, [places the obligation to receive him, i.e. the brahmin] on himself.

Then the devas cause [the poison] to enter him [the sponsor].<sup>20</sup>

Here we see *kilbiṣa* in conjunction with *enas*. *Enas* is usually translated as ‘offense’, Lubotsky translates it with ‘transgressions,’ thereby avoiding the duplicating of the word ‘offense’ for two different words. Lubotsky translates *ropi* with ‘pains,’ and Mayrhofer suggests ‘Leibschmerzen verursachen’ (‘causing a stomach-ache’). The association of stomach pains with the ‘poison’ (*viṣ*) from a guest eating the food of a host and thus incurring a debt to the host seems the likely explanation. I take *kilbiṣe brāhmaṇasya* to be a locative absolute: *kilbiṣe [sati] brāhmaṇasya* ‘when there is the obligation to a brahmin’. The gist of this verse is that when the brahmin who has arrived for a ritual celebration is not received, the ill effects that can occur due to the non-reception will fall back on the sponsor himself. The ill effects are physical, the abdominal pains, that are considered to be the result of the ‘poison’ (*viṣ*) which is from the food offered to guests from the host and thereby placing the guests in the debt of the host.

*5 nāśnīyān na piben na śayīta\*  
na \*nimsīta jāyāṃ nota putram ॥  
brahmakilbiṣe prokta  
ud eva tiṣṭhet sa ṛtasya pañtāḥ ॥*

One should not eat, not drink, not have sexual relations [with his wife], nor kiss [his] wife, nor his son. When an obligation to [receive] a brahmin has been announced, one should interrupt [the ritual to receive him]. This is the way of ‘proper conduct’ [i.e. the new rules]<sup>21</sup>

The first part of this verse is a reference to the *dīkṣā* ‘ritually purified state’ where the *yajamāna* ‘sponsor’ who is a *dīkṣita* ‘ritually purified individual’ must follow these conditions in order to maintain his ritual purity. But, being a *dīkṣita* ‘ritually pure person’ does not excuse him from his obligations to greet a brahmin, since both are in a state of purity. In this verse, *ṛta* does not mean ‘truth,’ but rather refers to ‘way of life,’ and by extension, ‘way of conduct’. What is being said here is that the ‘new’ rules stipulate the deference that must be given to a brahmin at all times. This also means that the brahmins in the AV have emerged as

<sup>19</sup> Emendation suggested by Lubotsky (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Vs. 4. Whatever pains there are in an offense against a Brahmin and whatever transgressions, [whatever] manifold misdeeds, he who will not stand up [when (an offense) is announced] puts it into himself, and so the gods make it enter [him]. Lubotsky (2007: 26).

<sup>21</sup> Vs 5. He should not eat, should not drink, should not be lying. He should not kiss the spouse, nor the son. When an offense against a brahmin is announced, up should he rise. This is the path of the *ṛta*. Lubotsky (2007: 27).

a clearly definable class who are ritually pure even outside of the ritual environment itself.

6. *śatarcino mādhyamā ye maharṣayaḥ*  
*kṣudrasūktānām uta yā prajeha* ¥  
*ṛṣiṇām yāni janimāni vidmas*  
*tebhyah pra brūma iha kilbiṣāṇi* ¥¥<sup>22</sup>

The Śatarcins, who are the great ancestors who composed the ‘middle hymns’, and the offspring here [at this ritual performance] whose hymns are short (meaning? *kṣudra*), which communities of prestigious ancestors that we know, To those [communities] we declare here [their] obligations.<sup>23</sup>

It is not clear to me what the ‘middle’ and the *kṣudrasūkta* refer to. However, like verses 1 and 2, these groups are being brought into the brahmin community and to them also, they are being informed of their obligations/responsibilities with their new status.

7. *sodaryāṇām pañcadaśānām śatānām*  
*trayastrimśad ud aśiṣyanta devāḥ* ¥  
*ekasmin vidd'e sarve 'rupyaṃ*  
*tad brāhmaṇe kilbiṣam anv avindan* ¥¥

From the fifteen hundred (gods) of the same womb, [Only] thirty-three gods remained (*aśiṣyanta*). When one brahmin was impeded (*viddha*), all experienced abdominal pains. Then they (the 33 devas) realized the obligation [to properly receive a brahmin].<sup>24</sup>

Again, this verse is stating that the failure to receive the uninvited brahmins at the various rituals will result in even the *devas* themselves suffering an adverse consequence from a ritual that refuses entrance to a brahmin.

8. *tasmai sa druhyād ya idam nāyad*  
*yo nottiṣṭhād yo na vadātā asmin* ¥  
*brāhmaṇasya kilbiṣe nāt'itasya*  
*sodaryatām icc'ato+ brāhmaṇeṣu* ¥¥

Let him [i.e. the brahmin] violate [his oath] to that person [his oath-partner]  
1. who will not come to this place [of the ritual],  
2. who will not suspend/interrupt [his ritual celebration],

<sup>22</sup> Lubotsky (2007: 28) discusses the set of interesting words in this verse, the *Śatarcins*, the term *mādhyamāḥ*, and *kṣudrasūta*. He notes that the particular stanza seems to be a later addition.

<sup>23</sup> The [descendants of the] *Śatarcins*, [the descendants of] the great ṛṣis who have composed the middle parts, and those here who are the progeny of those whose hymns are short—whichever races of the ṛṣis we know, to them we announce here the offenses. Lubotsky (2007: 27-28).

<sup>24</sup> From the fifteen hundred of the same kin, there were [only] thirty-three gods left. When one was wounded, all suffered racking pain. In that way they discovered the offense against a Brahmin. Lubotsky (2007: 28).

3. who will not speak to him,  
(even) when there is the obligation to [that person] who has imposed himself seeking solidarity with  
(the other) brahmins.<sup>25</sup>

This verse clearly links with the previous verse by its repetition of the word *sodarya*. I translate *sodarya* in this verse with ‘solidarity,’ while in verse 7 I translate it with the more literal ‘having the same womb’. What we see in these two verses is the establishing the equivalence of the brahmins with the *devas* ‘gods’. They are thus of the ‘same womb’. In this verse there are given the conditions under which a valid oath can be disregarded, even if the oath is with another brahmin. If the brahmin has done any of the conditions outlined in 1-3. These conditions all seem to be related to the ritual performance and the improper conduct of a fellow (*sodarya* ‘same-womb’) brahmin. The oath that is being referred to in this verse is probably related to the *tānūnaptra* which is the binding agreement between the brahmins and the ritual sponsor.

What is the meaning of the initial 1500 gods that become reduced to the 33 gods? I suggest that this perhaps refers to the change in the overall social system, where the 1500 refers back as a generic number of inclusivity to the entire community, as opposed to the emergent *gotra* system which now has a defined class called brahmins who represent and mediate the core 33 *devas*. The obligation (*kilbiṣa*) that was discovered in verse 7 is based on the belief that brahmins are to be regarded always as *devas* and thus they also have to be considered as recipients of the ritual celebratory gifts and offerings as if they were *devas* ‘gods’.

9. uttiṣṭ<sup>h</sup>ad brāhmaṇāḥ saṃ vadad<sup>h</sup>vam  
jītaṃ yācāma punar aitu sarvam ¥  
indrāgnī viśve devās  
te me jītaṃ punar ā vartayantu ¥¥

O Brahmins, interrupt [the ritual] [and] together agree [to this interruption]. ‘We demand (yāc) what has been deprived (jīta) [from us], let it all [i.e. that which has been taken from them] come back again [to us] . Let Indra, Agni, and the All-Gods, cause that which has been deprived from me return [to me].’<sup>26</sup>

Lubotsky follows Whitney in translating *jīta-* with ‘scathed’, a rather antiquated word, more commonly found in modern English only in ‘unscathed’. The meaning of ‘scath’ is, of course, ‘to damage, injure, harm, hurt’. Substituting those synonyms for the word ‘scath’ still fails to yield a meaningful sentence: “I ask for [returning] what has been scathed.” Rather, if we see in the word *jīta-* a derivation not from *jī* ‘to conquer, win’, but from *jyā* ‘to deprive’, it becomes clear that the composer is asking for, or demanding, that that which has been taken from the brahmins, be returned to them. They have been deprived (*jīta-*) of their goods.

<sup>25</sup> To him (to the oppressed Brahmin) he will be deceitful, who will not come here, who will not rise, will not come to an agreement about this, about the offense against an oppressed Brahmin who is seeking solidarity among the Brahmins. Lubotsky (2007: 29).

<sup>26</sup> Vs 9 O Brahmins, rise, come to an agreement: “I ask for [returning] what has been scathed. Let it come back whole again. Let Indra and Agni, the All-Gods bring back to me again what has been scathed. Lubotsky (2007: 30).

10. *sa dīrg<sup>h</sup>am āyus kṛṇute*  
*sa prajāyai cikitsati* ¥  
*yo brāhmaṇasya brāhmaṇo*  
*hūto anveti kilbiṣe* ¥¥

- a. He lengthens his own life,
- b. he takes cares of his offspring,
- c. he, who is a Brahmin's Brahmin,
- d. being invited] (*hūto*), he attends (*anveti*), when there is an obligation [to do so] (locative absolute).<sup>27</sup>

What is particularly interesting in this and the following verse is the occurrence of the two contiguous words *brāhmaṇasya brāhmaṇaḥ*. Lubotsky understands these as two grammatically unrelated words. In verses 10 and 11, he separates *brāhmaṇaḥ* from *brāhmaṇasya*. The grammar in this verse seems difficult in this translation, and Lubotsky's 'speaks' (*anveti*) is odd coming from *anu+i* where the usual meaning is simply 'to come after, to follow' and also 'attends, accompanies'.

The first matter to be considered is the occurrence of the word *brāhmaṇa*. We can suggest a translation of *brāhmaṇasya brāhmaṇaḥ* as 'Brahmin's Brahmin'. This particular phrasing can be seen in such expressions as *satyasya satya* which Oertel renders 'das Wahre des Wahren' = 'die Quintessenz des Wahren'.<sup>28</sup> What then would be a 'brahmin's brahmin'? English has such an idiom, e.g. 'an engineer's engineer' referring to an engineer who has the complete respect of his peers and other such constructions: a 'teacher's teacher', etc. It is an idiomatic expression that emphasizes an individual's superlative quality. A 'brahmin's brahmin' would be a brahmin who has the complete respect of his peers, a model for what a brahmin should be. At this time, the brahmins are emerging as a unified and definable class, but their identity and their characteristics are in the process of being further refined. This expression indicates that a mental model of the ideal brahmin is in the process of formation.

11. *prajāṃ śarvo hanti*  
*na rudro hanti nāśaniḥ* ¥  
*yo brāhmaṇasya brāhmaṇaḥ*  
*satye vadati kilbiṣe* ¥¥<sup>29</sup>

- Śarva does not kill the offspring,  
 nor does Rudra kill, nor [does] the thunderbolt [kill the progeny/offspring],  
 He, who is the Brahmin's Brahmin,  
 speaks the [ritual] truth when there is an obligation [to do so].

I suggest that *satya* means not simply 'truth' but '[ritual] truth,' and that it refers to the verbal performance during the course of the ritual when the participants are in the 'true' or 'real' realm, the realm that is

<sup>27</sup> He makes his own life long, he takes care for his progeny, who, being a Brahmin, speaks (?) at the offense against a Brahmin, when called upon [to do so]. Lubotsky (2007: 30).

<sup>28</sup> Oertel (1937).

<sup>29</sup> Vs 11. Neither does Śarva slay, nor does Rudra slay, nor [does] the thunderbolt [slay] the progeny of him, who, being a Brahmin, speaks the truth about the offense against a brahmin. Lubotsky (2007: 31).



characterized by ritual purity, the realm of the *devas* themselves. It is not the abstract or generic ‘truth’, or even that of stating a fact, ‘a truth’; it is the *satya*, the ‘truth’ that exists within the sacrificial ritual space and during the period of the sacrificial ritual performance. This is why Śarva, who is of Indo-Iranian origin and merged with Rudra, is mentioned in this verse. Śarva is death; he represents death and the impure, the antithesis of the *satya*. The brahmin’s obligation to speak occurs when it is ritually required of him, otherwise during the ritual celebration he is silent. In this verse the brahmin is indirectly compared with being a *deva* ‘god’ which is why death cannot enter the pure divine ritual space.

13. *ya utt<sup>h</sup>āya kilbiṣe*

*brāhmaṇasyānnasīc<sup>h</sup>ann avāyati* ¥

*ub<sup>h</sup>e enaṃ dyāvāpṛ<sup>th</sup>ivī saṃ tapatām*

*at<sup>h</sup>aitv agatasya pant<sup>h</sup>ām* ¥¥

[The person] who, interrupting [a ritual session even] when there is an obligation (to do so),  
[but] desiring the food of a *brāhmaṇa*, invalidates [the ritual].

Both Heaven and Earth torment him,

and let him go the path of what is not gone [=Death]<sup>30</sup>

In this verse, there are again the prerogatives of the brahmin that have become sacrosanct. The ritual gifts, the *dakṣiṇa*, which now solely belongs to the brahmin participants, and anyone other than a brahmin, even though at the ritual licitly, is no longer entitled to the gifts at the time of their distribution. I suggest also that what is being implied here is that the animals which normally would be sacrificed during the course of the ritual and shared in that context, are not killed and they are expected to be distributed alive to the brahmins in attendance.

This hymn declares the new obligations of the brahmins who have emerged as a distinct group. I suggest that this hymn is about the emerging formation of the brahmins within the Atharvan tradition. Verse 1 enumerates the first recognized group, well known *gotras* derived from lineages of *brāhmaṇas*, and verse 2, mentions the next generation of *brāhmaṇas*. The second verse contains the important word *druh* ‘to violate/break [an oath]’<sup>31</sup> emphasizing the expected requirement of marriage exclusively within the *gotra* system. Verse 5 refers to *dīkṣita* requirements which, again, are indicative of the ‘brahminizing’ of the Atharvan tradition. This hymn seeks to introduce those who were not under the brahminical sphere of influence and practice into the emerging Atharvanic brahminical fold.

Overall, this hymn is meant to convince (or simply to articulate) that the ritual sponsor, the *yajamāna*, has a new set of obligations that must be fulfilled during the ritual and its immediate aftermath. The sponsor’s obligation is to allow the full participation of the *brāhmaṇas* regardless of their lack of traditional prestige through feasting and wealth distribution, to acknowledge their accompanying right to the distribution of the *dakṣiṇā* ‘celebratory gifts’, and even their right to the sacrificial offerings of the animals themselves that they are allowed to take them away.

<sup>30</sup> Who would rise at the offense against a Brahmin and go away, looking for food, let both Heaven and Earth scorch him, and let him go [along] the path of what is not gone (=Death) Lubotsky (2009: 32).

<sup>31</sup> See also verse 8 and commentary.

### 3a. devakilbiṣa

Another very important occurrence of *kilbiṣa* in the Middle Vedic literature is found in the interesting compound *devakilbiṣa*. This compound is particularly noteworthy because it also occurs in conjunction with actual events that would characterize a *kilbiṣa*. The compound first appears in the 10<sup>th</sup> *maṇḍala* of the RV. In the following passage we notice that the oath and Varuṇa, the God of Oaths, are connected with *kilbiṣa*. The concept of 'obligation' fits well within the overall semantic environment of the oath.

RV 10.97.16

*muñcāntu mā śapat<sup>h</sup>yād át<sup>h</sup>o varuṇyād uta /  
át<sup>h</sup>o yamāsya paḍbīśāt sārvasmād devakilbiṣāt //*

May they (the plants) release me from the oath [not yet sworn], from *Varuṇa* [for a broken oath], from the foot-noose of *Yama* [that lasts for the duration of the oath], and from all my 'obligations to the *devas*'.<sup>32</sup>

What is the situation here? The speaker sums up the situation by stating that the plants will release him first from the oath (*śapathya*) that he has taken. He asks to be released from *Varuṇa* (the *varuṇya*) who punishes the one who has violated an oath which he has sworn. What would be the situation involving the foot-fetters of *Yama* referred to here? I suggest that *Yama*'s foot noose or fetter, the *pāḍvīśa* or *pāḍbīśa*.<sup>33</sup> refers to the condition of being bound **during the period of the oath**. Oaths are intimately related to time, often involving a set duration until their fulfillment. Oaths involve obligations which are incurred at the time of swearing. In *pada* d the speaker ends with a statement where he asks to be released from all his obligations (*kilbiṣa*) that he may have incurred or is responsible for. The speaker wishes to be 'released' (*nir+muc*) from the sworn obligations that result from oaths, and then from 'all obligations', including, presumably, those not sworn, including agreements and promises.

In the BŚS 4.7 there is the following passage that repeats the ideas found in the Vedic verse with the addition of the world *manuṣyakilbiṣa*.

*nir mā muñcāmi śapat<sup>h</sup>ān nir mā varuṇād uta /  
nir mā yamasya paḍbīśāt sarvasmād devakilbiṣād at<sup>h</sup>o manuṣyakilbiṣāt*

May I be released from my oath (*śapatha*), from *Varuṇa* [the god of oaths and punisher of those who violate their oaths], from the foot-noose of *Yama*, from [my] every **obligation to the *Devas*** and every **Obligation to men**.

The BhŚS 7.16.13 further develops the oath-taking event within what seems to be the actual ritual event

<sup>32</sup> *kilbiṣa* is in the singular and another translation can be: 'from (my) entire/complete obligation to the gods'.

<sup>33</sup> See Edgerton (1931) and citations in Bloomfield's Concordance (Bloomfield 1906: 533), under *nir mā yamasya paḍvīśāt*

itself.<sup>34</sup>

*idam āpaḥ pravahatādyaṃ ca malaṃ ca yat /*

O Waters, carry off the sacrificial oblation and bloody-stain [from the altar stone]

*yac cāb<sup>h</sup>idudrohānṛtaṃ yac ca śepe ab<sup>h</sup>īruṇam //*

which [has been offered] when I have violated (an oath) or when I have carelessly (*ab<sup>h</sup>īruṇam*)<sup>35</sup>  
sworn a false oath.<sup>36</sup>

*nir mā muñcāmi śapat<sup>h</sup>ān nir mā varuṇād uta /*

I release myself from the oath (taken), and from the (broken oath) to Varuṇa,

*nir mā yamasya paḍvīśāt sarvasmād devakilbiṣād at<sup>h</sup>o manuṣyakilbiṣāt //*

from the foot noose of Yama, from every obligation (of mine) to the gods and from (every) obligation  
(of mine) to men.

*āpo mā tasmād enaso viśvān muñcantv aṃhasaḥ // iti*

May the Waters release me from that **offense** and from every anxiety [arising from this situation].

The word *enas* is the word for ‘offense’ as mentioned above. It is used here in conjunction with *aṃhas* ‘anxiety’. We noted above how Lubotsky in AVP 8.15.4 rendered *enas* with ‘transgression’ thereby avoiding using the word ‘offense’ for two different words in the same verse. The more likely solution is to understand *kilbiṣa* as ‘obligation’ and *enas* as ‘offense’. Yet, what is the offense that is being referred to here? The first part of the verse refers to a sworn oath, then a broken oath, then to a sworn oath that was deliberately false (i.e. perjury), and finally to be released from the obligations for the duration of the oath period. It is these broken oaths that constitute the ‘offense’ and the subsequent **anxiety** (*aṃhas*) that one has in fear of divine retribution.

In these verses, the individual seeks to be released from all his ‘obligations’, not from his ‘offenses’. There is, of course, the very close cause and effect relationship that exists between an obligation and an offense; if one fails to perform the obligation, an offense or wrong can be said to have occurred.

I also suggest in this verse that *avadya* and *mala-* refer to the sacrificial animal. I draw attention to the use of the word *avadya* in RV hymn describing the birth of Indra. It is usually translated with ‘censure’ or ‘censurable’ from *a+vadya* ‘not to be spoken’. In their translation of this hymn Jamison & Brereton (2014) use the word ‘disgrace’ and translate with ‘thinking him somehow a disgrace’.<sup>37</sup> I think there is a better interpretation and that is to derive *avadya* from *ava+dā* ‘to cut up’ and then place this word within the

<sup>34</sup> Kashikar (1964) translates *BhŚS* 7.16.13 ‘O Waters, do you wash off what is impure and dirty, what I have disliked as untruth, and what I have sworn in as harmless. I relieve myself of the curse of (the wrath of) *Varuna*, of *Yama*’s fetters, of all sins against the gods, of the sin against the men.

<sup>35</sup> B-R ‘*nicht schrecklich, arglos*’ citing VS 6.17.

<sup>36</sup> This verse is found also at AVŚ 7.89.3 = BŚS 4.7 (*paśubandha* section).

<sup>37</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 586).

sacrificial/religious context.

*RV 4.18.5 avadyām iva manyamānā gūhākar indram mātā vīryeṇā nyṣṭam /  
āt'hód ast'hāt svayām átkam vásāna ā ródasī aprṇāj jāyamānaḥ //*

Considering him (*Indra*) as one fit for sacrifice (lit. 'fit to be cut up' < *ava* + *dā*), his mother hid Indra (although he was) filled with heroic might. Then he stood up<sup>38</sup> himself, wearing a garment.<sup>39</sup> When born he filled the two worlds.

The term *avadya-* is usually translated as 'censure' and derived from *a* + *vadya* < *vad* 'to speak'. However, I suggest that the term is a sacrificial term from *ava* + *dā* 'to cut up (for sacrifice)'. In other words, the son, Indra, is then considered to be fit for sacrifice and hence the mother seeks to hide him. There is, I think, no particular reason why he is a 'censure' or a 'disgrace' to the mother. We are dealing here with ideas surrounding not only cosmology, but also sacrifice. Thus, the situation seems to be that the Primordial Father, living alone in his primordial realm, is unaware of the pregnancy of the Primordial Cow; we are not told where she comes from, only that she simply appears. The Cow/Mother knows that if the Primordial Father finds out about the son, he will kill him, 'considering him fit for sacrifice'. Thus, she seeks to hide the son.

What is the subject in the BhŚS verse? We have an oath swearing in connection with several situations: 1. the violation of the oath after the oath was sworn, 2. the deliberate swearing of the false oath, and 3. release from all obligations to gods (including Yama) and men. What then does *avadya-* and *mala-* have to do with this situation? When there is the swearing of an oath, an animal is sacrificed to seal the oath. We see this very clearly in the archaic Kafir customs. Whenever there is an oath situation, an animal is immediately seized and sacrificed.<sup>40</sup> Note the Kāmviri word for 'peace' *lot* < *\*lapta* 'to be seized [for sacrifice]' (verb *\*labh*) and the ubiquitous Middle Vedic verb *ā* + *labh* 'to seize for sacrifice'. Here the waters then are used to wipe away the guilt associated with the violation of the oath in either of these two circumstances in which the person is, by his own admission, guilty. The waters are to wash away the sacrificial portion itself (*avadya*) and the stain (*mala-*) that is, the bloody stain left over after the animal is sacrificed. In other words, the waters are to wash away and make pure the guilt and consequences that will occur from the false oath swearing. The waters will wash clean the guilt of the perjurer or oath violator by the purifying action of the water. The *avadya-* is the fatty remains left on the altar and the *mala-* the bloody stain also left on the altar after the animal has been cut up.<sup>41</sup>

Again, one wonders why the waters are asked to wash away the 'censure' of the individual. We must again see a real situation involving sacrifice, oaths, and the sacrificial offering and by so doing, this verse makes perfect sense.

<sup>38</sup> *āthód ast'hāt svayām*. Compare here now the sequence of events. Indra 'stands up' at this moment and we note the use of the reflexive *svayām* 'himself' undoubtedly to indicate he is on his own power now.

<sup>39</sup> 'Wearing a garment', that is, he is a man and was born a fully grown man.

<sup>40</sup> See numerous examples in Robertson (1896: 377,409, 443-444, 446, 567-568, passim).

<sup>41</sup> See picture of the sacrificial stone of the Chitral Kalasha with marks of blood from goats in Castenfeldt (2003: 46), image 14/6.

### 3b. The supernatural danger of the oath among the Kalasha<sup>42</sup> of Chitral

We have drawn attention to the presence of the oath in the above verses in conjunction with *kilbiṣa* and its relationship with the gods Varuṇa and Yama. Oaths by their very nature involve obligations of various sorts and are divinely sanctioned. In the following extremely interesting discussion of the beliefs surrounding the oath among the Chitral Kalasha, Parkes, in his remarkable dissertation, presents a picture that to Indologists would seem to illustrate in real time conditions and situations that we only encounter through abbreviated, and usually enigmatic, Vedic verses and laconic ritual textual passages. He describes a conflict over land between one Bulbul Shah and his adversary Nadir Khan. The entire interchange between the two can be found in Parkes’ dissertation. I quote only that section that touches directly on the nature of the oath, its reception in the community, and the assumed consequences of the oath. Text in boldface is mine.

**Bulbul Shah eventually challenged Nadir Khan to take a ritual oath<sup>43</sup>, and Nadir Khan agreed: he told Bulbul Shah to fetch a kid for the sacrifice. The senior elders present immediately intervened: "You cannot take an oath", they exclaimed, 'for then neither of you would be able to use this land' (it would be 'sworn-land', *ṣat-jetr*<sup>44</sup>, ritually dangerous in the case of agnatic perjury). 'We all know that this land was mortgaged: and furthermore you will receive Rs.500 for the Rs.200 you initially paid'.**

But Bulbul Shah would not be moved. **The elders departed, to avoid supernatural harm from the oath**, and the disputants were left alone with a policeman and a youth (my ritually skeptical assistant Saifullah Jan) to witness the oath. At the point of sacrifice they were persuaded to desist and to re-submit their case to arbitration by the elders.

The elders could find no alternative to either taking an oath (**which would be mystically dangerous for the lineage**) or else pursuing the case in Chitral again (which would cost the disputants much money as well as causing shame for the valley).

So the matter rested until the beginning of May 1976. **Nadir Khan then accepted Bulbul Shah’s challenge to swear an oath on the site.** He arranged for a government clerk from Aiun to come as witness (**since no pagan Kalasha will attend an oath-taking**). After two fruitless days of further persuasion by the elders that Bulbul Shah drop his case, **they proceeded at midnight<sup>45</sup> to the field for the oath-taking (*ṣat ḥalek*).** Bulbul Shah, as plaintiff, brought the kid for sacrifice and dug the ritual hole in the field for swearing... **He then made a ritual oath to the effect that the land**

<sup>42</sup> The Kalasha speak an Indo-Aryan language and there are numerous reasons to consider their heritage as pre-Vedic and that they represent a very early migratory vector that did not accompany the larger other Indo-Iranian/Indo-Aryan groups into the subcontinent.

<sup>43</sup> Oaths between agnates are considered to be particularly dangerous Parkes (1983: 355).

<sup>44</sup> *ṣat-jetr*: *ṣat* < \**ṣapta* Kalasha-mon retains the earlier meaning of *ṣap*- ‘to swear’ over its later meaning ‘to curse’. Although the two meanings are related. *Ṣat maraṭ karik* ‘to make a sacrifice to end a curse of a broken promise.’ The person who make the promises must provide the sacrifice for this. TC 281 The word *jetr* ‘land’ is not recorded by TC. Perhaps it is from *ji* ‘to conquer’ and refers originally to ‘conquered land’.

<sup>45</sup> Note that Varuṇa, the Vedic god of oaths, is associated with the night: TB 1.7.10.1 *maitraṃ vai ahaḥ vāruṇī rātriḥ* ‘the day belongs to Mitra, the night to Varuṇa’. TS 6.4.8 *ná vā idāṃ divā ná náktam āsīd āvyāvṛttam* *† té devā mitrāvāruṇāv abruvan* *† idāṃ no ví vāsayatam iti ... mitró 'har ājanayad vāruṇo rátrim* ‘This was not day or night, but undiscriminated; the gods said to Mitra and Varuna, ‘Make this to shine forth for us’; ... Mitra produced the day, Varuṇa the night...’ Keith (1914, 2:289).

**was his. Nadir Khan thus won his case. But he would never be able to cultivate his sworn-land again, according to custom.** <sup>46</sup>

#### 4. *devakilbiṣāṇi*

We need to also consider whether the meaning ‘obligation’ can be seen in passages that deal with the *devakilbiṣāṇi*. The first question is to determine whether there is any difference between *devakilbiṣāṇi* (plu.) and *devakilbiṣa* (sg.). Most render the compound with the plural as ‘offenses against the gods’. Caland has ‘Vergehens gegen die Götter’<sup>47</sup> and Oertel on the same passage ‘sins against the gods’.<sup>48</sup> It is assumed that *deva* in the compound is also plural, but there is nothing to particularly indicate that it is a plural or a reference to the ‘gods’. I suggest that *deva* is singular and the compound should be interpreted as ‘the obligations of a god’ or ‘the obligations as a god’.

In the well known examples of the *devakilbiṣāṇi* given below, there is the condemnation of Indra **by the ‘creatures’** (*bhūtāni*) and not by the gods against whom, supposedly, these offenses occurred. Rather, Indra violated his **obligations as a deva** by his various treacherous oath-breaking actions. It is not clear in any of these example why these actions would be considered ‘offenses against the gods’?

On the other hand, the compound in the singular that was discussed above, *devakilbiṣa* refers to the ‘obligation to a god/to the gods’ similar to the *manuṣyakilbiṣa* ‘obligation to men’.

JB 2.134

*at<sup>h</sup>aiṣo 'gniṣṭut.*

*indram vai b<sup>h</sup>ūtāni paryacakṣata triśīrṣāṇaṁ tvāṣṭram avad<sup>h</sup>īd yatīn sālāvṛkeb<sup>h</sup>yaḥ prādād arurmuk<sup>h</sup>ān avad<sup>h</sup>īd bṛhaspateḥ pratyavad<sup>h</sup>īt saṁd<sup>h</sup>āṁ saṁhitāṁ atītya namucer āsurasya śīraḥ prācc<sup>h</sup>aitisīd ity eteb<sup>h</sup>yo devakilbiṣeb<sup>h</sup>yas.*

Now (is described) the *agniṣṭut*.

The creatures condemned (*pari + cakṣ*) Indra from his obligations as a god [which he violated.]<sup>49</sup>  
[They said:]

1 ‘He has slain the three headed son of Tvaṣṭṛ.’<sup>50</sup>

2 He gave the Yatis to the *Sālāvṛka* wolves.<sup>51</sup>

3 He has slain the Arurmukhas.

4 He has interrupted [the ritual of] Bṛhaspati (*prati + vadh*).

5 After breaking (*ati + i*) the agreement agreed upon (with Namuci), he cut off (*pra + chid*) Namuci’s head.<sup>52</sup>

Here we find that creatures (*bhūta*) condemned (*pari+cakṣ*) Indra, not the gods. Then five actions of Indra are mentioned: killing (2x), turning the Yatis over to the ‘wolves’, interrupting the ritual celebration

<sup>46</sup> Parkes (1983: 329-331).

<sup>47</sup> Caland (1919: 69).

<sup>48</sup> Oertel (1898: 122).

<sup>49</sup> Rau (1973: 212).

<sup>50</sup> Rau (1973: 203-206).

<sup>51</sup> Bodewitz (1984); Rau (1973).

<sup>52</sup> Rau (1973: 206).

of Bṛhaspati, and breaking an agreement, followed then by cutting off the head of Namuci.<sup>53</sup>

The text continues

*sa hā 'raṇya eva cacārā 'nabhyavayan [read: anubhāvayan] devān. sa u ha devān uvāca jāyjayata me 'ti. ne 'ti ho 'cur etā vai tvayā saṃd'ā atītā etāni devakilbiṣāṇi kṛtāni na tvā yājayaṣyāma iti.*

He [sc. Indra] wandered in the forest, (and then) perceiving the gods. He [Indra] said to them: ‘Have a ritual celebration performed for me.’ They replied. ‘No. You have broken these sworn agreements (*etā vai tvayā saṃd'ā atītā*) and these were agreements which [constitute your] obligations as a god (*deva*) (*etāni devakilbiṣāṇi kṛtāni*). We [the *devas*] will not have a ritual celebration performed for you.’<sup>54</sup>

*Devakilbiṣāṇi* modifies *kṛtāni* and not vice versa. The *kṛta* ‘deed, act’ refers to those deeds which are enumerated, wherein Indra violated his **obligations as a *deva*** ‘god’ by doing what he did. The relationship between the gods and mortals, and other beings, is a fixed relationship, one of a quid pro quo—a mortal offers up worship with offerings and the god in turn reciprocates with their favors or bounties. Indra, by not following his responsibilities as a god, destroys this established relationship.

Just as one is seized by Varuṇa for breaking oaths, Indra is not exempt from punishment for violating his part of the man-god contractual relationship, because he is bound to follow or adhere to his ‘obligation of/as a god’. These obligations are acts which Indra must have sworn to perform with the creatures who are his *mitras*, oath partners.

After this rebuke from the creatures, Indra goes into the forest which is often associated with exile. Why is Indra exiled? Because of his failure to honor his sworn obligations. There, he meets the *devas* and asks them to have a ritual celebration performed for him. The *devas* refused to have a ritual performed for Indra because he broke the agreements, bound by oaths, with these individuals or groups and by doing so disturbed the relationship that exists between the gods and men. When Indra reneged or broke his agreements to the various individuals and groups, he would have reneged on his obligations, thereby also depriving also the *devas* of their due, hence their refusal to have another ritual performed. Indra was able to have Agni ‘[God] Fire’ perform the *agniṣṭut* for him which is a simple soma ritual that is performed for removing pollution (*pāpma*). This will be the result of the purifying action of the fire.

The following text is difficult. *sa hā 'raṇya eva cacārā 'nabhyavayan devān* is translated by Oertel with ‘not descending’ (?) and he cites a suggestion from Bloomfield that the reading should be *anubhāvayan* ‘noticing, perceiving’.<sup>55</sup> The current reading is also the one given in Titus. *abhi+ava+i* means ‘to go down, descend (into water) and also ‘to perceive’.<sup>56</sup> I follow here Bloomfield’s suggestion which makes good sense of the sentence. “He [sc. Indra] wandered in the forest, (and then) **perceiving** the gods...”

It is clear that the condemnation of Indra is due to his failure to follow through with his reciprocal obligations with men and other creatures when he violates his obligations with those with whom he has

<sup>53</sup> This would seem to also be a sacrificial act.

<sup>54</sup> “These agreements thou hast transgressed thou hast committed those sins against the gods.” Oertel (1898:122).

<sup>55</sup> Oertel (1898:122) and fn. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Monier Williams.



made a pact.

## 5. Examples from the Ṛg Veda.

The word *kilbiṣa* occurs 5 times in the RV: 5.34.4 (*kilbiṣād*), 10.71.10 (*kilbiṣaspṛt*), 10.97.16 (*devakilbiṣāt*), 10.109.1 (*brahmakilbiṣé*), 10.109.7 (*nikilbiṣám*). In these occurrences, the meaning ‘obligation’ arguably is a better fit than ‘offense’. Unfortunately, as is the usual case with Rgvedic verses, there is very little to assist in the interpretation of a word in its original context. Unfortunately, in the case of the word *kilbiṣa*, which has a meaning within a social context, the larger context in which it would have been used is missing. Yet a meaning ‘obligation’ seems a more likely meaning in these few examples.

### 1. RV 10.71.10

*sárve nandanti yaśásāgatena sabhāsāhena sákhyā sákāyayā /  
kilbiṣaspṛt pituśānir hy èṣām āraṁ hitó bhāvati vājināya //*

All the comrades rejoice (in the assembly) with their comrade who has come with his fame and powerful in the assembly. He is an **obligation-freer**, a food-winner, prepared is he, fit for winning booty.

Several other translations of this verse are the following.

All his companions rejoice with a companion who has come in glory, who is overpowering in the assembly, for, **rescuing them from their errors** and winning sustenance for them, he is fittingly spurred onward to the competition.<sup>57</sup>

“Alle Freunde freuen sich über den Freund, der angesehen ist und als Sieger in der Versammlung hergekommen ist; denn als ihr **Entferner von Schuld**, ihr Beschaffer von Speise steht er, wird er nur entsprechend dazu angetrieben, zum Wettkampf bereit.”<sup>58</sup>

Jamison & Brereton (2014), apparently unconvinced of the meaning ‘offense’ and here ‘offense-freer’ or ‘offense-remover’ in this verse, render the compound with ‘rescuing them from their errors’. While their translation makes perfect sense, it is rather odd that this unexpected rendering would in fact be its meaning: what would these errors be? Rather, the companion here is a munificent patron who has the resources necessary to release his companions from whatever obligations they may have to someone else and from the obligations which a ritual celebration generates. A comparison can be made with the feasting celebrations found among the Kalasha<sup>59</sup>, where many individuals are involved in the provision of sacrificial ritual goods. In this verse, the very wealthy sponsor is supplying all the required goods, thereby freeing others from having to supply from their provisions for the ritual celebration.

<sup>57</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1498).

<sup>58</sup> Scarlata (1999: 665). Scarlata renders *kilbiṣaspṛt*- ‘aus der Schuld befreiend’ and *kilbiṣa*- ‘Vergehen, Sünde’.

<sup>59</sup> The staggering amount of food required for various festal celebrations among the Kalasha are provided in Darling (1979) *passim* and Parkes (1983, *passim*). What is relevant is that a feast sponsor relies heavily on his agnates to supply the various required foods, that is the animals, breads, grain, dairy products, etc. and they in turn are obligated to help the sponsor.



## 2. RV 5.34.4

*yasyāvadhīt pitaraṃ yasya mātaraṃ yasya śakro bhrātaraṃ nāta īṣate |  
vetīd v asya prayatā yataṅkaro na **kilbiṣād** īṣate vasva ākaraḥ ||*

This verse has had a number of translators and I provide several differing translations for *kilbiṣa*, showing the general doubt about the meaning ‘offense’. However, Jamison & Brereton (2014) here render the word with ‘offense’ unlike their ‘error’ in the example above. It is a very difficult verse.

“The man whose father the able one has smashed, whose mother, whose brother—he [=Indra] does not shrink (even) from him. Rather, he actually pursues his offerings; the arranger, the distributor of goods does not shrink from his **offense**.”<sup>60</sup>

“The Valiant One does not flee even from him whose father or mother or brother he has slain; even of one thus offended he demands offerings; nay even **from guilt** does the Collector of Wealth not shrink.”<sup>61</sup>

“The mighty god does not run away from him whose father or mother or brother he has killed. He, who is the giver of wealth, and the controller of men (*yataṃkaraḥ*) does indeed enjoy (the offerings) brought to him by this (worshipper). He does not run away **from danger**.”<sup>62</sup>

I think Oertel’s translation comes closest to the intent of the verse.

“The Valiant One does not flee even from him whose father or mother or brother he has slain; even of one thus offended he demands offerings; **from responsibility** does the Collector of Wealth<sup>63</sup> not shrink.” Oertel’s translation, modified.

The other occurrences of the word *kilbiṣa* in the RV occur in the late 10th *maṇḍala* in the same hymn. The topic of RV 10.109 is the brahmin’s wife.<sup>64</sup> This is also the topic of the AVŚ hymn 5.17. AVŚ 5.17 consists of 18 verses, while RV 10.109 has 7 verses. All seven verses occur with some variation in the AVŚ hymn and in a slightly different order: RV= AVŚ 1=1, 2=2, 3=3, 4=6, 5=5, 6=10, 7=11. I give below first the translation of Jamison & Brereton (2014).

## 3. RV 10.109.1

*tè 'vadan prat'amā brahmakilbiṣé 'kūpāraḥ salilō mātariśvā /  
vīlūharās tāpa ugrō mayob'hūr āpo devīḥ prat'amajā ṛtēna / /*<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 700).

<sup>61</sup> Oertel (1898: 123).

<sup>62</sup> Velankar (2003: 78).

<sup>63</sup> Velankar compares RV 3.51.3 where Indra is the *ākare vasoḥ*. Velankar (2003:203).

<sup>64</sup> See Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1574) and Bhawe (1955).

<sup>65</sup> First they spoke about the obligation to the priest—the unlimited ocean, Mātariśvā, fervor of solid splendor, the mighty one (*ugra-*), the divine waters, born first by means of Life (*ṛta*), Venkatasubbiah (1974: 379).

“These were the first to speak at the **offense against the Brahmin**: boundless Ocean, Mātariśvan, powerful ascetic Fervor, staunch in rage but joy itself, the divine waters, first born by their truth.”<sup>66</sup>

4. RV 10.109.7

*punardāya brahmajāyāṃ kṛtvī devāir nikilbiṣām*  
*ūrjam pṛthivyā bhaktvāyorugāyām upāsate*

“Having given back the Brahmin’s wife, having made **expiation of offense** along with the gods, having shared in the nourishment of the earth, they reverently approach wide-ranging (space).”<sup>67</sup>

Jamison & Brereton (2014) offer the interpretation that the R̥g Vedic hymn is concerned with the role of the wife in the ritual, which they consider a late introduction to the Vedic ritual.<sup>68</sup> I think we can see in this concern for the brahmin’s wife the emerging crystallization of the *gotra* system for the brahmins which required the wife to also be of brahmin parentage. The emphasis is then on the required *gotra* exogamy and brahmin endogamy. As already mentioned above, we see the increasing concern for the brahmin status of the wife. Bodewitz noted the concern for the lineage of the mother in JB 1.148<sup>69</sup> and Horsch “ascribed the spread of proper names of the type *Gautamīputra*- at the end of the Vedic period to the desire to make it clear that one is also of one’s mother’s side, of brahminical descent.”<sup>70</sup>

Verse 1 does not mention the wife of the brahmin; instead, it makes a cosmological statement which includes the brahmin within the cosmological framework. The “obligation to the brahmin” is articulating the primacy of the brahmin over the other definable groups in the society. By placing him within a larger cosmological setting, the primacy of the brahmin is made clear over everyone else, including the powerful *rājas/rājanyas*. Thus I translate these two important verses thusly:

RV 10.109.

1. They spoke first about the obligation to the brahmin, the unlimited ocean, Mātariśvā, fervor of solid splendor, the mighty one (*ugra*-), the divine waters, born first by means of Life.

7. Returning the brahmin’s wife, making her free of (her) obligation<sup>71</sup> with the gods,  
Sharing the nourishment (*ūrj*) of the earth, they worship the wide-ranging one (=Viṣṇu).

“Making her free of her obligation” with the gods is most likely a reference to the belief that a woman is ‘given’ (for consummation) four times: to God Soma, to God Fire (Agni), and then to the fairy Gandharvas. Then she is given to a man.<sup>72</sup> This is her ‘obligation’ that has to be met before she is married in the human world.

<sup>66</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1575).

<sup>67</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1575).

<sup>68</sup> Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1574).

<sup>69</sup> Bodewitz (1990: 84) and fn 10.

<sup>70</sup> Horsch (1965: 227ff.)

<sup>71</sup> I take the prefix *ni* to have the meaning of negation or privation when it is prefixed to a noun. See MW s.v. *ni*.

<sup>72</sup> RV 10.85.40-41 and AV 14.2.

The final occurrence of *kilbiṣa* in the RV is 10.97.16 was discussed above in section IIIa.

## 6. *akilviṣa*

There is one more important occurrence of the word *kilbiṣa*. The term occurs in the ŚB in a variant form with the negative prefix *akilviṣa*. Eggeling translates the term with two different translations depending on the context: ‘without blemish’ and ‘faultless’.

### creature offspring : ‘without blemish’

ŚB 2.6.2.2

*ub<sup>h</sup>āyī rudrīyāt pramuñcati tā asyānamīvā **akilviṣāḥ** prajāḥ prājāyante tasmād vā eṣā etair yajate*

2. And thereby he delivers from Rudra’s power both the descendants that are born unto him and those that are unborn; and his offspring is brought forth without disease and **blemish**. This is why he performs these offerings. Eggeling.

ŚB 2.5.2.3

*ub<sup>h</sup>āyīr varuṇapāsāt pramuñcat tā asyānamīvā **akilviṣāḥ** prajāḥ prājāyata*

3. both the creatures that were born and those that were unborn he delivered from Varuṇa’s noose; and his creatures were born without disease and **blemish**. Eggeling.

ŚB 2.5.2.4

*ub<sup>h</sup>āyīr varuṇapāsāt pramuñcati tā asyānamīvā **akilviṣāḥ** prajāḥ prājāyate*

Both the children that have been born to him and those that are yet unborn he thereby delivers from Varuṇa’s noose, and his children are born without disease and **blemish**. Eggeling.

ŚB 2.5.3.1

*varuṇaprag<sup>h</sup>āsair vai prajāpatiḥ*

*prajā varuṇapāsāt pramuñcat tā syānamīvā **akilviṣāḥ** prajāḥ prājāyantāt<sup>h</sup>aitaiḥ*

Verily, by means of the Varuṇapraghāsāḥ Pragâpati delivered the creatures from Varuṇa’s noose; and those creatures of his were born without disease and **blemish**. Eggeling

### Plants : ‘faultless’

ŚB 1.9.2.20

*evaitādāhāviṣaṃ naḥ pitūṃ kṛṇvity ānnaṃ vai pitūr anamīvāṃ na idāṃ akilviṣaṃ ānnaṃ kurvīty*

‘Make our nourishment free from poison!’—nourishment means food: ‘make our food wholesome, **faultless**!’ Eggeling.

ŚB 2.4.3.12

*tā anamīvā **akilviṣāḥ** kurute tā asyānamīvā akilviṣā imāḥ prajā upajīvanti*

and these creatures subsist on those wholesome and **faultless** (plants) of his. Eggeling.

In the above examples, Eggeling uses the term ‘faultless’ in the context of plants and ‘without blemish’ in the context of creatures. But note that the text uses the same words to describe the state of both plants and animals, *anamīvām* and *akilviṣam*. *Anamīva* is translated as ‘without pain, without disease’. For living beings, being born ‘without disease’ makes perfect sense. For plants, being ‘without disease’ also makes sense, because plants, too, are obviously susceptible to diseases. As for the term, *akilviṣa*, a translation ‘without obligation’ is preferable. We need to see both plants and animals within the context of sacrificial offerings. Whatever substance can be offered in a sacrifice is that which incurs an ‘obligation’; for a plant to be ‘without an obligation’ means that the substance, like that of an immature living creature, is not yet ready to be used in a sacrificial setting which will result in the incurring of an ‘obligation’. It is in this context that both plants and animals, when born or newly sprouted, are ‘without obligation’ until they reach the point when they can be used within a ritual sacrificial setting.

## 7. Etymology

Unfortunately, the word presents an etymological challenge. Mayrhofer records suggestions for Dravidian and Munda.<sup>73</sup> These suggestions are not particularly convincing. Except for its one occurrence in the 5th *maṇḍala*, it occurs only in the late 10th *maṇḍala*. I think it may be a borrowing from an eastern Indo-Aryan dialect, but I don’t have any particular proof to substantiate this theory. The lack of a suitable etymology does not diminish the proposed meaning for the word based on its usage. It can also be seen the semantic development in Sanskrit from ‘obligation’ to ‘offense’, since every obligation carries with it a negative sense insofar as individuals who do not carry out their obligation commit an offense. As the social system in which the ‘obligation’ was closely linked with ‘oaths’ underwent profound change, its negative connotation emerges as its primary meaning in classical Sanskrit.

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<sup>73</sup> KEWA 213 (dravid.; nicht überzeugend) and EWA 354 (“Austroasiatische Deutungen sind vorgeschlagen worden”).

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## Abbreviations

*AVP* = *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā Paippalāda*; *AVŚ* = *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā Śaunaka*; *BŚS* = *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra*; *EWA* = *Etymologische Wörterbuch des Altindischen*; *JB* = *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*; *KEWA* = *Kurzgefasstes Etymologische Wörterbuch des Altindischen*; *KS* = *Kāṭha Saṃhitā*; *MS* = *Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā*; *MW* = *Monier Williams. A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*; *PW* = *Böhtlingk, O. Sanskrit Wörterbuch*; *RV* = *Rgveda*; *ŚBM* = *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Mādhyandina*; *ŚK* = *Śrautakośa*; *ŚŚS* = *Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra*; *TB* = *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*; *VI* = *Vedic Index*; *VS* = *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*

# ヴェーダ語 *kilbiṣa* ‘obligation’

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キーワード : *kilbiṣa* アタルヴァ・ヴェーダ・パイッパラーダ派 誓い バラモン  
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## 要旨

ヴェーダ語 *kilbiṣa* は古代インドの語彙において重要な語である。この語はリグ・ヴェーダでの出現数は少ないが、中期ヴェーダ文献にはより頻繁に出現する。本論では、この語が従来「罪悪」という道徳的語義や「罪過」という否定的語義で解釈されてきたのは誤りであり、「責任」という積極的な語義を採るほうがより整合性の高い理解が得られることを主張する。中期ヴェーダ語の用例はこの解釈を裏付ける。この語を「責任」と理解することで、バラモンが個別の階級として成立する過程もよりよく理解され、アタルヴァ・ヴェーダ・パイッパラーダ派伝本の 8.15 の詩節に関する補説においてそのことを説明した。

(デイヴィッド・ネルソン 元ペンシルバニア大学南アジア司書)