

# Ornithology and Poetry: Ideas and Fancies Connected with Birds in Classical India

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The ideas of ancient cultures about nature and animals tend to be a curious mixture of facts and observations on the one, and of legends and beliefs on the other hand. This is true in classical India, too. Indians were, of course, as good observers as any, although they never produced zoological works comparable to those of Aristotle and Pliny. But nevertheless, the Indian attempts to classify the animal world, as found in some Jaina texts, Āyurveda and Purāṇas,<sup>1</sup> can well be put on the level of the classification of Aristotle. The perusal of Suśruta's chapters on snake poisoning or Varāhamihira's chapters on bird auguries – not to speak of special works such as the *Vasantarājaśakuna* – show a great amount of detailed zoological knowledge, although we have often great difficulties in identifying the less common names.<sup>2</sup>

The problem is that so much knowledge is lost. The great mess of the Sanskrit names of various deer and antelopes – only few of which have been reliably identified – depends on the fact that the texts were mostly written by Brahmins, who were vegetarians and often town-dwellers and as such usually had themselves only very vague ideas of the animals involved.<sup>3</sup> The hunters certainly knew how to use the names correctly, but they wrote no books.<sup>4</sup> This also means that even when we succeed in

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. BhāgP 3, 29, 28ff. (according to the number of senses). For Āyurveda see e.g. Zimmerman 1982, 224ff. (according to life-style), for Jaina texts Kohl 1954. I leave out the *Mṛgapakṣiśāstra* as too little is known of this curious (and probably late) text.

<sup>2</sup> Suśruta *Kalpasthāna*, adhyāya 3–5 on snakes and snake-poisoning, Varāhamihira BS 86 & 88 on birds. There are also other special works on bird auguries not available to me. I plan to discuss Suśruta on snakes on some future occasion.

<sup>3</sup> A nice example is the account of a mixed herd in the *Raghuvamśa* 9, 55, a *mṛgāṇām yūtham* including *hariṇī* as female, *kṛṣṇājina* as male and *eṇasāva* as fawns – all belonging to different species.

<sup>4</sup> The *Śyainikaśāstra* seems to be the only exception.

defining the right meaning of a certain word we must be prepared to accept that in a number of text passages this word does refer to something else.<sup>5</sup>

On the less exact side we have a number of poetic conventions, often called *dohadas*, connected with various plants and animals. These are often pure fantasy, but they soon became part of the usual, conventional arsenal of poets and were repeated again and again so that probably many started to believe in them. In this paper, it is my intention to consider how some commonly known birds are usually represented in classical Indian literature. In a previous article (Karttunen 2000) I have discussed the display and pairing of birds in Sanskrit literature, including such themes as the dance of peacocks, the conjugal fidelity of ducks, and the sexual virility of sparrows and certain other birds. But there are also many other fascinating ideas – both true and fancy – connected with birds in classical Indian literature. I would like to discuss some of them to show my appreciation of my long-time friend Rahul Peter Das.<sup>6</sup>

To start with, the **hawk-cuckoo** (*cātaka*)<sup>7</sup> – which is quite different from the ordinary Indian cuckoo or koel and non-parasitic in habits – is supposed to accept no earthly water. Instead it drinks rain water directly from the air and therefore waits eagerly for the coming of the rainy season. During the dry summer the hawk-cuckoos have much suffered of thirst.<sup>8</sup> Shrieking, they fly eagerly to reach the approaching rain clouds, not afraid of the accompanying thunder. This is one of the staple characteristics of the beginning of the rainy season in poetry.

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<sup>5</sup> The case of *śalabha* “cricket, grasshopper” and *pataṅga* “moth”, discussed by me in Karttunen 2003, is a good example.

<sup>6</sup> The first version of this paper was read at the International Sanskrit Conference in Kyoto in 2009, but Peter was not attending. That first version also included geese, but this part is growing into a separate study which will be published elsewhere. Beside Karttunen 2000, I have also discussed birds in chapter V.4 of Karttunen 1997 and in Karttunen 2005 (cock-fight) and 2008 (falconry).

<sup>7</sup> The name seems to cover the common hawk cuckoo (*Cuculus varius*, number 117 in Ali 1977), perhaps also the plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulinus*, *ibid.*: 122), the banded bay cuckoo (baybanded cuckoo; *Cacomantis sonneratii*, *ibid.*) and the pied crested cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*, *ibid.*: 118). Also Dave 1985: 130 accepts *cātaka* as the generic name of different hawk-cuckoos.

<sup>8</sup> KSS 12, 6 (73), 98 (p. 197 Tawney 2).

The motif<sup>9</sup> is often met in poetry. Kālidāsa was fond of it: in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* (2, 10+) the silly *cātaka* wants a drink even when it is thundering in a rainless sky. In the *Śakuntalā* (3, 33), with its throat dried by thirst the bird begs for water – and immediately a cloud is born and gives rain to its beak; (7, 7) cloud cuckoos swarm in midair in the region of clouds. In the *Vikramorvaśī* (2, 3+), we meet the *vrata* of the *cātaka*, longing for heavenly nectar. Further, in the *Kumārasambhava* (6, 27), the cloud is solicited for a show by the *cātaka* birds oppressed by thirst. In the *Raghuvamśa* (5, 17), when the autumn cloud has poured out its reserve of water, even the *cātaka* bird stops respecting it; (17, 15) after his coronation, the young king “[...] praised by bards looked like a swelling cloud acclaimed by *cātaka* birds”; (17, 60) a king must collect a treasure to have people seeking for his protection: even the *cātaka* birds do not welcome the cloud unless it is laden with water. In the *Meghadūta* (9), the *cātaka*, seeing a raincloud, cries sweetly, longing for water; (110) without saying a word (i.e. without thundering) the cloud gives water to begging *cātakas*.

Many further examples can be added from other poets. In Bhavabhūti’s *Mālatīmādhava* (9, 25), when addressing a cloud, Mādhava wishes “... that the *cātakas* frequent him, delighting in his bounty”; (9, 42) “the east wind whirls the water-swollen clouds, delighting the *cātakas* and making the peacocks cry in yearning”. Bhartṛhari addresses the *cātakas* as follows (*Nīti* 50–51):

O magnanimous cloud, who does not know that you alone are the supporter of the *cātakas*? Why do you then wait for our plaintive appeal? Oh friend *cātaka*, listen with an attentive mind for a moment: there are many clouds in the sky, but they are not all of them such (as you need); some of them moisten the earth with showers, others roar for nothing; do not utter a piteous cry before everyone that you happen to see.

And (*Nīti* 97):

Although the cloud, the gratifier of the desires of all beings, showers daily, only two or three drops of water fall into the mouth of the *cātaka*.

Verse 98 is also a nice example:

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rau 1986: 195. Hensgen 1958: 141 quotes S. P. Pandit for an attempt to give a rational explanation for the origin of this belief.

If the owl cannot see by day, why blame is due to the sun? Showers of rain do not fall into the mouth of the *cātaka*, but why blame the cloud for that? It is the power of fate.

Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* has the following passages: (2, p. 29 Kane [52 Cowell & Thomas]) "The royal elephant was surrounded by the troops of *cātaka* birds uttering their loud notes in the sky as they were excited by the deep sound issuing from his throat (which resembled thunder)". According to 4, p. 60 (108) in *Śrāvaṇa* (July–August), "... the *cātaka*'s heart expands", but in 3, p. 38 (70) in the beginning of autumn the clouds are thinned and the *cātaka* bird is distressed. Further, in 4, p. 66 (119), "like thirsty *cātakas*, low-born persons cannot be held fast (held on the earth)". I could quote further examples, but perhaps this is enough.<sup>10</sup>

A different idea is found in Bhoja's *Śrīṅgāramañjarī* (Warder 1992: 169) in a description of the Vindhya forest "[...] with *cātakas* drinking the spray from waterfalls".

There is also a special poem on this bird, the anonymous *Cātakāṣṭaka*, one of the first among the smaller Sanskrit poems that became available to Western readers through Heinrich Ewald's edition in 1842. Several Subhāṣita collections have a special section devoted to the *cātaka*.<sup>11</sup> In art, rain-drinking *cātakas* are depicted on an Indian style painted ceiling in Kucha, Central Asia (Coomaraswamy 1927: 150).

A related motif is connected with the red-eyed **chukor partridge** (*cakora*).<sup>12</sup> This bird is said to be equally fastidious, feeding only on moon-

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<sup>10</sup> See further *Ghaṭakarpara* 9f.; Bāṇa: *Kādambarī* p. 251 (NSP); Daṇḍin: *DKC Pūrvap.* 2, p. 28; Subandhu Vd p. 281 & 287 (Hall); KSS 17, 6 (119), 192 (p. 559 T 2) & 18, 4 (123), 335 (p. 610 T 2).

<sup>11</sup> *Śārīṅgadharapaddhati* section 47 *cātaka*, stanzas 852–866; Vallabhadeva's Subhāṣitāvalī section 15 *mayūra* and *cātaka*, stanzas 674–688. In Hindī, the bird is known as *papīhā* (sometimes mistakenly translated as sparrow hawk), and the motif of drinking raindrops is often mentioned in poetry. See e.g. Ghanānand B. 18, 23, 69, 73, 85; Mīrā Bāi B. 11, 48, 51; Nāmdev 136 (C & L 222).

<sup>12</sup> The bird now called chukor or chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) is only found in the Himalayan area and is not even included in Ali 1977. Earlier it was classified as a subspecies of the Greek partridge (*Perdix rufa*, now *Alectoris graeca*). On it see Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp 1998: 347. Although Dave 1985: 282 accepts *cakora* as chukor, I suspect that the name was also used of some other related species, perhaps a francolin.

beams. The poetic imagination did not care about the fact that the bird is not nocturnal in habits. Examples abound. Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī* 1, 1: "May the connoisseurs of poetry let all styles melt on their tongue, as do *cakora* birds with the moon-beams". Subandhu Vd 215 (Hall): "Gently came the evening breeze [...] with its coming greeted by amorous cakoras sluggish from copious draughts of moonbeams". In Somadeva's KSS 5, 3 (26), 246 (p. 231 Tawney 1) the lost husband appearing at the moment of need was like moon is to the partridges. In the *Vetālapañcaviṃśati* in the KSS 12, 9 (76 = Vetāla 2), 11 (P. 243 T 2), three young men always had their eyes fixed on the moon of the beautiful girl's face, as if they had taken upon themselves a vow to imitate the partridge. The examples also show erotic ideas attached to the imagined habit.

Another, and more acceptable characteristic of *chukor* often mentioned in poetry are its red eyes, often compared to human eyes. Thus in Bhāsa's *Bālacarita* 4, 1, the cowherd maidens have the eyes of young *cakoras* drunk with joy. In Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* 5, p. 74 (133 C & Th), we find the fixed pupils of Harṣa's partridge eyes (*cakorekṣaṇa*), and in 8, p. 137 (251), the eyes of Tārā were as beautiful as those of the timid partridge (*cakoralocana*). In Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* p. 343 (NSP), we read: "The sun setting, the sky was tinged with red, glowing like the pupils of a *cakora*". Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* p. 189 (Hall) mentions the red eyes of female cakoras. In Saumilla's *Pādadaḍitaka* 111, the intoxicated girl had the eyes of a cakora. In Śaṅkara's *Śāradātilakabhāṇa* 129, the man is looking at women with eyes similar to those of intoxicated *cakora* birds; and later on (142) the fair Gurjara woman has eyes similar to those of a *cakora* bird.

*Cakora* with its red eyes was also one of the animals traditionally considered to indicate the presence of poison. Thus the KAŚ 1, 20, 8 knows that "in the proximity of poison [...] the eyes of the cakora-partridge become discoloured" (cf. Suśruta, *Kalpa* 1, 30–33; Karttunen 2001). In Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* 6, p. 94 (170): "My eye grows disordered, like the partridge's at poison (*viṣa iva cakorasya*)".

There are some further passages on *cakora* in my collection. In Bhāvabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* 9, 30, we meet a love-theme: in the mountain forest [...] lost in a rapture, the partridge (*cakora*) attends soft-eyed upon his beloved (and does not hear Mādhava's words). In Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* 3, p. 42 (80 C & Th), "in the happy country [...] partridges tear the *ārūka* plants to pieces with their beaks (*cakoracañcujarjaritārūkair*)"; and 8, p. 127 (234): "In the Vindhya forest [...] the beaks of the *cakora* birds were busy in feeding their mates". We see that Bāṇa also allows his *cakoras* more natural food than moon-beams.

Partridges were also kept in cage: in Bāṇa (HC 7, p. 117 K, 215 C & Th) among the royal presents, there were partridges in cages of coral (*pravāla-pañjaragatāṃś ca cakorān*). In Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* p. 232 (Hall), a serving maid of the palace is asked to give a sprig of pepper to the pair of cakoras.<sup>13</sup>

The **koel** or Indian cuckoo (*kokila*)<sup>14</sup> with its sweet voice was the symbol of spring and love, a messenger of the love-god.<sup>15</sup> It was rightly noted that only the male cuckoo is singing, but his voice was also the standard comparison for a lovely female voice.<sup>16</sup> Often the koel is described as being intoxicated by spring.<sup>17</sup> It has special love for mango buds and flowers.<sup>18</sup> It was rarely left out from the descriptions of spring (see e.g. in the *Ṛtusamhāra* section on spring). It also did not escape notice that the symbol of love had parasitic habits and did not take care of the offspring of love. This is shown by the number of its names indicating "nourished by others" (*parabhṛta*, also *anyapuṣṭa*, *anyabhṛta*, *anyavāpa*, *parapuṣṭa*) or just "nursed by crows" (*kākapuṣṭa*, *-puccha*, *dhvāṅkṣapuṣṭa*). In poetry, this was

<sup>13</sup> The moon-loving *cakor* is also common image in Classical Hindī rīti poems, see e.g. Ghanānand B. 7, 24, 25, 69, 92, 94 and 100.

<sup>14</sup> The koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea* Linn., Ali 1977: n. 115, Dave 1985: 127ff.) is common everywhere in South Asia. It should perhaps not be called the Indian cuckoo as this name is used for another species of parasitic cuckoos, the short-winged *Cuculus micropterus* (Ali 1977: n.117).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Kālidāsa in *Vikramorvaśī* 4, 12; 4, 25 (*tvāṃ kāmīno madanādūtam udāharanti*); 4, 56; KS 4, 16; 6, 2; *Raghuvaṃśa* 9, 34; *Ṛtusamhāra* 6, 20–22.24f.27f.; *Ratnāvalī* 1, 16+; *Kādambarī* p. 305. Kāma's messenger in *Vikramorvaśī* 4, 25 and KS 4, 16, Daṇḍin DKC *Pūrvap.* 5, p. 42 (*kalakaṅṭha*, also 44, *kokila* in p. 43 & 51), further 7, p. 177 (*kālāṇḍajakaṅṭha*), KSS 16, 1 (111), 6 (p. 479 T 2). When its voice is heard at the onset of winter, it is inauspicious (VM:BS 46, 69 and *Matsyapurāṇa* 237, 5).

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Mbh 3, 112, 7, HC 4, p. 57 (103), *Bhagavadajjūkīya* 18+, *Śāradātīlaka* 126, KSS 12, 2 (69), 7 (*pikī*, p. 137 T 2) & 12, 34 (101), 279 (p. 380) & 17, 6 (119), 155 (*pikī*, p. 557); VM:BS 48, 14 & 70, 7 & 105, 11. Male voice e.g. in AgniP 225, 29, the Buddha's voice in *Mahāvastu* 1, p. 152 & 2, 306 & 3, 343. Note female koel singing in the KS 1, 45 (but male in 4, 14 & 16).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. KĀŚ 2, 26, 5 (*mattakokila* among protected birds); *Mālavikāgnimitra* 3, 4; *Raghuvaṃśa* 9, 47; *Kādambarī* p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Kālidāsa in KS 3, 32 & 4, 14 & 6, 2, *Mālavikāgnimitra* 4, 2 and *Śakuntalā* 6, 2+; Bhavabhūti, *Mālatīmādhava* 3, 3+; Rājaśekhara, *Vidhaśālabhañjīkā* 2, 0 & 3, 0; *Kādambarī* p. 278; Subandhu Vd p. 131, 263 & 265 (Hall).

often presented as an example of female deviousness.<sup>19</sup> Ali (1977: 58) confirms that the koel really prefers the crow's nest and claims that as many as thirteen cuckoo chicks have been found in a single crow's nest.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* 1, 63, 5, Indra took a cuckoo's form to stand by Rambhā in her attempt to seduce Viśvāmitra, to captivate the sage's heart with his voice.<sup>21</sup> In the KAŚ 1, 20, 8, the cuckoo is listed among the poison-indicating birds (also Suśruta *Kalpa* 1, 31, cf. Karttunen 2000).

In Enthoven (1924, 219f.), we find a cult of koel. In the Bombay Presidency, "the cuckoo or kokil is believed to be an incarnation of the goddess Parvati. The bird is specially worshipped by high-caste Hindu women for the period of one month on the occasion of a special festival of the cuckoos, or Kokilavrata, which is held in the month of Ashadh (June–July) at intervals of twenty years." In the Tibetan Bon religion, the cuckoo, "the turquoise bird", is the holy bird, the king of the birds, who inspires the shaman – and therefore it is also honoured in Lamaism (Conze 1996, Bya-chos 50).

The much exaggerated ability of **parrots** (*śuka, cimi*) and **mainas** (the grackle, *sārikā*)<sup>22</sup> to imitate human voice was a popular poetic devise. They were presented as repeating even long discussions or reciting literary texts, including complete Vedic hymns and Buddhist *sūtras*. In the *Ratnāvalī* (act 2) a maina is eavesdropping the conversation between Sāgarikā and her girlfriend and then prattles it all to the ears of the king and the *vidūṣaka*. We are also told in general (ibid. 2, 6) that babies, parrots, and mainas are liable to give away girls' secrets. In another text, a parrot repeats the nightly talk of the young couple to the parents of the

<sup>19</sup> E.g. *Śakuntalā* 5, 22 and *Kuṇāla-jātaka* (*Jātaka* 536).

<sup>20</sup> For crows as koel's usual victims cf. Bāṇa: HC 6, p. 100 (182). But in the KSS 4, 1 (21), 80 (p. 169 T 1) the female crow leaves her mate and marries the koel (*muk-tvā balibhujaṃ kākī kokile ramate katham*), that is, above her own rank.

<sup>21</sup> *kokilo hṛdayagrāhī mādhava ruciradrume / ahaṃ kandarpasahitaḥ sthāsyāmi tava pārśvataḥ*.

<sup>22</sup> There is quite a number of different species of parrots found in India, e.g. the Alexandrine or large Indian parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*), Ali no. 113. See further Dave 1985: 141ff. The *sārikā* is the hill maina (myrna) or grackle (*Gracula religiosa*), Ali no. 175, not to be confused with the common village mainas (genus *Acridotheres*). Dave 1985: 81ff.

man. To silence it, the embarrassed wife sticks a small ruby from her ear-ornament into its beak under the pretext of a pomegranate seed.<sup>23</sup>

In a Buddhist monastery, the birds are reciting the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu.<sup>24</sup> In the Brahman settlement, parrots and mainas repeated the teachings of the Brahmans (HC 2, p. 21 K [36 C & Th]). They sing songs of the *Sāmaveda* in Harṣa's *Nāgānanda* 1, 11 and a Vedic hymn in the courtesan's house in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* 4, 27+. In the house of a learned Brahman, the well-versed parrots and mainas were chiding the Veda students in their cages (*Kādambarī* p. 5). Around the *āśrama*, the garrulous parrots repeat the prayer of oblation which they hear incessantly and thus have learned, while a maina recites the Subrahmaṇya (*Kādambarī* p. 81). In the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* literature, Śaṅkara is capable of identifying Maṇḍana Miśra's house as the one where the parrots are debating the theories of *svataḥ* and *parataḥ*.<sup>25</sup>

The maina was taken as female and therefore not suitable to religious learning. Instead, it was accused of constant prattling.<sup>26</sup> During the wedding night of Nala and Damayantī, a learned maina on an ivory perch recited the *Kāmasāstra* and watched their love-making (*Naiśadhīya* 18, 15). Nevertheless, in a Buddhist hermitage the mainas have learnt to recite Vinaya rules (HC 8, p. 128 above).

Not only girls were afraid of garrulous talking birds. According to KAŚ 1, 15, 3f., they must not be present at secret conferences, because they may betray what was said. Bāṇa in HC 6, p. 105 K (192 C & Th) gives examples: in Śrāvastī faded the glory of Śrutavarman, whose secret a parrot heard, while in Padmāvati, there was the fall of Nāgasena, the heir to the Nāga house, whose policy was published by a *sārikā* bird. But the bird was only imitating, without thought of what was right or wrong to say (*Kādambarī* p. 560), and two parrots living at different houses learned different ways of talking.<sup>27</sup> Some authors let intelligent parrots to

<sup>23</sup> Amaru 15 Devadhar = Deva 16, cf. Subandhu Vd p. 51. This is also quoted by Vidyākara 621 together with other similar verses (616, 622 and 631).

<sup>24</sup> Bāṇa, HC 8, p. 128 K (236 C & Th) *śukair api śākyaśāsanakuśalaiḥ kośaṃ samu-pādiśadbhiḥ*. Much later, in \*Soḍḍhala's *Udayasundarī*(*campū*) ch. 2 (Warder 1992, 208ff.) a parrot with a crest (*śikhā*, thus very unusual) recited Buddhist verses.

<sup>25</sup> E-mail by V. Sundaresan in the Indology List 1.2.2000.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. *Karpūramañjarī* 1, 18+. In the *Mṛcchakaṭika* 4, 27+, we meet both a parrot reciting a Vedic hymn and a maina chattering like a house-maid.

<sup>27</sup> *Pañcatantra* of Pūrṇabhadra: 1, 31, cf. *Jātaka* 503; similarly, in \*Āmradeva's commentary on Nemicandra's *Ākhyānakamaṇikośa* story no. 64 (Warder 2004:



act as go-between or messengers<sup>28</sup>, and in the *Mahāummaḡajātaka* (546), a parrot is sent as a spy to the enemy court. In a narrative, the talking birds were assisting robbers (*Pañcatantra* of Pūrṇabhadra 1, 32).

When the exaggeration of the birds' ability to repeat and imitate became a literary commonplace it was exaggerated further. The parrot Vaiśampāyana knows the meaning of all the *śāstras*, is expert in the practice of royal policy, skilled in tales, history, and Purāṇas, and acquainted with songs and with musical intervals. He recites and himself composes graceful and incomparable modern romances, love-stories, plays and poems, and the like; he is versed in witticism, and is an unrivalled disciple of the *vīṇā*, flute and drum. He is skilled in displaying the different movements of dancing, dexterous in painting, very bold in play, ready in resources to calm a maiden angered in a lovers' quarrel, and familiar with the characteristics of elephants, horses, men, and women. He is the gem of the whole earth (*Kādambarī* p. 25f., cf. KSS 10, 3 [59], 22ff. [p. 18–21]). Occasionally, the parrot's intelligence was explained making it a wise man or Gandharva under curse.<sup>29</sup>

Talking birds were much favoured by the royalty (*Pañcatantra* of Pūrṇabhadra 1, 33). They were kept in gold-painted bamboo cages and even in golden cages.<sup>30</sup> Teaching them talk was one of the urban arts (*kalā*).<sup>31</sup> In a devotional Hindi poem a prostitute was busy teaching her parrot to say "Rām", when Yama's messenger came. As both said the name of god, he could not take them with him. Instead, Viṣṇu took them to heaven (*Mīrā Bāi* in Bahadur p. 38, note 20).

The bright green colour of many parrots was standard domain in poetic colour comparisons, e.g. for silken garments, for a bodice and for the

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143), two parrots were twins, but were caught by different persons and trained to speak differently by their captors, an ascetic and a Bhilla.

<sup>28</sup> \*Yaśahpāla: *Moharājaparājaya* act 2 (Warder 2004: 228f.); *Mahāvastu* 1, p. 263 & 271.

<sup>29</sup> \*Rāmacandra, *Satyahariścandra* act 3 (Warder 2004: 178) & \**Mallikāmakaranda* act 4 (ibid.: 190); \*Someśvara, *Ullāgharāghava* 4, beginning (ibid.: 641): a Gandharva prince; \*Padmagupta, *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* 10, 46 (Warder 1992: 6): a Nāga prince; \*Soḡḡhala, *Udayasundarī(campū)* ch. 4 (ibid.: 211): a gambler. Cf. also *Kādambarī* p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Bamboo (*vetra*) in Bāṇa, HC 7, p. 117 (214f.), golden in *Kādambarī* p. 21, Subandhu Vd p. 234, \*Padmagupta: *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* 8, 74 (Warder 1992: 5f.).

<sup>31</sup> The *śukaśārikāpralāpanam* of *Kāmasūtra* 1, 3, cf. Saumilla, *Pādatāḡitaka* 35+ and Bāṇa, *Kādambarī* p. 357.

bars of the bird cage.<sup>32</sup> Often the comparison was specified as resembling the parrot's belly, wing or tail feathers. In the Veda, the parrot (*śuka*) also represents the yellow or reddish colour.<sup>33</sup> This could also apply to the parrot-coloured horses, although many have explained them to be green (Mbh 2, 47, 17, *Agnipurāṇa* 289, 8). Parrot's beaks were red as tiger's claws reddened with the blood of slain deer,<sup>34</sup> but the parrot's nose was also an ugly comparison (harlot's mother in \*Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* in Warder 1992: 158). A lotus leaf is as smooth as a parrot's belly (*Śakuntalā* 3, 18+).

Together with cuckoos and bees, wild parrots belong to garden in spring.<sup>35</sup> They eat fruits and seed. A good mango fruit is without worm-holes or parrot bites (Mbh 2, 16, 28). A mango, often hailing from a magic tree, dropped by a parrot was a repeated motif.<sup>36</sup> In the *Mṛcchakaṭika* 4, 27+, the parrot in cage was fed on curds and rice. In autumn, flocks of wandering parrots were seen in rice fields (Subandhu Vd: p. 286). In Buddhist legends, they collect and bring rice to Aśoka (*Dīpavaṃsa* 6, 11 & 160; 17, 86; also in *Mahāvāṃsa* 5, 29). The fruits and seeds dropped from the beaks of parrots are often mentioned (e.g. BhāgP 1, 1, 3). Parrot and maina were also included among the poison-detectors (KAŚ 2, 30, 4, *Suśruta Kalpa* 1f.). At his coronation, the young king ordered even the cage birds to be set free (*Raghuvaṃśa* 17, 20). Both were counted among forbidden food.<sup>37</sup>

An often mentioned poetic convention was also the supposed marriage of the two birds, the (male) parrot and the (female) maina.<sup>38</sup> In nar-

<sup>32</sup> Silken garments in *Karpūramañjarī* 2, 14 (compared to tail feathers), *Kādambarī* p. 175, *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra* 23, 59 (tail); bodice *Vikramorvaśī* 4, 17 (belly); bars of cage *Kādambarī* p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. RV 1, 50, 12 and AV 1, 22, 4 (jaundice); VS 24, 2 *śukababhru* "reddish like a parrot". In MS & TS, the bird is called yellow and having human voice (*puruṣavāc*).

<sup>34</sup> *Kādambarī* p. 51. In Vidyākara 149, the colour of the rising sun is compared to a parrot's beak. In the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* 6, 20, the comparison is to *kiṃśuka* trees (with the pun *kiṃśuka*).

<sup>35</sup> Daṇḍin: DKC *Pūrvap.* 5, p. 42 & 51.

<sup>36</sup> \*Somaprabha: *Sumaināhacariya* in Warder 2004: 251 & 255; *Jātaka* 281; \**Malayasumḍarī* after 937 (Warder 2004: 62).

<sup>37</sup> Parrot in GautDh 17, 34, both in VasDh 14, 48 and ManuDh 5, 12. Penance for killing a parrot in ViṣṇuDh 50, 38 and ManuDh 11, 135. The killing of both was also forbidden by Aśoka (PE 5).

<sup>38</sup> *Kādambarī* p. 373f.; Subandhu Vd p. 108f.; \*Kavivallabha: *Abhirāmacitrālekha* 1,

rative literature, this is often connected with the popular motif of the birds trying to control an adulterous wife.<sup>39</sup> Without doubt the two talking birds were often kept in the same cage, but of course nothing came out of it.<sup>40</sup> A supposed love relation between different species of animals has been a rather common motif in folklore and literature of many peoples. The Romans firmly believed that such relations also brought offspring, many of which were (afterwards) reported as auguring disasters such as the outbreak of war or the death of emperor. In India, according to Varāhamihira, animals mating with animals of another species (BS 86, 66 *parayoniṣu gacchanto maithunam*) is considered as a particularly dark omen (with the useful exception of horses and asses producing mules and hinnies – *anyatra vesarotpatter*).

**Pigeons** and doves (*kapota*, *parāvata*, *hārīta*)<sup>41</sup> were described in classical texts as wild, half-domesticated and fully domesticated. They were thus seen in the forest,<sup>42</sup> living in garden houses,<sup>43</sup> sleeping on the turrets and roofs of houses,<sup>44</sup> building their nests in the palace<sup>45</sup> and kept in cage.<sup>46</sup> In

11 (Warder 2004: 906f.); KSS 12, 10 (77 = Vetāla 3, p. 245ff. T 2); *Śukasaptati*, frame-story.

<sup>39</sup> There is a number of different versions, from Jātakas (145, 198) to *Śukasaptati*.

<sup>40</sup> The author of the *Mahāummaḡajātaka* (Jātaka 546), p. 421 F knew that in reality a parrot weds a parrot and a maina a maina (*suvo va suviṃ kāmeyya sālikā pana sālikāṃ / suvassa sālikāya ca sambhāvo hoti kādiso*). However, this was said by a maina courted by an enemy parrot. Occasionally we also find stories of the mutual devotion of the couples of wild parrots, e.g. KSS 12, 5 (72), 237ff. (p. 182f. T 2). See also Bloomfield 1914: 352f.

<sup>41</sup> A number of different species are found in India, e.g. the blue rock pigeon (*Columba livida*), the common green pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*), the emerald dove (*Chalcophaps indica*), the spotted dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), the red turtle dove (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*), the ring dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), and the little brown dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) Ali nos. 105–112. See also Dave 1985: 250ff. and Hensgen 1958: 138.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. *Mālatīmādhava* 9, 7; *Uttararāmacarita* 2, 9; *Raghuvaṃśa* 4, 46.

<sup>43</sup> *Mṛcchakaṭika* 5, 11+; *Karpūramañjarī* 3, 27.

<sup>44</sup> *Vikramorvaśī* 3, 2, *Meghadūta* 38; Subandhu Vd 217 (Hall); Saumilla's *Pādatāḡitaka* 97; *Buddhacarita* 8, 37.

<sup>45</sup> *Pratimānāḡaka* 3, 0, Subandhu Vd p. 217, further Daṇḡin: DKC 2, p. 94; but according to VM:BS 46, 68 when a pigeon or an owl enters the king's palace, danger is to be apprehended. For the pigeon as sinister omen see also AV 6, 29, ŚāṅkhGS 5, 5, 1f. and AgniP 263, 28 (a pigeon entering a house).

the *Kapotajātaka* (42), a pigeon is living in the kitchen. Their homing instinct was mentioned.<sup>47</sup> Colonies of doves inhabit the deserted *āśrama* (*Kādambarī* p. 44) and a ruined village (*Vidyākara* 1175). Their meat is tasty and listed as allowed food in some Dharmasūtras.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, we often meet fowlers hunting pigeons.<sup>49</sup> For domestic pigeons, the most dangerous enemy was the cat, while the wild were afraid of falcons and hawks.<sup>50</sup>

In the famous legend, king Śibi sheltered the dove pursued by a hawk as its lawful prey offering his own flesh instead.<sup>51</sup> In another legend a pigeon sacrifices itself to offer food for a guest.<sup>52</sup> The courtship of pigeons is easily observed – daily, claims Bhartṛhari (*Vairāgya* add. 35 Kale) – and many authors ascribed them a happy conjugal life.<sup>53</sup> Their cooing is often mentioned, especially in the summertime (HC 2, p. 22 [37]).

Pigeons as messengers are mentioned as early as the Rigveda and pigeons carrying letters are found in the KĀŚ.<sup>54</sup> There were also arranged pigeon races (forbidden by King Kumārapāla<sup>55</sup>). Richard Hawkins (Foster 1921: 104) listing Jahāngīr's possessions claims that: "of pidgeons for sport of flying there be ten thousand."

<sup>46</sup> *Mālavikāgnimitra* 4, 17+, *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* 3, 27+, *Mṛcchakaṭika* 4, 27+. For a special wooden pigeon house see AgniP 363, 10 (the masculine (!) *kapotapālikā* and neuter *viṭāṅkam*).

<sup>47</sup> *Mṛcchakaṭika* 1, 8+; *Mānasollāsa* 4, 11 (verses 4, 1277–1297) is a special chapter on pigeon breeding for this purpose.

<sup>48</sup> BauDh 1, 12, 7 *kapota*, but in VasDh 14, 48 *pārāvata* dove and *pāṇḍukapota* are forbidden, *pārāvata* again in 23, 30. Aśoka in PE 5 forbade the killing of white pigeons (*setakapote*) and domestic pigeons (*gāmakapote*). Caraka, *Sūtra* 27, 72 on the uses of *kapota* meat.

<sup>49</sup> Mbh 12, 141ff., *Pañcatantra* (Pūrṇabhadra) 2, frame-story = *Hitopadeśa* 1, frame-story, also in KSS 10, 5 (61), 58ff. (p. 48f. T 2), BhāḡP 11, 7, 62ff.

<sup>50</sup> Cat in *Mālavikāgnimitra* 4, 1+ & 17+: \*Bālacandra: *Karuṇāyudha* in Warder 2004, 656f.; hawk in Mbh 3, 130f.; *Hitopadeśa* 4, verse 51, p. 94 Kale; in falconry in *Śyainikāśāstra* 4, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Mbh 3, 130f., then often, e.g. KSS 1, 7, 88ff. (p. 45f. T 1). There is also a Buddhist version in Xuanzang 3 in Beal 1884 (1981), 125.

<sup>52</sup> Mbh 12, 141ff., again in the *Pañcatantra* (Pūrṇabhadra) 3, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Mbh 12, 141ff., *Mṛcchakaṭika* 4, 27+, BhāḡP 11, 7, 53ff.

<sup>54</sup> RV 10, 165, 1-5 from *Nirṛti*, also AV 6, 29, 2 and much later BhāḡP 1, 14, 14; KĀŚ 2, 34, 11 and 13, 1, 2.

<sup>55</sup> \*Somaprabha: *Kumārapālapratibodha*. Ed. Jinavijaya Muni, Baroda 1920, p. 40f., quoted by Chand 1982: 23.

KAŚ also advises a curious besieging tactics (13, 4, 14). During a siege, fire-mixture can be tied to the tails of hawks, crows, pheasants (*naptṛ*, Dave's nightjar), kites (*bhāsa*), parrots, mynahs, owls and pigeons nesting in enemy fort and thus put fire on the town. My late teacher Pentti Aalto (in lecture, 1973) showed that this is a widely distributed literary motif, ranging from the Bible (*Judges* 15, 4f. with foxes instead of birds) to Russian, Armenian and Mongol chronicles and to West European and Scandinavian legends. It is, however, rather difficult to do and perhaps never actually used.

Pigeons are variegated in colour (KS 4, 27) and used in many comparisons. They have the grey colour of sacrificial smoke (Rām 2, 111, 6 and 4, 13, 22). They were a favourite of Bāṇa. The afterglow of the sun was flecked like a pigeon's throat (HC 4, p. [126] *kapotakaṅṭhakarbure*). Sun's steeds are bright as *haritāla* pigeons (*Kādambarī* p. 314). Fine betel nuts were green as young *hārīta* doves (HC 7, p. 116 [214]) as was also an emerald seat (*Kādambarī* p. 382). The sky was gray as an old pigeon's wing (*Kādambarī* p. 135) and the earth at sunset was tawny as a pigeon's eye (*Kādambarī* p. 343, but cf. *Pādatāḍitaka* 97). The neck of a pigeon was used for dark blue colour (*Uttararāmacarita* 6, 25 the bodies of young princes).

**Crows** (*kāka*, *vāyasa*)<sup>56</sup> are detested as carrion-eaters and as the birds of ill omen, but they also receive the *bali* offerings left by the pious in the forest. The poor crow was often unfavourably compared with other birds, e.g. Garuḍa, peacock and goose<sup>57</sup>. Its harsh voice was compared to that of the cuckoo (Mbh 1, 2, 236). They rear the offspring of cuckoos in their nests (above). To call someone "a crow" was an insult (Bhāsa's *Dūtavākya* 38, HC 3, p. 52 [95]). The voice of bow frightens crows into flight (*Ūrubhaṅga* 54). Their propensity to steal gold and other shining objects was duly noted.<sup>58</sup> In the Kaliyuga trees will be full of crows and therefore yield few flowers and fruits (Mbh 3, 186, 37). But in the (admittedly very

<sup>56</sup> There are no ravens in most parts of India, although some translators seem to prefer "raven" instead of "crow". Of crows there are two common species, the almost wholly black (but much smaller and slenderer than raven) jungle crow (*Corvus macrorhynchus*, Ali 181) and the black and grey village crow (house crow, *Corvus splendens*, Ali 182), resembling the more robust European crow. See also Dave 1985: 1ff.

<sup>57</sup> Garuḍa in Rām 3, 45, 42 *yad antaraṃ vāyasavainateyayor*; Daṅḍin DKC 2, p. 100 (*śauṅgeya*); peacock in Mbh 2, 55, 9 & 5, 37, 19; goose in Mbh 8, 28; Hāla 710; Bāṇa HC 3, p. 52 (95); \*Amaracandra, *Bālabhārata* 37, 32 (Warder 2004: 571).

<sup>58</sup> Vidyākara 732; Hitopadeśa 2, story 7.

late) *Skandapurāṇa* (3, 3, 15, 13) crows, approaching the Mānasa lake, themselves change into geese.

Common macabre scenes – the descriptions of battle-fields and burning places of corpses (*śmaśāna*) – rarely omit crows among the carrion eaters.<sup>59</sup> They also harass wounded animals.<sup>60</sup> They eat the *bali* offering (therefore called *balibhuj*) and even grow fat with them,<sup>61</sup> but their touch is unclean and makes food inedible.<sup>62</sup> But they cannot pollute a holy river by their touch (*Padmaprabhṛtaka* 23+). Unrighteous rulers have grown fat like crows (BhāgP 1, 18, 33 *pṭonāṃ balibhujām iva*). Of course, crow's flesh was forbidden as food<sup>63</sup> and one has to avoid unintentional swallowing of its droppings.<sup>64</sup> Together with jackals, crows were among the most usual sinister auguries, but in some cases also good portents.<sup>65</sup> The killing of crows was forbidden.<sup>66</sup>

The war of the crows and the **owls** (*ulūka*)<sup>67</sup> is an important theme in narrative literature. Its origins are found in a Buddhist *Jātaka*,<sup>68</sup> where the

<sup>59</sup> In battle-field: AV 11, 9, 9; Mbh 3, 255, 31 & 5, 179, 4; *Veṅṣaṇḥāra* 6, 34+; Mbh 8, 28; \*Amaracandra, *Bālabhārata* 39, 81 (Warder 2004: 576). Cremation ground in KSS 3, 4 (18), 147 (p. 132 T 1); *Caṇḍakauśika* 4, 9. Execution ground in *Mṛcchakaṭika* 10, 3. In AgniP 371, 28 and *Jātakamālā* 29, verse 44 crows eat sinners in the hell.

<sup>60</sup> A cow in \*Śrīdharadāsa: *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2015 (Warder 2004: 956f.); a cock in \*Jalhaṇa: *Sūktimuktāvali* p. 73 (ed., Warder 2004, 966 = ŚārṅgP 908, by Bheribhāṅkāra).

<sup>61</sup> VasDh 11, 9; Mbh 1, 146, 18; Mbh 8, 28; KAŚ 13, 1, 16; *Caṇḍakauśika* 4, 12; *Pādātāḍitaka* 31+; AgniP 264, 24f. Also offerings to Yakṣas (Subandhu Vd p. 74) and to Goddess (*Caṇḍakauśika* 4, 12). In *Meghadūta* 23, *grhabalibhuj* is explained by Vallabha as *kāka*. Cf. Hensgen 1958: 137f.

<sup>62</sup> GautDh 17, 10; ManuDh 11, 160; AgniP 173, 33.

<sup>63</sup> GautDh 17, 29, VasDh 14, 48, ManuDh 5, 14, YājñDh 1, 174.

<sup>64</sup> ManuDh 11, 155; AgniP 168, 14f. & 173, 33. In AgniP 133, 15 the excrements of owls and crows were used in a Bhairava ritual.

<sup>65</sup> Sinister e.g. AV 7, 64; ŚāṅkhGS 5, 5, 4; Rām 4, 1, 24f.; Mbh 2, 71, 26 & 3, 176, 44 & 3, 188, 81 & 4, 41, 21 & 5, 47, 98 & 5, 141, 18; KAŚ 13, 1, 9; Bhāsa, *Pañcarātra* 2, 0; *Mṛcchakaṭika* 9, 10f.; HC 5, p. 75 (134) & 82 (148); *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* section 83, 2656–2674; AgniP 232, 1–13; *Gargasamhitā aṅgas* 19 & 42; Mīnarāja, *Yavanajātaka* 68; VM:BS 95; \**Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* p. 175–180; *Vasantarājaśakuna* 12, 53–65 (*Kākālaprakaraṇa*); and 12, 66–68 (*Kākāṇḍasamjñāprakaraṇa*); *Mānasollāsa* 2, 13, 833–846; \**Śivatattvaratnākara* ch. 5, 8. Positive omen e.g. in Subandhu Vd p. 148 and *Padmaprabhṛtaka* 29, also Mīrā Bāi in Bahadur 77f.

<sup>66</sup> BaudhDh 1, 19, 6, ManuDh 11, 132 and ViDh 50, 32.

<sup>67</sup> Several common species in India, e.g. the barn or screech owl (*Tyto alba*), the

clever crow points out to other birds that the dark and cruel appearance of the owl makes it unsuitable to become elected the king of birds. This was supposedly the original cause of the war, in fact based on the natural behaviour of crows towards owls, then fully developed in the frame-story of the third book of the *Pañcatantra* (also *Kalīla wa Dimna* chapter 8). Nārāyaṇa (*Hitopadeśa*, also book 3) turned it into a less likely war between land birds and water birds, but a crow is used as spy. At daytime crows attack an owl, but in the night a crow may become the prey of an owl (Mbh 10, 1, 35ff.; KĀŚ 9, 1, 30). Further, in Subandhu (Vd p. 176), the darkness spread, increasing the outcry of the owls and dulling the glory of the crows (cf. also *Vidyākara* 871). According to the *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra* 32, 346 at the close of night the terrible owl, which had a fearful hooting, has behind it (a group of) chasing crows and it is hastily searching after its own hollow (of the tree).<sup>69</sup> A curious comparison is used in the *Padmaprabhṛtaka* 16+: for a Pāṇinian the followers of the *Kātantra* are like crows strong due to their union – and thus starts the traditional fight between the crows and the owls.

The crow is the symbol of blackness.<sup>70</sup> Afternoon sunshine is crimson like a young crow's beak (*bālavāyasāsyāruṇe* HC 2, p. 25 [43]). As the crow represented the black colour, a white crow was a symbol of rarity.<sup>71</sup> Another impossibility: Mt. Meru is not shaken by the wind of a crow's wings flapping (*Bālacarita* 2, 6). A third are the crow's teeth (*Śāradātilakabhāṇa* 61+). Among the paradoxes listed in Jalhaṇa<sup>72</sup> is a crow placed in a golden cage and an owl in a lotus pool.

Next I would like to consider the **woodpecker** (variously called *dārvāghāṭa*, *kāṣṭhakūṭa* and *śatapatra*).<sup>73</sup> In literature, woodpeckers are usu-

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brown fish owl (*Bubo zeylonensis*) and the Indian great horned owl (*Bubo bubo ssp.*), Ali's nos 125–127.

<sup>68</sup> *Jātaka* 270; then also in the *Pañcatantra* of Pūrṇabhadra 3, 1 and KSS 10, 6 (62), 5ff. (p. 64ff. T 2).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Jātaka* 226.

<sup>70</sup> *Vidyākara* 875; *Mattavilāsa* 14+.

<sup>71</sup> Mbh 1, 43, 10; *Mṛcchakaṭika* 9, 41.

<sup>72</sup> \**Sūktimuktāvalī* p. 407, 45 quoted by Warder 2004: 961.

<sup>73</sup> Several species in India, the most common perhaps the golden-backed woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*), Ali no. 150. Dave 1985: 119ff. accepts other names, but thinks the *śatapatra* can, beside woodpecker, also refer to the large Indian parakeet and peacock.

ally mentioned because of their strong beak and the way they use it.<sup>74</sup> However, in a *Jātaka* (210 *Kandagalakajātaka*) a woodpecker struck a tree too hard for it, and perished.

Woodpeckers are mainly found in narrative literature. In *Jātaka* 206 (*Kuruṅgamiṅgajātaka*) the deer is caught in a leather snare and is helped by his friends. While the woodpecker as a bird of ill omen keeps the hunter away, the turtle gnaws the snare, but is then too tired to escape. Now the deer, pretending lameness, entices the hunter away and thus rescues the turtle.<sup>75</sup>

In the *Pañcatantra* (Pūrṇabhadra 1, 20), we are told how by clever collaboration the sparrow, woodpecker (*kāṣṭhakūṭa*), frog and fly together succeeded in killing a mad elephant. The task of the woodpecker was to blind the elephant with its beak.

Another popular story is found in the *Jātaka* 308 (*Javasakunajātaka*): the woodpecker removes a bone from the lion's throat and thus saves his life, but the arrogant beast is ungrateful and refuses to share the wild buffalo (*vanamahīṣa*) he has killed. The story is also found in the *Jātakamālā* 34.<sup>76</sup>

Beside narratives the woodpecker is occasionally mentioned among forest birds.<sup>77</sup> As augury, *śataptra* seems to indicate good (Mbh 5, 81, 25, cf. VM:BS 48, 6 and 86, 23).

For **hoopoe**<sup>78</sup> we have a classical Greek author, Claudius Aelianus, giving a curious story, for which he claims Indian (Brahman) origin.<sup>79</sup> According to him, the wicked sons misused their old parents and their youngest brother. The three took hermit life and left home. But the way was laborious and the exhausted parents died. The loyal son cut his head open with sword and buried them in his head. Admiring this, the Sun God transformed him into the most beautiful bird, the hoopoe, and gave him the

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<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, it is classed among *pratuda* birds in Caraka, *Sūtra* 27, 50 and Suśruta, *Sūtra* 46, 67ff.

<sup>75</sup> A modified version is used as the frame-story of the second book in *Pañcatantra* (I have used Pūrṇabhadra, but it is also in other versions), but the woodpecker is here left out.

<sup>76</sup> The same motif is found in the fable of the heron and the wolf in Aesopic tradition (e.g. Babrius 92 and Phaedrus 1, 8, Perry's number 156).

<sup>77</sup> Rām 3, 71, 11f. and Mbh 3, 155, 47f. & 75 *śataptra*.

<sup>78</sup> The hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), Ali no. 136, is the same species as in Europe, it is common practically all over South Asia and Eurasia, with the exception of the northernmost areas (Dave 1985: 162f.).

<sup>79</sup> *Nature of Animals* 16, 5, cf. Karttunen 1997: 206.



crest in the memory of his deed.<sup>80</sup> But he adds, quoting Aristophanes (*Aves* 471ff.), that the Greeks had a similar story about the lark. He also says that the Indian king keeps a hoopoe as pet, carrying it on his hand and admiring its beauty. But Aelianus certainly errs in claiming that the Indian hoopoe is twice as large as the Greek and much more beautiful. In fact, it is the very same bird.

This story is not known from India, but the Sanskrit name of the hoopoe (*priyaputra* or *putrapriya*) seems to be related. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* 2, 96, 12, the *putrapriya* bird is singing “putra putra” (quoted by Dave). It is not often mentioned in literature, although it appears sometimes among forest birds.<sup>81</sup>

The shrill, lamenting voice of the **osprey** (*kurara*, *kurarī*),<sup>82</sup> always taken to be female, was the common comparison for lamenting women,<sup>83</sup> but not often mentioned otherwise.<sup>84</sup> Sometimes we meet the claim that other birds of prey attack them, which seems not to be true.<sup>85</sup>

In conclusion, we see some real observations of the habitual ways of birds, but more often we are dealing with curious habits and poetic images frequently used in comparisons. Erotic themes are common and in some cases colour symbolism is important. There are still more birds to be discussed. A study of geese (*haṃsa*) is under work. In addition, a lot of material is also available dealing with hawks, falcons, eagles and vultures – both real and mythic ones – but this I must leave to some future occasion.

<sup>80</sup> In Christian tradition, the same story is included in the *Physiologus* (20 in Sbordone’s Byzantine redaction), with allegoric interpretation.

<sup>81</sup> Mbh 3, 107, 7f. & 155, 47f.; Brahmapurāṇa 178, 39.

<sup>82</sup> The osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) Ali no. 132, is found all over Eurasia, Africa and America. Dave 1985: 185ff.

<sup>83</sup> E.g. Rām 4, 19, 28; Mbh 1, 6, 11 & 2, 62, 22, etc.; *Raghuvaṃśa* 14, 68; *Vikramorvaśī* Prol. 2+; *Mālatīmādhava* 5, 20; BhāgP 6, 14, 53 & 7, 7, 7, etc.; Aśvaghōṣa, *Buddhacarita* 8, 51. But in *Mahāvastu* 1, 172 the Buddha’s voice is compared to a *kurara*’s cry.

<sup>84</sup> As water bird e.g. in Rām 3, 69, 7f. (lake Pampā) & 4, 29, 29; Mbh 3, 61, 108 & 3, 155, 50; *Mālatīmādhava* 9, 33+; BhāgP 3, 21, 43; VM:BS 48, 9. In Bāṇa, HC 2, p. 22 (37) and Subandhu Vd 277, they catch fish. Caraka, *Sūtra* 27, 37 and Suśruta, *Sūtra* 46, 74f. include it in the *prasaha* class of birds.

<sup>85</sup> Bhāsa, *Pratijñāyauḡandharāyana* 4, 24; Daṇḍin DKC 8, p. 206; BhāgP 11, 7, 34 & 9, 2.

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