Argument and Design:
The Unity of the Mahābhārata

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Edited by

Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee

Argument and Design

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BRILL

Contents

Reading and Rethinking with the Abhinavadvaipāyana

Among my favorite memories of my early years in Western India are those of months spent together with Alf and his family in Pune, where we spent a year engaged in our respective research projects on the great Sanskrit epics, I on the Rāmāyaṇa and he, of course, on his beloved Mahābhārata. Pune, and indeed India, was a much calmer and quieter place in the pre-liberalization, pre-globalization days of the mid 1970s and, as we were, as I recall for the most part, the only two American Sanskrit scholars resident in town with our families in 1974–75, we had a lot of time to spend with each other both discussing our work and watching our then young sons, my oldest, Jesse, and his youngest, Simon (whom I fondly remember by Jesse's name for him, Sai Moon), play.

My warmest memories of those youthful days were during the hot season when Alf visited me when I was staying for some time in Mahabaleshwar. We would sit, surrounded by the *vānara*-haunted woodlands of the Sahyadri Hills, reading Vālmīki just for the pure pleasure of it, but, at the same time, further honing our skills in the language and ideologies of the Sanskrit epics and the ways in which they were read, interpreted and debated by their oldest recoverable readers, the authors of their Sanskrit commentaries. It is this last exposure that I think has led us in our own ways to be cautious and even downright skeptical of the received wisdom concerning these extraordinary literary, social, political, and religious works, wisdom at the basis of much of the western scholarship we read as students.

We were both young scholars, just at or just past the terrifying ordeal of the tenure review and, given our mutual scholarly interests, similar career tracks, and similar familial situations, we became, and have remained ever since, fast friends, even when, as has not infrequently been the case, we differed in our analyses of the poems, their relationship, and their genetic histories. A favorite and longstanding discussion has, of course, been the complex and still unsettled friendly debate on the relative chronology and interrelation of the two epics.

And so we became close friends enjoying many intellectual and social moments together, corresponding by email, and meeting at innumerable scholarly meetings and conferences. But just now, looking over Alf's extraordinary record of illuminating books and articles on the Vyāsa's great Bhārata

and many of its versions and re-representations in the regional performative cultures of India down to the modern day, I am put in mind of Arjuna's well-known words to his friend and alter ego Kṛṣṇa after being granted a vision of the latter's *aiśvara rūpa*:

> sakheti matvā prasabhaṃ yad uktaṃ
>   he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti |
> ajānatā mahimānaṃ tavedam
>   mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi ||
> yac cāvahāsārtham asatkṛto 'si
>   vihāraśayyāsanabhojaneṣu
> eko 'tha vāpy acyuta tatsamakṣaṃ |
>   tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam || (Bhagavadgītā 11.41–42)

> Whatever, thinking you as merely a friend, I may have said carelessly or out of affection, calling you, in my ignorance of your greatness, "Hey Kṛṣṇa! Hey Yādava! Hey my friend!" or if, for the sake of a joke, I ever treated you disrespectfully while we were eating, lounging, or sitting around, or just enjoying ourselves, whether alone or in front of others, I beg your pardon, for you are incomparable, Acyuta.

But seriously, the record to which I refer encompasses Alf's long and extraordinary journey along the authorial paths that wend their way through the two great epic poems of ancient India and out along the many and diverse streams of literary, artistic, and performative cultural production that they have inspired from the time of their first circulation to the present day. He began this journey as an undergraduate studying religion at Haverford College and moved on after graduation to the University of Chicago, where he had the good fortune to work with such notable scholars as Mircea Eliade and J.A.B. van Buitenen, who guided his studies and gave him his grounding in Sanskrit. His dissertation, "A Study of the Mahābhārata in Relation to Indian and Indo-European Symbolisms," gives a very early indication of where his scholarly interests lay and in what direction they would lead him. He also has been profoundly influenced by the work and example of the late, great epic scholar Madeleine Biardeau.

Along with only a very small cadre of academicians of his generation—scholars such as Jim Fitzgerald and John Brockington—Alf has focused virtually all of his attention on India's extraordinary cultural legacy that is the great, ancient Sanskrit epic poems and the incalculably enormous influence they have exerted for millennia over the arts, literatures, religions, and societies of a vast sweep of

southern Asia stretching from Iran in the west to the Philippines in the east. He is also all but unique among scholars of Vyāsa's prodigious poem to have moved beyond the philological and interpretive approach into some of the modern, lived, and performed legacies of the epic, most notably the South Indian cult of Draupadī.

Most noteworthy, I think, is Alf's welcome call to "rethink" the epics. For, the fact is that the grand and complex texts, in all their virtually innumerable forms, that we classify simply as "epics" form by themselves a category that——like animals in Lévi-Strauss's famous phrase——are "good to think with." That is to say that within the vast corpus of Indic texts they form a distinct, if difficult to define, *genre* deeply imbricated with many other kinds of text and yet undeniably and unmistakably of a particular type, whether we call that type *itihāsa* or *kāvya*, two terms that have been used in various contexts of both works.

From the earliest commentaries on the poems and their fragments through the sectarian traditions of their reception in the medieval period, down to the huge corpora of modern scholarship and apologia in India and around the world, the epics have presented a pertinent example of the *andhagajanyāya*, "the maxim of the blind men and the elephant," according to which people with differing views, beliefs, and agendas impose their own restricted views on a topic that is vast, variegated, and complex. This is especially the case with the Mahābhārata, a work so capacious and, in its own words, so comprehensive that, when it comes to the myths, legends, and the ideologies of religious, social, military, and political life that formed the core of its author's worldview, *ṛṣi* Vyāsa's boast,

> dharme cārthe ca kāme ca mokṣe ca bharatarṣabha |
> yad ihāsti tad anyatra yan nehasti na tat kvacit || (Mahābhārata 18.5.38)

> In regard to all matters of righteous conduct, wealth and political power, pleasure and desire, and the final emancipation of the soul, O bull among the Bharatas, whatever is found here may be found elsewhere, but whatever is not, will be found nowhere else.

Students of the epic and its receptive history know how, for example, Indian thinkers have read the text variously as a tract illustrative of *advaitavedānta* or *dvaitavedānta*, a poem imbued with the sentiment of detached tranquility (*śāntarasa*), an allegory of the conquest of the passions or an exhortation to militant revolution. Similarly, scholars from the nineteenth century onward have understood it variously as a nature myth, an expanded *vedic* legend, an inverted anti-Pāṇḍava history, a *dharmaśāstra*, a confused and inconsistent pastiche of a long tradition of bards and redactors, and as a single, unified work

basically produced by a single author or group of composers, and so on and so forth.

In his two penetrating and learned "Rethinking" books, Alf considers many of the single interpretations that have been imposed on the great epic and offers, especially in the work on the Mahābhārata itself, the idea of a thematic, "pathway" approach that gives us a coherent way of reading through and seeing the imposing text as a guide book directed at the poem's ultimate, if often self-effacing, hero Yudhiṣṭhira, with whom we can slowly walk the pathway to *dharma*, or righteous conduct.

It is doubtless true that the poem is in reality many things and is finally impossible to reduce to a single, simple text. It is, among other things, one more episode in the endless recurrent vedic-purāṇic mythos of the conflict between the *devas* and the *asuras*—the exponents of *dharma* and *adharma*, respectively—over control of the world, a dark and profound meditation on time, a didactic text on how to act and how not to act in the world, the earliest surviving text marking the transition from the sacrificial cult of the Vedas to the rise of devotional Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavism, a grim history of a sanguinary civil war, a repository of ancient myths and legends, a kind of narrative *śāstra* covering many topics of worldly and otherworldly life, a cautionary tale of the consequences of lust and greed and, finally, all worldly passions. And then too, in the end, it is just a rollicking great tale that has inspired countless re-tellings and kept audiences fascinated for millennia.

Alf has wandered along these and other pathways through both epics and has graced and enriched our understanding of these marvelous creations. In his numerous books and articles, Alf has moved easily from his early studies of the homology of battle and *vedic* ritual in the representation of the Mahābhārata war to a large, integrative understanding of the structure, genetic history, and central thematic of the grand construction, seeing the poem as having been composed over a much shorter period than had previously been thought.

Perhaps the final frontier in the holistic study of the Mahābhārata is the problem of its many and diverse upākhyānas, its lesser or parallel narratives, involving tales and characters evidently drawn from a wide spectrum of sources, vedic and unknown, that are scattered throughout the text. Many of these have been clearly included as exemplary stories serving as lessons in what Alf has called, "the education of the Dharma King." Prominent examples would be the Rāmopākhyāna and the Nalopākhyāna, which belonged originally, it would appear, to narrative, dynastic, and bardic traditions other than that of the Candravaṃśa. The thematic connection of others to the central narrative of the Bhārata may be less clear but it is the job of scholarship such as that exemplified by Alf to explore this and to attempt to read them structurally or thematically into the larger epic.

In celebration of Alf's unparalleled contributions to Mahābhārata studies a group of his colleagues, students, and friends were invited by his *priyaśiṣya* Vishwa Adluri to lend their thoughts to the question of the upākhyānas and to present the result of their research in a series of three panels dedicated to him on the auspicious occasion of his *saptati*. The extraordinary *mālā* of presentations on many aspects of the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, and their subordinate narratives that was offered by the participants forms the contents of the present volume, which we present to Alf and lovers of India's great epics everywhere.

Alf and I continue our efforts to dig deeper into the treasure troves that are the immortal works of Vyāsa and Vālmīki and will, I hope, have many more years to argue about them. Here, in this volume are some exciting new contributions to the field. Let the conversation continue.

Robert P. Goldman
William and Catherine Magistretti Professor of Sanskrit
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Notes on Contributors

Vishwa P. Adluri

is Adjunct Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Hunter College, New York, and the author of over a dozen articles and essays on the Mahābhārata. His work mainly focuses on the reception of ancient thought—both Greek and Indian—in modernity. He is the author of *Parmenides, Plato and Mortal Philosophy: Return from Transcendence* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2011), *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), and *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism* (London: Anthem Press, forthcoming in 2016), and has edited numerous volumes on the Mahābhārata (including a two-volume edition of Alf Hiltebeitel's collected essays—*Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, 2 vols. [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011]). Vishwa has a PhD in Philosophy from the New School for Social Research, New York and a PhD in Indology from Philipps-Universität Marburg.

Fernando Wulff Alonso

is Professor of Ancient History in the University of Málaga, Spain. His research focuses on the Greco-Roman sources of the Mahābhārata (*The Mahābhārata and Greek Mythology* [New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2014]), its role in the construction of the work, and the uses of Ancient India in academic and political settings. His previous work embraced the study of gender, mythology and epics, modern and contemporary uses of Ancient history for the construction of national identities, and the social and cultural impact of Republican Rome on subject societies.

Joydeep Bagchee

has a PhD in Philosophy from the New School for Social Research, New York, and is currently a fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin. His current research focuses on the intersection of the textual sciences, philology, textual criticism, and the history of science, with the aim of illumining how contemporary ideas of scholarship and especially of historical rigor developed. Bagchee is especially interested in the textual traditions of the two Sanskrit epics. He is co-author of *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism* (London: Anthem Press, forthcoming in 2016).

Greg Bailey

is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Program in Asian Studies, La Trobe University, Melbourne. He has published translations and studies of the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*, Bhartṛhari's *Śatakatraya* and books on the god Brahmā, early Buddhism, contemporary Australia, and many articles on Sanskrit literature. At present he is working on the relationship between early Buddhism and the Mahābhārata.

Adam Bowles

is Senior Lecturer in Asian Religions at the University of Queensland in Australia. He has published three volumes concerning the Mahābhārata. Two of these are translations of the Karṇaparvan published with the Clay Sanskrit Library. The other, entitled *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India: The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), is a study of one of the didactic corpora belonging to the Śāntiparvan. He has also edited, with Simon Brodbeck and Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas* (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D. K. Printworld, in press). In addition, he has research interests in aspects of the Maratha polity of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, components of which appeared in the co-authored monograph *A History of State and Religion in India* published by Routledge in 2012.

Simon Brodbeck

is Reader in Religious Studies at Cardiff University in Wales. He is the author of *The Mahābhārata Patriline: Gender, Culture, and the Royal Hereditary* (Ashgate, 2009) and some two dozen articles on aspects of the Mahābhārata, and co-editor of *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata* (Routledge, 2007, with Brian Black) and *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas* (D.K. Printworld, in press, with Alf Hiltebeitel and Adam Bowles). He also co-edits the journals *Religions of South Asia* (Equinox, est. 2007) and *Asian Literature and Translation* (open access, est. 2013). He is currently engaged in translating the critically reconstituted Harivaṃśa.

Nicolas Dejenne

is Assistant Professor in History and Textual Traditions in the Indian World at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris III in France. After a monographic study about the figure of Paraśurāma ("Du Rāma Jāmadagnya épique au Paraśurāma contemporain: Représentations d'un héros en Inde," PhD diss., 2007), his main field of research has remained the Sanskrit epics and Purāṇas for which he has been a regular participant at DICSEPs and dedicated WSC-sections since

the beginning of the 2000s. He also works on the history of Indian studies in France and is a co-editor for an ongoing French *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Indian Literatures*.

Robert P. Goldman

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Sally J. Sutherland Goldman

received her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley in 1979, where she has taught Sanskrit and related subjects since 1981. She is the Associate Editor of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Translation Project. She is the co-annotator of the *Bālakāṇḍa* (1984), and co-translator of the *Sundarakāṇḍa* (1996), *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (2009), and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (forthcoming 2016). She has lectured, taught, and published widely in the areas of Sanskrit epic and literature and traditional South Asian constructions and representations of gender. She is co-author of the *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language* (1980, 2004).

Alf Hiltebeitel

is Professor of Religion, History, and Human Sciences at the George Washington University. His publications take him back and forth between the Mahābhārata and fieldwork on Tamil Mahābhārata "folk" traditions. From this tandem project, his work branches out into related texts, other cults and oral epic traditions, and recently into an attempt to understand the Indian concept of *dharma*. Recently out are the following titles: *Dharma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010); *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies in the Mahābhārata, Essays by Alf Hitebeitel*, vol. 1, and *When the Goddess Was a Woman*: *Mahābhārata Ethnographies, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011)—both edited and introduced by Vishwa P. Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee; and *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; New Delhi: Oxford India, 2014).

Thennilapuram Mahadevan

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Adheesh Sathaye

is Associate Professor of Sanskrit Literature and South Asian Folklore at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *Crossing the Lines of Caste: Viśvāmitra and the Construction of Brahmin Power in Hindu Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). His research concerns Hindu mythological literature, the cultural history of caste, Sanskrit poetry, drama and story literature, and the broader intersections between performance, textual production, and traditional culture in South Asia.

Bruce M. Sullivan

(Professor of Comparative Study of Religions and Asian Studies at Northern Arizona University) is a specialist in Hinduism and Sanskrit literature, and the author of four books, including a study of Vyāsa in the Mahābhārata (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990). Two books were coauthored with a scholar in India, N. P. Unni, each a translation and study of a *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* drama (Delhi: 1995 and 2001). Sullivan also edited and contributed to *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). His educational background includes a PhD in South Asian Languages and Civilizations and the History of Religions from the University of Chicago.

From Supplementary Narratives to Narrative Supplements

Vishwa Adluri

The premise for this volume was that the Mahābhārata is a work of literature and that its upākhyānas (subtales or, perhaps more accurately, proximate narratives) are central to its literary project. The volume's starting point was Alf Hiltebeitel's 2005 essay "Not without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics,"[1] which was the first article to argue that rather than being extraneous to the main epic (a putative "Bhārata" or a Mahābhārata without its ancillary narratives) the upākhyānas may well be central to the epic's literary design.[2] In this essay, Hiltebeitel argued "it should no longer be enough to tell its [the Mahābhārata's] main story, especially with the suggestion that its main story would have been an original '*Bhārata*' with the rest making it a '*Mahābhārata.*' Even though it must require shortcuts, one owes it to this grand text to attempt to block out the main story against the backdrop of its archetypal design, which includes its frame stories, *upaparvans, upākhyānas,* and the enigma of the author."[3]

In response to Hiltebeitel's provocative suggestion, a group of epic scholars gathered at the Forty-First Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, Wisconsin in October of 2012 to discuss and debate the status of the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas, especially as they influence our understanding of the text as a work of literature. The contributions were not restricted to the sixty-seven narratives Hiltebeitel identifies in his list as upākhyānas: many of the participants in the Mahābhārata Upākhyāna Project took Hiltebeitel's invitation to consider the status of the Mahābhārata's secondary narratives literally, and identified other material that fit the category of "upākhyāna" understood as a narrative that either elaborates on some aspect of the main narrative or

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1 Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (2005): 455–511.

2 For this reason, this article has been reprinted here as the first of the essays in the book. Along with the concluding "The Geography of the Mahābhārata's Upākhyānas," this essay brackets this collection of essays dedicated to furthering Hiltebeitel's thinking on the epic.

3 Ibid., 479 and see p. 35 in this volume.

clarifies a specific dharma point.[4] Thus, Greg Bailey discusses the Mārkaṇḍeya-samāsyāparvan, a narrative unit of about forty-two chapters in the Āraṇya-kaparvan. In his words,

> What is so fascinating about this parvan is that nothing happens in terms
> of narrated action to the primary interlocutors, the Pāṇḍavas, especially
> Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, Nārada and the narrator, Mārkaṇḍeya. It suspends
> any narrated action on the part of the principal players, except for
> Mārkaṇḍeya himself and Kṛṣṇa. The hearers are simply transported out
> of their own world by a series of narratives told them by Mārkaṇḍeya, a
> sage possessing all the best qualifications for instructing audiences who
> themselves have the appropriate qualifications to listen. As such it mir-
> rors several other groups of interlocutors in the Mahābhārata, without, of
> course, going back to the first interlocutory level, and also many upākhyā-
> nas where narrated action is shifted to quite another level.[5]

These characteristics—suspension of the narrated action and transportation
of the listeners (whether the primary listeners, i.e., the participants in the narra-
tive themselves or the secondary listeners, i.e., the readers of the Mahābhārata
as they travel and suffer along with the participants)—seem to constitute the
essence of what makes up the "upa-" of an upākhyāna. As Robert Goldman
notes in his contribution, the "sense of 'subordinate *or* lesser'" may ultimately
be less useful for understanding the upākhyānas. Instead, it is "more helpful"
to "understand the prefix as it is used in upākhyāna to refer instead to the the-
matic proximity in terms of the instructive quality of episodes (*adhyayana*)
such as the Rāmopākhyāna when juxtaposed with the events in the career of
the Pāṇḍavas."[6]

The papers authored by the participants in the project varied greatly—from
reflections on the Mahābhārata's status as literature to discussions of the liter-
ary and philosophical strategies through which the epic has been designed to
keep replicating itself and from thoughtful engagements with single though
crucial upākhyānas to analyses of sequences of upākhyāna-like material within
particular books—yet all of them were bound by a common conviction. The

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4   As will be seen, the Mahābhārata upākhyānas have a special relationship to its dharma dis-
    course. In this sense, rather than being subtales they are "super"-tales in the sense of narratives
    that function as powers function in mathematics: K^u. It is this special relation of K^u that, of
    course, gives the Mahābhārata's dharma discourse its special texture (K^u = D).

5   Gregory M. Bailey, "Introductory Notes on the Literary Structure of the Mārkaṇḍeyasamāsyā-
    parvan," 127–28.

6   Robert P. Goldman, "On the Upatva of Upākhyānas: Is the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa an
    Upākhyāna of the Mahābhārata?" 69.

Mahābhārata is a work of literature, indeed, self-consciously so, and its literary qualities ought to be taken seriously. For instance, in the first of the upākhyāna-specific contributions in this volume, Joydeep Bagchee argues that the story of the birth and three-year gestation of Bharata is simultaneously a symbol for the conception and three-year composition of the Mahābhārata. "Śakuntalā's son [Bharata]," he observes, "not only bestows his name upon the Kuru genealogy, his descendants, but also gives his name to the text, the Mahābhārata."[7] "Like the seer Vyāsa, he embodies the twin functions of creator (of the text) and genitor (of the Kuru race)."[8] Bagchee also goes on to show that, contrary to the perception of the Mahābhārata tradition as being in decline, the southern recension's changes to the Śakuntalā and Yayāti upākhyānas illustrate a great force of natality at work in the epic—one renewing it from within. Addressing the widespread objection that the Mahābhārata's size, its number of words, and its diversity of literary styles and religious ideas militates against it being an intentional composition, Bruce M. Sullivan points out that these are "are assumptions rather than persuasive arguments."[9] If Isaac Asimov could publish some 500 books in all ten major categories of the Dewey Decimal System, there appears nothing inherently implausible in the idea that the Mahābhārata, whether composed by one individual or as Hiltebeitel advocates "by committee,"[10] should have a certain inner harmony.[11] Others have addressed this controversy in different ways: Fernando Wulff Alonso points to the fact that "postcolonial concepts imply not only setting aside perspectives that

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7   Joydeep Bagchee, "The Epic's Singularization to Come: The Śakuntalā and Yayāti Upākhyānas in the Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata," 84.

8   Ibid., 84, n. 6.

9   Bruce M. Sullivan, "The Tale of an Old monkey and a Fragrant Flower: What the Mahābhārata's Rāmāyaṇa may Tell Us about the Mahābhārata," 188.

10   See Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 20 and 167–69.

11   In fact, much of my own work has been dedicated to this idea, that is, to work out the recognizable narrative patterns or units such as the eighteen-parvan architecture, the circular composition, the doubled beginning, the return to the beginning with the ascent of the main characters to heaven in the Svargārohaṇaparvan, and so on that hint at a carefully conceived philosophical program. See Vishwa Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the *Adiparvan*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 143–210 and "Literary Violence and Literal Salvation: Śaunaka Interprets the *Mahabharata*," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 45–68, and see also Vishwa Adluri, "Hermeneutics and Narrative Architecture in the *Mahabharata*," in *Ways and Reasons for Thinking about the Mahabharata as a Whole*, ed. Vishwa Adluri (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2013), 1–27.

define other societies and their productions as inferior to Western canons, but also discussing these perspectives and their implications. The values that supported aesthetic valuations, for example, were full of assumptions about the existence of a single (classical) aesthetic and rationality and automatically implied assessments about the capabilities of the societies that produced such texts or works of art."[12] Against the proponents of "an accumulative Mahābhārata," Wulff points to a major unifying theme of the epic: the world constructed or inhabited by the epic poets, in which the macrocosm is understood as a double of the microcosm and in which the difference between gods and humans first comes into play. In contrast, Adheesh Sathaye invokes a museological metaphor to characterize the Mahābhārata. He suggests that rather then accept theories of random accretion and expansion over centuries, we might look at the epic's narratives as carefully "curated" exhibits within a larger pan-Indian project. My own article focuses on how the Ambā-Upākhyāna of the Udyogaparvan, narrated just prior to the commencement of the great battle, elucidates a central aspect of the epic's cosmological narrative: the primordial conflict between the creative, outward force of *śṛṣṭi*, emanation, and the absorptive, inward pull of *laya*, dissolution. Taking up Madeleine Biardeau's concept of the upākhyānas as "récit-miroir," "mirror story" narratives that are so called because they reflect the "proximate narrative circumstances of the princes and princess to whom they are recited,"[13] Adam Bowles examines a sequence of three narratives in the Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata. He finds that the upākhyānas do not just reflect these circumstances, but much like two mirrors arranged in parallel, create an infinite series of reflections, all inviting us to enter and to lose ourselves in reflection(s) on the epic's central theme of the proper dharma.[14] Extending the concept of the "mirror story," Sally Sutherland goes on to ask in what way the Rakṣovaṃśa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa might be reflective of the Rāmopākhyāna of the Mahābhārata (or vice versa). Nicolas

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12   Fernando Wulff Alonso, "Supernatural Conflicts, Unanimities, and Indra in the Main Story and Substories of the Mahābhārata," 206–207.

13   Adam Bowles, "Reflections on the Upākhyānas in the Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata," 327.

14   "In the Mahābhārata, this discursive structure is doubled, since in the narrative frame embedding Bhīṣma's counsels, King Janamejaya is receiving precisely the same (or almost the same) wise counsel from the brahman Vaiśaṃpāyana. (And we might ask in a manner that poses the problem of the context of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata's composition and reception, who were the homological parities of these royal listeners?) The point, however, is to simply note that the stories told in the Ādhp, which in many cases are animal fables, are 'mirrors' being held up to potentates 'in' the narrative, and most likely 'outside' of the narrative, too. And, if their narratives are not so closely tied to the 'narrative' of the Mahābhārata, they still invite readings against their varied Mahābhārata contexts together with reflections on the art of governance." Ibid., 328.

Dejenne's contribution takes us back to the person probably responsible for the contemporary surge of interest in the upākhyānas: Madeleine Biardeau, whose work on the Nalopākhyāna Hiltebeitel credits with triggering his own reflections on the upākhyānas. T.P. Mahadevan, in contrast, prefers to look further back: at the possible Vedic origins of the Mahābhārata's composers, who he thinks may have written themselves into the epic as the eponymous *uñchavṛtti brāhmaṇa* of the Mudgala Upākhyāna. Two concluding pieces take us back to the status of the upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata's overarching project: Simon Brodbeck's "Upākhyānas and the Harivaṁśa," which discusses how the various theories of the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas might apply to its *khila* or appendix, the Harivaṁśa, and Alf Hiltebeitel's "The Geography of the Upākhyānas," which looks at how the Mahābhārata might be using upākhyānas to "to construct what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a 'chronotope.'" More specifically, he asks, "how do upākhyānas function in the epic with regard to cosmology—including not only space but time, and time not just with regard to the main story's pasts and futures, but what the Mahābhārata might mean by its primary genre term, *itihāsa* or 'history'?"[15] As Brodbeck's contribution is the final article in this sequence of essays that take a substantive look at specific upākhyānas, it seems appropriate to take a closer look at his conclusions here. Summing up his analysis of the Dhanya-Upākhyāna, the upākhyāna that in terms of its placement in the epic is located at the extreme end from the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, Brodbeck notes:

> This being the Mahābhārata's last upākhyāna, it is significant that it concerns the extension of a string of utterance, from a riverine origin, on and on in a series that ends importantly and precisely with Kṛṣṇa the marvel and the blessing and, along with him, with the *dakṣiṇā*. In this way, Nārada's trek is deliberately made to stand alongside our own trek as Mahābhārata readers. It is as if the passage through the upākhyānas were to stand for the passage through the text as a whole. For the *āścarya* of this upākhyāna is also the *āścarya* of this *parvan*, the Viṣṇuparvan or Āścaryaparvan, which is mentioned last and cryptically (as *adbhutaṃ mahat* and *prakīrtitam*) in the list of the one hundred and one Mahābhārata parvans (1.2.69, 233). Thus the importance of Nārada continuing to the end of his treasure hunt emphasizes the importance of getting to the end of the Mahābhārata .... As Biardeau said, "You have to read the whole thing"—for the *dakṣiṇā* is distributed only at the completion of the rite, and only at the completion of the utterance.[16]

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15   Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Geography of the Upākhyānas," 428.
16   Simon Brodbeck, "Upākhyānas and the Harivaṁśa," 420–21.

At the time Alf and I launched the Mahābhārata Upākhyāna Project, we could neither have anticipated that the responses would be so positive nor, indeed, the wealth of evidence that would be raised in support of the project's thesis. We had simply been formulating our ideas on the upākhyānas independently of each other (though, of course, in dialogue) and thought that it would be interesting to see what our colleagues thought about the topic. My own work was based on the study of specific segments of the epic, segments I had begun to identify as imbuing the epic with "'Archimedean points' for musings about events with the 'detachment' implicit in wisdom."[17] These included the Mudgala-Upākhyāna (3.246–47), the Jāpaka-Upākhyāna (12.189–93), and the Uñchavṛtty-Upākhyāna (12.340–53) (as a trio of upākhyānas concerned with the *uñchavṛtti* brahmans, the ultimate fate and message of the epic); the Rāma-Upākhyāna (3.257–76) and the Nārāyaṇīye Hayaśira-Upākhyāna (12.335) (as a duo of upākhyānas concerned with the themes of incarnation and descent); and the Ambā-Upākhyāna (5.170–93) and the Tripura-Upākhyāna (8.24) (two upākhyānas I found fascinating for their clues to the theology of the Goddess and Rudra, and their roles in inaugurating the destruction of the Kurus). On the basis of my reading of these upākhyānas, I had tentatively advanced the hypothesis that

> They [the upākhyānas] appear somewhat extraneous to the Kuru narrative, which is mistakenly taken to be the "main" narrative, charac-terized by a straightforward tale of heroes. The upākhyānas [, however,] function as powers function in mathematics: K^u. They so completely change the text that it would be hasty to think they can be nothing more than random interpolations. The main narrative depends on these texts to multiply its meanings .... [Indeed,] we begin to understand why the upākhyānas are special "intensive" segments of meaning that *constitute*— not *change* the epic. And this meaningful, pedagogical, and complex narrative is the epic as we have it: the epic as it is preserved in the textual tradition and in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this text in its Indian cultural context.[18]

But how or why the other upākhyānas did so was an open question, requiring wider investigations. Fortunately, thanks to the contributors to this volume, we are now in a position to understand this issue more clearly. We are now begin-ning to see, if not a complete upākhyāna map, at least the first outlines of one:

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17   Vishwa Adluri, "The Divine Androgyne: Crossing Gender and Breaking Hegemonies in the Ambā-Upākhyāna of the Mahābhārata," 281.

18   Ibid., 280–81.

a new way of navigating the epic, using not the so-called heroic epic as our guide[19] but the epic's own musings about itself and its characters, provided self-reflexively via its narration of its upākhyānas. Indeed, as I received and edited the articles for this volume, I was struck by the similarity between the contributors' conclusions. In launching the project, Alf and I had been clear that there were to be no dogmas. Everyone was free to interpret the topic as they liked; everything was open to question (including the hypothesis of the meaningfulness of the upākhyānas); there would be no guidelines for thinking. Yet, surprisingly enough, almost all of the scholars who contributed to the project arrived at fairly similar conclusions: (1) the upākhyānas *are* meaningful; (2) their inclusion (or addition, if one prefers) in the epic follows a design; (3) together, they yield an *argument*; and (4) this argument shows the Mahābhārata to be a highly self-conscious work of literature, a dharma text from its inception and not a Kuru epic with didactic interpolations, as had long been suspected.[20] These conclusions were often extended beyond what Alf in his 2005 article had defined as strictly upākhyānas. It seems that all sorts of didactic and philosophic, reflective, and recapitulating material was now being seen as part of the "main" Kuru narrative, undermining the claim of this narrative to being the main theme of the epic.

As the "last frontier in theorizing an integral *Mahābhārata*,"[21] the upākhyānas thus compel our attention. They compel our attention both because of what they contain in themselves and because they are *part of what it means to read the epic* (and the coda "as a whole" is only necessary because so far so

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19   This reading of the epic, long the backbone of Western scholarly approaches, has become untenable in light of much new work, especially the reconstruction of its genesis undertaken in Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). While the idea of an original heroic epic with later accretions may have given an earlier generation of Orientalists, unfamiliar with and untrained in Indian philosophy, literature, and poetics as they were, a handle on this gigantic epic, it is scarcely credible when present-generation scholars revive Lassen's hypothesis of invading white Aryans or Holtzmann's hypothesis of an "inversion" in the epic's sympathies. Fortunately, the number of scholars still searching for, as Sukthankar puts it, "the lost paradise of the primitive Kṣatriya tale of love and war," is now in the single digits and still dwindling. V.S. Sukthankar, *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata* (Bombay: Asiatic Society, 1957), 31.

20   For a brief overview of the roots of this suspicion, see Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, "Introduction," in *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), xi–xxxvi and see also Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, "Introduction," in *When the Goddess Was a Woman: Mahābhārata Ethnographies, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), xi–xxxiii.

21   Hiltebeitel, "The Geography of the Upākhyānas," 428.

many have tried to read the epic without bothering to read it as a whole[22]). If Brodbeck's observations are correct, the upākhyānas are important not only in some abstract sense but specifically *important to us*, that is, to how we are to interpret and "take" the narrative. It may be that the paradigmatic recipient of the upākhyānas is not Yudhiṣṭhira (who, according to Hiltebeitel's calculations, is either the primary or secondary auditor of forty-nine of them), but the reader of the Mahābhārata himself. Like Yudhiṣṭhira, he is meant to undergo a pedagogy in what it means to be "the Dharma king" and, like Yudhiṣṭhira, he is meant to understand that the narrative of what happens to him may ultimately be less important than the narratives of how he can take and what he should think about the narrative of what befalls him. A Mahābhārata without its upākhyānas would not only be an abridgment in the sense of being a shorter version but it would also be an abridgment in the sense of being a Mahābhārata shorn of its pedagogic, philosophic, and transformative functions; it would be an epic that had lost its stated purpose: of being in size and weight, a text rivaling the four Vedas as a source of salvation.[23]

This volume, with its fourteen chapters arranged sequentially,[24] of course can only make a beginning with this project of reading the Mahābhārata as a

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22   Reading the epic "as a whole" obviously does not imply that scholars have to have read the *whole epic* or that they can rule out the possibility of surprise, of wonder, of bafflement, of things that appear not to fit, and so on. If that were the case, then they would not be reading the epic; at most, they would be rereading it. By "as a whole," I simply mean the hermeneutic principle that one has to assume the unity of the epic if one is to read it as a literary work. Even if one wishes to maintain that certain sections were added later to the epic, one still has to understand why just these additions in just these places were made and this means, one still has to approach the epic as a literary unity. The task of understanding cannot be circumvented, as text-historical scholars have tried to do for so much of their history, by saying, "well, then, they added these sections because they wished to write their ideology (or theology or history or sectarian views) into the text, and they did it here because it was convenient (or they were lazy, or they were cunning, or they were careless and overlooked the possibility that eight hundred years later astute scholars from Germany would identify the insertion and lay bare their subterfuge)."

23   See 1.1.208a–209c for the story of the Mahābhārata's weighing against the four Vedas:
      catvāra ekato vedā bhārataṁ caikam ekataḥ |
      samāgataiḥ surarṣibhis tulām āropitaṁ purā |
      mahattve ca gurutve ca dhriyamāṇaṁ tato 'dhikam ||
      mahattvād bhāravattvāc ca mahābhāratam ucyate |
      niruktam asya yo veda sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate ||.

24   This is true only of the central eight contributions. The first two contributions, as mentioned, are theoretical and contexualizing essays. Then follow eight contributions from the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna (1.62–69) to the Kapota- (12.141–45) and Kṛtaghna-Upākhyānas

work of both argument and design, namely, as literature. It offers the reader a first orientation to the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas, their placement, their names, their significance, and how they tie up with each other. But beyond that, there are many things that remain to be discovered about the upākhyānas: how they relate to the epic's stated project of being a dharma and a *mokṣa* text,[25] how they make it possible for the Mahābhārata to claim encyclopedic comprehensivity,[26] how they enable the Mahābhārata to expand in its various local incarnations while still retaining the same basic narrative architecture,[27] and so on. After the failure of the oral epic and Indo-European approaches to the Mahābhārata, which arose from the German Indologists' need to posit a special proximity between their country and ancient India that would confirm their status as privileged interpreters and translators of Indian Antiquity,[28] the upākhyānas offer the best approach for rethinking what the Mahābhārata is and how it might live up to its claim to containing encyclopedic wisdom—the *mataṁ kṛtsnaṁ* (Mahābhārata 1.55.2c; 1.56.12c), as it likes to call itself, of the seer Vyāsa. It is with this hope in mind that we, the thirteen contributors and participants in the Mahābhārata Upākhyāna Project, would like to present this volume to the reader.

(12.162–67). Two historical contributions (one on Madeleine Biardeau's reflections on the upākhyānas and another on the *uñchavṛtti brāhmaṇas* of the Mahābhārata) round out this collection. There follows Brodbeck's essay on upākhyānas in the Harivaṁśa, a sort of supplement or annex to the Mahābhārata. Finally, Hiltebeitel's article on the geography of the upākhyānas exploring how the Mahābhārata uses the upākhyānas to imagine or construct what Bakhtin has called a "chronotope" was chosen as the concluding essay in this collection both because it forms an appropriate conclusion to this volume and because it offers hints to new avenues of research that might be pursued profitably.

25 arthaśāstram idaṁ puṇyaṁ dharmaśāstram idaṁ param |
    mokṣaśāstram idaṁ proktaṁ vyāsenāmitabuddhinā || (Mahābhārata 1.56.21)

26 dharme cārthe ca kāme ca mokṣe ca bharatarṣabha |
    yad ihāsti tad anyatra yan nehāsti na tat kva cit || (Mahābhārata 1.56.33, 18.5.38)

27 See Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism* (London: Anthem Press, 2016).

28 See Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*, especially chapters 1–2 and see also chapter 5.

Not without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics

Alf Hiltebeitel

This chapter on India's two Sanskrit epics, the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa*,* will address four topics:[1] how they have been defined by scholars and by themselves; how each conceptualizes the relationship between its whole and its parts, and particularly its subtales;[2] how subtales figure in their main stories; and how each creates grand narrative out of this configuration. This article favors the priority of the Mahābhārata and will be presented from that standpoint.[3]

Epic Cues and Scholarly Views

The Mahābhārata describes itself as "sprung from the oceanic mind (*rnanaḥ-sāgarasambhūtām*)" (1.53.34a) of its author Vyāsa and to be his "entire thought" (1.1.23; 1.55.2) in a text of a hundred thousand couplets (*ślokas*) (1.56.13). Although no known edition reaches that number, when the Mahābhārata describes texts of that size it denotes their originary vastness. As one lost prototype,[4] it mentions that aeons ago, seven sages known as the Citra-śikhaṇḍins, "having become of a single thought, promulgated[5] a supreme

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1   Many of the ideas in this chapter, along with fuller synopses of both epics, appear as separate entries on each epic in Stanley Wolpert, ed., *Encyclopedia of India* (New York: Scribners/Macmillan, 2006). I thank the editor for permission to develop that material further for this article.

2   I will favor the translation "subtale" for *upākhyāna,* with perhaps a hint of subtext.

3   I agree with Madeleine Biardeau's chronological positioning of the Mahābhārata as older than the Rāmāyaṇa (Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002], 700–701 and ff., 726; *Le Rāmāyaṇa de Vālmīki* [Paris: Gallimard, 1999], xxxiii–xxxv, though I see a shorter time between them. See Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 15–31, 165; see also Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Emergence of Kāvya out of the Two Sanskrit Epics," paper presented at the International Seminar on the Origins of Mahākāvya, Università degli Studi di Milano, June 4–5, 2004.

4   It was destined to be lost after the golden age reign of King Vasu Uparicara (12.322.48).

5   For *proktam,* see Christopher Z. Minkowski, "Janamejaya's *Sattra* and Ritual Structure," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 3 (1989): 402, 411–12 concerning *pra + vac/.proktaḥ* as

treatise (*tair ekamatibhir bhūtvāyatproktaṃ śāstram uttamam*) consisting of a hundred thousand verses, from which proceeds dharma for the entire loom[6] of the worlds" (*kṛtaṃ śatasahasraṃ hi ślokānām idam uttamam / lokatantrasya kṛtsnasya yasmād dharmaḥ pravartate*; Mahābhārata 12.322.26d and 36). Even grander, it recalls a "treatise" (*śāstra*) by Brahmā of originally one hundred thousand adhyāyas or chapters (12.59.29)—there are about two thousand adhyāyas in the Mahābhārata[7]—that underwent four abridgments: by Śiva to ten thousand chapters, Indra to five thousand, Bṛhaspati to three thousand, and Kāvya Uśanas to one thousand (59.86–91). Indeed, amid a wider discussion of abridgments in classical Indian literature, Sylvain Lévi points out that in claiming one hundred thousand verses,[8] the Mahābhārata would have come into "competition with Buddhism," since the designation "inevitably calls to our mind … the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā.* For passing into current usage the [latter] work must have been submitted to successive reductions to twenty-five thousand, eight thousand (*aṣṭasahasrika,* which is the classical form of the treatise), seven hundred, and five hundred lines."[9]

To describe the Mahābhārata's magnitude, many also cite a verse that occurs twice—once near its beginning and once near its end—that claims, "Whatever is here may be found elsewhere; what is not here does not exist anywhere" (Mahābhārata 1.56.33; 18.5.38). One strain of scholarship takes this verse to suggest that by the time the Mahābhārata reached its "extant" mass, it would have

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having Vedic overtones, with "the sense of an original utterance"; cf. Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 98–99.

6 "Loom" for *tantra,* or more prosaically, perhaps, "course."

7 The Pune Critical Edition has 1995 "chapters" or "lessons" (*adhyāyas*).

8 Lévi seems to suggest that the designation "hundred thousand-verse" "had been consecrated since the fifth century," citing its appearance on a fifth century inscription. But that inscription would be quoting Mahābhārata 1.56.13 and 12.331.2, where the claim is made in the epic itself. There is no reason to think that the Mahābhārata number was reached only by the fifth century and announced at that point.

9 Sylvain Lévi, "Tato Jayam Udirayet," trans. L.G. Khare, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 1 (1917): 13–20 (translation slightly modified). Lévi's *Prajñāpāramitā* sequencing is uncertain; see Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960). My view would be that his instinct is likelier for the Mahābhārata*,* with which the Buddhist texts would have "caught up." On Lévi's hypothesis, the *Śatasāhasrikā* would have "lent itself to this process without difficulty: it was only necessary to cut down the tautologies, the redundancies, and the repetitions which swelled it and gave it an enormous bulk …. In its steady effort for the beautiful [or perfect], India has manifestly passed through the intermediate stage of the colossal. Before relishing and realizing the beauty that consists in a harmonious equilibrium of lines, the mind of man first permits itself to be carried away by mere mass." Lévi, "Tato Jayam Udirayet," 19. Evolutionary claims aside, Lévi's conclusion could be said to anticipate what this article has to say about the more local stance of Vālmīki vis-à-vis Vyāsa.

grown from oral origins into a massive "encyclopedia"—a text of such monumental self-sufficiency that it could have considered itself to have absorbed everything that would have haphazardly come its way as a reflex of its snowball descent through centuries.[10] Many such scholars cite another verse in support of this theory, which says that Vyāsa "composed a *Bhārata*-collection [*saṃhitā*] of twenty-four thousand couplets without the subtales [*upākhyānair vinā*]; so much is called *Bhārata* by the wise" (1.1.61).[11] Although a hundred thousand-verse *Bhārata* is also mentioned (12.331.2), translators have sought to help the developmental argument along by adding that Vyāsa composed this shorter version "first"[12] or "originally."[13] But the verse says nothing about anything coming first. Since "without" implies a subtraction, and since the passage describes Vyāsa's afterthoughts, the twenty-four thousand-verse *Bhārata* would probably

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10   This approach gained authoritative status in Edward Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1969; first published in 1902 by Charles Scribner's Sons) and has recently been slightly refined (bardic background, a post-Aśokan first written redaction, and a normative redaction under the Guptas yielding a "library") in James L. Fitzgerald, "Mahābhārata," in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (New York: Routledge, 2004), 52–55, 68–70. For counter-arguments, see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*: that the epic would have been composed over a shorter period (1–31), with nothing required from the Guptas (ibid., 25–26); and that the term "encyclopedia" has been misleadingly applied to the Mahābhārata, particularly with reference to the "Whatever is here may be found elsewhere …" verse, which, rather than defining the exhaustiveness of the text, is pitched toward an "ontological debate" (162–63).

11   Sukthankar illustrates the lengths to which scholars have gone in fitting the 24,000 verse "Bhārata without upākhyanas" into their theories of the text, notably his theory of Bhṛguization: "in my opinion we should have no hesitation in concluding that *in our version of the Mahābhārata there is a conscious—nay deliberate—stitching together of the Bhārata legends with the Bhārgava stories* (author's italics). The question how precisely this Bhārgava element, which we find concentrated mostly in the *upākhyānas* came into the cycle of the Bhārata legends … is largely a matter of speculation. Even according to the traditional view, it was *not* the work of Vyāsa, the reputed author of the Mahābhārata, because the diaskeuasts have been fortunately frank enough to admit that *his* work, the Bhārata, which originally consisted merely of 24,000 stanzas, had no episodes to speak of." V.S. Sukthankar, "Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata: A Text-Historical Study," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 18, no. 1 (1936): 70. There is nothing demonstrably "traditional" about this view of Vyāsa, and the frankness of the diaskeuasts is a fancy. On "Bhṛguization," see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 105–18.

12   J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 1. *1. The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1 and 22; cf. Aurobindo Ghosh, "Notes on the Mahābhārata," in *On the Mahabharata* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1991), 9.

13   Kisari Mohan Ganguli, trans. The *Mahabharata*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970 [1884–96]), 6.

be a digest or abridgment[14] that knowers of the *Mahābhārata* could consult or cite for purposes of performance from a written text.[15] Another passage tells us that the divine Seers (*surarṣis*) once gathered to weigh the "*Bhārata*" on a scale against the Four Vedas; when the "*Bhārata*" proved heavier in both size and weight, the Seers dubbed it the "*Mahābhārata*" (1.1.208–9), thereby providing

14   David Shulman, "Toward a Historical Poetics of the Sanskrit Epics," in *The Wisdom of Poets: Studies in Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25, seeing the fallacy of arguing that the 24,000-verse "*Bhārata*" came first, takes the verse to imply that Vyāsa "compressed" the 100,000 verses "by eliminating the various minor stories (*upākhyāna*) into a mere 24,000 verses." But first credit on this recognition may go to Sastri (see P.P.S. Sastri, ed. *The Mahābhārata* (*Southern Recension*) *Critically Edited by P.P.S. Sastri* [Madras: Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons, Madras, 1931], x–xi), who states that the verses in question in his attempt to critically edit the Southern Recension "unmistakably state that the computation of the Mahābhārata is 100,000 verses if counted along with the minor narratives, and only 24,000 verses if the minor narratives are excluded. It is not at all meant that 24,000 verses alone were originally composed and the remaining 76,000 verses were added later to complete the 100,000 verses."

15   Fitzgerald still asks "at what stage was a putative *Bhārata* story recast as the '*Mahā*' *Bhārata* …?" ("Negotiating the Shape of 'Scripture'," 272), and in a footnote to this continuing question cites "the purported historical observation of Vyāsa at 1.1.61 … [as] evidence that at least some in ancient India distinguished larger and smaller versions of this epic" (ibid., 272, n. 19). While not claiming directly the shorter *Bhārata's* precedence, he implies it (it would be no use to his developmental argument were it not earlier). Suggesting by the move to a footnote that this *Bhārata* might be the same as "a putative Bhārata story" that would have this priority over the *Mahābhārata,* he ignores the question of what kind of text it would be "without the *upākhyanas.*" But that element of the verse in question is where one must begin (as Sukthankar did, claiming that the original "had no episodes to speak of"; see n. 11 above) in considering how the epic "distinguished larger and smaller versions of" *itself* (rather than gratuitously attributing the distinction to "some in ancient India," implying "some Brahmans," whom Fitzgerald frequently invokes with the suggestion that sociological divisions would have produced the textual variations in which he usually sees additions). Fitzgerald tries to relate 1.1.61 to his argument for centuries of sequential development in the composition of Books 12 and 13, and to explain "sectors" of the Bhārgava Rāma dossier by associating the Vaiśaṁpāyana and Ugraśravas frames with two of "four, or more, distinct poetic or redactional efforts" (James L. Fitzgerald, "The Rama Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the *Mahābhārata*: A New Survey of Rāma Jāmadagnya in the Pune Text," in *Stages and Transitions: Temporal and Historical Frameworks in Epic and Purāṇic Literature*, Proceedings of the Second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, Aug. 1999, ed. Mary Brockington [Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002], 115, 99–100, 104–7, 112–13)—an opportunistic (I believe) association between frames and redactions also made by Sukthankar and some others (see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 105, n. 47 and above n. 11).

a double "etymology" (*nirukta*) for one and the same huge text.[16] Yet despite nothing surviving of this shorter *Bhārata,* scholars have used it to argue for an originally oral bardic and heroic story that would have lacked not only subtales but frame stories, tales about the author both in the frames and elsewhere, didactic additions, and devotional passages with "divinized" heroes. Some have assumed that Kṛṣṇa would have been "divinized" before the introduction of still "later" passages glorifying Śiva and even the Goddess; and there were even those who wanted to argue that Kṛṣṇa was not original to the earliest bardic version. Although these ideas dominated Western scholarship only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they are still vigorous. It is, however, no longer possible to find a serious scholar who wants to argue for an originally Kṛṣṇa-less epic, and there are now those who see principles of ongoing design as guiding the Mahābhārata's agglutination rather than historical accident.

New developments have thus complicated this profile. These include inter-textual studies positioning the Mahābhārata in relation to both Indo-European and Indian texts; genre study, including the history of *kāvya* or Sanskrit "poetry" composed according to classical aesthetic norms; debate on the likely period of the Mahābhārata's composition in written form; and the completion of the Pune Critical Edition, along with wider recognition of the Mahābhārata's design. For a notable result of the Mahābhārata's Pune Critical Edition is its establishment of a textual "archetype." There remains debate as to whether this archetype takes us back to the text's first composition, or to a later redaction that would put a final stamp on centuries of cumulative growth. This essay favors the first option. In either case, this archetype includes a design of eighteen Books or *parvans,*[17] nearly all the epic's one hundred "little books" or

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16   Cf. 1.56.31: "The *Mahābhārata,* they say, is the great Birth of the Bhāratas (*bharatānām mahoj janma*)*:* he who knows this etymology [*nirukta*] is rid of all his sins."

17   Schlingloff's contrary claims (Dieter Schlingloff, "The Oldest Extant Parvan-list of the Mahābhārata," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 [1969]: 334–38) about the Mahābhārata's "oldest extant parvan-list" based on the Kuṣāṇa period "Spitzer manu-script" found in east Turkestan have been revived by Franco (Eli Franco, *The Spitzer Man-uscript: The Earliest Philosophical Manuscript in Sanskrit*, 2 vols. [Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004]), with some additional informa-tion and suggestions: that it may have come from "the Great Gandhara area" and been written using a broad-nibbed copper pen (vol. 1, 11); that it is probably a Sarvāstivādin text (19) from "around the second half of the third century" (33); that it included a refutation of God in one fragment (18–19); and that its reference to some Mahābhārata units and brief encapsulation of the Rāmāyaṇa "may have been occasioned by a discussion of the Buddha's omniscience" (17). If the last two things are true, it hardly seems that the Bud-dha's omniscience was directed toward the "extant" totality of either epic. Indeed, not

upaparvans (the list of these at 1.2.30–70 problematically includes as numbers 99 and 100 parts of the Harivaṃśa as the last two), and its often adroit adhyāya breaks. Similar developments apply to *Rāmāyaṇa* studies.

Traditional Rāmāyaṇa scholarship has been marked by what Robert Goldman calls a "zeal"[18] to demonstrate that most or all of this epic's first book is late. Books 2–6 are taken to supply most or all of the poem's "'genuine' portions," and the closing Book 7 is taken as axiomatically late. For such scholars, Books 2–6 have presented the possibility of making a case that they narrate a largely consecutive heroic story of a man who is for the most part not yet "divinized."

This view has also been challenged over the last several decades. Pivotal to this rethinking has been the completion of the Rāmāyaṇa's Baroda Critical Edition.[19] Most of the key passages that speak of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu make the Critical Edition's cut. The lateness of Rāma's "divinization" has thus been challenged by Sheldon Pollock[20] and supported by Goldman and

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knowing the context, we cannot know what the units were listed for, why both parvans and subparvans were selected, why in some cases they are apparently listed out of sequence and in others with one inclusive of another, why the Mahābhārata is digested by (selected) components and the Rāmāyaṇa as a (minimalist) consecutive narrative, or even that the four fragments mentioning these features were all on the same page. No Mahābhārata scholar using the find as evidence of a once-shorter text (see John L. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998], 131–32; Fitzgerald, "Negotiating the Shape of 'Scripture'," 270–71, nn. 15 and 17 has tried to explain what kind of "*Bhārata*" it would have been with the odd assortment of units mentioned. With such uncertainties, notions that the Virāṭā- and Anuśāsana-Parvans would not yet have been extant (Schlingloff, "The Oldest Extant Parvan-list of the Mahābhārata," 338; Franco, *The Spitzer Manuscript*, vol. 1, 10; Brockington and Fitzgerald as cited) must be taken cum grano salis. Regarding Book 4, the only evidence is that no Virāṭaparvan is mentioned between a unit beginning with *a* or *ā*, for which Schlingloff ("The Oldest Extant Parvan-list of the Mahābhārata," 338) proposes *a(raṇeyaṃ)* "or perhaps *a(jagara)*"—both subparvans of Book 3— and (*ni*)*ryyaṇaṃ* for the *Abhiniryāṇa* subparvan of Book 5. But *a* could provide *a(jñātavāsa)*, the "residence incognito" widely used to describe the Virāṭaparvan (see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Śiva, the Goddess and the Disguises of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī," *History of Religions* 20 [1980]: 148, n. 4), or *a(bhimanyu-vivāha)*, the main *adhyāya* name (4.66–67) in Book 4's concluding subparvan.

18   Robert P. Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman, trans. *Bālakāṇḍa*, vol. 1 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63.

19   G.H. Bhatt and U.P. Shah, eds., *The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: Critical Edition*. 7 vols. (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960–1975).

20   Sheldon I. Pollock, "Ātmānam mānuṣaṃ manye: Dharmākūtam on the Divinity of Rāma," *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 33 (1984): 505–28.

Sally Sutherland Goldman.[21] Pollock's argument is that Rāma's *seeming* humanity is a structural piece of the story threaded into the poem along with a boon obtained by Rāvaṇa from Brahmā: that of invulnerability to death from all different classes of beings other than humans, whom he omitted because he disdained them. Rāma must thus be born as a man to slay Rāvaṇa; more than this, he must think he is a man until he accomplishes this goal. The fact that Rāma keeps fairly well to this sense of himself until he has killed Rāvaṇa would then be a feature of the narrative rather than a way of disqualifying the boon passage, which occurs in Book 7, and the passage in Book 6 where, after killing Rāvaṇa, Rāma's divinity is finally revealed to him by Brahmā.

Pollock[22] and Biardeau[23] have also introduced a consideration based on comparison with the Mahābhārata and the fruits of its Pune Critical Edition. Up to Book 2, each epic follows a similar archetypal design, with (in partly my terms) each Book 1 introducing Frames, Origins, and the Youths of the Heroes, and each Book 2 describing a pivotal Court Intrigue. This approach can be carried further: Book 3: Forest (in the title of both epics' third books); Book 4: Inversions (the Pāṇḍavas' topsy-turvy disguises in Virāṭa's kingdom of Matsya, "Fish"; Rāma's engagement with the topsy-turvy world of monkeys, in whose capital, Kiṣkindhā, the lead monkeys play out a reverse image of Rāma's own story); Book 5: "Effort" (*udyoga*; Rāmāyaṇa 5.10.24; 33.66 uses this Mahābhārata term) made in Preparation for War (by both sides in the Mahābhārata; by Hanumān and all the monkeys in the Rāmāyaṇa) with Kṛṣṇa and Hanumān going as Divine Messengers into the Enemy Camp where there are Attempts to Capture Them; War Books (Rāmāyaṇa 6; Mahābhārata 6–11), and Denouments (Rāmāyaṇa 7; Mahābhārata 12–18). As we shall see, this is only bare bones that can be further fleshed out. The Rāmāyaṇa's term for its Books is *kāṇḍa,* meaning a "section" of a stalk of a plant, such as bamboo, between its joints; the Mahābhārata's is *parvan,* which can mean the joints themselves of such a plant. Together they could describe a complete stalk of a noded plant. Such closeness of design cannot be accidental. In favoring the priority of the Mahābhārata, this article holds that Rāmāyaṇa Books 1 and 7 are integral to its earliest design

21   Robert P. Goldman, trans. *Sundarakāṇḍa*, vol. 5 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

22   Sheldon I. Pollock, trans. *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, vol. 2 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert P. Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 38–42.

23   Madeleine Biardeau, "Some Remarks on the Links between the Epics, the Purāṇas and their Vedic Sources," in *Studies in Hinduism: Vedism and Hinduism*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 77–119.

and that the Rāmāyaṇa poet is not only familiar with the Mahābhārata's design but intent upon refining it.

Such a relation can be exemplified by the two epics' frame stories, which are opened at the beginning of the first Books and left pending into the denouments. In both epics the frames are three-tiered. In the Mahābhārata, there are in fact three frames. Initially, Vyāsa recites the epic to his five Brahman disciples, first to his son Śuka and then to the other four, including Vaiśampāyana (Mahābhārata 1.1.63). Second, Vaiśaṁpāyana recites it at Vyāsa's bidding to King Janamejaya, a descendant of the Pāṇḍavas, at his snake sacrifice so that he can hear the story of his ancestors. And third, the Bard Ugraśravas, who overheard Vaiśaṁpāyana's narration, brings it to Śaunaka and the Ṛsis of the Naimiṣa Forest and recites it there in 18 Books (2.3.71).[24] Unlike the Mahābhārata's three frame stories, which present a serial layering of the first three recitals of supposedly the same text that are scattered over its first 56 chapters and resumed in late portions of its twelfth Book, the Rāmāyaṇa frame, in only its first four chapters known as the *upodghāta* or preamble, presents two progressive unfoldings of the story—the first by the sage Nārada to the hermit Vālmīki; the second by Vālmīki himself, now a poet—that trace its ripening into the third full unfolding, the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa itself.

In the first, in answer to Vālmīki's opening question whether there is an ideal man in the world today (Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.2–5), Nārada satisfies the question with a brief and entirely laudatory account of Rāma's virtues and adult life, presumably to date (1.1.7–76). Saying the minimum about Rāma's killing of the monkey Vālin (1.1.49, 55), Nārada hardly hints at anything problematic in Rāma's life and omits both Sītā's fire ordeal and her banishment. Among the great Ṛsis or seers Rāma encounters, he mentions only Vasiṣṭha (29) and Agastya (33–34).

In the second *sarga,* once Nārada has left, Vālmīki witnesses the cries of grief of a female Krauñca bird (probably the large monogamous sarus crane over the slaying of her mate by a "cruel hunter,"[25] and is provoked into the spontaneous utterance that creates "verse" (and thus poetry) out of "grief" (*śloka* out of *śoka*; 1.2.9–15). As this verse is said to mark the origins of poetry, the Rāmāyaṇa is called the *ādikāvya* or "first poem"—a term that does not occur in the Baroda Critical Edition, though it probably should since it occurs

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24   The eighteen parvans are mentioned again at 1.2.244ab toward the end of the Parvasaṃgraha or "Summaries of the Books"—as if to say that what we get is this Naimiṣa Forest edition.

25   See Julia Leslie, "A Bird Bereaved: The Identity and Significance of Vālmīki's Krauñca," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 26 (1998): 455–87.

in a universally attested *sarga* where, after Sītā has vanished into the earth, the god Brahmā encourages Rāma to hear the rest of this *ādikāvya* (7, Appendix I, No. 13, lines 31–39). Now, however, the same Brahmā appears (22–36) to prompt Vālmīki to tell the story he has just heard from Nārada, and gives him the insight to see what he did not know and what is still yet to happen—with, moreover, the confirmation that his poem will endure so long as the rivers and mountains last on earth and that it will all be true (1.2.33–35). Brahmā thus assures Vālmīki that he will know things omitted from Nārada's encomium. Upon Brahmā's vanishing, Vālmīki now conceives the idea of composing "the entire Rāmāyaṇa poem [*kāvya*] in verses such as these" (1.2.40d), that is, such as the *śloka* he has just uttered.

In the third *sarga,* Vālmīki meditatively enters into this project for the first time (1.3.2) and has a sort of preview of the story (3–28): not a retrospective table of contents like the Parvasaṃgraha (PS)—the lengthy "Summaries of the Books" that forms the Mahābhārata's second adhyāya and second *upaparvan*—but a kind of first glimpse and unfolding of what his poem will contain. Here he provides the first reference to some of Rāma's encounters with important Ṛṣis (he will hear Viśvāmitra's stories [4], face Rāma Jāmadagnya [5], and hear Bharadvāja's instructions [8]). Most important, while adding nothing problematic on the slaying of Vālin (15–16) and without having mentioned Sītā's fire ordeal, he closes with Sītā's banishment (28).

Then, looking back upon the poem's completion, the fourth *sarga* hints at the context in which Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa will finally be told by the twins Kuśa and Lava to their father Rāma. Just as information on the Mahābhārata's frame is resumed with further revelations about Vyāsa, Śuka and his co-disciples, and the Naimiṣa Forest is in Book 12,[26] the Rāmāyaṇa's frame will be picked up in Book 7 when Kuśa and Lava do just that: pick up the frame in the Naimiṣa Forest (Rāmāyaṇa 7.82,14b)![27] The main difference is that when the Rāmāyaṇa frame is reentered in Book 7, it is not just a matter of further revelations about the composition that are difficult to relate to the main story. Vālmīki's dramatic entry into the main story presents the occasion to reveal the poetic heart of the whole poem through its effects on its hero and its heroine. Nonetheless, in both epics there is a moment where the author emerges from the frames to speak directly to the epic's main listener. In the Rāmāyaṇa this occurs at this

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26   In stories about Śuka including the Śukotpatti or "Birth of Śuka" (Mahābhārata 12.310–20), and in the Nārāyaṇīya (12.321–39); see the final section of this chapter "Upākhyāna Precedence and the Essence of them All."

27   The site where the twins recite the Rāmāyaṇa at Rāma's *aśvamedha* sacrifice. On the coincidence of the sites for the third narrations, which suggests a nod to Mahābhārata precedence, see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 285–86.

climactic moment when Vālmīki addresses Rāma and confirms Sītā's veracity before she enters the earth. In the Mahābhārata, in a much less noticed but still quite dramatic passage, it occurs in the one time that Vyāsa addresses Janamejaya directly to tell the subtale (*upākhyāna*) of the Horse's Head in answer to a culminating question of the Nārāyaṇīya.[28]

Vālmīki thus gets a triple inspiration—from Nārada, the *krauñcī,* and Brahmā. Yet the *upodghāta* leaves us in suspense as to when Sītā came to his ashram. Was it before or after the Krauñca bird incident? The poem never tells whether Vālmīki's response to the female bird comes before or after his familiarity with Sītā's grief at her banishment. But in either case, now that Vālmīki knows the whole story from Brahmā, he could connect Sītā's banishment with the cry of the *krauñcī* whenever she arrived. What we do know is that, having had pity (*karuṇā*, Rāmāyaṇa 1.2.11d) for the female bird, Vālmīki will compose his poem with pity as its predominant aesthetic flavor (*aṅgīrasa*) in relation to grief (*śoka*) as its underlying *sthāyibhāva* or "stable aesthetic emotion." The Mahābhārata provides no such developmental inspiration story for its author Vyāsa, although I believe the father-son story of Vyāsa and Śuka is its analogue.[29] Even though Ugraśravas seems to tell the Pauloma and Āstīka subparvans on his own, there is no suggestion that they are anything but the "entire thought" of Vyāsa, and there is no hint at any growth process either in the poet's mind or in the performances by either of the narrators.[30] The Rāmāyaṇa frame is thus shorter, more developmental, more focused, and more poetically traceable into the main narrative and the whole poem.

Indeed, once past the *upodghāta,* the Rāmāyaṇa's main story begins immediately with a brief praise of the Rāmāyaṇa itself and the Ikṣvāku dynasty (Rāma's ancestors) that quickly narrows down to the country of Kosala, its capital city of Ayodhyā, and the current reign there of Rāma's father Daśaratha (Rāmāyaṇa 1.5.1–9), all presumably as it was composed by Vālmīki and imparted to be recited by Kuśa and Lava to Rāma. So it continues to its end—again,

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28   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata," in *Between the Empires: Society in India, 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 227–56.

29   Both include poignant bird stories; see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 279–322 and Alf Hiltebeitel, "More Rethinking the Mahābhārata: Toward a Politics of Bhakti." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47 (2004): 203–27. As in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Śuka story is presented in a way that appears disjointed from the main story, and in the Mahābhārata's denouement rather than its preamble. It is thus much more difficult to trace into the main story.

30   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 99–105). Ugraśravas recital in eighteen parvans (see above at n. 16) would not add anything but rather be his way of arranging the "whole" to meet the sacrificial timetable of the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis's 12-year *sattra* (1.1.1–2).

unlike the Mahābhārata, which has the overriding device of presenting its multiple frame stories as intertwining dialogues between its narrators and their listeners.[31] Although the *upodghāta* concludes with Rāma, as chief-auditor-to-be, inviting his brothers to join him in listening to Kuśa and Lava, whom he is yet to recognize as his sons, he interrupts their narration to question them only once: when, having listened for some time, he asks them who authored this poem (*kāvya*) (7.85.19). Otherwise, until he recognizes them soon after this and wants to see their banished mother (86.2–6), he is the rapt and silent listener. Yet note the concluding words of the *upodghāta* with which he launches their recital: "Moreover, it is said that the profound adventure [*mahānubhāvaṃ caritam*] they tell is highly beneficial even for me. Listen to it" (1.4.26d). Who has said this? Why beneficial to Rāma? The preamble leaves us with such implicit and subtle questions. The point seems to be that listening to Vālmīki's poem will awaken Rāma to recall Sītā after he has banished her.

Wholes, Parts, and Terms of Identification

In these passages, we see two of the three leading terms by which the Rāmāyaṇa describes itself: *kāvya* (poem) and *carita* (adventure), the third being *ākhyāna* (tale, narrative). Let us look at how these and other terms are used by each epic to identify itself and to define the relationship of its whole to its parts.

Most frequently, the Mahābhārata characterizes itself fourteen times as a "narrative" (*ākhyāna*; Mahābhārata 1.1.16a; 1.2.29b, 235c, 238a, 239b, 240b, and 241b; 1.53.31d and 32a; 1.56.1c, 30c, 32c; 12.337.10a; 18.45.53a) and eight times as a "history" (*itihāsa*; 1.1.17a, 24d, 52c; 1.2.237a; 1.51.16c; 1.56.18c and 19a; 1.93.46c).[32] But it also calls itself a work of "ancient lore" (*purāṇa*; 1.1.15b; 1.56.15d), a "story" (*kathā*; 1.56.2a), a "collection" (*saṃhitā*; 1.1.19.1c and 61b), a "fifth Veda" (1.57.74ab; 12.327.18ab), the "Veda that pertains to Kṛṣṇa" (*Kārṣṇa Veda*, probably referring primarily to Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa—1.1.205a; 1.56.17c), a "great knowledge" (*mahaj-jñāna*; 1.1.25b and 49a), a "treatise" (*śāstra*; 1.56.21; indeed, in this verse, a *dharmaśāstra, arthaśāstra,* and *mokṣaśāstra*; and probably 12.238.13c),[33] an *upaniṣad* (1.1.191a), a "biography" or "adventure" (*carita*; 1.56.1d),[34] a "victory"

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31   See Shulman, "Toward a Historical Poetics of the Sanskrit Epics," 28–33.

32   That is, in its frames.

33   See the discussion of this reference in the final section "Upākhyāna Precedence and the Essence of them All" below.

34   Although there is constant overlap in the use of the main *narrative* terms, there is also sometimes a helpful distinction, such as at Mahābhārata 13.107.141 where four narrative genres are mentioned as each to be always heard: *purāṇa, itihāsa,* whatever *ākhyānas* there are, and "biography of the great-souled" (*mahātmanāṃ ca caritam*).

(*jaya*; 1.56.19a), and, surprisingly, a "subtale" (*upākhyāna*; 1.2.236a)! In addition, while not calling itself one as a whole, the epic is also a de facto "dialogue" (*saṃvāda*), for it sustains the dialogical interlacing of each of its three dialogical frame levels, not to mention the multiple dialogues that the frame narrators and other narrators report like the Bhagavadgītā, which Saṃjaya can report to Dhṛtarāṣtra "by the grace of Vyāsa" (Bhagavadgītā 18.73 and 75 = Mahābhārata 6.40.73 and 75) thanks to Vyāsa's having given him the divine eye (6.2.9–13).[35]

Indeed, most of these terms are used doubly. The more "didactic" (*veda, saṃhitā, upaniṣad,* and *śāstra*) not only describe the Mahābhārata as a whole, but, far more often, refer to sources outside of it that the epic's narrators cite as authoritative and sometimes quote in part or digest, particularly the many *śāstras* or "treatises" mentioned by Bhīṣma in Book 12. But the more "narrative" terms (*saṃvāda, ākhyāna, itihāsa, purāṇa, carita, kathā,* and *upākhyāna*) can also be cited as authoritative tales. In this way the Mahābhārata sustains itself as a multigenre work both in terms of its multiple self-designations for the whole and in the interreferentiality between the whole and its parts. This contrasts with the Rāmāyaṇa, whose poet Vālmīki composes his work under the single-genre title of *kāvya*. The Mahābhārata is not called a *kāvya* until a famous interpolation, probably introduced by 400 CE, in which the god Brahmā appears to Vyāsa to pronounce on the genre question: says Vyāsa, "O Blessed one, I have created this highly venerated *kāvya* [*kāvyaṃ paramapūjitam*] in which I have proclaimed the secret of the Vedas [*vedarahasyam*] and other topics" (Vulgate 1.1.61–62; Pune Critical Edition 1, App. 1, lines 13–14), to which Brahmā replies, "I know that since your birth you have truthfully given voice to the *brahman.* You have called this a *kāvya,* and therefore a *kāvya* it shall be. No poets [*kavayo*] are equal to the excellence of this *kāvya*" (Vulgate 1.1.72–73b; Critical Ed. 1, App. 1, lines 33–35). In a second and later interpolation that reads now as part of the same passage, Brahmā then recommends that Gaṇeśa be Vyāsa's scribe (Vulgate 1.1.74 83; Critical Ed. 1, App. 1, apud line 36).

One striking thing about the Mahābhārata's "narrative" terms for itself and its parts, including *carita*[36] and eventually *kāvya,*[37] that is, the terms themselves, even though the genres they describe all develop, change, and overlap by classical times, is that they are all but one Vedic. Indeed, the Vedic resonances of three of them—*ākhyāna, itihāsa,* and *saṃvāda*[38]—are so strong that

35   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata,* 56–59.

36   Alexander Lubotsky, *A Ṛgvedic Word Concordance,* 2 Parts, American Oriental Series, vols. 82–83 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1997) 527 cites 1.110.2.

37   See e.g. ṚV 8.79.1 describing Soma as "a sage and a seer inspired by poetry (*ṛṣir vipra kāvyena*)."

38   See Laurie Patton, Laurie Patton, *Myth as Argument: The Bṛhaddevatā as Canonical Commentary,* Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, vol. 41 (Berlin and New York:

they were once at the heart of long debates centered on an "*ākhyāna* theory" of the origins of Vedic poetry itself.[39] The one non-Vedic exception seems to be *upākhyāna*—a term that may have been given its first life by the authors of the Mahābhārata.[40] They present a topic whose significance—for both epics— has not been sufficiently appreciated.[41]

Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 197–98 on early appearances of *ākhyāna, itihāsa,* and *purāṇa* in the Aitareya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas, with the use of *itihāsa* to interpret Ṛg Vedic *saṃvāda* hymns, leading to an *aitihāsika* "school" of interpretation; mention of *ākhyāna-vids* as "those who know the stories"; Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.2 where *itihāsapurāṇa* refers to a fifth Veda; and 202 on the question of the coherence of Ṛg Vedic *saṃvādas* independent of *ākhyānas* and *itihāsas*. See now also Stephanie Jamison, *The Rig Veda between Two Worlds. Le Ṛg Veda entre deux mondes* (Paris: Boccard, 2007), 120–50 on Ṛgvedic usages of *kāvya* in relation to later ones.

39   See Patton, *Myth as Argument*, 195–214.

40   That is, as far as I can ascertain it is a non-Vedic term: see Monier-Williams (Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964], 212), citing nothing earlier than the Mahābhārata. Barbara Gombach introduces some uncertainty here. While positing throughout her dissertation that the Mahābhārata's "ancillary stories make the epic a Veda" and "Vedicize" the main story—as if the main story were not filled with Vedic allusions itself—she lists *upākhyāna* among terms "known from earlier Vedic literature" along with *itihāsa, ākhyāna, gāthā,* and *saṃvāda*. Barbara Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000), part 1, 345 and 346. But this is without citation. Gombach has done immensely valuable work in mapping the number and variety of the epic's interior sub-narratives, but the term "ancillary" carries for her the general imputation of "addition" and "interpolation" (ibid., 24, 184, 319) through "centuries of compilation" (ibid., 302), in particular with the suggestion that the clustering of stories in Books 1, 3, 12, and 13 "might help explain different degrees of interpolation" (ibid., 24). All this is said while granting "that some of the ancillary material was inspired by the epic itself" (ibid., 165).

41   Sukthankar partially tracked the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas (those that have something to do with Bhārgavas) with the assumption that upākhyānas are not only "episodes" but "digressions" (Sukthankar, "Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata," 14, 17, 33, 35, 44, 65; see n. 11 above); Dange (Sadashiv Ambadas Dange, *Legends in the Mahābhārata* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969]) brings a Frazerian comparative folklore approach to many upākhyānas among the legends he discusses; Van Buitenen (1975, 111, 182) also introduces the "episodes" in Book 3 as more "pious" than those in Book 1, and "extraneous to the main story" yet "preserved in the library that is The *Mahābhārata*" because they each have "their own interest"—a view he extends elsewhere, as will be noted. Sri Aurobindo claimed to be able to identify two upākhyānas—Sāvitrī and Nala—as Vyāsa's by "the ultimate test of style." Ghosh, "Notes on the Mahābhārata," 12, 44-54. Richest are Jamison's (Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife, Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996]) and Parida's (Sarat Chandra Parida, *Hospitality in Changing Indian Society: Vedic Age to Puranic Age* [Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 2004], 47–172) treatments of numerous upākhyānas mainly around the theme of hospitality: Jamison discussing nineteen of those listed below (numbers 1, 2, 6,

As observed, the upākhyānas are precisely the units mentioned as omitted in the "*Bhārata.*" But what are the upākhyānas and, first of all, how many are there? Although one could arrive at shorter lists, I will count 67 upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata, as listed:

TABLE 1.1   *Mahābhārata Upākhyānas*

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1. Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna 1.62–69
2. Yayāti- Upākhyāna 1.70–80
3. Mahābhiṣa-Upākhyāna 1.91
4. Aṇimāṇḍavya-Upākhyāna 1.101
5. Vyuṣitāṣva-Upākhyāna 1.112
6. Tapatī-Upākhyāna 1.160–163
7. Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna 1.164–68, 173
8. Aurva-Upākhyāna 1.169–172
9. Pañcendra-Upākhyāna 1.189
10. Sunda-Upasunda-Upākhyāna 1.201–4
11. Śārṅgaka-Upākhyāna 1.220–25
12. Saubhavadha-Upākhyāna 3.15–23
13. Nala-Upākhyāna 3.50–78
14. Agastya-Upākhyāna 3.94–108
15. Ṛśyaśṛṅga-Upākhyāna 3.110–13
16. Kārtavīrya/ Jāmadagnya-Upākhyāna 3.115–17
17. Śukanyā-Upākhyāna 3.122–25
18. Māndhātṛ-Upākhyāna 3.126
19. Jantu-Upākhyāna 3.127–28
20. Śyena-Kapotīya-Upākhyāna 3.130–31
21. Aṣṭāvakrīya-Upākhyāna 3.132–34
22. Yavakrīta-Upākhyāna 3.135–39
23. Vainya-Upākhyāna 3.183
24. Matsya-Upākhyāna 3.185
25. Maṇḍūka-Upākhyāna 3.190
26. Indradyumna-Upākhyāna 3.191
27. Dhundhumāra-Upākhyāna 3.192–95
28. Pativratā-Upākhyāna 3.196–206
29. Mudgala-Upākhyāna 3.246–47
30. Rāma-Upākhyāna 3.257–76
31. Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna 3.277–83

7, 13-15, 29, 31, 34-35, 40, 48, 50-51, 55, 57, 62, and 67), and Parida twenty-one of them (numbers 1, 2, 7, 10, 13-15, 17, 20, 29-33, 42, 47, 48, 50, 55, 64, and 67)—the latter, while still bracketing them among "interesting episodes" that were "inserted" as "this Epic grew to a great extent." Parida, *Hospitality in Changing Indian Society*, 76.

TABLE 1.1   *Mahābhārata Upākhyānas* (cont.)

32. Āraṇeyam upākhyānam yatra dharmo 'nvaśāt sutam 3.295–99
33. Indravijaya-Upākhyāna 5.9–18
34. Dambhodbhava-Upākhyāna 5.94
35. Ambā-Upākhyāna 5.170–193
36. Viśva-Upākhyāna 6.61–64
37. Tripura-Upākhyāna; Tripura-Vadha-Upākhyāna 8.24
38. [Karṇa-Śalya-Saṃvāda] Haṃsa-Kākīya-Upākhyāna 8.28
39. Indra-Namuci-Upākhyāna 9.42
40. Vṛddha-Kumārī-Upākhyāna 9.51
41. Ṣoḍaśarāj[ik]a-Upākhyāna 12.29
42. Nārada-Pārvata-Upākhyāna 12.30
43. Rāma-Upākhyāna 12.48–49
44. Mucukunda-Upākhyāna 12.75
45. Uṣṭragrīva-Upākhyāna 12.113
46. Daṇḍa-Utpatti-kathana-(Upākhyāna) 12.122
47. Ṛṣabha-Gitā/ Sumitra-Upākhyāna 12.125–26
48. Kapota-Upākhyāna 12.141–45
49. Kṛtaghna-Upākhyāna 12.162–67
50. Jāpaka-Upākhyāna 12.189–93
51. Cirakāri-Upākhyāna 12.258
52. Kuṇḍadhāra-Upākhyāna 12.263
53. Nārāyaṇīye Hayaśira-Upākhyāna 12.335
54. Uñchavṛtty-Upākhyāna 12.340–53
55. Sudarśana-Upākhyāna 13.2
56. Viśvāmitra-Upākhyāna 13.3–4
57. Bhaṅgāsvana-Upākhyāna 13.12
58. Upamanyu-Upākhyāna 13.14–18
59. Mataṅga-Upākhyāna 13.28–30
60. Vītahavya-Upākhyāna 13.31
61. Vipula-Upākhyāna 13.39–43
62. Cyavana-Upākhyāna 13.50–51
63. Nṛga-Upākhyāna 13.69
64. Nāchiketa-Upākhyāna 13.70
65. Kīṭa-Upākhyāna 13.118–120
66. Ut[t]aṅka-Upākhyāna 14.52–57
67. Nakula-Upākhyāna 14.92–96

This number is reached by including all units that are mentioned to be upākhyānas either in passing in the text,[42] cited as upākhyānas in the PS,[43] or called upākhyānas in the colophons and/or the running heads for units in the Pune Critical Edition. In assessing instances mentioned only in the colophons, I err toward generosity and count anything as an upākhyāna that appears to be called such as the prominent title in either the Northern (N) or Southern (S) Recension.[44] In treating this number for special attention, it should thus be clear it is not a boundaried group without overlap with other "ancillary story" material.[45] Rather, I wish to take the 67 and the reverberations between them as a kind of sonar with which to plumb the epic's depths.

It is not evident how certain subtales came to be called upākhyānas and others by other genre terms. But there does not seem to be anything to discourage the view that traditional unit titles would have been part of the text's earliest self-conception, since both the Northern and Southern Recensions provide intelligible patterns, in what one could call a colophon discourse, of giving common, similar, and sometimes alternate upākhyāna and other names for

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42   There are three of these: numbers 27 (see Mahābhārata 3.195.37c), 33 (see 5.18.16a), and 39 (see 9.42.28a). The first two are also named *upākhyānas* in the colophons and headings; the third only in passing.

43   The Parvasaṁgraha mentions two in Book 1: numbers 9 (at 1.2.87) and 10 (at verse 90); four in Book 3: numbers 20 (115ab), 21 (*auddalakīya* = Aṣṭāvakrīyam) and 23 as two cited together (126ab), and 32 (127ed); and one in Book 5: number 35 (mentioned twice at 54a and 150f). Curiously, the PS*'s* description of the Rāma-Upākhyāna is "the very detailed Rāmāyaṇa upākhyāna" (*rāmāyaṇam upākhyānam … bahuvistaram*; Mahābhārata 1.2.126ed).

44   While highlighting some of those discussed below, those with the best upākhyāna credentials for both N and S are numbers 7 (Vasiṣṭha), 8, 10 (Sunda-Upasunda), 11, 13 (Nala), 15 (Ṛśyaśṛṅga), 27, 28, 30 (Rāma, usually as Rāmāyaṇa-Upākhyāna in S), 31 (Savitṛ), 34, 49 (Kṛtaghna), 50 (Japaka, on which see V.M. Bedekar, "The Place of Japa in the Mokṣadharma Parvan (Mahābhārata 12.189–93) and the Yogasūtras," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 44 [1963]: 63–74), 51 (Cirakāri; on which see V.M. Bedekar, "The Legend of Cirakārin in the Skanda Mahāpurāṇa and the Mahābhārata," *Purāṇa* 11, no. 2 [1962]: 210–28; Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata," part 1, 209–317; Fitzgerald, "The Rama Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the *Mahābhārata*," 112), 52, 54 (Uñchavṛtti), 60, 61, 66, and 67 (Nakula); those called upākhyānas only in N are numbers 3 (Mahābhiṣa), 9 (Pañcendra), 12, 16 (Kārtavirya), 18, 20, 36, 37, 43 (Rāma[-Jāmadagnya]), 45, 46, and 65; those only in S, numbers 29 (Mudgala), 47 (Sumitra, called Ṛṣabha-Gītā in N), 48, 53 (Hayaśiras), and 59. Mudgala has an apparent descendent named Mavutkalliyar (Maudgalya) Muni who, in Tamil Draupadī cult stories, was married to Draupadī in her previous life; see Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadī*, vol. 2: *On Hindu Ritual and the Goddess* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 484–85.

45   See Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Ma*h*ābhārata."

adhyāyas and larger narrative units. This is not the case in the Rāmāyaṇa, for which I consider the number of upākhyānas to be zero. The Rāmāyaṇa mentions no upākhyānas in passing or in the *upodghāta,* which would be the closest analogue to the PS; and the practice of giving names to sargas and larger units differs from that for adhyāyas and larger units in the Mahābhārata in one important respect. The Rāmāyaṇa's Baroda Critical Edition shows that while Northern Recension colophons do name a few units primarily as upākhyānas,[46] the Southern Recension gives none as either primary or secondary names. In fact, the Southern Recension gives hardly any sarga or larger unit names at all.[47] The extensive absence of Southern Recension sarga names, especially the total absence with regard to the few units called upākhyānas in the Northern Recension, confirms that there would be no upākhyānas in the Rāmāyaṇa insofar as they could be counted as such in the Baroda Critical Edition, which would require some parity across recensions. I take this as evidence that the few instances of naming units upākhyānas in Northern Rāmāyaṇa manuscripts is late and probably affected by the usage in the Mahābhārata. Indeed, it would appear that whereas the Mahābhārata's names for adhyāyas and larger units tend to be genre-related, the Rāmāyaṇa's names for sargas and larger units tend to be mainly descriptive of events that transpire in the sarga. Most important, the Rāmāyaṇa has neither a colophon discourse about upākhyānas nor a practice of using the term in passing that could have given rise to the few Northern usages one finds.

Ākhyāna and upākhyāna are thus both among the multigenre terms by which the Mahābhārata characterizes itself and its varied components. If *ākhyāna*—even ahead of *itihāsa*—is the term used most frequently to describe

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46   These are the Ṛśyaśṛṅga-Upākhyāna (1.8-10), Vedavatī-Upākhyāna (7.17), Saudāsa/ Mitrosaha-Upākhyāna (7.57), Mandhātṛ-Upākhyāna (7.59), Śveta-Upākhyāna (7.69), and Idā/ Ila-Upākhyāna (7.78 79). Ṛśyaśṛṅga and Mandhātṛ also give their names to Mahābhārata upākhyānas. Seven units are also given upākhyāna as a secondary title: Surabhī-Upākhyāna (2.68), Sugrīva-Vaira-Upākhyāna (4.10), Dundubhi(bher)—Upākhyāna (4.11), Puṣpaka-Upākhyāna (6.109), Daṇḍa/Daṇḍaka-Upākhyāna (7.70-72), Vṛtra-Vadha-Upākhyāna (7.75-76), and Yajña-Upākhyāna (7.77)—again, only in the Northern Recension, as with minor usages in the collophons to 2.58, 6.79, and 7.81. Likewise, amid Northern variants for 1.52, one reads Śatānanda-Upākhyāne [Vasiṣṭha]-Viśvāmitra-Saṃvādaḥ as a secondary title using upākhyāna with reference to the tale's narrator rather than its topic.

47   An intelligible exception occurs from 6.97 to 100, from the death of Rāvaṇa to the consecration of Vibhīṣaṇa. Here southern manuscripts begin a short display of interest in naming *sargas,* evidently because they concern a succession in this southern royal line. Cf. 6.116, with a flourish of southern interest in titling Rāma's consecration.

the Mahābhārata as a whole, and upākhyāna, perhaps bizarrely, one of the least to do so (the Mahābhārata would be a subtale to what? the Veda?), a first order of business would be to distinguish uses of *ākhyāna* from upākhyāna. Clearly, there would be an analogy between the usages of *ākhyāna: upa-ākhyāna* and *parvan: upa-parvan*. In both cases *upa-* implies "subordinate" and "lesser" (as in *upa-purāṇa* for "lesser purāṇas"), but also denotes ways of breaking the Mahābhārata down by terms that relate its whole to its parts: the totality of its parts in the case of the *upaparvans;* some of its parts in the case of the upākhyānas. *Ākhyāna* and upākhyāna are frequently used interchangeably (as indeed with the other "narrative" terms mentioned above). Sometimes, especially in the PS, it would seem that metrical fit is all that has decided which of the two terms was used.[48] But the first usage of *ākhyāna* to self-describe a sub-narrative in passing may provide a clue as to a useful distinction. The first *ākhyāna* narrated in its entirety (Mahābhārata 1.12.5cd), "the great Āstīka *ākhyāna*" (*mahadākhyānam āstīkam*; 1.13.4a), is the oft-interrupted *Āstīka-parvan* (1.13.53), the epic's fifth *upaparvan*. Like the oft-interrupted [*Mahā*]*bhārata-Ākhyāna,* it brims with substories of its own.[49] It is delivered by the bard Ugraśravas to the Sages (Ṛṣis) of the Naimiṣa Forest as the main introductory piece to entertain that audience in the epic's outer frame. In contrast, upākhyāna designates major *uninterrupted*[50] subtales told to rapt audiences usually composed of the epic's heroes and heroines, or alternately to one or the other of the audiences in its frame stories.

As to upākhyāna narrators, Vaiśampāyana addresses ten to Janamejaya (1–4, 11, 32, 39–40, 66–67); Bhīṣma narrates twenty-three: 21 (44–52, 54–65) to Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas and two (35–36) to Duryodhana; Lomaśa Ṛṣi tells eight of nine (from numbers 14–22) to the Pāṇḍavas, Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi also tells them eight (23–28 and 30–31), and Kṛṣṇa three (12, 41–42); Citraratha

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48   See, e.g., 1.2.124c-25d, where, after reference to "the series or upākhyānas" told in "the encounter with Mārkaṇḍeya," one finds one of them, Indradyumna Upākhyāna, referred to as an *ākhyāna*.

49   By Gombach's count ("Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Ma*h*ābhārata," part 1, 10–22), it has six "ancillary stories," with the fifth having its own substory about the two Jaratkārus, male and female, on which see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 174–76, with a suggestion that this story offers a key as to how the Mahābhārata's tales and subtales "fit."

50   One could make an exception for the inclusion of the Aurva-Upākhyāna (1.169–72) within the Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna (1.164–73), on which, see Sukthankar, "Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata," 14: "a digression within a digression." But I would stress as overriding factors the close thematic relation between the two stories and the uninterrupted character of the upākhyāna material itself, which includes Vasiṣṭha not only in these two upākhyānas but in the Tapati-Upākhyāna that immediately precedes them (1.160–63).

narrates three (6–8) to Arjuna and the Pāṇḍavas; Śalya tells two: one (33) to Yudhiṣṭhira, the other (38) to Karṇa and Duryodhana; Vyāsa tells one to Draupadī's father Drupada (9) and another to the Pāṇḍavas (29); and six are told by single-time speakers: Kuntī to Pāṇḍu (5; the only upākhyāna spoken by a woman), Nārada to the Pāṇḍavas (10); Bṛhadaśva to the Pāṇḍavas (13); Akṛtavraṇa to the Pāṇḍavas (15; interrupting Lomaśa's skein); Rāma Jāmadagnya to the Kauravas (34); and Duryodhana to Karṇa and Śalya (47). As to auditors, of the 56 that are addressed to main characters, 49 are told primarily to Yudhiṣṭhira, 48 of these to him and his Pāṇḍava brothers, and 44 of these also to their wife Draupadī (all of these told once the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī are in the forest). On the Kaurava side, three are addressed to Duryodhana and two to Karṇa. Adding the 10 told to Janamejaya and one narrated to Pāṇḍu by Kuntī, one finds that 65 of the 67 upākhyānas are addressed directly to members of the larger Kaurava household to which all these listeners belong, and of which Yudhiṣṭhira is clearly the chief listener. Not irrelevant to this pattern is the one in which King Drupada hears upākhyāna 9 as an explanation of how his daughter can marry into that household. And likewise not irrelevant would be the last upākhyāna in this tally, the anomalous number 53 known in S colophons (see n. 31) as the Nārāyaṇīye Hayaśira-Upākhyāna. Here the primary narrator is Ugraśravas, who answers a question by Śaunaka (speaking for the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis) about the Horse's Head, a form of Viṣṇu, by quoting what Vyāsa told Janamejaya about that subject.[51] With Janamejaya as one of the two listeners, one can now say that all the upākhyānas are addressed in one way or another to those with ties to the Kaurava household. Moreover, with Vyāsa, author of the outermost frame, addressing Janamejaya for once in the inner frame, where he otherwise sits silently and leaves the recitation to Vaiśaṁpāyana, and to have all this further reported by Ugraśravas to the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis, means that this upākhyāna cuts across the Mahābhārata's three frames.[52] Further, that the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis are, this one and only time, an interested party to a subtale suggests their proximity to this mysterious Veda-reciting form of Viṣṇu that resides in the "great northern" or milky ocean,

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51   The Critical Edition has suppressed this anomalous feature, overriding the preponderant manuscript evidence at 12.335.1 and 9 to have Janamejaya cite Yudhiṣṭhira as the one addressed by Vyāsa. See Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata."

52   On the Nārāyaṇīya context of this exchange, see Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata."

which seems to be somewhere, like the Naimiṣa ("Twinkling") Forest itself, in the heavenly night sky.[53]

Another approach to the upākhyānas is to think about volume and proportion. Taking the Mahābhārata's own numbers, on the face of it, if the epic has a hundred thousand couplets and Vyāsa composed a version of it in twenty-four thousand couplets "without the upākhyānas" (Mahābhārata 1.1.61), the upākhyānas should constitute 76% of the whole. That proportion is not to be found. Calculating from the roughly 73,900 couplets in the Critical Edition,[54] the full total for the 67 upākhyānas is 10,521 couplets or 13.87%; and if one adds certain sequels[55] to four of the upākhyānas totaling 780 verses to reach the most generous count of 11,031 verses, one could say that, at most, 14.93% of the Mahābhārata is composed of upākhyāna material. While we are nowhere near 76%, these proportions are not insignificant. Moreover, one can get a bit closer to 76% if one keeps in mind the interchangeability of the epic's terms for narrative units and calculates from the totality of its substory material. According to Barbara Gombach, "nearly fifty percent" of the Mahābhārata is "represented by ancillary stories," with Books 1, 3, 12, and 13 cited as the four in which "the stories cluster more densely" than in the other Books.[56] Gombach gives 68% for the ancillary stories in the Śāntiparvan (Book 12), which has 14 upākhyānas; 65% for those in the Anuśāsanaparvan (Book 13), with eleven upākhyānas; 55% for those in the Āraṇyakaparvan (Book 3), with 21 upākhyānas[57]; and I calculate 44% for the Ādiparvan (Book 1), with eleven upākhyānas. Of other Books that contain more than one upākhyāna, the Āśvamedhika (Book 14),

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53   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 158 and *passim*: *naimiṣa,* "twinkling," seems
      to evoke the heavenly night sky, at least in the Mahābhārata. On the Horse's Head and its
      location, see Mahābhārata 12.330.36-39; 335.3, 27, and 34, and Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya
      and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata."

54   Barend A. Van Nooten, *The Mahābhārata*, Twayne's World Authors Series (New York:
      Twayne Publishers, 1971), 50: "about 73,900"; Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, 4: "nearly
      75,000." A count has to be approximate because the Mahābhārata contains prose pas-
      sages. One also has to count all couplets as "*ślokas.*"

55   These are the 151-verse Uttara-Yayāta (1.81–88), which continues upākhyāna number 2; the
      368-verse continuation of no. 24 at 3.186–188; the 203-verse sequel to no. 62 in the
      Cyavana-Nahuṣa-Saṃvāda (13.51–56); and the 58-verse Maitreya-Bhikṣā (13.121–23) which,
      rather more loosely than the other cases, continues no. 65. I consider it more meaningful
      to add upākhyāna-sequels than their prequels.

56   Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata," part 1, 5, and 24.

57   Ibid., part 1, 194, 225.

with two; Śalya (Book 9), with two; and Udyogaparvan (Book 5), with three are comprised of 54%,[58] 28%, and 17% ancillary story material respectively.

Of the 67 upākhyānas, 57 thus occur in parvans 1, 3, 12, and 13 where "stories cluster" most densely. There are, however, two major differences in the ways upākhyānas are presented in the two early Books from the two later ones. Whereas Books 1 and 3 provide multiple narrators for their 32 upākhyānas, all but 3 of the 25 in Books 12 and 13 are spoken by one narrator, Bhīṣma (who has told two upākhyānas earlier, one each in Books 5 and 6 [numbers 35 and 36], to Duryodhana). And whereas Books 1 and especially 3 show a tendency to cluster their upākhyānas (two in a row are told by Vaiśaṁpāyanas and three in a row by the Gandharva Citraratha in Book 1; nine, five, and two in a row by Ṛṣis whom the Pāṇḍavas encounter while pilgrimaging in Book 3), in Bhīṣma's run of four hundred and fifty adhyāyas in Books 12 and 13, he tends to present his twenty-one upākhyānas there only intermittently. Yet there is one run, from the end of Book 12 through the first third of Book 13, where he concentrates nine of them. These two books run together the totality of Bhīṣma's postwar instructions to Yudhiṣṭhira in four consecutive *upaparvans,* which James Fitzgerald calls "four large anthologies."[59] Both Books abound in dialogues (*saṃvādas*), "ancient accounts" (*itihāsam purātanam*),[60] and other genres. Why then does Bhīṣma intensify his upākhyānas at this juncture? This question will be taken up in the section "Upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata."

The upākhyānas' content should also be important, and allow us to identify certain themes that recur in them in meaningful patterns. But for now, the best way to register their content would be by their primary personages or protagonists. This approach makes it possible to break the 67 down into no less than ten groupings: 17 about leading lights of the great Brahman lineages,[61] fifteen

58   This is by Gombach's account which, I think, dubiously includes the *Anugītā* (14. 16.12-19.60).

59   James L. Fitzgerald, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7. *11. The Book of Women. 12. The Book of Peace, Part 1*, trans. James L. Fitzgerald (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 79–80.

60   Two pre-war upākhyānas, numbers 10 (1.201.1) and 33 (5.9.2), cite this phrase to describe their content, as do fourteen post-war ones: nos. 41 (12.29.12), 44 (75.3), 46 (12.122.1), 49 (162.28), 50 (189.6, 192.2), 52 (263.2), 55 (13.2.4), 57 (12.2), 59 (28.6), 61 (40.2), 64 (70.2), and 67 (14.95.4).

61   Numbers 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 43, 50, 51, 58, 61, 62, 64, 66. All eight of the major Brahman lineages are featured at least once: fifteen (2, 8, 16, 17, 18, 26, 34, 35, 43, 56, 60, 61, 62, 66, 67) feature Bhārgavas; nine (3, 6, 7, 8, 30, 44, 53, 56, 65) feature Vasiṣṭhas, including Vyāsa); six (1, 22, 28, 50, 56, 62) feature Vaiśvāmitras; four (1, 15, 16, 43) feature Kāśyapas; three (14, 33, 67) feature Agastya; three (23, 47, 49, 51) feature Gautamas; two (22, 60)

about heroic kings of varied dynasties,[62] eleven about animals (some divine),[63] seven about gods and demons,[64] four (including the first two) about early kings of the main dynasty,[65] four about women,[66] three about the inviolability of worthy Brahmans and hurdles to attaining that status,[67] three about revelations concerning Kṛṣṇa,[68] two about current background to the epic's main events,[69] and one about the Pāṇḍavas as part of the main story.[70] From this, the only useful generalization would seem to be that such content is represented as being of interest to the rapt audiences that listen to these tales. But here an important point has been conceded by certain scholars who have been prone to correlate such variety with lateness and textual strata. Regarding the most famous of all the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas, the Nala-Upākhyāna, Fitzgerald regards "Nala" and some other non-upākhyāna stories as "good examples of passages that do exhibit an inventive freedom suggestive of 'fiction.'"[71] More

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feature Bharadvāja; and two (23, 54) feature Ātreyas (the latter, apparently, as suggested by *somānraye* at 12.341.2). The number featuring Bhārgavas could be raised to 22 if we note, as Sukthankar does ("Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata," 28–29), that Mārkaṇḍeya is a Bhārgava. But these numbers would not suggest that the upākhyānas are primarily Bhārgava material. See n. 11 above.

62   Numbers 13, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27, 29, 30, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 55, 57.

63   Numbers 11, 24, 25, 38, 45, 48, 49, 53, 54, 65, 67.

64   Numbers 4, 9, 10, 33, 37, 39, 52. Most frequently mentioned are: Indra in 26 upākhyānas (5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 20, 21, 29, 33, 39, 41, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57, 59, 61, 66, 67); Agni in 12 (11, 13, 27, 30, 33, 41, 43, 46, 48, 55, 57, 66); Brahmā in 12 (9, 10, 14, 24, 27, 29, 30, 45, 46, 49, 50, 53); Dharma in eight (4, 9, 32, 47, 50, 55, 66, 67); Viṣṇu in eight (9, 14, 27, 30, 33, 46, 50, 53); Śiva in six (9, 10, 14, 35, 46, 58); Yama in five (9, 13, 31, 46, 50); Varuṇa in five (13, 23, 30, 33, 46); Kubera in five (13, 33, 35, 44, 46); Bṛhaspati in five (2, 33, 41, 46, 67); Hayaśiras in three (46, 47, 53); Soma in three (5, 33, 46); four gods in two each: Sūrya (6, 54), Gaṅgā (9, 41), Mṛtyu (46, 50), Krodha (50, 67); and numerous gods in one: Vāyu (30), Śrī (9), Śacī (33), Viśvakarman (10), Aśvins (17), Tvaṣṭṛ (33), Upaśruti (33), Earth (43), Sarasvatī (46), Skanda (46), Nirṛti (46), Kāla (50), Vedamāta Sāvitri (50), Svarga (50), Kāma (50), Kuṇḍadhāra (52).

65   Numbers 1, 2, 3, 6.

66   Numbers 5, 28, 31, 40. But women figure centrally in at least 10 others, notably 1, 6, 17, and 35, which feature women in their titles and could have been counted in this category.

67   Numbers 56, 59, 60.

68   Numbers 34, 36, 63.

69   Numbers 12, 35. These are the only two upākhyānas where a character in the main story tells about other characters in the main story. But cf. 11.27.6–11, Kuntī's short account of Karṇa's mysterious birth, called an *ākhyāna* in the Parvasaṃgraha at 1.2.188a.

70   Number 32. On this anomaly, see below.

71   James L. Fitzgerald, "The Many Voices of the Mahābhārata," review of *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*, by Alf Hiltebeitel,

pointedly, Gombach credits Madeleine Biardeau's study of "Nala"[72] as a "case for regarding this *upākhyāna* as a story composed in and for the epic to deepen its symbolic resonances."[73] Allowing "that some of the ancillary material was inspired by the epic itself," Gombach settles for a middle position: that some ancillary stories are interpolated does not mean that all are interpolated.[74] But this renders the notion of interpolation and the distinction between authors, on the one hand, and redactors, editors, and compilers, on the other, as rather whimsical.[75] "Nala" is what Biardeau now calls one of Book 3's three "mirror stories"[76]—tales that mirror the listeners' (the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī's) current trials. We shall note some other upākhyānas that merit this term, and also propose "puzzle stories" as another category of interactive subtale. Once one admits that one story is composed to fit one or another feature of the epic's wider surroundings, the principle cannot be easily shut off, as we shall observe.

As to the Rāmāyaṇa, we noticed at the beginning of this section that the three terms *kāvya, carita,* and *ākhyāna* are woven through the *upodghāta*. *Kathā* (story) is also used there, but with less specificity. And we have observed that upākhyāna is not used at all for the whole and, technically speaking, also not used for parts. It is, moreover, noteworthy that *itihāsa* (history), which along with *ākhyāna* is one of the two main terms to describe the Mahābhārata, is not only unused to describe the Rāmāyaṇa but, excepting two interpolations,[77] is absent from its entire Critical Edition text. In this, it is like the absence of

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       Journal of the American Oriental Society 123, no. 4 (2003): 803–818 discussing Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, chapter 6 on "Nala," and mentioning the Śuka story as well.

72   Madeleine Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī. Héros épiques. Part 1," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 27 (1984): 247–74; "Nala et Damayantī. Héros épiques. Part 2," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 28 (1985): 1–34.

73   Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata," 1 and 73.

74   Ibid., part 1, 164–65.

75   With his test of style (see n. 28), Sri Aurobindo sought to salvage the Nala- and Sāvitrī-Upākhyānas for Vyāsa as works of "the very morning of Vyāsa's genius, when he was young and ardent." Ghosh, "Notes on the Mahābhārata," 44. On compilers and redactors, see my discussion of this point with regard to Nārāyaṇīya scholarship in Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata" and Gombach's formulation that "the Mbh's editors and redactors took pains to archaicize the epic" ("Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata," 1300) through the ancillary stories, as if "interpolators" were editors and redactors and compilers who came along later than authors, and as if there were not such archaizing as well in the presumably prior "epic."

76   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 412–13.

77   1, Appendix 1 line 4; 6.3709*. I thank Shubha Pathak, "The Things Kings Sing: The Religious Ideals of Poetic Rulers in Greek and Sanskrit Epics" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2005), 50 for these references and for making available to me her further charting of the

kāvya in the Mahābhārata's Critical Edition; as if the two texts were in early agreement to yield one of these terms to the other. Neither does *purāṇa* (ancient lore) describe the Rāmāyaṇa,[78] which evidently places itself outside the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition that Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.2 links with Nārada as a fifth Veda.[79] Similarly, upākhyāna, "subtale," is used only in the Mahābhārata, although there is an interpolated verse in the Rāmāyaṇa's *aśvamedha* recital scene where the twins begin singing the poem and tell Rāma that the Rāmāyaṇa has twenty-four thousand verses and a hundred upākhyānas (Rāmāyaṇa 7.1328*, following 7.85.20)—suggesting Mahābhārata influence. Other words the Mahābhārata uses to define itself such as *śāstra* (treatise) do not define the Rāmāyaṇa at all.

A distinctive point about the usage of *kāvya* is that it is used only at the Rāmāyaṇa's two framing points:[80] nine times in the *upodghāta*, four in the two chapters of the *aśvamedha* recital scene (Rāmāyaṇa 7.84–85) where the hints left at the end of the *upodghāta* are picked up as the frame finally enters the story (or where the story finally returns to the frame). It thus has a kind of bookend function of describing the work as poetry, most notably that "it is replete with" all the "poetic sentiments" or *rasas* (1.4.8).[81] In contrast to *kāvya*, *carita* implies the "movement" ($\sqrt{car}$) of the main narrative. Of its four usages in the *upodghāta* to characterize the Rāmāyaṇa, two present a juxtaposition. The first has Brahmā enjoin Vālmīki to "compose the whole adventure of

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78 two epics' terms for themselves in the star passages and appendices of their critical editions.

78 Though, curiously, the only instance where *purāṇa* describes a story of any kind occurs when Rāma hears from the fallen vulture Sampāti how the Ṛṣi Niśakara once told him that, "in an ancient legend" (*purāṇe*) he once heard (Rāmāyaṇa 4.61.3), Rāma's life was foretold with some strange and exceptional twists (4–13).

79 Clearly the Mahābhārata does not do this. I would even suggest that Vālmīki might be registering a distrust of this tradition, which the Rāmāyaṇa puts under question right at the beginning when Nārada describes Rāma as the ideal man. Note that in the Mahābhārata, Nārada includes Rāma among the sixteen great kings of old whose past glories he recounts (twice) in the *soḍaśarājakīya*, the second version being upākhyāna number 41, as quoted by Kṛṣṇa.

80 Aside from *kāvya*, the only other words to describe the Rāmāyaṇa at the *aśvamedha* recital are *carita* and, as the twins now sing it, *gītā*: "Having heard the sweetness of the song [*gītāmādhuryam*], he [Rāma] returned to the sacrificial pavilion" (Rāmāyaṇa 7.85.23).

81 On the *rasas* in the *upodghāta*, see the rich discussion in Pathak, "The Things Kings Sing"; similarly, in the Sundarakāṇḍa, see Robert P. Goldman, trans. *Sundarakāṇḍa*, vol. 5 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 35–37.

Rāma" (*rāmasya caritaṃ kṛtsnaṃ kuru*; 1.2.30cd). The second, once it is implied
that Vālmīki has composed it, calls "the whole Rāmāyaṇa poem [*kāvya*] the
great adventure of Sītā [*sītāyāś carītam mahat*]" (1.4.6). This suggests that
although Rāma's adventure is Vālmīki's starting point the complete poem is
also about Sītā's adventure. The "profound adventure" that Rāma prepares
himself to hear at the end of the *upodghāta* would thus include the two adven-
tures intertwined (4.26). This sense of *carita* as ongoing double adventure
carries through the narrative. For instance, when Hanumān begins to tell
Bharata about "Rāma's whole adventure in the forest" (*sarvaṃ rāmasya caritaṃ
vane*; 6.114.4cd) near the end of Book 6, he tells mainly of the separate adven-
tures of Rāma and Sītā once the latter is abducted (cf. 2.54.18). *Carita* is also the
main word to describe the Rāmāyaṇa's adventures in course (2.54.18; 6.114.4)—
and even in the course of hearing it. When the twins begin reciting the poem
and Rāma asks who composed it, they reply, "The blessed Vālmīki, who has
reached the presence of the sacrifice, is the author [*kartā*] by whom this adven-
ture is disclosed to you without remainder [*yena idaṃ caritaṃ tubhyam aśeṣaṃ
sampradarśitam*]" (7.85.19).

Meanwhile, *ākhyāna* is used four times in the *upodghāta*. It describes the
benefits of hearing the tale's recital (Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.78), that it is "unsurpassed"
as a "tale exemplary of righteousness [*dharmyam ākhyānam uttamam*]" (1.4.11),
that it is a "wondrous tale told by the sage" that he "completed in perfect
sequence" as "the great source of inspiration for poets [*kavīnām*]" (1.4.20), and
that Rāma urged his brothers to "listen to this tale whose words and meanings
alike are wonderful as it is sweetly sung by these two godlike men" (1.4.25). It is
also the first term to describe the Rāmāyaṇa as the recital of its main story
begins: "Of these kings of illustrious lineage, the Ikṣvākus, this great tale is
known as the Rāmāyaṇa. I will recite it from the beginning in its entirety, omit-
ting nothing. It is in keeping with the goals of righteousness, profit, and
pleasure and should be listened to with faith" (1.5.3–4). *Ākhyāna* can also be
used for tales told in course, most notably for the "glad tidings" that Hanumān
brings at various points to others (5.57.1, 59.6; 6.101.17, 113.40).[82] It is thus com-
plementary to both *kāvya* and *carita*. It links the narrative to poetry and the
inspiration of poets while also bringing listeners into the unfolding of the hero
and heroine's double adventure, the reiterations of that adventure by
Hanumān, and the blessings that it brings when heard with faith.

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82   In contrast to these four consistent usages and the four in the *upodghāta,* it is certainly in
     a minor key that *ākhyāna* is used just once—for the "tale of the descent of the Gaṅgā"
     (Rāmāyaṇa 1.43.30)—for a unit within the whole.

The Rāmāyaṇa thus makes very selective use of limited terms. In contrast to the Mahābhārata, they are used strategically rather than definitionally, and are not used to emphasize the interplay between the Rāmāyaṇa's parts and its whole. Emerging from and flowing back into the passages that frame the Rāmāyaṇa (the *upodghāta* and the *aśvamedha* recital scene), side-stories fall within a single poetic narrative that is portrayed as being addressed uninterruptedly (the one exception noted) to Rāma. The Rāmāyaṇa does not have multiple audiences in a thrice-told stacking of dialogical frames.

We must now see how these findings relate to the different manners in which subtales figure in the two epics' main stories.

Upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata

To summarize the Mahābhārata, we have now seen that it should no longer be enough to tell its main story, especially with the suggestion that its main story would have been an original "*Bhārata*" with the rest making it a "Mahābhārata." Even though it must require shortcuts, one owes it to this grand text to attempt to block out the main story against the backdrop of its archetypal design, which includes its frame stories, *upaparvans,* upākhyānas, and the enigma of the author. For present purposes, touching only lightly on the *upaparvans* but keeping the frames and the author in view, it must suffice to focus on the upākhyānas—especially where they are woven into their Books' structures. Our attention will thus be given only to Books 1, 3, 5, 8, 12, 13, and 14. Book 1, the Ādiparvan, takes its first five *upaparvans* to introduce the three frames around related matter. Its sixth, on "The Descent of the First Generations," runs from the birth of Vyāsa (son of the seer Parāśara and the ferryboat girl Satyavatī) and the gods' descent to rescue the goddess Earth to an account of the origins of gods, demons, and other beings. From there, *upaparvan* seven pauses over the epic's first two upākhyānas, the Śakuntalā- and Yayāti-Upakhyānas, about Lunar Dynasty ancestors (Śakuntalā was the mother of Bharata, one of the line's eponyms),[83] to introduce that dynasty's early genealogy down to the

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83   See now Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading: A Window on the Original and the Second Reading by Kālidāsa," in *Revisiting Kālidāsa's* Abhijñāna Śākuntalam: *Land, Love, Languages: Forms of Exchange in Ancient India*, ed. Deepika Tandon and Saswati Sengupta (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan Edition, 2011), 17–37 on the importance of the Śakuntalā story's primacy among upākhyānas, though only in the Northern Recension, and its considerable (and probably early) rehandling in this and other regards in the Southern Recension. Although I neglected to reread Biardeau's 1979 article on the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna in researching this chapter, I find now that this study

youths of the main heroes, with heightened attention to the three generations before them. This narrative widening begins with the Mahābhiṣa-Upākhyāna (number 3),[84] about how Mahābhiṣa, a royal sage residing in heaven, boldly gazes up the windblown skirt of the heavenly river Gaṅgā and is cursed to earthly birth, whereupon, as King Śantanu, he marries Gaṅgā[85] their union resulting in the birth of Bhīṣma as their eighth[86] and sole surviving son and Gaṅgā's departure once Śantanu asks why she drowned the first eight leading to Śantanu's second marriage to Satyavatī, now a fisher-princess, upon her father's obtaining Bhīṣma's double vow to renounce kingship and women, for which Śantanu gives Bhīṣma the boon to be able to choose his moment of death; Bhīṣma's abduction of three sisters, two as brides for Śantanu and Satyavatī's second son, who dies soon after becoming king, leaving the two as widows, and the third, the unwedded Ambā, with thoughts of revenge against Bhīṣma; Satyavatī's determination to save the line by getting the two widowed queens pregnant, first by asking Bhīṣma, who refuses to break his vow of celibacy, and then, admitting her premarital affair, recalling her first son Vyāsa; Vyāsa's unions with the two widowed sisters, cursing the first to bear a blind son because she had closed her eyes at his hideous ascetic ugliness and the second to bear a pale son because she had blanched; the births of the blind Dhṛtarāstra, the pale Pāṇḍu, plus a third son, Vidura, sired with the first widow's low caste maidservant—and behind Vidura's birth, the *Aṇimāṇḍavya-Upākhyāna* (the fourth), named after a sage who learns that he was impaled as the result of a childhood sin in his previous life and curses the god Dharma—lord of postmortem punishments and thus "functionally"[87] tantamount in this, his virtual

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is returning to an argument she makes there about upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata: "the apparently secondary accounts with which the epic is stuffed, far from being what one lately calls interpolations, are the reprise under a symbolic form of the dominant message of the principal account, which they thus aide to decipher, all while contributing to the progression of the intrigue." Madeleine Biardeau, "Śakuntalā dans l'épopée," *Indologica Taurinensia* 7, *Dr. Ludwig Sternbach Felicitation Volume, Part 1* (1979): 120 (my translation).

84   One of the epic's "three beginnings" (see Mahābhārata 1.1.50); these are probably recommended for performance purposes like the 24,000-verse Bhārata.

85   See Andrea Custodi, "Dharma and Desire: Lacan and the Left Half of the Mahābhārata" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2004), 155–203 on the theme of the gaze in this upākhyāna.

86   This corrects earlier versions of the article, where I erroneously had Bhīṣma as the "ninth" son.

87   On this episode, see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 192–95. As Kantawala says, Dharma, seated on his throne and meting out "justice," is here "a functional name given to Yama." S.G. Kantawala, "The Legend of Aṇī Māṇḍavya," in *Modern Evaluation of the*

epic debut, to Yama, god of the dead—to suffer Vidura's low-caste human birth. From here, one enters upon the generation of the main heroes. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's marriage to Gāndhārī yields the hundred Kauravas, incarnate demons headed by Duryodhana. And once Pāṇḍu becomes impotent after his marriages to Kuntī and Madri, Kuntī tells him the Vyuṣitāṣva-Upākhyāna (number 5) about a queen made pregnant by her husband even after he was dead as part of the build-up to her disclosure that she has the means to induce pregnancy by gods, which results in Pāṇḍu choosing Dharma to sire his first son, Yudhiṣṭhira, and so on. Already we see how impoverished the Mahābhārata would be "without upākhyānas," the first five of which tie in with the main story through a train of curses and boons having to do with sex and with death, identify dharma/ Dharma as death/Yama, and, while stirring up such undercurrents below the surface, lay the groundwork for the birth of Dharma's son, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

After some youthful trials, the Pāṇḍavas must conceal their survival from the Kauravas, which they do disguised as Brahmans, and Vyāsa appears to direct them to Pañcāla where they will meet their destined bride. On the way Arjuna defeats the Gandharva Citraratha who had challenged him. Citraratha tells the Pāṇḍavas they are vulnerable without keeping a priest and holy fires, and then relates three upākhyānas in succession: the Tapati-Upākhyāna (about another of their ancestresses Tapatī, daughter of the Sun and mother of the eponymous Kuru), and the Vasiṣṭha- and Aurva-Upākhyānas (about Brahmans), all three of which prepare them for forthcoming adventures while imparting some positive and negative information on marriage and sexuality.[88] Then, when the five Pāṇḍavas—still disguised as Brahmans—marry Draupadī, Vyāsa, who "by chance arrived" (Mahābhārata 1.187.32d), sanctions the marriage by telling Draupadī's father Drupada the Pañcendra-Upākhyāna. At a sacrifice performed by the gods at Naimiṣa Forest, Yama was consecrated as the *śamitṛ* priest assigned to putting victims to death, which detained him from killing humans for the rite's duration, making the gods edgy until they learned from Brahmā that the rite would strengthen Yama for this job once it was done. As one of the attendees, Indra then saw golden lotuses floating down the Gaṅgā and traced them upriver to the tears of the goddess Śrī, who was

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Mahābhārata. Prof. P.K. Sharma Felicitation Volume, ed. S.P. Narang (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1995), 104–5.

88   Said in correspondence to the point made by Sutherland Goldman (2004, 72) cited below in connection with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa's approach to Mithilā. Tapatī is a positive ancestress of the Pāṇḍavas, mother of Kuru: Vasiṣṭha's encounter with the cannibal Kalmāṣapāda builds up to the latter's near attack of a pregnant woman.

weeping at the river's source over the fall of four former Indras, her former husbands, into a cave as the result of their arrogance toward Śiva. Once the current Indra has suffered the same fate, Vyāsa reveals that the Pāṇḍavas are the five Indras, cursed by Śiva to become mortals and marry Draupadī, who is Śrī incarnate, which gives the marriage a resemblance of monogamy; they will regain Indroloka only after performing "unbearable" (*aviṣahya*) and lethal karma. Further, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have joined them incarnated from two hairs of Viṣṇu. The Pañcendra-Upākhyāna thus shifts the emphasis from the five gods who sire the Pāṇḍavas, beginning with Dharma, to the Pāṇḍavas being additionally five Indras. Vyāsa says nothing explicit to indicate that Yama's death-dealing mission is to be carried out in the person of Yudhiṣṭhira at the battle of Kurukṣetra. But if Dharma and Yama are "functionally" the same, this conclusion would be inevitable.[89] The ninth upākhyāna, spoken by the author himself, thus deftly knots together threads we detected in the first five.[90]

After some amends are made between the two camps, the seer Nārada arrives at the Pāṇḍavas' new capital, Indraprastha, to tell the Sunda-Upasunda-Upākhyāna about two demonic brothers who kill each other over a woman, thereby warning the Pāṇḍavas to regulate their time with Draupadī and providing them with an inverse mirror story to their own situation—and the very rule that will send Arjuna into a period of exile in which he will marry three other women. Two upākhyānas in a row are thus concerned with the marriage of Draupadī: through the first, Vyāsa tells Draupadī's father Drupada the divine secret that makes it legal, and through the second Nārada tells the Pāṇḍavas how to regulate it. Finally, when Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn the Khāṇḍava Forest to satisfy Agni and clear the ground for the construction of Indraprastha, Book 1 closes with the Śārṅgaka-Upākhyāna about some precocious birds reminiscent of the four Vedas[91] who escape the blaze.

Book 3, the Āraṇyakaparvan, relates 21 upākhyānas during the Pāṇḍavas' residence in the forest. Early on, Kṛṣṇa tells its first upākhyāna—the Saubhavadha-Upākhyāna—to explain his absence from the dice match. Thereafter, most of the upākhyānas relate to events in the Book's second through fifth *upaparvans* and its final three. The opening sequence tells

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89   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 119–20.

90   Van Buitenen's view of it as a "silly" case of "inept mythification" ("Introduction," xix–xx), itself a restatement of some earlier salvos of Moriz Winternitz (see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 164 and n. 118), could not be farther from the case.

91   Madeleine Biardeau, "Compte rendu of seminar on the Mahābhārata," *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Section 5, no. 79 (1971–72): 140–41.

of the Pāṇḍavas' forest-entering encounter with the monstrous *rākṣasa*
Kirmīra, killed by Bhīma; Arjuna's encounter with Śiva on Mount Kailāsa to
obtain divine weapons; and Arjuna's further adventures in the heaven of his
father Indra. In Arjuna's absence, the other Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī then go
on pilgrimage and hear numerous stories, many billed as upākhyānas. Thus
nine—the Agastya-, Ṛśyaśṛṅga-, Kārtavīrya-, Śukanyā-, Māndhātṛ-, Jantu-,
Śyena-Kapotīya-, Aṣṭāvakrīya-, and Yavakrīta-Upākhyānas—are told during
the "Tour of the Sacred Fords" to the pilgrimaging Pāṇḍavas minus Arjuna,
with all but one of these, Kārtavīrya, narrated by the group's sage travelling
companion Lomaśa. And once Arjuna has rejoined them, the Pāṇḍavas and
Draupadī hear six more upākhyānas narrated by the ageless sage Mārkaṇḍeya:
the Vainya- (a story of King Vainya and the Ṛṣis Atri and Gautama), Matsya-,
Maṇḍūka-, Indradyumna-, Dhundhumāra-, and Pativratā-Upākhyānas. Then,
after further forest adventures, Vyāsa comes "desirous of seeing" (Mahābhārata
3.245.8c) the Pāṇḍavas to tell them the Mudgala-Upākhyāna, a tale illustrative
of the superiority of giving over asceticism and the first of several upākhyānas
to emphasize the merits of *uñchavṛtti* Brahmans who practice the vow of living
only on gleaning (*uñcha*), that is, eating only grains left over from the harvest,
and, more than this, who willingly give their meager fare to demanding hun-
gry guests, in this case, the chronically famished Ṛṣi Durvāsas.[92] Immediately
after Vyāsa's visit, the closing three *upaparvans* then tell of the following epi-
sodes: first, Draupadī is abducted by the Kauravas' brother-in-law Jayadratha,
after which Mārkaṇḍeya tells two more upākhyānas (the ones about Rāma
and Sāvitrī); next, Karṇa gives Indra his natural-born golden armor and ear-
rings; and, in closing, Vaiśaṁpāyana recounts "'The Fire-Sticks Subtale' in
which Dharma instructs his son [*āraṇeyam upākhyānaṃ yatra dharmo 'nvaāt
sutam*]" (1.2.127cd).

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92   Durvāsas also appears three other times in this role. He is a cranky and demanding guest
      in the household of Kuntibhoja, who leaves Durvāsas's high maintenance to his adopted
      daughter Kuntī (1.104; 1.113–14; 5.142.19). In the *Durvāsa-Māhātmya* (13.144), Yudhiṣṭhira
      directs a question about honoring Brahmans to Kṛṣṇa rather than Bhīṣma and learns how,
      when no one else would invite Durvāsas as he went about uttering a verse proclaiming his
      troublesome reputation, he came to stay with Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī and ate voraciously and
      harassed them in other ways until he finally granted them boons for keeping their temper.
      And in a Northern passage justly rejected by the Critical Edition, he grants Duryodhana,
      after being well fed, the boon of appearing with his horde of ten thousand disciples before
      Draupadī to demand food just after she has fed the Pāṇḍavas and gone to take rest, where-
      upon Kṛṣṇa comes to her rescue, filling the horde's bellies from one gram of leftover rice,
      whence Durvāsas withdraws lest he provoke the Pāṇḍavas by not finishing the meal pro-
      vided (3, App, I, No. 25).

As noted, three upākhyānas in Book 3 stand out as what Biardeau calls "mirror stories": the Nala-Upākhyāna—the love story about Nala and Damayantī told by the seer Bṛhadaśva while Arjuna is visiting Śiva and Indra and Draupadī misses this favorite of her husbands; the Rāma-Upākhyāna—a "Mahābhārata-sensitive" version of the Rāma story[93] focused on Sītā's abduction and told to all five Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī by Mārkaṇḍeya just after Draupadī's abduction; and the Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna—the story of a heroine who saved her husband from Yama, told by Mārkaṇḍeya just after the Rāma-Upākhyāna when Yudhiṣṭhira asks, having already heard about Sītā, if there ever was a woman as devoted to her husband(s) as Draupadī (this implicit slighting of Sītā is rather curious). Finally, the "Firesticks Subtale" then closes Book 3 as it began with the encounter of a monster who appears first as a speaking crane and for the moment "kills" the four youngest Pāṇḍavas at a lake where they have gone to slake their thirst. But whereas the first monster, Kirmīra, was a *rākṣasa*, this crane turns into a one-eyed Yakṣa before he reveals himself, after questioning Yudhiṣṭhira, to be Yudhiṣṭhira's own father Dharma in disguise. Gratified at his son's subtle answers to his puzzling questions, Dharma revives Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers and promises him success in disguising himself in Book 4 during the thirteenth year in exile, which soon inspires Yudhiṣṭhira to take on the name "Heron" (an "eater of fish," like the first "crane" disguise of his father) and to introduce himself to King Virāṭa of Matsya (the kingdom of "Fish") as a dicing master thanks to his having received the boon of "the heart of the dice" after hearing how this skill saved Nala in the Nala-Upākhyāna.[94] One may also suspect that a subcurrent runs between the Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna in which Yama restores life to Sāvitrī's husband Satyavan and the "Firesticks Subtale" in which Yudhiṣṭhira restores life to his brothers, for such a parallel between Yama and Yudhiṣṭhira would not only hark back to their already established connections through Dharma, but anticipate Book 4, which will speak of the Pāṇḍavas' year in concealment in Matsya as a rebirth from the womb (Mahābhārata

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93   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Authorial Paths through the Two Sanskrit Epics, Via the *Rāmopākhyāna*," in *Epic Undertakings: Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, vol. 2, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Muneo Tokunaga, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009), 169–214.

94   Moreover, all five Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī adopt disguises that could be cued from the Nala-Upākhyāna; see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 228–29). On Yudhiṣṭhira-Kaṅka and the Matsyas, see ibid., 197 and n. 562; Madeleine Biardeau, "Études de mythologie hindoue v: 11. Bhakti et avatāra (suite)," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 65 (1978): 99–101, 107; Madeleine Biardeau, "Un certain Kīcaka," in *Lex et litterae: Studies in Honour of Professor Oscar Botto*, ed. Siegfried Lienhard and Irma Piovano (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1997), 44–47. The foregoing sentence corrects an error in Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 484, before n. 67.

4.66.10cd). We shall find later support for reasoning that the Parvasaṁgraha calls the "Firesticks Subtale" an upākhyāna, even though it is the only one that is part of the main story, just because so many upākhyāna crosscurrents run through it.

Looked at from the standpoint of its three upākhyānas, Book 5, the Udyoga-parvan, presents surprising symmetries and asymmetries. The initial *upaparvan* traces how both sides try to secure alliances. Arjuna and Duryodhana come to Dvārakā to seek aide from Kṛṣṇa, who says bafflingly that his relation to each is equal. But since he saw Arjuna first he gives him the first choice of two options: Kṛṣṇa as a noncombatant charioteer, or a whole army division. Arjuna chooses Kṛṣṇa and Duryodhana departs content. Then the Madra king Śalya, brother of the twins' mother Mādrī, sets out to join the Pāṇḍavas but has his mind turned after he finds elegant way-stations en route prepared for him by Duryodhana. Travelling on, he tells Yudhiṣṭhira that he has sided with Duryodhana, and Yudhiṣṭhira, foreseeing that Śalya will be Karṇa's charioteer, asks him to destroy Karṇa's confidence (*tejas,*) in combat. Telling Yudhiṣṭhira that even Indra had ups and downs, Śalya consoles him with Book 5's first upākhyāna, a cycle of three ultimately triumphant Indra stories called the Indravijaya-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 5.9-18): both a rear-view mirror story comparing Draupadī's sufferings with Damayantī's (58.34cd) and Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī's tribulations in Book 4 with those of Indra and Sāci, and a prophetic lens through which to see aspects of Yudhiṣṭhira's war conduct anticipated by Indra's.[95]

As negotiations proceed, events come to center on the lengthy middle *upaparvan* 54, titled "The Coming of the Lord," in which Kṛṣṇa as divine messenger comes as the Pāṇḍavas' last negotiator with the Kauravas while a host of celestial seers descend to watch the proceedings and tell stories: one of them an upākhyāna about the arrogant king Dambhodbhava that Rāma Jāmadagnya tells to warn Duryodhana that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are the ancient indomitable seers Nara and Nārāyāṇa.[96] Arbitrations break down when Duryodhana tries, futilely to capture Kṛṣṇa, and end when the Kauravas send Śakuni's son Ulūka (Duryodhana's mother's brother's son, who thus has the same relation to Duryodhana that Kṛṣṇa has to the first three Pāṇḍavas) with a last abusive message to the Pāṇḍavas. Book 5 then closes with

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95   Parallel themes in the Indravijaya-Upākhyāna and the Mahābhārata war include destruction of opponent's *tejas,* breach of friendship (*sakhya*), reliance on stratagems supplied by Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, and concluding sin-cleansing *aśvamedhas.*

96   Other important stories related here are Kaṇva's story of Mātali (95–103) and Nārada's about Gālava (104–21), the latter called the Gālava-Carita and "this great incomparable *ākhyāna*" (*idam rnahākhyanam anuttamam*; Mahābhārata 5.121.22a) in closing.

the Ambā-Upākhyāna-Parvan, most of which, from its beginning, comprises Book 5's third upākhyāna, the Ambā-Upākhyāna, in which Bhīṣma tells Duryodhana how Ambā, determined to destroy him, came to be reborn as Draupadī's brother Śikhaṇḍin, and why Bhīṣma won't fight Śikhaṇḍin because he was formerly a woman.[97] Surrounding a revelatory middle upākhyāna that compares Duryodhana to an ancient tyrant who defied Nara and Nārāyaṇa, Book 5 thus has one upākhyāna in its first *upaparvan* that leaves its listener Yudhiṣṭhira with a fateful secret about Karṇa that will advantage Yudhiṣṭhira in the war, and another in its last *upaparvan* that leaves its listener Duryodhana with a fateful secret about Bhīṣma that will disadvantage Duryodhana in the war.[98]

Book 8, the Karṇaparvan, is the only war book with upākhyānas woven into its structure. On the war's seventeenth day, Karṇa promises Duryodhana the death of Arjuna, and Arjuna promises Yudhiṣṭhira—by now obsessed about Karṇa—to finish off Karṇa. Regarding Śalya as the only match for Kṛṣṇa's charioteering, Karṇa requests that Śalya be his charioteer, and Duryodhana, to convince Śalya, recounts the Tripura-Upākhyāna about how Brahmā came to drive Śiva's chariot in Śiva's conquest of the Triple City of the demons.[99] Śalya then agrees on condition that he can say what he pleases, and engages Karṇa in a duel of insults that includes the Haṃsa-Kākīya-Upākhyāna in which he

97   See Custodi, "Dharma and Desire: Lacan and the Left Half of the Mahābhārata," 204–63 on the constraints on gender transformation in this upākhyāna.

98   Albeit charmingly, Van Buitenen, typically (see nn. 28 and 67 above) finds this upākhyāna "epigonic" and "absurd." J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction [to Book 5. The Book of the Effort]," in *The Mahābhārata: 4. The Book of Virāṭa; 5. The Book of the Effort* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 175, 178. While offering the convincing formulation "I assume that it developed within the *Mahābhārata*" (ibid., 176), he takes it to have been added as "instant tradition" toward the end of the epic's "half millennium of … composition." Ibid., 178. Along with his own "monologue intérieur" to account for such a belated creation (ibid., 177), he offers such erroneous or misleading statements and details as: Rāma Jāmadagnya's appearance in the story is "posthumous" (ibid., 175); King Drupada is "once more … sonless" (far more likely, Śikhaṇḍin is old enough, and certainly older than Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī, to be among the "accursed brood" [*dhig bandhūn;* 1.155.3b; Van Buitenen trans.] of sons Drupada speaks of when he desires one who will be up to killing Droṇa); and with five references to it elsewhere in the epic, the story of Śikhaṇḍin's sex change is "astonishingly underplayed." Ibid., 176.

99   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Two Kṛṣṇas on One Chariot: Upaniṣadic Imagery and Epic Mythology," *History of Religions* 24 (1984): 15 and n. 42, where I tried for the last time to develop the notion of "background story" as a way to handle some of the issues raised by this chapter: in particular, the relation of certain myths (mostly, however, not upākhyā-nas) to certain parvans.

compares Karṇa's challenge to Arjuna to a crow challenging a gander. These subtales recall that the events of this parvan could not occur without those that preface the Indravijaya-Upākhyāna, in which Śalya promised Yudhiṣṭhira that when Karṇa asked him to be his charioteer, Śalya would undermine Karṇa's confidence.

Book 12, the Śāntiparvan, begins to tell how Yudhiṣṭhira, beset by grief over all the warriors slain so that he could rule, is persuaded by his family, counsellors (including Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, and Vyāsa), and Bhīṣma to give up his guilt-ridden aspirations to renunciation and accept his royal duties. In its early going, Kṛṣṇa contributes the Book's first three upākhyānas. At the capital, he recites two in a row: first, a string of sixteen vignettes about ancient kings whose deaths were also lamented, and then he and Nārada combine to deliver a death-and-revival tale about a boy named "Excretor of Gold," son of the listener to the sixteen vignettes, that briefly lightens Yudhiṣṭhira's mood.[100] On the way to joining Bhīṣma at Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa then describes Rāma Jāmadagnya's 21 massacres of the Kṣatriyas there, answering Yudhiṣṭhira's curiosity about how the warrior class kept regenerating. For the rest, ten upākhyānas are dispersed through Bhīṣma's multi-genre instructions in the three anthologies on Rājadharma, "laws for kings," Āpaddharma, "law for times of distress," and Mokṣadharma, "norms concerning liberation" (*upaparvans* 84–86). Bhīṣma never recites two in a row; in the Mokṣadharma one finds intervals of as many as 64 (12.194–257) and 76 (12.264–339) adhyāyas between them. Yet there is a striking pattern. Four of these upākhyānas confront the Dharma King Yudhiṣṭhira with "puzzle pieces" about dharma in which lead characters are either his own father, the god Dharma, in disguise, or figures who bear the word *dharman /dharma* in their names. Moreover, one such tale occurs as the last upākhyāna in each anthology. Thus Dharma himself appears disguised in the Sumitra-Upākhyāna or Ṛṣabha Gītā near the end of the Rājadharma; a magnificent crane bears the name Rājadharman in "The Story of the Ungrateful Brahman" (Kṛtaghna-Upākhyāna) that ends the Āpaddharma*;* and, after Dharma appears in another disguise in the Mokṣadharma's first upākhyāna (the Jāpaka-Upākhyāna), that subparvan ends with the story of a questioning Brahman named Dharmāraṇya, "Forest of Dharma," who, like Yudhiṣṭhira at this juncture, has questions about the best practice to pursue toward gaining heaven—which turns out to be eating only what is gleaned after grains and other food have been harvested (Uñchavṛtti-Upākhyāna). Yudhiṣṭhira (and other careful listeners) would be

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able to recall that Vyāsa himself had exalted the same practice, along with the merits of giving that meager fare to guests, toward the end of Book 3 in the Mudgala-Upākhyāna. Moreover, since Book 3 ends with the "Firesticks Subtale" in which Dharma appears disguised as a crane and a puzzle-posing Yakṣa, it would appear that one strain of the epic's upākhyānas carries a major subcurrent through such puzzle pieces, especially in that they frequently punctuate the ends of major units. Moreover, with one such story ending the Śāntiparvan, we have reached the juncture mentioned earlier where Bhīṣma is launching his only concentrated stretch of upākhyānas.

Book 13, the Anuśāsanaparvan, begins with Bhīṣma's fourth anthology, on Dānadharma, comprising his closing "further instructions"[101] to Yudhiṣṭhira on "the law of the gift" (*upaparvan* 87). Here we must consider Fitzgerald's hypothesis that the four anthologies demonstrate decreasing "tautness" and increasing relaxation as the result of "a progressive loosening of editorial integration"[102] over centuries, from the second century BCE down to the fourth-to-fifth century CE.[103] Fitzgerald's point is buttressed by the general impression scholars have had that the Anuśāsanaparvan is loose and late. R.N. Dandekar, the Critical Edition editor of this edition's last-to-be-completed parvan, perhaps puts it best:

> The scope and nature of the contents of this *parvan* were such that literally any topic under the sun could be broached and discussed in it .... This has resulted in poor Yudhiṣṭhira being represented as putting to his grandsire some of the most elementary questions—often without rhyme or reason. Not infrequently, these questions serve as mere excuses for introducing a legend or a doctrine fancied by the redactor, no matter if it has already occurred in an earlier part of the Epic, not once but several times.[104]

Even more pointedly Dandekar remarks, "Yudhiṣṭhira's questions are mostly elementary in character and often show the questioner to be just a simpleton."[105]

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101   The Parvasaṃgraha makes this connection by calling the Dānadharmaparvan the Ānuśāsanika, "Further Instruction," at Mahābhārata 1.2.65b.

102   Fitzgerald, "Introduction," 147–48.

103   Ibid., 114.

104   R.N. Dandekar, "Introduction," in *The Anuśāsanaparvan for the First Time Critically Edited*, part 1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1961), xlvii.

105   Dandekar is quite insistent, going on: "the redactors must have seen in this *parvan* perhaps their last opportunity to introduce into the epic various miscellaneous topics which

No doubt Dandekar had the Bhaṅgāsvana-Upākhyāna principally in mind, in which Yudhiṣṭhira, seemingly quite out of the blue, asks, "in the act of coition, who derives the greater pleasure man or woman" (Mahābhārata 13.12.1[106]), and thereby launches his celibate grandfather Bhīṣma into a tale that makes the case that the luckier ones are women. But Yudhiṣṭhira is hardly a simpleton. He is portrayed throughout as having an underlying guilelessness that sustains him. The four anthologies repeatedly reinforce this trope,[107] but nowhere more pivotally than in the transition from Book 12 to 13, which marks Yudhiṣṭhira's revived interest in stories. He begins Book 13 stating that he is unable to regain peace of mind, even after Book 12, "out of the conviction that he alone had been responsible for the tragic catastrophe of the war," and that he feels "particularly unhappy at the pitiable condition" of Bhīṣma.[108] But once Bhīṣma reassures him in the opening "Dialogue [saṃvāda] Between Death, Gautamī, and Others" that fault is multiple and, as regards the war, certainly not his alone, Yudhiṣṭhira replies, "O grandsire, wisest of men, you who are learned in all the treatises, I have listened to this great narrative [ākhyāna], O foremost of the intelligent. I desire to hear a little more narrated by you in connection with dharma, O king. You are able to narrate it to me. Tell me if any householder has ever succeeded in conquering Mṛtyu (Death) by the practice of dharma" (13.2.1–3). This appeal launches Book 13's first upākhyāna, the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna, on how, by following the "the law of treating guests" (atithidharma),[109] Death may indeed be overcome—a tale that reveals that the divine guest through whom a householder can overcome Death by showing him

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had occurred to them at the last moment" (ibid., lxxiv–lxxv); and rephrases this point in his Introduction to the Critical Notes (R.N. Dandekar, ed. *The Anuśāsanaparvan for the First Time Critically Edited*, part 2 [Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1961], 1051): "Some of the questions put into Yudhiṣṭhira's mouth are so elementary that they show the venerable king to be a naive person. They make one wonder if Yudhiṣṭhira had not learnt even commonplace things in the course of his long and eventful life."

106   Dandekar, "Introduction," lix.

107   See Hiltebeitel, "On Reading Fitzgerald's Vyāsa."

108   Dandekar, "Introduction," lvii–lviii.

109   Dandekar, "Introduction," lviii supplies this compound. The text speaks of *atithipūja,* "honoring or worshiping guests" (Mahābhārata 13.2.68–69, 91), as does the Uñchavṛtti-Upākhyāna just before it (12.347.3) ending the Mokṣadharma, and the Kapota-Upākhyāna (12.142.39–40, 143.8) in the Āpaddharma. Cf. *atithi-vratin,* one who is "devoted to guests," in the Mudgala-Upākhyāna (3.246.4 and 15).

unstinting hospitality[110]—even to the point of offering him his wife—is
Dharma himself.[111] This would be a clever, beautiful, and relieving—yet also
provocative[112]—revelation to Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira, who, just after hear-
ing the Mokṣadharma on "the norms of liberation," which he knows cannot
really be for him if he is to rule, hears a story that points the way to understand-
ing how he can still overcome death by cultivating the generosity of a gifting
royal householder. Indeed, if we follow Yudhiṣṭhira's train of thought from
hearing the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna to his unexpected question, the latter may
not be so out of the blue after all, but a "jolt of sexuality" like those centered on
the wife that Jamison finds energizing the structures of Brahmanic rituals[113]—
and a timely reminder to Draupadī of the pleasures Yudhiṣṭhira would like to
think she once enjoyed and, who knows, could enjoy again. For what lies ahead
for the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī but the rest of their householder lives together?
Indeed, in a telling case of what I have elsewhere called pacing,[114] we do not
learn that Draupadī has been present for Bhīṣma's battlefield oration until this
main run of upākhyānas is over and Draupadī joins the four younger Pāṇḍavas

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110   The *atithi* is not just an ordinary guest (*abhyāgata*) but, etymologically, "one who has no
fixed day in coming" (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 14), that is, an unin-
vited and "date-less" (*a-tithi*) guest. Thus Ganguli's delightful note on the Uñchavṛtty-
Upākhyāna: "the word 'atithi' which is rendered 'guest' here and elsewhere, means a
person who enters without invitation the abode of a householder. Such an individual is
adorable. All the deities reside in his person. He is supposed to favor the householder by
giving him an opportunity of performing rites of hospitality .... [But] he cannot expect to
be served with food till the householder has done his best for serving him as sumptuously
as possible .... Hence, by the time the food is placed before him, the guest becomes very
hungry." Ganguli, trans. *The Mahabharata*, vol. 10, 630 n. 1 (second ellipsis Ganguli's). My
thanks to Balaji Hebbar for pointing out the *abhyāgata/.atithi* distinction.

111   At the very moment Sudarśana arrives home to hear Dharma's report from the bedroom
that he is there with his wife, Death (Mṛtyu) is standing over Sudarśana with a concealed
iron mallet (*kūtamudgara*; Mahābhārata 13.2.66) to test his reaction. A study of the inter-
activities between Yama, Mṛtyu, Kāla, and Dharma in the epics would be revealing.

112   Indeed, both discussants might have things to ponder here. Yudhiṣṭhira would know that
he owes his very birth *and rule* to the fact that his father Pāṇḍu gave his mother Kuntī to
Dharma *first* among the gods he selected to sire his sons, and might also ponder whether
he gave his own wife Draupadī to dharma at the dice match; and Bhīṣma now prolongs his
life on a bed of arrows, overcoming death to this extent thanks to a boon given by his
father for renouncing marriage—a sort of gift of his wife to the dharma of his father.

113   Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, 96, 283, n. 221.

114   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Weighting Orality and Writing in the Sanskrit Epics," in *Epics, Khilas, and
Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures*, Proceedings of the Third Dubrovnik International
Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas, September 2002, ed. Petteri Koskikallio
(Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and the Arts, 2005), 81–111.

in voicing approval at Yudhiṣṭhira's new determination to forego asceticism and end his disgust at the householder life (13.57.42-44).

Why is Bhīṣma unbottled like this at this juncture?[115] Granted that the Dānadharmaparvan is relatively loose and likely late to the point of including entries down to "the last moment," it need be no later than its literary unfolding within the Mahābhārata's primary archetypal design. The four anthologies get more and more relaxed from one to the next because the interlocutors do as well. In the Dānadharma they are at last beginning to enjoy themselves, to put the war behind them, to treasure the dwindling light of leisure they still have to raise questions and delight in stories on the bank of the Gaṅgā before Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma puts his learned life behind him. Cutting away for Vaiśaṁpāyana to describe the scene to Janamejaya, we hear, amid praise of the Gaṅgā, how 45 celestial seers arrive to tell stories (*kathās*) "related to Bhīṣma" (13.27.10), stories that cheer one and all—even at the seers' parting, when Yudhiṣṭhira touches Bhīṣma's feet with his head "at the end of a story [*kathānte*]" (Mahābhārata 13.27.17) and returns to his questioning, which leads Bhīṣma to tell him the Mataṅga-Upākhyāna.[116] This anticipatory theme of not ending at the end of a story, of keeping the story going with a new story, comes up again when Bhīṣma winds up the Vipula-Upākhyāna by telling how Mārkaṇḍeya had formerly told it to him "in the interval of a story [*kathāntare*] on Gaṅgā's bank" (13.43.17). It is as if living in ongoing stories along side the salvific river is a main current in Yudhiṣṭhira's atonement, and that after the relative dialogical and śāstric stringency of the three Śāntiparvan anthologies, it is good to get back to upākhyānas in "The Book of the Further Instruction." This bears further on the matter raised by Dandekar of returning to stories "no matter if' they have "already occurred." When Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira return to such stories—most notably the Viśvāmitra-Upākhyāna (13.3–4) with its familiar cast of revolving characters (Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, Jamadagni, Rāma Jāmadagnya, etc.)[117]—it is from a new and different angle and, as always with any story, from the pleasure of hearing it again. There is thus a stronger case to be made for reading Books 12 and 13, whole and in sequence, as part of the Mahābhārata's total design and earliest inspiration, than a developmental anthology-by-anthol-

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115   For the stretch from 12.340 to 13.51, Bhīṣma recounts upākhyānas at a clip of 35 out of 64 adhyāyas or 54.7%. By the same rough measure, that contrasts with 64 out of 450 adhyāyas or 14.22% over the four anthologies as a whole: about the same clip as that for upākhyānas in the epic at large (see at nn. 40 and 41).

116   On which see the discussion below at nn. 97–98 in connection with the Rāmāyaṇa.

117   See Sukthankar, "Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata, 45: "the *third* repetition of the birth of Jamadagni," etc.

ogy approach allows. As the return to upākhyānas indicates, Book 13 goes well beyond the rules of transformation that Fitzgerald offers as explanation for such a progression.

With Book 14, the Āśvamedhikaparvan, Yudhiṣṭhira, now adding Bhīṣma's demise to his guilt over the war, agrees to perform a sin-cleansing Horse Sacrifice at Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa's bidding. While the Pāṇḍavas prepare for it, Kṛṣṇa wants to see his people at Dvārakā, and on the way meets the sage Uttaṅka for the multistoried Uttaṅka-Upākhyāna. Arjuna then has many adventures guarding the horse. But immediately upon the rite's completion an angry half-golden blue-eyed mongoose appears from his hole to disparage the grand ceremony as inferior to a gleaner's hospitality to a ravenous guest. With this incident comes the Mahābhārata's final upākhyāna: this time a double puzzle piece that reveals the mongoose to have been Dharma in disguise when testing the "pure gift" (*śuddha dāna*; Mahābhārata 14.93.57) of the gleaner, an *uñchavṛtti* Brahman; but before that, Dharma had been Anger (Krodha) as a mysterious guest who tested the absence of anger in the Ṛṣi Jamadagni and been cursed by the latter's ancestors to become the mongoose. It addresses the question of whether a king's giving to Brahmans and others in sacrifice is comparable to the gleaner's "pure gift," done with devotion and faith and without anger, to Dharma, that ever-demanding guest who would harbor not only this trace of anger but, from his Mahābhārata debut, the "functional" identity of Yama. Again, a major unit ends with an upākhyāna puzzle piece on this theme of dharma's disguises. Moreover, it brings to culmination the cycle of substories about gleaners with the hungry guest finally being not just Durvāsas but Dharma—who will have one remaining disguise by which to test Yudhiṣṭhira in the last adhyāya of the epic's penultimate Book 17: that of the dog whom Yudhiṣṭhira, because of his "non-cruelty" (*ānṛśaṃsyam*; 17.3.7d), will refuse to abandon even at the cost of heaven. Yet this last lesson is not really finished until Yudhiṣṭhira curses dharma/Dharma out of anger (18.2.42-45) at seeing Duryodhana in heaven, which brings home the mongoose's last lesson about how even Dharma leaves his anger behind him. Just so, as Yudhiṣṭhira puts his human feelings behind him, he bathes in the heavenly Gaṅgā and becomes "freed of enmity" (18.3.26–27, 38–40). Here Dharma, finally in his own form, reveals in this final third test of Yudhiṣṭhira's human heart that he had earlier been the one testing him as the Yakṣa and the dog.[118]

Clearly this beginning of a thematic analysis of the underlying values or messages of the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas takes us beyond our earlier classification of their content by their primary protagonists. Although a fuller

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118   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 272–75 on this sequence.

discussion of such values is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is possible, at least as regards that chief and raptest of upākhyāna aficionados, Yudhiṣṭhira, to make the following observation. *Ānṛśaṃsya,* non-cruelty, is a value that he hears a good deal about in the upākhyānas of Book 3,[119] but not in the upākhyā-nas of Books 12 and 13 until Bhīṣma mentions it to him again in the Sudarśana Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 13.2.16) at the beginning of Book 13. There, where it is related through one of Dharma's disguises to the values of hospitality and the angerless generosity of the pure gift, I would propose that we have a tying together of an important value nexus from which we could consider such other important upākhyāna themes as friendship,[120] hospitality,[121] and ingratitude (no. 49) that this chapter has largely left aside, and further, begin to explore the question of how this nexus might relate to bhakti in ways that would help us to differentiate the Mahābhārata from the Rāmāyaṇa in, among other things, the ways they use subtales.

Subtale Material in the Rāmāyaṇa

From the Rāmāyaṇa's seven books, only a few matters bear summary in any detail: the stories of great Ṛṣis who are the subject of upākhyānas in the Mahāb-hārata; and the relation of these Ṛṣis to other Ṛṣis, including Vālmīki. Attention will thus be restricted to portions of Books 1–4, 6, and 7.

  Book 1, the Bālakāṇḍa, opens, as we have seen, with the *upodghāta,* which leads into a description of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, narrowing down to the one defect in the long reign of its current monarch, Daśaratha: he is sonless. At this time the Gods and Ṛṣis are alarmed by Rāvaṇa, who harasses the Ṛṣis in their hermitages. With the help of a descendant of the sage Kaśyapa named Ṛśyaśṛṅga (whose story is told in the Mahābhārata's Ṛśyaśṛṅga-Upākhyāna), Daśaratha's three wives bear four sons, all partial incarnations of Viṣṇu. Once the boys start their Vedic education, the Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra (whose story is told in the Mahābhārata's Vasiṣṭha- and Viśvāmitra-Upākhyānas and is mentioned

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119 In Nala at 367.15; in the Pativratā-Upākhyāna at 3.198.87, 203.41, and 206.33; and in the "Firesticks-Subtale" at 3.297.55, 71 (doubly), and 74, and 298. See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 202–14, 230–31, 268–70.

120 Notable in upākhyānas 48 (Kapota) and 49 (Kṛtaghna).

121 See nn. 78 and 79 above. The guest/hospitality theme figures prominently in the upākhyā-nas of Books 12 and 13: notably in numbers 48 (Kapota), 49 (Kṛtaghna), 51 (Cirakāri), 54 (Uñchavṛtti), 55 (Sudarśana), and 65 (Kīṭa), as also in number 67 (Nakula) in Book 14. For its still wider range, see Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/.Sacrificer's Wife* and Parida, *Hospitality in Changing Indian Society*, as cited in n. 27 above.

in the Vītahavya-Upākhyāna) arrives. He demands that Daśaratha allow Rāma
and Lakṣmaṇa to accompany him into the forest, and is supported by the Ṛṣi
Vasiṣṭha. Viśvāmitra teaches the pair divine weapons and prepares them for a
rākṣasa encounter. Viśvāmitra then mentions that King Janaka of Mithilā will
be performing a sacrifice at which a great bow will be presented as a test of
strength.

Along the way to Mithilā, Viśvāmitra tells stories: the last of them about
Ahalyā. Cursed by her husband, the Ṛṣi Gautama, for being seduced by Indra (a
story told in the Mahābhārata's Cirakāri-Upākhyāna and alluded to in its
Indravijaya-Upākhyāna at 5.2.6), she is redeemed by Rāma's arrival at their
hermitage—a cautionary tale about marriage and sexuality[122] before Rāma
learns more about Janaka's sacrifice. Janaka's minister Śatānanda then tells
Rāma the story of Viśvāmitra's former rivalry with Vasiṣṭha—how Viśvāmitra
elevated himself from Kṣatriya to Brahman after being shamed by the bad
results of trying to steal Vasiṣṭha's cow (a topic, again, of the Māhābhārata's
Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna [Mahābhārata 1.165]).

Janaka's sacrifice turns out to be Sītā's "self-choice" of a husband, where
Rāma wins Sītā by breaking a bow of Śiva. To unite the houses further, Janaka
provides wives for Rāma's brothers. Viśvāmitra departs and along the way back
to Ayodhyā Rāma is confronted by Rāma Jāmadagnya, who appears repeatedly
in the Mahābhārata, notably in the Kārtavīrya-[Mahābhārata 3.115-17],[123]
Rāma-(Jāmadagnya),[124] and Viśvāmitra-Upākhyānas. Indeed, the Rāmāyaṇa
knows the Mahābhārata story of Rāma Jāmadagnya's effacement of the
Kṣatriyas as something that happened "long ago" (*pūrvam*), which worries
Vasiṣṭha and other sages in the return party in case he has come to eliminate
Rāma Dāśarathi as well (Rāmāyaṇa 1.73.19–20). This older Brahman Rāma
blocks the new Kṣatriya Rāma's path and demands that he break a bow of
Viṣṇu—which Rāma does, making the older Rāma yield. The young couples
then return to Ayodhyā.

Ṛśyaśṛṅga's contribution to the four brothers' births, the stories told along
the way by and about Viśvāmitra, and the encounter with Rāma Jāmadagnya,
have, like other Ṛṣi stories in the Rāmāyaṇa, often been viewed as "*purāṇa*"-style

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122   Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Gendered Narratives: Gender, Space, and Narrative Struc-
       tures in *Vālmīki's Bālakāṇḍa*," in *The Ramayana Revisited*, ed. Mandakranta Bose (New
       York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 72.

123   Also called the Jāmadagnya-Upākhyāna.

124   12.48–49; I insert "Jāmadagnya" in parentheses to distinguish this upākhyāna from the
       Rāma-Upākhyāna about Rāma Dāśarathi, but the colophons give both of them the name
       Rāma-Upākhyāna.

(i.e., late) "digressions" or "interpolations" because they depart from a straight-forward Rāma saga.[125] But this view overlooks an emerging pattern. The sequence of Ṛṣis—Ṛśyaśṛṅga (a descendant of Kaśyapa), Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Gautama (with Ahalyā),[126] and Rāma Jāmadagnya (son of Jamadagni)—has linked Rāma's early years to sages from five of the eight great Brahman *gotras* or lineages whose eponymous ancestors are connected with the composition of the older books of the Ṛg Veda and regarded as the main *pravara* Ṛṣis—the ones to whom all Brahman families make invocation (*pravara*) when they give their line of descent.[127] Let us note further that this material is less *purāṇa*-like than Mahābhārata-like; it often folds within the Rāmāyaṇa's one main story material that the Mahābhārata treats in its upākhyānas.

Book 2, the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, builds up to the forest banishment of Rāma, accompanied by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. Crossing the Gaṅgā, the trio heads toward their first destination, the hermitage of the Ṛṣi Bharadvāja. When Rāma asks Bharadvāja to "think of some good site for an ashram in a secluded place," the seer directs them to Mount Citrakūṭa, "a meritorious place frequented by the great Ṛṣis" (Rāmāyaṇa 2.48.25).

When Bharata learns what has happened, he affirms the Ikṣvākus' custom of primogeniture, tells his deputies that he, rather than Rāma, will fulfill the terms of exile, and orders them to prepare an army to help him bring Rāma back. Following the same route, Bharata reaches Bharadvāja's *āśrama*. Bharadvāja tests him, conjuring up a feast for the army and a royal palace for him. Bharata rejects the royal seat, foreshadowing his stewardship of Rāma's throne. Having seen Bharata's worthiness, Bharadvāja again gives directions

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125 See Goldman and Sutherland, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 60 endorsing, especially with reference to the Ṛśyaśṛṅga episode, long held views of the "'purānic' quality of the *Bālakāṇḍa,* as contrasted with the more 'epic' quality of Books Two through Six." Cf. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, 132 for whom "the Ṛśyaśṛṅga episode probably has an independent origin," and the Bhārgava Rāma encounter is an "interpolated" "grotesque story." Ibid., 478–79. In another Brockington study, the Bharadvāja and Agastya episodes are "examples of inter-polated episodes." John L. Brockington, *Epic Threads: John Brockington on the Sanskrit Epics*, ed. Gregory M. Bailey, and M. Brockington (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 299. Cf. Rosalind Lefeber, trans. *Kiṣkindhā-Kāṇḍa*, vol. 4 of *The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 346 and 349 on the Niśākara episode's "late" and "decidedly purāṇic type of story."

126 Śatānanda is also a Gautama, providing a male presence from this family that the story told does not provide.

127 See Hiltebeitel, "Authorial Paths through the Two Sanskrit Epics" for a fuller treatment of this pattern as a "map" through the text, with discussion of the substitutions of Ṛśyaśṛṅga for Kaśyapa and Rāma Jāmadagnya for Jamadagni.

to Citrakūṭa. There, after long discussion, Bharata agrees to be regent for the duration of Rāma's exile.

Soon sensing disquiet among the Citrakūṭa Ṛṣis. Rāma learns that Rāvaṇa's younger brother Khara has been cannibalizing ascetics in nearby Janasthāna. The sages retreat to a safer ashram and Rāma moves on to the ashram of Atri, where Atri's wife Anasūyā tells Sītā the duties of a faithful wife and gives her apparel and jewels.[128] Rāma gets his next directions from the ascetics there, who recommend, all other routes being treacherous, "the path through the forest that the great Ṛṣis use when they go to gather fruits" (Rāmāyaṇa 111.19). With this close of Book 2, adding Bharadvāja and Atri, Rāma has now been linked with seven of the eight *pravara* Ṛṣis or their descendants. These original seven, who together constitute the northern constellation of the Seven Ṛṣis (the Big Dipper), have pointed Rāma south.

The first line of Book 3, the Araṇyakāṇḍa, finds the trio entering the "vast wilderness" of Daṇḍaka. As they move on from a circle of ashrams, the *rākṣasa* Virādha looms before them and seizes Sītā. Pained by seeing her touched, Rāma fills Virādha with arrows and the brothers each break off an arm to release her. Virādha realizes he has been slain by Rāma, which relieves him from a curse. Before going to heaven, he tells Rāma that the great Ṛṣi Śarabhaṅga "will see to your welfare" (Rāmāyaṇa 3.3.22–23). Śarabhaṅga relays Rāma to the hermitage of Sutīkṣṇa, who offers his ashram as a residence; but Rāma says he might kill the local game. The trio lives happily for ten years in another circle of hermitages before returning to Sutīkṣṇa (10.21–26). Storytellers have now told Rāma about Agastya's āśrama and he asks Sutīkṣṇa how to find it in so vast a forest (29–30). Sutīkṣṇa heads him due south, and along the way Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa stories told about Agastya that also occur in the Mahābhārata's Agastya-Upākhyāna. Rāma intends to live out the remainder of his exile with Agastya (Rāmāyaṇa 3.10.86), but Agastya, after meditating a moment, says that he knows Rāma's true desire and directs him to a lovely forest called Pañcavaṭī near the Godāvarī River where Sītā will be comfortable and Rāma can protect her while safeguarding the ascetics (12.12–20). These words of the eighth, last, and southernmost of the great *pravara* Ṛṣis resound with forebodings, as does the trio's meeting on the way to Pancavaṭī with the vulture Jaṭāyus, who offers to keep watch over Sītā whenever Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are away. However

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128   On this theme, see Alf Hiltebeitel, Sītā Vibhūṣitā: The Jewels for Her Journey," *Indologica Taurinensia* 8–9, *Ludwik Sternbach Commemoration Volume* (1980–81): 193–200. The articles given by Anasūyā are additional to those given to Sītā by Daśaratha to cover the bark that Kaikeyī has contemptuously given Sītā to wear over her silk (Rāmāyaṇa 2.33.5–12; 34.15–18).

kindly, a vulture is normally a bad omen (3.22.4). At Pañcavaṭī, the trio is soon visited by Rāvaṇa's sister Śūrpaṇakhā, and there, after one thing leads to another, Sītā is carried off by Rāvaṇa while Jaṭāyus is sleeping (3.48.1). Once Rāvaṇa has met Jaṭāyus's challenge and picked Sītā up to continue on his way, Brahmā, seeing this outrage with his divine eye, says, "What is done was to be done," and the Daṇḍaka Forest Ṛṣis are "thrilled" (*prahṛṣṭāḥ*) at the same sight (50.10–11).

Jaṭāyus, unwinged after his fight with Rāvaṇa, soon tells the brothers before he dies that Rāvaṇa abducted Sītā and went south. The brothers head south on an "untrodden path" (*Rāmāyaṇa* 3.65.2), passing into the Krauñca Forest, still hoping to find Sītā. Instead they run into a *dānava*-turned-*rākṣasa*, Kabandha: "Headless trunk," but also a name for a sacrificial post. He guards the way past him as Virādha did for the Daṇḍaka Forest at this Book's beginning (and as Kirmīra and the Yakṣa do at the beginning and end of the Mahābhārata's Book 3). Kabandha is a headless torso with a single-eyed[129] face in his stomach, a huge devouring mouth, and long grabbing arms that suddenly seize the brothers, who quickly sever them. Realizing that this amputation by Rāma ends a long curse, Kabandha tells his story, and after Rāma has asked if he knows anything about Rāvaṇa and has cremated the demon, Kabandha rises lustrously from his pyre to say that Rāvaṇa's abode may be found if Rāma allies with the monkey Sugrīva, whom Rāma should quickly make a friend and "commiserator" (*vayasva*). Kabandha then directs them to Sugrīva's haunt on Mount Ṛṣyamūka. This path takes them through Mataṅga's Wood to Mataṅga's āśrama, where all the Ṛṣis have passed away except the "mendicant woman" Śabarī ("the Tribal Woman"). As Śabarī soon corroborates, Mataṅga and his disciples ascended to heaven just when Rāma reached Citrakūṭa, but Śabarī has awaited Rāma's arrival so that she can go to heaven after seeing him. For this, Rāma permits her to enter fire (70.26)—indexing an association between fire-entry and purification that will also apply to Sītā.

Book 4, the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, then begins with Rāma exploring Mount Ṛṣyamūka, being met by Hanumān, and making Sugrīva his friend and commiserator just as Kabandha had advised.[130] In offering to find Sītā, Sugrīva

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129   So too Dharma as the Yakṣa. One might connect this with their penetrating insight into what Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira need for their next adventures: friendship with Sugrīva and the heart of the dice.

130   In precise detail: Kabandha had advised, "Quickly make him a comrade [*vayasya*], having gone there now, Rāghava, sealing your compact in the presence of blazing fire to shun all trickery" (*Rāmāyaṇa* 3.68.13); and now, "Sugrīva and Rāghava entered into *vayasya* by reverently circling the blazing fire" (4.5.16). This fairly unusual term *vayasya*, literally meaning "contemporary" but used only by Vālmīki in the sense of "commiserator" or

expresses a one-sided willingness to die for his bond with Rāma (Rāmāyaṇa 8.9), and begins to give his side of a story that Vālin wronged him, which Rāma accepts even before fully hearing it and promises to kill Vālin. The first part of Sugrīva's tale concerns his falling out with Vālin after Vālin had killed the demon Māyāvin, which Rāma accepts without question. But behind this story lies another by which Sugrīva discloses why Mount Ṛṣyamūka provides him asylum. Māyāvin opposed Vālin because he had killed Māyāvin's older brother, "a buffalo named Dundubhi" (4.11.7), whom Vālin crushed until blood oozed from his ears, hurling away the carcass. But "blood drops from the wounds fell out from its mouth and were lifted by the wind toward Mataṅga's hermitage" (41). There Mataṅga cursed Vālin to be unable to enter his Wood on pain of death. Sugrīva now points to Dundubhi's bones, which Rāma kicks off to a great distance with just his big toe. Mataṅga's departure thus defines his hermitage, along with Mount Ṛṣyamūka, as a place cursed for its pollution. Albeit that Mataṅga is a Ṛṣi, he is not a Vedic Ṛṣi or even a Brahman. Rather, just as Śabarī's name denotes the Tribal, his denotes the Untouchable. As with the Mahābhārata's Mataṅga-Upākhyāna,[131] Dundubhi's killing has behind it a buffalo sacrifice—a quite archaic one, with death by wrestling rather than the sword—in which this "untouchable Ṛṣi" takes on the pollution of this non-Vedic villagey rite.[132]

"sympathizer," will continue to define Rāma and Sugrīva's bond. I note Vāmīki's unique development of Sugrīva's and Rāma's friendship around this "sentiment" (which is not to be found in the Rāmopākhyāna) in Hiltebeitel, "Authorial Paths through the Two Sanskrit Epics."

131   There a she-ass discloses the unwelcome news to the young Mataṅga, who thinks himself a Brahman, that because his Brahman mother slept with a Śūdra barber he is by birth a Caṇḍāla or Untouchable, and Mataṅga spends the rest of his days doing tapas, unsuccessfully, to become a Brahman (Mahābhārata 13.30.13-14). It would seem that he cannot be the same Mataṅga: being denied *brāhmaṇya* by Indra, he would likely be denied the possibility of being a Ṛṣi.

132   A myth linked with the village buffalo sacrifice in Karnataka shows that an old nexus may link the stories of these two Mataṅgas: Back in the Tretāyuga when all of south India was under the rule of Rāvaṇa and Brahmans had to perform ceremonies in secret, a Brāhmaṇī discovered that her husband and his relatives were meat-eating and liquor-imbibing Untouchables, and that her own two daughters shared their fare. Before submitting herself to flames and becoming the village goddess, she cut off her husband's penis and put it in his mouth, making him the prototype victim of the buffalo sacrifice at which his maternal uncle would become the Potrāj charged with bearing off the rite's pollution, and his younger brother Gavanga the chief of the Ranigya musician-choristers (Āsādis) charged with reviling the goddess with abusive songs—all of which would take place with participation of Brahmans and local landlords in the place of Kṣatriyas. See Sir Walter

Rāma thus forges his friendship with Sugrīva in a place that is both cursed and beyond the range of the Vedic Ṛṣis, who up to now have marked his trail. On the one hand, since leaving Agastya, Rāma's interventions have brought grace and salvation to Kabandha, Śabarī, and Vālin, and a timetable for Mataṅga to have vacated his hermitage and go to heaven before Rāma's arrival—of these, only Mataṅga is thus denied Rāma's saving presence. On the other, since meeting Jaṭāyus and the cannibal-post Kabandha, Rāma has met only impure or inauspicious beings, including monkeys (according to Sītā when she first sees Hanumān and thinks she is dreaming, "a monkey in a dream is held by all the *śāstras* to be inauspicious" [Rāmāyaṇa 5.30.4*; similarly 32.21]). This pattern recurs toward the end of Book 4, where one learns that 8,000 years earlier (4.59.9), the Ṛṣi Niśākara ("Night-Maker") welcomed Jaṭāyus's vulture brother Sampāti, wingless after a misadventure, to his āśrama where wild animals—bears, deer, tigers, lions, elephants, and snakes—surrounded him as they would a benefactor (*dātṛ*). Like Mataṅga, he went to heaven rather than wait to see Rāma (61.15), and, although he could have restored Sampāti's wings, he left him wingless so he would have to stay on the spot until it was time to benefit Rāma. Sampāti is thus there to see the monkey search party that is looking for Sītā in the south stop and think of fasting to death because they have failed to find her. Thinking better of eating this tempting prey, Sampāti tells the monkeys that he and his son saw Rāvaṇa taking Sītā to Laṅkā—a vulture-Ṛṣi collaboration that thus cues Hanumān's leap to Laṅkā.[133]

Elliot, *Aboriginal Caste Book*, vol. 2 (London: India Office Library, 1821–60), 675–81 for this rich and little known version summarized in Alf Hiltebeitel, "Sexuality and Sacrifice: Convergent Subcurrents in the Fire-walking Cult of Draupadī," in *Images of Man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia*, ed. Fred W. Clothey (Madras: New Era Publications, 1982), 88–91 and 109 nn. 81–82. The Rāmāyaṇa's Mataṅga is thus like the Potrāj a handler of the impurity of a buffalo sacrifice (see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Rāma and Gilgamesh: The Sacrifices of the Water Buffalo and the Bull of Heaven," *History of Religions* 19 [1980]: 200–23). And the Mahābhārata's Mataṅga becomes a kind of chorister, for after he fails to become a Brahman, he asks Indra to be able to rove at pleasure through the heavens honored by Brahmans and Kṣatriyas and able to assume any form at will, and Indra gives him the boon of becoming Chandadeva, God of *Chandas* verses, and of being adored by women (Mahābhārata 13.30.13–14).

133   It is interesting that Nightmaker points the way to Laṅkā, since Hanumān's leap to Laṅkā follows a route "adorned with planets, constellations, the moon, the sun, and all the hosts of stars ... thronged with hosts of great seers" (Goldman, trans. *Sundarakāṇḍa*, 112, translating 5.1.161). One wonders whether the animals that went around (*parīvārya upagacchanti*, Rāmāyaṇa 5.59.15c) Niśākara's ashram do not hint at the constellations. Cf. n. 78 above on Niśākara, whose knowledge of Rāma's future from "of old" might suggest that it had been "in the stars." On Laṅkā as an "astronomical conundrum" and location, see Alf

In the Yuddhakāṇḍa (Book 6), Rāvaṇa seems unable to focus on Rāma or the war until his wise maternal grandfather Mālyavān, counseling peace with Rāma and Sītā's return, says the gods and Ṛṣis desire Rāma's victory, differentiates *dharma* and *adharma* as divine and demonic, alludes to the Mahābhārata idea that the king defines the age (*yuga*),[134] says that throughout the regions the Ṛṣis are performing fiery Vedic rites and austerities that are damaging the *rākṣasas*, foresees the *rākṣasas'* destruction, and concludes, "I think Rāma is Viṣṇu abiding in a human body" (6.26.6–31), Getting it right, Mālyavān calls attention to the Ṛṣis' labors to affect the war's outcome and provides analogs to features of the Bhagavadgītā: a theology for the war about to happen; a prediction of its outcome; and a disclosure of the hidden divinity behind it—in this case, hidden so far mainly from himself.

Once the war is won and Rāma has accepted Sītā after her fire ordeal, after finally learning that he is Viṣṇu, everyone (monkeys and *rākṣasas* included) heads toward Ayodhyā on the Puṣpaka chariot, stopping along the way at Bharadvāja's āśrama where Bharadvāja recounts the trio's whole adventure, which he knows by his penances (Rāmāyaṇa 6.112.14). Rāma is at last enthroned in the presence of his rejoicing family and people and the monkeys, *rākṣasas*, and *ṛṣis*. Twice it is said that he ruled for 10,000 years (82, 90), the second time in this Book's very last words—surely sounding like a happy ending, as many western scholars and some Indian vernaculars have taken Book 6 to be.

But the Uttarakāṇḍa (Book 7) opens with Rāma just consecrated and a series of departures and dismissals. First, the Ṛṣis come to his palace—Agastya and the original Seven among them (Rāmāyaṇa 7.1.3–4). Rāma asks about the *rākṣasas* he conquered, launching their former near-neighbor Agastya on a lengthy *rākṣasa* genealogy, with tales of Rāvaṇa's boon and his violations of women, including what some Northern manuscripts call the Vedavatī-Upākhyāna (7.17) (see above n. 46). Rāma is repeatedly filled with wonder. Then "all the Ṛṣis went as they came" (36.46). Rāma also dispatches a hundred kings, and the *rākṣasas*, monkeys, and bears—Hanumān parting with the famous words: "As long as I hear *Rāma-kathā* on the face of the earth, so long will my breaths reside in my body" (39.16). Next Rāma dismisses the Puṣpaka chariot while keeping it on call. And next he dismisses Sītā who will not remain on call. All these dismissals subtract down to a great unraveling.

Hiltebeitel *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 89–90 and nn. 5 and 6, 93–94 and n. 18.

134   See Madeleine Biardeau, "Études de mythologie hindoue IV: II. Bhakti et avatāra," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 63 (1976): 155–71.

After some happiness between Rāma and Sītā, there comes the news that Ayodhyā's citizens gossip about her time in captivity, and Rāma banishes her to protect his royal reputation even after she has announced that she is pregnant. Painfully, Lakṣmana leaves her at Vālmīki's hermitage. Next Rāma hears that there are still some ascetics who live in fear of a *rākṣasa* named Lavaṇa. Śatrughna goes to tackle Lavaṇa, and stops over in Vālmīki's leafy hut on the night Sītā gives birth to the twins.[135] At dawn he resumes his journey,[136] kills Lavaṇa, and establishes a kingdom at Mathurā. Twelve years later he decides to visit Ayodhyā. On the way, in a passage rejected by the Critical Edition even though it appears in all the manuscripts collated, he stops at Vālmīki's, overhears the twins' elegant recitals, and promises that he and his army will keep their birth secret (7, Appendix 1, no. 9[137]). When Śatrughna sees Rāma, he mentions nothing about Vālmīki, Sītā, or the twins.

Finding himself once again in Agastya's hermitage after going by the Puṣpaka to behead the Śūdra Śambūka, Rāma listens to more of Agastya's stories,[138] and returns to Ayodhyā, again dismissing the Puṣpaka. He now tells Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa he wishes to perform a Rājasūya sacrifice, but Bharata tells him a horse sacrifice is less destructive and Lakṣmaṇa that the *aśvamedha* removes all sins and purifies (Rāmāyaṇa 75.2). Rāma approves the *aśvamedha*. He orders Lakṣmaṇa to make invitations to the monkeys and *rākṣasas*, and to the regional *ṛṣis* and their wives, and to prepare a vast sacrificial enclosure in the Naimiṣa Forest. Bharata is to lead a procession trailed by all the mothers from the inner apartments and "my golden wife [*kāñcanīm mama patnīm*] worthy of consecration [*dīkṣā*] in sacrificial rites" (19). Sītā thus has a replacement-statue even while still alive.[139] With the sacrifice proceeding, Vālmīki suddenly arrives with his disciples (84. 1) and directs the twins to sing "the whole Rāmāyaṇa poem at the gate of Rāma's dwelling" (3–5)—twenty *sargas* a day (9). Rāma hears the boys sing the first twenty *sargas* beginning "from the sight of Nārada [*nārada-*

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135   Earlier that evening he hears Vālmīki tell what some Northern manuscripts call the Saudāsa-Upākhyāna (Rāmāyaṇa 7.57).

136   Stopping at an āśrama on the Yamunā, he hears from Cyavana what some Northern manuscripts call the Mandhātṛ-Upākhyāna (Rāmāyaṇa 7.59).

137   U.P. Shah, ed. *The Uttarakāṇḍa: The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Baroda: University of Baroda, 1975), 26–27.

138   Including what some Northern manuscripts call the Śveta-Upākhyāna (Rāmāyaṇa 7.69), which builds up to an account of the Daṇḍaka Forest.

139   Amid these preparations, Rāma, with a smile, tells Lakṣmaṇa what some Northern manuscripts call the *Iḍa/.Ilā-Upākhyāna* (Rāmāyaṇa 7.78–79) about a king who alternates being male and female. Perhaps in Sītā's absence, Rāma suggests a curiosity about bisexual self-sufficiency.

darśanāt]" (11), that is, from the beginning of the *upodghāta* on. Once the twins tell Rāma who authored this poem that contains his whole adventure (19), they offer to continue singing it at intervals in the rite (21). After many days, Rāma recognizes them, misses Sītā, and summons her to attest to her purity by oath in the midst of the great Ṛṣis, *rākṣasas*, and monkeys, plus unnamed kings and the four castes in thousands (87.6–7). But when Vālmīki brings Sītā he attests to her purity himself (19), and tells Rāma only that "she will give proof of her fidelity" (15, 20). No longer demanding the oath just announced, Rāma accepts Vālmīki's word as tantamount to being Sītā's: "Surely I have proof of fidelity in your stainless words. Surely Vaidehī gave proof of fidelity formerly in the presence of the gods" (88.2–3)—who by now have also come to witness (5–7). Indeed, in a phrase that occurs nowhere else in either epic, this conclave occurs "in the middle of the universe [*jagato madhye*]" (1, 4). *Not* demanded to make an oath, Sītā nonetheless makes one implicitly in her only and last words: "If I have thought with my mind of none other than Rāma, let the goddess Mādhavī [Earth] give me an opening …" (10). Rāma, who had hoped for "affection" (*priti*) from Sītā (4), has thus accepted the author's word as Sītā's only to be overwhelmed with grief and horror by what her word—and the poet's—actually is. This is the moment at which he comes to realize what it means to be caught up in his own story, which, if he heard it from the frame on, as we are told, he would know to have also been Sītā's story and to have been inspired by the grief of a female bird. Rāma now threatens to destroy the Earth unless she returns Sītā intact (7, Appendix 1, No. 13, lines 18–20) until Brahmā repeats what he told him after Sītā's fire ordeal, that he is Viṣṇu, and invites him to listen with the great Ṛṣis to the rest of this "first poem," which will now tell what is still to happen (21–40). Once Brahmā returns to heaven, the Ṛṣis in Brahmaloka obtain his permission to return for the rest as well (43–49). The heavenly Ṛṣis of Brahmaloka thus come to an earthly Naimiṣa Forest to hear the end of the Rāmāyaṇa, whereas in the Mahābhārata the Ṛṣis of the Naimiṣa Forest seem to be *in* the heavens when they have the Mahābhārata at last brought to them.[140] Though the Critical Edition rejects this *sarga,* it does so only on the grounds that without it "the continuity of the narration … is not hampered and appears in a better order."[141] For Rāma, the relation between Sītā's two ordeals seems to be that whereas his first self-recognition as Viṣṇu emerges out of a human identity crossed with uncertainty and confusion as to his own all-too-human emotions, his second comes after he has learned of his divinity and has repeatedly pared his life down to a perfect rule through his repeated dismissals of

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140   See above at nn. 20 and 39.
141   U.P. Shah, ed. *The Uttarakāṇḍa*, 29.

others, yet without consideration of what this has cost him since the banishment of his wife—not to mention what it has cost her. If so, the poem could be saying that Vālmīki's initial question to Nārada—whether there is an ideal man today—was not really convincingly answered.

Once the *aśvamedha* ends, Rāma finds the universe empty without Sītā and again dismisses the kings, bears, monkeys, and *rākṣasas* (Rāmāyaṇa 89.1). The *ṛṣis* seem to take care of themselves. Rāma never remarries, but at all his sacrifices there is a golden Sītā (*jānakī kāncanī*; 4). For 10,000 years he rules a harmonious kingdom. Finally Death or Time (Kāla) comes to him as a messenger from Brahmā and tells him they must meet alone; anyone hearing them must be killed. While Rāma posts Lakṣmaṇa at the door, "Time who destroys all" (94.2) tells Rāma it is time to return to heaven as Viṣṇu. As the two converse, the congenitally ravenous "blessed Ṛṣi Durvāsas" (95.1b), familiar from the Mahābhārata's Mudgala-Upākhyāna,[142] tries to barge in, threatening to curse the kingdom if he is prevented. Lakṣmaṇa chooses his own death rather than allowing that of others and admits him. Durvāsas only wants something to eat after a thousand-year fast, which Rāma happily provides. At Vasiṣṭha's advice Rāma then banishes Lakṣmaṇa as equivalent to death, and Lakṣmaṇa, meditating by the Sarayū River, is taken up to heaven. After Rāma divides Kosala into two kingdoms to be ruled by Kuśa and Lava, he enters the Sarayū and resumes his divine form, followed in this by Bharata and Śatrughna.

Upakhyāna Precedence and the Essence of Them All

The relation between the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata's Rāmopākhyāna is usually posed as one between just these two Sanskrit Rāma stories, and as a question of whether there is a genetic relation between them. Which came first? Or do both rely on some prior Rāmakathā? On these questions, this study's position is two-fold. First, the primary relation is not between the Rāmāyaṇa and the Rāmopākhyāna, but between the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, which it views as the slightly earlier of the two quite possibly overlapping projects. On this point, it was noted that their similar designs could not be accidental. It is easier to imagine Vālmīki refining *kāvya* out of a multi-genre Mahābhārata than to imagine Vyāsa overlooking this achievement to spread disarticulation. In this vein, the Rāmopākhyāna opens with material about Rāvaṇa that the Rāmāyaṇa saves for Book 7. It thus cannot be explained

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142   And other Mahābhārata stories, as mentioned above (see n. 66).

as an epitome of the Rāmāyaṇa, since it lacks the structure that the Rāmāyaṇa shares with the Mahābhārata.

Second, this article holds that it is helpful to reflect on how upākhyāna material is used in both epics. As observed, the Rāmāyaṇa uses this term only in an interpolation and in Northern Recension colophons. Rather than having stand-out "subtales," the Rāmāyaṇa folds all its secondary narratives into one consecutively unfolding poem. This is especially noteworthy in its stories about the eight great Ṛṣis encountered by Rāma, many of which include material that the Mahābhārata relates in its upākhyānas. Other than mentioning Vasiṣṭha, a fixture in the Ikṣvāku house, the Rāmopākhyāna does not know these Ṛṣis. It has no Ṛśyaśṛṅga, Viśvāmitra, Gautama and Ahalyā, Rāma Jāmadagnya, or for that matter Vasiṣṭha involved in the stories from birth through marriage; just this: "In the course of time [Daśaratha's] sons grew up very vigorous, and became fledged in the Vedas and their mysteries and in the art of archery. They completed their student years, and took wives" (Mahābhārata 3.261.4–5). It has no Bharadvāja; just this of Bharata: "He found Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on Mount Citrakūṭa" (216.63). And from Citrakūṭa on, there is not a peep from Atri and Anasūyā or Agastya. There is also no Vālmīki, Mataṅga, or Niśākara. It is improbable that the Rāmopākhyāna would have strained out all these figures and episodes if it were a Rāmāyaṇa epitome. Vālmīki would seem to have worked such upākhyāna material into something he claims to be new: *kāvya,* "the first poem." And this would seem to be the best way to think about what he did with the Rāmopākhyāna: go beyond it to author a poem in which Rāma and Sītā move through their double adventure along paths signposted by Ṛṣis who impart Vedic authority to new values about dharma centered on *bhakti* as a servant-master relation of subjects to a divinity-embodying king. These knowing Vedic Ṛṣis represent "all the Ṛṣis" high and low who motivate this divine incarnation to cleanse the world of noxious *rākṣasas*, and ultimately come to hear out his story to the end. And they in turn are represented by Vālmīki himself who frames all the paths that Rāma and Sītā take as ones that begin with his inspiration to tell their adventures in a poem that will lead them ultimately back to him.

As to the Mahābhārata, we began with the question of what a "Bhārata" without upākhyānas might have signified, and looked at how and where upākhyānas are woven into the Mahābhārata. There is, however, one other reference to the epic's upākhyānas that is yet to be plumbed. It occurs toward the end of Book 12 in the highly devotional Nārāyaṇīya, and takes us back where we began: to the "oceanic mind" of the author, and also to the Āstīkaparvan

substory called "The Churning of the Ocean" (1.15 17).[143] One may also recall that on the last day of the war, Duryodhana, hiding from the Pāṇḍavas to recuperate, finds his last relief by magically concealing himself in an otherwise unheard of Dvaipāyana Lake (9.29.53a), that is, a lake bearing the name of the author.[144]

About one third of the way through the Nārāyaṇīya, itself an eighteen-chapter epitome of the Mahābhārata (although the Critical Edition splits a chapter and makes it nineteen [Mahābhārata 12.321–39]),[145] Bhīṣma says that the story he has just told Yudhiṣṭhira about Nārada's journey to "White Island" (Śvetadvīpa)—an island somewhere on the northern shore of the milky ocean[146]—is a "narrative [ākhyānam] coming from a seer-based transmission [ārṣeyam pāramparyāgatam] that should not be given" to anyone who is not a Viṣṇu devotee (12.326.113), and, moreover, that it is the "essence" of all the "other upākhyānas" he has transmitted:

> of those hundreds of other virtuous subtales [anyāni ... upākhyānaśatani ... dharmyāṇī] that are heard from me, king, this is raised up [or extracted, ladled out: uddhrtaḥ] as their essence [sāro]; just as nectar was raised up by the gods and demons, having churned [the ocean], even so this nectar of story [kathāmṛtam] was formerly raised up by the sages (Mahābhārata 12.326. 141–15).

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143   Of which the Rāmāyaṇa has a short version as well (Rāmāyaṇa 1.44.13–27). The Mahābhārata provides no genre term or independent title for its "Churning of the Ocean" story; see Gombach, "Ancillary Stories in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata," part 2, 11, n. 9.

144   Just after Vyāsa suddenly appears on the battlefield to rescue Saṃjaya so that his all-seeing bard can return to the city and continue narrating events to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (9.28.35–39), Saṃjaya meets Duryodhana alone and tells him of his narrow escape "through the grace of Dvaipāyana" (42–43). When Saṃjaya keeps Duryodhana uninformed about his three remaining allies, even though Saṃjaya has just seen them, Duryodhana tells him to tell his father he has entered a lake (47–49), which he then does, solidifying the waters by his māyā or power of illusion (52). Eventually, goaded by Yudhiṣṭhira, Duryodhana breaks up through the solidified waters shouldering his iron mace (31.36). See Hiltebeitel, Rethinking the Mahābhārata, 59–62.

145   On this point, which calls for a correction of the Critical Edition, see Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata."

146   12.322.8; 323.21; 326.126, placing it in the general vicinity of the Horse's Head, the subject of the upākhyāna narrated later in the Nārāyaṇīya by Ugraśravas to the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis about Viṣṇu's manifestation (Mahābhārata 12.335) and also mentioned in two other upākhyānas (see n. 47 above).

Hearing this, Yudhiṣṭhira and all the Pāṇḍavas become Nārāyaṇa devotees
(Mahābhārata 12.326.121). This suggests that one could count the "White Island"
story as a sixty-eighth upākhyāna. Furthermore, Bhīṣma holds that it is the
essence of them all. He has also used *ākhyāna* and upākhyāna interchangeably
with each other and with *kathā* (story). And when he speaks of the "hundreds
of other virtuous upākhyānas that are heard from me," he probably implies not
only those he has just told Yudhiṣṭhira in the Śāntiparvan, but all the others he
has told or will tell elsewhere, and those that have been recited by others,
which Bhīṣma, given his many heavenly and earthly sources,[147] would almost
certainly know as well.

Still within the Nārāyaṇiya, just after its next major narrative on *pravṛtti* and
nivṛtti, Śaunaka[148] says to Ugraśravas:

> O Sauti, very great is the narrative [*ākhyāna*] recited by you, having heard
> which, the sages are all gone to the highest wonder.[149][...] Surely having
> churned the supreme ocean of knowledge by this hundred-thousand
> (verse) *Bhārata* narrative with the churning of your thought [*idaṃ
> śatasahasrād hi bhāratākhyāna vistarāt / āmathya matimanthena jñāno-
> dadhim anuttamam*]—as butter from milk, as sandal from Mount Malaya,
> and as Āraṇyaka (forest instruction) from the Vedas, as nectar from
> herbs—so is this supreme nectar of story [*kathāmṛtam*] ... raised up [as]
> spoken by you, which rests on the story of Nārāyaṇa [*nārāyaṇakathā-
> śrayam*]. (Mahābhārata 12.331.1-4)

Although Śaunaka commends Ugraśravas for "having churned the supreme
ocean of knowledge by this hundred-thousand (verse) *Bhārata-ākhyāna* with
the churning of *your* thought" (i.e., Ugraśravas's), we must remember that
Ugraśravas is only said to be transmitting the Mahābhārata to the Naimiṣa
Forest Ṛṣis as the "entire thought" of Vyāsa (Mahābhārata 1.1.23). This suggests
that the full hundred thousand verses—with the upākhyānas included—
of the *Bhārata-ākhyāna* were churned first by Vyāsa before they were

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147   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Bhīṣma's Sources," in *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honor of Asko
      Parpola*, ed. Klaus Karttunen and Petteri Koskikallio, Studia Orientalia, no. 94 (Helsinki:
      Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), 261–78 making the point that Bhīṣma's youth spent with
      his mother, the heavenly Gaṅgā, may have provided him a special educational opportu-
      nity to meet celestial sages.

148   Again correcting the Critical Edition, which makes the speaker Vaiśaṃpāyana; see Hilte-
      beitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata."

149   The Critical Edition omits a long section here that should probably be restored.

rechurned by Ugraśravas, with Vaiśaṁpāyana, their intermediary,[150] having also delivered Vyāsa's "entire thought" (1.55.2) at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, where Ugraśravas overheard it.

Then, still within the Mokṣadharma anthology of the Śāntiparvan, before these two passages but leading up to the story of Śuka (12.310–20), there is a third passage that uses the same metaphor and similes. It occurs within Bhīṣma's account of the lengthy instruction that Vyāsa gives his firstborn son Śuka (Mahābhārata 12.224-46), who is not only one of Vyāsa's five disciples (Vaiśaṁpāyana being another) to have first heard the Mahābhārata from him, but the son who *will* obtain liberation before the Mahābhārata—despite Śuka's having heard it—can have fully happened.[151] Says Vyāsa,

> Untraditional and unprecedented, the secret of all the Vedas, this treatise [*śāstra*], of which everyone can convince himself, is further instruction for my son [*putrānuśāsanam*]. By churning the wealth that is contained in all the narratives [*ākhyānas*] about dharma and all the narratives about truth, as also the ten thousand *Ṛcs*,[152] this nectar has been raised [*dharmākhyāneṣu sarveṣu satyākhyāneṣu yad vasu/daśedam ṛsahasrāṇi nirmathyāmṛtam uddhṛtam*]—like butter from curds and fire from wood, as also the knowledge of the wise, even has this been raised for the sake of my son [*putrahetoḥ samuddhṛtam*]. (Mahābhārata 12.238.13–15)

The churning metaphor thus finds Vyāsa at its bottom, since he would be the first to use it—before Bhīṣma or Ugraśravas.[153] Indeed, Śuka is born when Vyāsa sees a nymph and ejaculates his semen onto his churning firesticks

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150   As the Critical Edition registers and actually prefers, some mss. attribute these words not to Sauti but to Vaiśaṁpāyana.

151   This point is developed in Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, chapter 8, especially pp. 284–85, 316. Note that Fitzgerald concedes that the Śuka story, like "Nala," is "suggestive of 'fiction'." James L. Fitzgerald, "The Many Voices of the Mahābhārata," review of *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*, by Alf Hiltebeitel, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 4 (2003): 807. Fitzgerald is on uncertain ground when he says that Vaiśaṁpāyana's response to Janamejaya's questions "cannot be a understood as verbatim repetitions of Vyāsa's composition." Fitzgerald, "The Rama Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the *Mahābhārata*," 99, n. 23. Logically he is right, but in fiction, not to mention futurist fiction, strange things are possible. The Mahābhārata poets finesse this by having both Vaiśaṁpāyana and Ugraśravas relate Vyāsa's "entire thought."

152   Presumably Ṛgvedic mantras.

153   Though perhaps not before the ten thousand *Ṛcs* or the "sages" (*vipras*) mentioned at the end of the passage just quoted from Bhīṣma at Mahābhārata 12.326.15.

(Mahābhārata 12.311.1–10). Vyāsa's further instruction to Śuka would also be churned up from all the *ākhyānas*—presumably of the Mahābhārata, *w*hich would imply as well the upākhyānas and likewise imply that this "treatise" for his son epitomizes the Mahābhārata itself.[154] Śuka's agenda of seeking liberation (*mokṣa*) is set here, and he attains *mokṣa* toward the end of Book 12 as a boy, just before the Nārāyaṇīya and its sequel: Bhīṣma's grand run of upākhyānas from the end of Book 12 into Book 13. Taking the passage literally, it seems to say that Vyāsa churned all the Mahābhārata's narratives about dharma and truth for the sake of Śuka's liberation, the very thing that Yudhiṣṭhira, shortly after hearing that story, accepts that he must do without while asking for further stories.

These churning passages are heightened reflections on at least two of the purposes of narrative within the Mahābhārata's overall grand design: that it all rests on Nārāyaṇa, and that its essence is liberating instruction on both truth and dharma. They would seem to reflect the exuberant overview of some of those who were involved in the production of the earliest totality of this work.

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154   See n. 22 above.

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On the Upatva of Upākhyānas: Is the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa an Upākhyāna of the Mahābhārata?

Robert P. Goldman

My first inclination was to entitle this presentation, "The Ritual of Battle: Rāma in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa." But somehow, in the back of my mind, I had a haunting feeling that I had read something with a similar title some time back. In any case, that title would have been as equally apposite to the matter at hand as the somehow less evocative one I finally settled upon.

Before attempting to justify my second choice for a title I would like to reflect, for a moment, on just what we understand the *upasarga upa* to mean in the term *upākhyāna*. This may not be as simple as it would first appear. According to the lexical work the Gaṇaratnamahodadhi of Vardhamāna,[1] *upa* has no fewer than thirteen distinct meanings not including the standard sense of "lesser, secondary" which is the one we normally and perhaps unreflectingly assign to it in the term *upākhyāna*. Vardhamāna says:

> sāmīpyasāmarthyavyāptyācāryakṛtimṛtidoṣadānakriyāvīpsārambhā-
> dhyayanapūjaneṣu ("*upa* can be taken in the senses of proximity, capacity, pervasion, a teacher, fraud, death, fault, giving, action, repetition, beginning, studying, and worshiping").

How, then precisely, are we to understand the sense of *upa* in the term *upākhyāna*? The sense of "subordinate *or* lesser," as, for example, in terms like *upapurāṇa* is surely an apposite one here as the upākhyānas of the Mahābhārata—even the longer ones—are certainly but mere drops in the vast ocean of the monumental poem. But this sense does not, to my mind, convey much that is not perfectly obvious. Perhaps it is more helpful if we understand the prefix as it is used in upākhyāna to refer instead to the thematic proximity in terms of the instructive quality of episodes (*adhyayana*) such as the Rāmopākhyāna when juxtaposed with the events in the career of the Pāṇḍavas. If this

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1 Julius Eggeling, ed., *Vardhamāna's Ganaratnamahodadhi with the Author's Commentary* (London: Trübner & Co, 1879).

interpretation has merit then, in at least some sections, especially its closing episodes, it would appear that Uttarakāṇḍa of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa may well have been crafted as a kind of repetition of the ritual-political thematic of the larger epic. I will argue that the author or authors of several of the closing *sargas* of the Uttarakāṇḍa, in an effort to construct ritual, when associated with battle, as a necessary legitimating force for the territorial conquest, real, metaphorical, spiritual, or fanciful, in fact, borrow from the longer epic. In doing so, I believe, these sections work, albeit clumsily, against the grain of the first six *kāṇḍas* of the poem in an attempt to revalorize Rāma's famous utopian kingdom of God on earth to make it more like the imagined universal empire conquered through the kind of massive, ritually sanctioned violence idealized in the Mahābhārata, Sanskrit *kāvya* and royal *praśastis*. In so doing, however, they struggle to depict Rāma as an ideal, Mahābhārata-style *cakravartin*, "universal emperor," for whom killing and conquest constitute the supreme dharma, while still maintaining his unique character, as Pollock has pointed out, as a ruler for whom the path to heaven is not "conquest in battle" as in the Mahābhārata but "truth, righteousness, and strenuous effort, compassion for creatures and kindly words, reverence for brahmans, gods, and guests."[2]

So, then, with this as a background and in fond recollection of reading Vālmīki with Alf in the *vānara*-haunted woods of the Western Ghats back in the 1970s, let me turn to the rationale for viewing the Uttarakāṇḍa in part as a kind of *nachdichtung* or even, dare I say, an upākhyāna of critical elements of the central narrative of the Mahābhārata.

Rāma as Cakravartin and Dharmarāja

Although the polyvalent and highly charged term *cakravartin*, or universal emperor, is used of several monarchs in the Mahābhārata, it occurs only once in the critically established text of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. It is, however, not used there directly of Rāma, but refers to him only by implication. In the epic's fifth book, the Sundarakāṇḍa, Hanumān, in introducing himself to the imprisoned Sītā, describes Rāma's father, Daśaratha as *cakravartikule jātaḥ*, "born in a line of universal emperors" (*VR* 5.29.2). The term *dharmarāja*, or dharma king, too, occurs a number of times in the Mahābhārata, chiefly in reference to

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2   For this and the rest of Pollock's illuminating discussion of the character of Rāma, which
      combines both the nature of the *kṣatriya* and that of the brahman, see Sheldon I. Pollock,
      trans. *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, vol. 2 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert
      P. Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 64–73.

Yudhiṣṭhira[3] but it is not found at all in the Rāmāyaṇa. Nevertheless, both of these concepts appear to deeply inform the Vaiṣṇava understanding of the figure of the Rāmāvatāra and certainly seem to be at the heart of the epic's characterization of the hero, especially in its final book.

Regarded as an outstanding military strategist and warrior, Rāma is actually never depicted in the epic as engaging in the kind of ritualized wars of territorial conquest that are an essential part of the construction of the idealized Hindu king. Aside from some forest skirmishes in self-defense against bands of predatory *rākaṣasas*, his sole and defining martial exploit is his successful and sanguinary siege of Laṅkā during which he and his mostly simian allies decimate the armies of the *rākṣasa* lord Rāvaṇa, and, at the end of which, he kills the demon-king after a prolonged chariot duel, the only such military encounter described in the poem.

Despite this the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa seems to represent the Kosalan rulers as something like High Kings if not actual *cakravartins*. However the precise situation and territorial reach of these kings are described far more vaguely in the Rāmāyaṇa than in the case of comparable figures in the Mahābhārata. The first six kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyaṇa actually make no clear territorial claims for the Kosalan state beyond the region immediately surrounding its capital city of Ayodhyā, neither when they describe the idealized realm of Daśaratha (*VR* 1. 5–7) nor in their depiction of Rāma's legendary 11,000-year utopian reign (*VR* 6.115). In the first six books of the epic the only suggestion that the Kosalan king actually holds sway over feudatory princes comes in a mere two verses found in the no doubt late framing narrative of the Bālakāṇḍa (*VR* 1.5.9 and 14)[4] and the one from the Sundarakāṇḍa mentioned above where we learn that Daśaratha had expanded an already great realm and that his city was filled with crowds of neighboring kings who came to pay tribute. In other words, Kosala, the seat of the Solar Dynasty, is represented as, at best, a regional power able to exert its authority only to a limited degree beyond its borders and into the realms of its *sāmanta* princes. It is only in the Uttarakāṇḍa that we hear, in what can only be a very late interpolation to the text, about the massed armies of three hundred feudatory kings that were mustered, too late as it happens, to assist Rāma at the siege of Laṅkā.[5]

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3   For a thorough and learned exposition of the concept see Alf Hiltebeitel's magisterial study *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

4   John L. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 391–97.

5   For a discussion of this peculiar episode (*VR* 7.37–38) see Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Appendectomies: Textual Surgeries in the Construction of 'The National Epic of India,'" paper

Compare this with the imagined military and political reach of Yudiṣṭhira and his Lunar Dynasty as it is described in the Sabhāparvan of the Mahābhārata (2.23–29) with its marvelously hyperbolic account of Yudhiṣṭhira's *digvijaya* during which his four heroic brothers lead their victorious armies on fantastic campaigns of conquest and make vassals of every king in India and far beyond it's borders. Indeed, one might argue that it is precisely this conquest of the four directions on behalf of the *dharmarāja*, "dharma king," that accounts for the specific number of Pāṇḍu's sons, five; one to rule at the center and four to conquer the cardinal directions. The four brothers' military expeditions leave the *dharmarāja* Yudhiṣṭhira, or so the poet imagines for us, in command of an empire encompassing not only the entire Indian subcontinent but extending all the way from Antioch in the West to China in the East. This is entirely consonant with the Indic concept of the world-conquering *cakravartin* and is indeed perhaps the original textual model for the concept, which in turn may have been derived from early contact with the Achaemenid Empire in emulation of which this fantasized imperium may well have been envisioned.[6]

As noted above, the first six kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyaṇa, although they do not hesitate to indulge in the most astonishing hyperbole when it comes to the numbers of the *vānaras* in Sugrīva's host, the vast size of Kumbhakarṇa and (on occasion) Hanumān, or the length and virtues of Rāma's *rājya*, have, in contrast, virtually nothing to say about Kosala's military forces or about the extent or expansion of its rulers' territorial control.

On the other hand the authors of the Uttarakāṇḍa seem suddenly to find it awkward that Rāma's long-awaited and enduring utopian realm should, in the end, be confined to the narrow territory between the Sarayū and the Gaṅgā. And yet, as I hope to demonstrate, although the authors of the Uttarakāṇḍa wish to construct Rāma as a true *cakravartin* and *dharmarāja*, ruling over at least the entire Indian subcontinent as we see Yudhiṣṭhira doing in the Mahābhārata and many poets and kings claiming in the later *kāvya* and inscriptional *praśasti* literature, and so forth, they are also cognizant of and influenced—no doubt—by Vālmīki's construction of Rāma as an ideal and uniquely merciful

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presented at the conference on New Directions in the Study of the Epics of South and Southeast Asia, October 26–27, 2012, University of California at Berkeley. See also "Historicity and Sovereignty" in the Introduction to Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, trans. *Uttarakāṇḍa*, vol. 7 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert P. Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

6   Note how this notion of universal sovereignty comes to be associated with the *Sūryavaṃśa* as well in later poetic works such as the *Raghuvaṃśa*.

monarch who conquers only when his righteous anger is provoked and never simply to acquire tribute or territory.[7]

In what I would suggest is an attempt to negotiate these two opposing ideals of Hindu kingship, the Uttarakāṇḍa authors indulge in an awkward dance around the critical issue of the agonistic nature of the two great *śrauta* rites associated with the political power of the king, the *rājasūya*, "the royal consecration," and the *aśvamedha*, "the horse sacrifice," which ritually sanctify the subjugation of other kingdoms. These are, of course, the very two rites that enable Yudhiṣṭhira first to conquer the known world and later, after the restoration of his lost kingship, to extend his sovereignty once again over all of Bharatavarṣa.

The connection between ritual and battle in the Mahābhārata is very intimate as Alf has shown.[8] Yudhiṣṭhira's first act as king after he has sent forth his brothers to subjugate and lay waste to all rival kingdoms is to perform a grand *rājasūya*, the purpose of which is to ritually confirm his new status as the *cakravartin* (Mahābhārata 2.30–36). Subsequently, after his victory over his enemies in the civil war of the Bhāratas, the despondent king is urged to purify himself and once again assert his suzerainty over all other kings and their territories by performing an *aśvamedha.* In this rite a war party follows a consecrated stallion in its wanderings for a year and demands surrender or battle from every king into whose territory the horse wanders.[9] Arjuna, appointed to lead the armed party, duly circumambulates the earth following the hoof prints of the horse, defeating and subjugating the world's kings once again in the name of Yudhiṣṭhira, the newly reestablished universal monarch (14.68–91).

In Vālmīki's Uttarakāṇḍa as well, Rāma, like Yudhiṣṭhira, having newly established himself as king and having demonstrated his adherence to the brahmanical code of social and ritual order (*varṇāśramadharma*) and the

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7   Cf. Pollock, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, etc., on Rāma. On the hyperbole of imperial control see Jesse R. Knutson, "The Political Poetic of the Sena Court," *Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 2 (2010): 371–401 and Jesse R. Knutson, *Into the Twilight of Sanskrit Court Poetry: The Sena Salon of Bengal and Beyond* (Berkeley, London, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

8   Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1976]).

9   On the aśvamedha see Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland, trans., *Bālakāṇḍa,* vol. 1 of *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, ed. Robert P. Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 145–53, 298–309.

exemplary conduct of the perfectly dharmic king through his summary execution of a *śūdra* ascetic,[10] and his banishment of his beloved and devoted wife,[11] decides that he too must ritually validate his accession to the throne through the performance of a rājasūya. He tells Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa:

> I have fully accomplished this unsurpassed task (viz. the execution of the *śūdra* ascetic Śambūka) for the twice-born brāhman. And therefore, Rāghavas, I now wish to firmly establish the bulwark of righteousness. I wish to perform the unsurpassed *rājasūya* together with both of you, who are my second selves, for in this lies everlasting righteousness. For, it was by sacrificing with the *rājasūya* rite, accompanied by excellent oblations and excellent subsidiary rites, that Mitra, destroyer of his foes, attained the position of Varuṇa. And it was by sacrificing with the *rājasūya* rite in accordance with righteousness, that Soma, who knew righteousness, attained fame among all the worlds and an eternal domain. (*VR* 7. 74.3–6)

Note that, unlike in the Mahābhārata's Sabhāparvan, where all four of Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers serve as his conquering generals, here Rāma addresses only two of his three siblings. This is because a bit earlier in the book, Rāma has already begun his new campaign of dynastic territorial expansion by dispatching his juniormost brother Śatrughna to defeat the demonic Lavaṇa and to seize and rule his realm, situated in the heartland region of the Śūrasenas, from its newly founded capital of Madhurā (i.e., Mathurā) (*VR* 7.53–62). This marks the first move in the Rāmāyaṇa's variation on the theme of universal conquest in which kinsmen of the nominal *cakravartin* do not conquer kingdoms to annex them to his empire but, instead, rule them directly as kings in their own right under the authority of the emperor. The model is perhaps more like that of a Napoleon than that of a Yudhiṣṭhira.

But we must remember that, in what we may call the standard model, that of Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata, the rājasūya is performed only after the completion of a prolonged and very sanguinary military campaign involving the wholesale slaughter of many kings and their armies in a campaign more reminiscent of Rāvaṇa's murderous digvijaya chronicled in the first half of the Uttarakāṇḍa (*VR* 7.11–34) than of anything that Rāma himself does directly.

Indeed, nothing quite like this kind of war of territorial expansion occurs in books one through six of the Rāmāyaṇa. In book six, Rāma merely conducts a

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10   This controversial episode is narrated in *sargas* 64–67 of the Uttarakāṇḍa.

11   This controversial episode is narrated in *sargas* 42–44 of the Uttarakāṇḍa.

punitive campaign against the demonic king who had abducted his beloved wife. Even after his total victory in this campaign, he shows no interest whatever in occupying or annexing the conquered territory. Instead he simply consecrates his slain enemy's brother on the Laṅkan throne, and, taking nothing from that fabulously wealthy kingdom but the loan of a flying palace, he returns home to rule his own kingdom in peace. Thus there is neither conquest nor tribute but merely, to use the contemporary idiom, regime change.

But let us return to the question of Rāma's proposed rājasūya. The very nature of this rite, with its inevitable slaughter of rival kings and their armies, presents, when situated in the context of Rāma's ushering in his millenarian age of universal sovereignty, peace, and harmony, an irreconcilable dilemma. Bharata, who serves here as the spokesman for the Uttarakāṇḍa authors, immediately understands the utter incompatibility of the two concepts. Accordingly he sets himself immediately to the project of dissuading Rāma from his poorly thought out plan. He says to Rāma:

> Therefore, your majesty, how can you undertake such a sacrifice, which would witness the destruction of the royal lineages on earth? For, in the performance of that, your majesty, the annihilation—like the universal destruction—of all men who have attained manly valor, will come to pass on earth. Tiger among men, you who are of unequalled valor through your virtues, should not destroy the earth for it is already under your sway. (*VR* 7.74.12–14)

Rāma needs no further persuasion and he is evidently relieved by Bharata's intervention. Indeed, he is delighted that the earth will be spared the devastation he was about to unleash upon it. The text continues:

> When truly valorous Rāma had heard that speech of Bharata, which seemed to consist of the nectar of immortality, he experienced unequalled delight. And he said these splendid words to that increaser of Kaikeyī's joy: "I am indeed pleased and gratified by your words this day. These words in conformity with righteousness, which you have boldly uttered, tiger among men, will be the salvation of the earth. Because of your excellent speech, knower of righteousness, I will surely desist from that intention of mine, which was to perform that foremost of rites the *rājasūya*." (*VR* 7.74.15–18)

Thus, in effect, Rāma, who has proposed the supposedly required rite for the installation of a new king, a rite that is most exemplary of the true

kṣatriyadharma and which inevitably must be accompanied by a true ritual of battle involving the martial immolation of all rival monarchs, leaps at the way out offered by the suggestion that he need not engage in violence in order to conquer the world. Indeed, according to the words of Bharata, he has already, it seems, done so through unspecified but apparently nonviolent means.

Even the Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira who is among the most reluctant of warriors and most self-effacing of kings and who, in fact, often earns the contempt and rebukes of his brothers and even his wife for his renunciatory and pacifist tendencies, is willing to offer the rājasūya and permit his brothers to launch their campaigns of conquest across the world. Rāma, however, after broaching the idea, no doubt to demonstrate his kingly credentials, is only too delighted to drop it at the first expression of what it would actually entail.

At this point Lakṣmaṇa joins the discussion, proposing that, instead of the massively destructive rājasūya rite, Rāma should perform the other great ritual of sovereignty, the aśvamedha. But in putting forth his rationale for this substitution, Lakṣmaṇa makes no mention of this rite's equally martial and political implications. Instead, he dwells solely upon the ritual's power to purify its patron. He illustrates this by bringing up the account of how, in mythic times, Indra, smitten by the debilitating sin and pollution of *brahmahatyā* as a consequence of his having slain great Vṛtra, was purified and restored to his senses through a performance of the aśvamedha (*VR* 7.75–76). Rāma takes Lakṣmaṇa's advice and performs the rite but, although the performance is described (with numerous digressions) over some eleven chapters (*VR* 7.77–88), at no point is there any account of a military campaign or of any conquest associated with such a campaign. Interestingly, however, many later literary and purāṇic versions of the Rāmakathā such as, for example, Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*, will revert to the normative understanding of the context of the aśvamedha and even have Rāma's twin sons engage in battle with Rāma's kinsman and the army appointed to accompany the sacrificial horse, sometimes even with Rāma himself.[12]

It is also noteworthy here that the other elaborately described aśvamedha in the epic poem—the one performed by Daśaratha at *VR* 1.8–13—similarly makes no mention whatever of any conflict or conquest during the consecrated horse's yearlong wanderings. It, too, is performed solely for the purification of the royal *yajamāna*.[13]

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12   Uttararāmacarita Acts 4–5.

13   On the non-military, purificatory uses of the *aśvamedha*, see Goldman and Sutherland, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 298–99 and Goldman and Sutherland, *Uttarakāṇḍa*.

Given all of this, one would think that the authors of the Uttarakāṇḍa would be content to portray King Rāma as a pacific and righteous monarch, more of a *cakravartin* in the spiritual and moral sense of the term than in its political sense.[14] Besides, Rāma, in Bharata's rather vague terms, is already a ruler who holds the whole earth under his sway—a sway, remember, for which the text has given neither history nor explanation.

Nonetheless the Uttarakāṇḍa, in its closing half, does provide an interesting revisionist history of conquest and territorial expansion on the part of Rāma and his ruling Ikṣvāku dynasty of Kosala. Although, as I have indicated, Rāma is never, after the defeat of Rāvaṇa, shown to engage personally in any form of warfare or to employ either the rājasūya or the aśvamedha rituals to legitimate wars of conquest or territorial expansion, the later sargas of the Uttarakāṇḍa do present some rather interesting cases of military campaigns led by his kinsmen which serve to vastly expand the reach of an imagined Ikṣvākuid imperium.

As noted above, the first example of such a move is narrated, with several digressions, in sargas 53–63 of the kāṇḍa. Here, responding to the petition of the sages who live along the banks of the Yamunā and of their spokesman, the Bhārgava *ṛṣi* Cyavana, concerning the depredations of a terrible and immensely powerful demon named Lavaṇa, Rāma deputes his brother Śatrughna, who hitherto in the long epic has had a quite minor role at best, to destroy the monster. After a heroic battle, he does so. The episode is, in a way, a minor reprise of Rāma's own great martial feat, the destruction of the fearsome Rāvaṇa who, with his *rākṣasa* hosts, had similarly preyed on brahman sages. The critical difference here, however, is that Rāma now instructs his brother to found a city and a kingdom in the region of the battle and consecrates him as king of the new political formation of Madhupurī or Madhurā. In this way the Doab heartland of the Śūrasenas at Mathurā is represented as becoming a satrapy or a client state of Kosala. After twelve years of ruling his new kingdom, Śatrughna returns to Ayodhyā to see his beloved brother once more. But Rāma tells him, rather sharply, that this abandonment of his kingdom is inappropriate behavior for a ruler and that he must return—after only five days—to Mathurā where he is to remain and continue to rule.

Then, many years later, according to the Uttarakāṇḍa, just as the whole book and indeed the entire epic are within a few brief sargas of their end, the authors suddenly seem to feel the need to quickly cram in a few more major territorial acquisitions for the Solar Dynasty. Three short chapters, totaling a mere fifty-

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14   Pollock, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* 64–73. Compare the ambivalence of the term in the accounts of the birth of the Buddha.

eight ślokas in all, chronicle not one but two unheralded and rather astonishing wars of conquest and annexation.

In sargas 90 and 91 we learn that Bharata's maternal uncle Aśvapati Yudhājit of the Kekeyas sends a messenger to Ayodhyā to request him to invade, subdue, and occupy the rich and beautiful country of the Gandharvas, which lies along the banks of the Indus. Once he has done so, Bharata is to found two grand capital cities in that region.

Delighted at the prospect of the military campaign against thirty million powerful *gandharvas*, Rāma immediately resolves to send out an army led by Bharata and the latter's two sons, Takṣa and Puṣkala, to annihilate the natives and occupy their land. Bharata, Takṣa, Puṣkala, and Yudhājit duly proceed to the country of the gandharvas where, after a tremendous but inconclusive week-long battle, described in but a single verse, Bharata manages finally to annihilate all thirty million of the gandharva warriors in single instant with the terrifying weapon of mass destruction of Death himself, the dreaded *saṃvartāstra*. Following this stunning act of ethnic cleansing, Takṣa and Puṣkara occupy the land, now known by its familiar name Gāndhāra (evidently in memory of the slaughtered millions), founding, respectively, two splendid eponymous capitals, Takṣaśīlā and Puṣkarāvatī. These cities are well-known from the historical record in both Indic and Greek sources.

Clearly this sketchy and far-fetched account, which attempts to provide the etymologies of the well-known geographical names Gāndhāra, Takṣaśīlā, and Puṣkarāvatī, has been designed largely to further enhance the imperial pretensions of the *Sūryavaṃśa* by extending the reach of the Kosalan monarchy to far flung northwestern territories in what are today Pakistan and Afghanistan.

When Rāma learns of the success of this campaign of conquest, he is delighted but, perhaps a bit disturbed by its massive and unprecedented death toll, he decides to expand his dynasty's territorial reach still further but more nonviolently. In sarga 92 he tells Lakṣmaṇa to seek out yet another large and well-endowed country over which he, Rāma, will set his devoted brother's two sons, Aṅgada and Candraketu, as rulers. But this time in a kind of Aśoka moment, he insists that this be done in a kinder, gentler fashion. He instructs Lakṣmaṇa:

> But please, gentle brother, seek out a country in which there will be no oppression of kings and no destruction of ashrams, so that we may give no offense. (*VR* 7.92.4)

Bharata, the Conqueror of Gāndhāra, now recommends the delightful country of Kārupatha as a likely target for this gentle subjugation. There is no description at all of the way in which the conquest is accomplished; but in short order

Rāma is able to consecrate Aṅgada in the charming city of Aṅgadīya in the west and Candraketu in the northern city of Candrakāntā, said to be in the country of the Mallas which may be the site of the modern city of Multan in West Punjab. The commentator Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, in keeping with the constant tenor of the Uttarakāṇḍa, suggests that Rāma plays no part in the conquest, assigning that task to his juniors Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa. Here, too, even more than in the case of Gāndhāra, the treatment of the campaign of conquest has a very slapdash feel with little thought behind it other than to add a few more remote territories to the imagined extent of what we would have to imagine as the greater Kosalan Empire.

What can we make of all this? For one thing it seems clear that, judging from the belated, terse and rather sketchy nature of these four passages, their purpose is to depict the Kosalan monarch Rāma as, in effect, a true *cakravartin*. Therefore it represents him as a powerful imperial dynast who, through his kinsmen acting as his surrogates, conquers, subjugates, and rules lands extending out from Ayodhyā through the heartland of the Doab and to the very periphery of the Indian subcontinent. The position of these passages in the poem and their extremely offhand style and tone—virtually that of afterthoughts—suggest that they may be among the very latest additions to the final book of the epic. This seems especially clear in light of the fact, discussed earlier, that this characterization of Rāma and his military and political behavior seems quite alien to the way he and his kingdom are represented in the six preceding kāṇḍas of the poem and even in the earlier portions of the seventh.

These passages strike one as jarring and rather unconvincing efforts to turn Rāma, one of traditional India's most notable paragons of virtue, restraint, and compassion, into a conquering hero capable of ordering the slaughter of thirty million innocent Gandharvas simply to provide kingdoms for his nephews. This is after all the same Rāma who earlier, in the Yuddhakāṇḍa, even when on the verge of the death, defeat, and destruction of his army, his brother, and himself, refused to permit Lakṣmaṇa to deploy a massively destructive weapon the latter had requested permission to use in order to exterminate the entire pestilent race of the *rākṣasas* on the grounds that such a genocide would violate dharma (*VR* 6.67.36–39). The episodes seem, in fact, to constitute a strange epilogue to an epilogue the purpose of which was to create a new Rāma quite unlike the figure portrayed in the epic's preceding six kāṇḍas. Indeed, it looks very much as if these passages constitute a belated effort to, one might say, to align the Rāmakathā itself more closely with the longer epic of the Bhāratas.[15]

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15   Cf. the medieval and later efforts to render Vālmīki's characterization of Rāma more like that of Kṛṣṇa as represented in such works as the Harivaṃśa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Gītagovinda, etc., in such works as the Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa, the modern graphic and

In conclusion, it appears evident in light of the Uttarakāṇḍa's curious non agonistic uses of the critical royal and martial *vaidika* rituals, the rājasūya and the aśvamedha, followed by his kinsmen's wars of conquest that there has been a shift in the characterization of Rāma from that of the benign, supervisory dharma king to that of an expansionist conquistador. The crude and sketchy accounts of his kinsmen's conquests and occupation of distant territories seem simply to have been tacked on, as it were, to the end of the epic narrative and that the authors of the kāṇḍa, or at least its closing portion may have been struggling to find a new model for the representation of Rāma more in keeping with that of the traditional kṣatriya ruler.

It is my belief that these authors may well have inserted these brief, clumsy, and generally poorly written passages in an effort to recreate the image of the Rāmāyaṇa's hero more in the model of the idealized *cakravartin*, Yudhiṣṭhira, held up as an ideal template for kṣatriya rule in the Mahābhārata as illustrated in that epic's Sabhā and Āśvamedhika parvans where the ideal of righteous universal sovereignty is sanctified by ritual performance in the form of the rājasūya and the aśvamedha sacrifices and realized through battle in the shape of the conquests of the Dharmarāja's warrior-kinsmen.

Considered in this way, several of the closing chapters of the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa may serve to shed further incremental light on the ongoing investigation of the relative chronology of the Rāmāyaṇa, the different strata of the Uttarakāṇḍa and of the Uttarakāṇḍa's relationship to the Mahābharata. For, if my reading of these passages is correct, it would follow that the author or authors of these passages would have been familiar with the larger epic.

Moreover, the accounts in the book's closing sargas concerning the foundation of some of the well-known urban sites in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent may also perhaps help us determine the absolute chronology of their composition. Consider, for example, sarga 92's reference to Bharata's son Puṣkara having founded the great capital city of Puṣkarāvatī. This town, modern Charsadda, also known as Puṣkalāvatī and, to the Greeks, as Peucelaītis or Peucela, which had earlier been the chief town of the Achaemenid satrapy of

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cinematic versions of the Rāmāyaṇa in which Rāma is provided with an elaborately described childhood and even a romantic life with the women of his Pramodavana. On this see Allan Keislar, "Searching for the *Bhuśuṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa*; One Text or Many? The *Ādi-rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhuśuṇḍi-rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa-mahā-mālā*" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1998).

Gandaris[16] and which was under the control of a ruler known to the Greeks as Astes (Sanskrit Hastin), seems to have been established as a military strong-hold by Alexander's generals Hephaistion and Perdiccas in 327 BCE.[17] But it also was known to have become a significant capital, largely reconstructed in the Greek manner, only during the reign of Menander in the middle of the second century BCE.[18] Takṣaśīla (Greek Taxila) too had a somewhat similar his-tory, having also been rebuilt by Menander and perhaps served as his capital.[19]

It would of course be purely speculative at this point to draw any firm chronological conclusions from the information we have. Nonetheless, the foregrounding of these two cities which became so politically prominent under Greek rule in the middle of the second century BCE and the Uttarakāṇḍa's determined effort to represent them as having been founded by scions of the royal family of Ayodhyā, Rāma's nephews, may suggest that it was the increased importance of these towns in that period that inspired the work's author or authors to claim these towns and their surrounding provinces as part of a pan Indian empire for the Kosalan monarchy.

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17   Samad, *The Greeks in Ancient Pakistan*, 9.

18   Ibid., 99.

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The Epic's Singularization to Come: The Śakuntalā and Yayāti Upākhyānas in the Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata

Joydeep Bagchee

> Ours is a problem in textual dynamics, rather than in textual statics.
> V.S. SUKTHANKAR, "Prolegomena."

∴

Introduction

In his article "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics,"[1] Hiltebeitel counts sixty-seven upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata. Eleven of these occur in the first parvan or major book alone. Among these, the Śakuntalā narrative stands out in a number of ways: it is the first upākhyāna in the text; one of ten addressed by Vaiśaṃpāyana to Janamejaya (1–4, 11, 32, 39–40, 66–67 in Hiltebeitel's list); one of only four "about early kings of the main dynasty"[2]; as well as being the upākhyāna that goes over from an account of the partial incarnations of the gods and other beings to the first of the accounts of the descendants of the Lunar Dynasty. Most significant, this upākhyāna introduces "the mother of Bharata, one of the line's eponyms."[3] Hiltebeitel also draws attention to the fact that Śakuntalā's period of gestation of three years[4] corresponds exactly to the time Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, the

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[1] Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.

[2] Ibid., 475.

[3] Ibid., 479.

[4] pratijñāya tu duḥṣante pratiyāte śakuntalā |
garbhaṁ suṣāva vāmoruḥ kumāram amitaujasam ||
triṣu varṣeṣu pūrṇeṣu diptānalasamadyutim |
rūpaudāryaguṇopetaṁ dauḥṣantiṁ janamejaya || (Mahābhārata 1.68.1–2)

traditional author of the epic, is said to have taken for its composition.[5] Śakuntalā's son not only bestows his name upon the Kuru line, his descendants, but also gives his name to the text, the Mahābhārata, and to a land called Bhārata.[6]

The placement of the Śakuntalā narrative has other noteworthy aspects: it precedes the story of Yayāti and the discussion of Yayāti's line through his youngest son Pūru, the Paurava dynasty, even though its main protagonist, Duḥṣanta Paurava, belongs to this dynasty (see Mahābhārata 1.62.3; cf. also 1.67.15c, 33c, 68.59a, 69.32c, and 69.34a).[7] In this inversion of the chronological order, we see one of the epic's dominant architectonic motifs: the epic begins at the end of time and works its way backward in time to the beginning.[8]

In this chapter, I focus on the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 1.62–69), perhaps the most popular of the epic's subtales among early European

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5   See his "The First Reading of 'Śakuntalā': A Window on the Original and the Second Reading by Kālidāsa," in *Revisiting Kālidāsa's* Abhijñāna Śakuntalam*: Land, Love, Languages: Forms of Exchange in Ancient India*, ed. Deepika Tandon and Saswati Sengupta (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), 17–37.

6   Vishwa Adluri points out (personal communication) that this suggests that Bharata should be understood not just as a character in the epic, one of the remote ancestors in the Kuru genealogy, but as a cipher for the coming into being of the text. Like the epic's composer, the seer Vyāsa, Bharata embodies the twin functions of creator (of the text) and genitor (of the Kuru race). Also like the seer, he is a Brahmā-like figure. He is described as a *cakravartin*, a "Turner of the Wheel" (Mahābhārata 1.67.29; cf. also 1.69.45–46 and 1.68.4), and as a Dakṣa-like figure (*yājayām āsa taṁ kaṇvo dakṣavad bhūridakṣiṇam*; 1.69.48). On Vyāsa's relation to Brahmā, see Bruce K. Sullivan, *Seer of the Fifth Veda: Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa in the Mahābhārata* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).

7   At least in the Mahābhārata's Critical Edition. The southern manuscripts transpose these two sections, see V.S. Sukthankar's comments in the "Prolegomena" and in still greater detail in his "Editorial Note (3)" to the fourth fascicule of the Ādiparvan (V.S. Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," in *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1. *The Ādiparvan* [Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933], i–cx and V.S. Sukthankar, "Editorial Note (3)," in *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1. *The Ādiparvan: Fascicule 4* [Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930], i–iv). Biardeau makes "disorganization" and "composition spread out in time" responsible for the change in order (Madeleine Biardeau, "Śakuntalā dans l'Épopee," *Indologica Taurinensia* 7 [1979]: 115) but I shall instead argue that an interest in restoring the text was behind the changes in the southern recension.

8   Its first narration is to King Janamejaya, two generations after its main heroes have passed away. Likewise, in the Ādiparvan, when the bard begins narrating, the first detail he tells us pertaining to the Kurus is Dhṛtarāṣṭra's post-war lament, in which the old king looks back at the events leading up to the destruction of his hundred sons.

scholars.[9] I specifically seek to understand what the differing placement of this narrative in the two main recensions—northern and southern—reveals about the textual history of the Mahābhārata. I will argue that, contrary to the popular view, the southern recension (which reverses the order of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti episodes) does not so much create a new arrangement as restore an order already implicit in the archetype of the two recensions.[10] Thus, this article is an invitation to reconsider our view of the textual history of the Mahābhārata.

The Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna in the Northern and Southern Recensions

The Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna occurs in the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata from 1.62–69. The two immediately preceding and succeeding sections are the Aṁśāvataraṇaparvan (1.61)[11] and the Yayāti-Upākhyāna (1.70–80) (with a kind of extended sequel in the Uttarayāyāta at 1.81–88). Thereafter, there occur two lists of genealogies—a metrical genealogy at 1.89 and a prose genealogy at

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9   For the history of the western reception of the Śakuntalā, see Dorothy Matilda Figueira, *Translating the Orient: The Reception of Śakuntala in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). Also useful are: Montgomery Schuyler, Jr., "The Editions and Translations of Çakuntalā," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901): 237–48; Peter H. Salus, "Šakuntalā in Europe: The First Thirty Years," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84, no. 4 (1964): 417; and Robert A. Hueckstedt, "The Plays of Kalidasa and their Major Twentieth-Century English Translations," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 22, no. 1 (1987): 215–29.

10   Note that when I say "southern recension," I mean precisely this (i.e., a a specific state of the text whose existence can be inferred on the basis of the manuscript evidence, specifically the common features between the T, G, and M manuscripts, and which must have come into being at least at the time these three traditions separated if not before). I do not mean a "southern redaction" (which, allegedly, would have been responsible for the emergence of the southern recension) and even less "the work of southern redactors" (who would have been the people behind the "southern redaction"). Since all we have are manuscripts, we must restrict ourselves to speaking only about manuscripts.

11   The Critical Edition refers to this upaparvan as the Ādivaṁśāvataraṇaparvan. In the colophons of the manuscripts collated for the Critical Edition, the book is referred to as the Aṁśāvataraṇaparvan (with the usual variation). The Parvasaṁgrahaparvan list (1.2.72–94) also refers to it as Aṁśāvataraṇaparvan. The editor's decision is likely based on the sole reference to the book as the Ādivaṁśāvataraṇaparvan at 1.2.34 (cf. parvānukramaṇī pūrvaṁ dvitīyaṁ parvasaṁgrahaḥ | pauṣyaṁ paulomam āstīkam ādivaṁśāvatāraṇam ||).

1.90—and the main narrative of the Mahābhārata resumes from 1.91 onward with the story of the birth of Bhīṣma from Vasu. The Critical Edition follows the northern sequence of narratives; the southern manuscripts are unanimous in reversing the sequence of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti episodes as well as making several other smaller changes. As the textual history of this section of the Ādiparvan is quite complex, I first give the sequence of episodes in the two recensions. The northern sequence is essentially that of the Critical Edition; for the southern sequence, I have relied on the critical apparatus of the Critical Edition to reconstruct the putative text of the southern recension, though of course there are sometimes divergences from this text even within the manuscripts of the southern tradition.[12] I have listed all such insertions as are made in all of the manuscripts of the southern recension; those found only in a selection of them have been placed within braces ({ ... }). Thus, the sequence below indicates the essential outline of the southern tradition as represented by TG (M differs, but is not reconstructed here).[13] Continuations of the narrative are noted by means of ellipses; the hiatus noted by Sukthankar between 1.69.51 and 1.70.1 is indicated by means of a short line.

Critical Edition (northern sequence)

61.99   iti devāsurāṇāṁ te gandharvāpsarasāṁ tathā |

–102   aṁśāvataraṇaṁ rājan rākṣasānāṁ ca kīrtitam ||

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12   These differences have been noted in the footnotes. I have incorporated the southern variants into my text, displacing the reading of the northern recension, where this reading was supported by all (or, at least, a clear majority) of the manuscripts (all such cases have been explicitly highlighted in the footnotes). However, note that the text below should *not* be taken as the text of the southern recension, which can only be reconstructed from the critical apparatus with a great deal more of difficulty (if at all, since in many cases it will be impossible to find a unanimous reading among the southern manuscripts) and would also require a finer evaluation of the evidence (when TG have one reading against M, do we reprint the reading of TG or M? The latter problem has been obviated in this reconstruction by choosing to give only the text of TG). On the problems of identifying a true critical text of the southern recension, see the conclusion.

13   Note that the changes listed here cannot be considered a continuous text of the southern recension when read with the intervening passages from the Critical Edition, for those passages represent the editor's best guess of the text of the common *archetype* of the two recensions. For a complete text of these sections as they are found in the southern recension, one would have to *also* reconstruct the text of the southern recension for the intervening passages, a task that can only be achieved by carefully looking at the variants of the southern manuscripts in the critical apparatus, as I have done here. My aim, however, was only to reconstruct the *sequence* and not the content of these sections.

ye pṛthivyāṁ samudbhūtā rājāno yuddhadurmadāḥ |
mahātmāno yadūnāṁ ca ye jātā vipule kule ||
dhanyaṁ yaśasyaṁ putrīyam āyuṣyaṁ vijayāvaham |
idam aṁśāvataraṇaṁ śrotavyam anasūyatā ||
aṁśāvataraṇaṁ śrutvā devagandharvarakṣasām |
prabhavāpyayavit prājño na kṛcchreṣv avasīdati || (Aṁśāvataraṇap. ends)

62.1 janamejaya uvāca | (Śakuntalā-Up.)

−2 tvattaḥ śrutam idaṁ brahman devadānavarakṣasām |
aṁśāvataraṇaṁ samyag gandharvāpsarasāṁ tathā ||
imaṁ tu bhūya icchāmi kurūṇāṁ vaṁśam āditaḥ |
kathyamānaṁ tvayā vipra viprarṣigaṇasaṁnidhau ||

62.3 vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca |
pauravāṇāṁ vaṁśakaro duḥṣanto nāma vīryavān |
pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā bharatasattama || ...

69.50 bharatasyānvavāye hi devakalpā mahaujasaḥ |

−51 babhūvur brahmakalpāś ca bahavo rājasattamāḥ ||
yeṣām aparimeyāni nāmadheyāni sarvaśaḥ |
teṣāṁ tu te yathāmukhyaṁ kīrtayiṣyāmi bhārata |
mahābhāgān devakalpān satyārjavaparāyaṇān || (Śakuntalā-Up. ends)

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70.1 vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca | (Yayāti-Up.)

−2 prajāpates tu dakṣasya manor vaivasvatasya ca |
bharatasya kuroḥ pūror ajamīḍhasya cānvaye ||
yādavānām imaṁ vaṁśaṁ pauravāṇāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ |
tathaiva bhāratānāṁ ca puṇyaṁ svastyayanam mahat || ...

80.26 yados tu yādavā jātās turvasor yavanāḥ sutāḥ |

−27 druhyor api sutā bhojā anos tu mlecchajātayaḥ ||
pūros tu pauravo vaṁśo yatra jāto 'si pārthiva |
idaṁ varṣasahasrāya rājyaṁ kārayituṁ vaśī || (Yayāti-Up. ends)

81.1 vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca | (Uttarayāyāta)
evaṁ sa nāhuṣo rājā yayātiḥ putram īpsitam |
rājye 'bhiṣicya mudito vānaprastho 'bhavan muniḥ ||

88.26 vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca |
evaṁ rājā sa mahātmā hy atīva; svair dauhitrais tārito 'mitrasāhaḥ |
tyaktvā mahīṁ paramodārakarmā; svargaṁ gataḥ karmabhir vyāpya pṛthvīm ||
                                                                     (Uttarayāyāta ends)

89.1 janamejaya uvāca | (Pūruvaṁśānukīrtanaṁ)

−3 bhagavañ śrotum icchāmi pūror vaṁśakarān nṛpān |

yadvīryā yādṛśāś caiva yāvanto yatparākramāḥ ||
na hy asmiñ śīlahīno vā nirvīryo vā narādhipaḥ |
prajāvirahito vāpi bhūtapūrvaḥ kadā cana ||
teṣāṁ prathitavṛttānāṁ rājñāṁ vijñānaśālinām |
caritaṁ śrotum icchāmi vistareṇa tapodhana ||

89.4   vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca
hanta te kathayiṣyāmi yan māṁ tvaṁ paripṛcchasi |
pūror vaṁśadharān vīrāñ śakrapratimatejasaḥ || ...

89.14   rathaṁtaryāṁ sutān pañca pañcabhūtopamāṁs tataḥ | (Bharata's genealogy)
−16   ilino janayām āsa duḥṣantaprabhṛtīn nṛpa ||
duḥṣantaṁ śūrabhīmau ca prapūrvaṁ vasum eva ca |
teṣāṁ jyeṣṭho 'bhavad rājā duḥṣanto janamejaya ||
duḥṣantād bharato jajñe vidvāñ śākuntalo nṛpaḥ |
tasmād bharatavaṁśasya vipratasthe mahad yaśaḥ || ...

89.54   bharatasyānvaye jātāḥ sattvavanto mahārathāḥ |
−55   devarṣikalpā nṛpate bahavo rājasattamāḥ ||
evaṁvidhāś cāpy apare devakalpā mahārathāḥ |
jātā manor anvavāye ailavaṁśavivardhanāḥ ||

90.1   janamejaya uvāca |
śrutas tvatto mayā vipra pūrveṣāṁ saṁbhavo mahān |
udārāś cāpi vaṁśe 'smin rājāno me pariśrutāḥ || ...

90.6   vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca |
śṛṇu rājan purā samyaṅ mayā dvaipāyanāc chrutam |
procyamānam idaṁ kṛtsnaṁ svavaṁśajananaṁ śubham || ...

90.29   ilinas tu rathaṁtaryāṁ duḥṣantādyān pañca putrān ajanayat ||
                                                              (Bharata's genealogy)

−33   duḥṣantaḥ khalu viśvāmitraduhitaraṁ śakuntalāṁ nāmopayeme |
tasyām asya jajñe bharataḥ |
tatra ślokau bhavataḥ ||
mātā bhastrā pituḥ putro yena jātaḥ sa eva saḥ |
bharasva putraṁ duḥṣanta māvamaṁsthāḥ śakuntalām ||
retodhāḥ putra unnayati naradeva yamakṣayāt |
tvaṁ cāsya dhātā garbhasya satyam āha śakuntalā ||
tato 'sya bharatatvam || ...

90.96   ity eṣa pūror vaṁśas tu pāṇḍavānāṁ ca kīrtitaḥ |
pūror vaṁśam imaṁ śrutvā sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate || (Pūruvaṁśānukīrtanaṁ
                                                                                   ends)

91.1   vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca | (Continuation of the
                                                                                        main narrative)

ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavo rājāsīt pṛthivīpatiḥ |
mahābhiṣa iti khyātaḥ satyavāk satyavikramaḥ || ...

TG (southern sequence)[14]

61.99   iti devāsurāṇāṁ te gandharvāpsarasāṁ tathā | [15]

−102   aṁśāvataraṇaṁ rājan rākṣasānāṁ ca kīrtitam ||[16]

ye pṛthivyāṁ samudbhūtā rājāno yuddhadurmadāḥ | [17]

mahātmāno yadūnāṁ ca ye jātā vipule kule ||

569*   ete tu mukhyāḥ kathitā mayā te rājasattama |

dhanyaṁ yaśasyam āyuṣyaṁ putrīyaṁ vijayāvaham | [18]

idam aṁśāvataraṇaṁ śrotavyam anasūyayā ||[19]

aṁśāvataraṇaṁ śrutvā devagandharvarakṣasām |

prabhavāpyayavit prājño na kṛcchreṣv avasīdati || (Aṁśāvataraṇap. ends)

62.1   janamejaya |

−2   tvattaḥ śrutam idaṁ brahman devadānavarakṣasām |

aṁśāvataraṇaṁ samyag gandharvāpsarasāṁ tathā ||[20]

imaṁ tu bhūya icchāmi kurūṇāṁ vaṁśam āditaḥ |

kathyamānaṁ tvayā vipra viprarṣigaṇasaṁnidhau ||[21]

62.3[22]/

70.1[23]   vaiśaṁpāyana |

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14   The sequence of M differs: M omits 62.1–2 and inserts, immediately after 61.102, the S version of 89.1–16. This "short genealogical adhyāya" (Sukthankar's words) occurs twice in M: once immediately before the Yayāti episode, which is inserted after 89.16, and once again after it, both times followed by a colophon. The second time it (i.e., 89.1–16) is followed in *all* S manuscripts by the formal introductory stanza 571*, which precedes the Śakuntalā episode.

15   99a: T1 G1–3 *asurāṇāṁ surā˚*.

16   99c: T *puṇyaṁ* (for *rājan*).

17   100a: T G1.2 M6–3: *samutpannā*; 100c: T2 G6: *mahātmanāṁ*.

18   101b: note the transposition of *āyuṣyaṁ putrīyam* from the *āyuṣyaṁ putrīyam* of the constituted text—this is a feature of all S manuscripts.

19   101d: note the reading *sūyayā* (for the *sūyatā* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all TG manuscripts.

20   G5 M om. 1–2; 1a: G6 *sarvaṁ*; 1b: G3 *devagandharva˚*; after 1, G1 ins. (for the first time, the S version of) 1.89.1–19; the passage is repeated, in its proper place, after the Yayāti episode.

21   G5 M om. 2; 2a: T1 G1–4 *idaṁ*; 2c: T2 G4.6 *˚yā brahman*; 2d: G1–3 *devarṣi˚*.

22   After *vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca*, TG (for G1 see n. 20) insert a formal introductory stanza, following it up with the Yayāti-Up. and the Uttarayāyāta. The insertions of these two sections have been ignored for the purposes of this reconstruction.

23   Sukthankar's comments are a little confusing here, but the *vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca* of 62.3 evidently doubles as the *vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca* of 70.1 (i.e., it is not repeated). According to the critical apparatus for 70.1, the *uvāca* is omitted by all S manuscripts.

570*.1	dharmārthakāmasahitaṁ rājarṣīṇāṁ prakīrtitam |	(formal introductory stanza)
–2	pavitraṁ kīrtyamānaṁ me nibodhedaṁ manīṣiṇām ||	
70.1	prajāpates tu dakṣasya manor vaivasvatasya ca |	(Yayāti-Up.)
–2	bharatasya kuroḥ pūror ājamīḍhasya cānvaye ||[24]	
	yādavānām imaṁ vaṁśam pauravāṇāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ |	
	tathaiva bhāratānāṁ ca puṇyaṁ svastyayanaṁ mahat ||[25] ...	
80.26	yados tu yādavā jātās turvasor yavanāḥ sutāḥ |	
–27	druhyor api sutā bhojā anos tu mlecchajātayaḥ ||[26]	
	pūros tu pauravo vaṁśo yatra jāto 'si pārthiva |	
	idaṁ varṣasahasrāya rājyaṁ kārayituṁ vaśī ||[27]	(Yayāti-Up. ends)
81.1	vaiśaṁpāyana |	(Uttarayāyāta)
	evaṁ sa nāhuṣo rājā yayātiḥ putram īpsitam |	
	rājye 'bhiṣicya mudito vānaprastho 'bhavan muniḥ ||[28]	
88.26	vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca |	
	evaṁ rājā sa mahātmā hy atīva; svair dauhitrais tārito 'mitrasāhaḥ |	
	tyaktvā mahīṁ paramodārakarmā; svargaṁ gataḥ karmabhir vyāpya pṛthvīm ||[29]	(Uttarayāyāta ends)[30]
870*.1	putraṁ yayāteḥ prabrūhi pūruṁ dharmabhṛtāṁ varam |	(subst. 89.1–3 of the constituted text)[31]

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24 1c: G1 °*sya kule*; 1d: note the reading *ājamī*° (for the *ajamī* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all TG manuscripts (and M5).

25 2b: G4 *kauravā*°, T2 G4.5 M6–8 *nityaśaḥ*; 2c: T1 G2 M (except M5) *bharatā*°; 2d: G3 om. 2e–3f.

26 26a: G1.3 *putrāḥ* (for *jātāḥ*), T G2.4–6 M *yadorjātā yādavāstu* (M3.5 °*śca*).

27 27d: T1 *kāraya naḥ prabho*, T2 G *kārayitā prabho*, M3.5 *kaliyugebhavat*, M6–8 *prabho* (for *vaśī*).

28 S om. *uvāca*; 1b: G1.3 *purum* (for *putram*).

29 G2 om. *vaiśaṁ°u*°; S om. *uvāca*; 26a: after *evaṁ*, T1 G5 M6–8 ins. *sa*, T1 *sumahā*°, M3.5 *yayātiḥ* (for *hyātī*°); 26b: G (except G2.3) *mātṛvākyāt* (for *'mitra*°); 26d: G4–6 *naptrupetaḥ* (for *vyāpya pṛthviṁ*), G1.3 *vṛddhiṁ* (for *pṛthviṁ*).

30 After the Uttarayāyāta, S inserts the first sixteen lines of chapter 89 (Mahābhārata 1.89.1–16) with some substitutions and insertions as a separate chapter (with its own colophon). The remainder of this chapter (1.89.17–55) is then inserted between 1.69.48 and 1.69.49 of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, which is itself inserted following S's short chapter of sixteen lines (i.e., after 1.89.16). Line 1.89.16 is then *repeated* after 1.69.48 of the Śakuntalā-Up. to restore the context with the preceding half of this chapter (i.e., 1.89), which had been lost due to the insertion of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna.

31 Hereafter, the words "of the constituted text" are understood and will not be repeated.

−4   ānupūrvyeṇa ye cānye pūror vaṁśavivardhanāḥ |

          vistareṇa punar brūhi dauḥṣanter janamejayāt |

          saṁbabhūva yathā rājā bharato dvijasattama |

871*.1   pūrur nṛpatiśārdūlo yathaivāsya pitā nṛpaḥ | (subst. 89.4)

−2   dharmanityaḥ sthito rājye śakravīryaparākramaḥ | [32] ...

89.5   pravīraḥ śatarucyau ca putrā mahābalāḥ | [33]

−7   pūroḥ pauṣyām ajāyanta pravīras tatra vaṁśabhāk ||[34]

          manasyur abhavat tasmāc śūraḥ śaibyāṁ tataḥ | [35]

          pṛthivyāṁ sāgarāṁtāyāṁ rājā rājīvalocanaḥ ||[36]

          subhrūḥ saṁhanano vāgmī sauvīrītanayās trayaḥ | [37]

          namasyor abhavan putrāḥ śūrāḥ sarve mahārathāḥ ||[38]

874*.1   sunvantaṁ vasunābhaṁ ca garbharamyau yaśasvinau | (after 89.7)

−6   śūrān abhayadān rājā janayām āsa vīryavān |

          yavīyān sunvataḥ putro rathaṁtaryām ajāyata |

          śūraś ca dṛḍhadhanvā ca vapuṣmān sa nṛpottamaḥ |

          rudrāśvaṁ pṛṣadaśvaṁ ca rathāśvaṁ ca gayaṁ manum |

          yavīyāñ janayām āsa gandharvyāṁ bhīmavikramān | [39] ...

876*.1   etān vai suṣuve sādhvī antinārād yaśasvinī | [40] ...   (after 89.11)

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32   Line 1: T2 G3.4.6 *puruṁ*, G1.2 *punar* (for *pūrur*), G1–3 *pitevāsya yathā nṛpaḥ*.

33   Note the change from the *pravīreśvararaudrāśvās trayaḥ putrā mahārathāḥ* of the consti-
      tuted text. M6–8 (first time) °*ryaḥ* (for *pravīraḥ*). T1 °*gdhyauś*; T2 G4(sup. lin.).6 °*gdyauś*;
      G4.5 °*dhrau*; M3 °*jyā* (for *śatarucyau*).

34   5d: G3 °*vān* (for *bhāk* of S; *kṛt* of constituted text).

35   6a: M (except M7) *namasyur*; G1.2 °*manu*; G3 *nabha*°; 6b: note the change from the *chūraḥ
      śyenīsutaḥ prabhuḥ* of the constituted text; G3 °*vo*; M8 °*byāḥ*; M8 *tataḥ* (for *prabhuḥ* of
      constituted text).

36   Note the change from the *pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā rājīvalocanaḥ* of the constituted
      text.

37   7ab: G2 *suhṛt* (for *subhrūḥ*); T2 *subhruścābhayado vā*°; T1 G1.2.4–6 M6.8 *sauvīr*°; G3
      saṁbhramaḥ saṁvano vāgmī sauvīraḥ (sic) *tana*°; M3.5 *subhruścābhayado rājā vāgmī
      sauvīrajā* (M5 °*kā*) *strayaḥ*.

38   7c: Note the change from the *manasyor* of the constituted text (supported by T1 G1.2.4–6
      M6–8 [G4 sup. lin. °*nyor*]; G3 *nabha*°; M3.5 *namanyor*).

39   Line 1: T1 G6 M3.5 *gargaramyau*; line 2: T1 G1–3 M *śūrānubhayato rājā* (G3 °*taḥ subhrūḥ*);
      line 4: G1.2 M °*ṣmāṁśca*, G3 *vasumāṁśca*, T M3 *śūraṁ ca dṛḍhadhanvānaṁ vapuṣmaṁtaṁ
      nṛpottamaṁ*; line 5: G4–6 M6–8 *rathadaścaṁ* (for *rathāśvaṁ ca*); line 6: G3 *gāndhāryāṁ*,
      G6 *gandhavān*.

40   G2.4–6 *hyantinārād*, T1 G1.3 *sarasvatī* (for *yaśa*°).

89.15	duḥṣantaṁ śūrabhīmau ca prapūrvaṁ vasum eva ca |	
	teṣāṁ jyeṣṭho mahārājā duḥṣanto durjayo yuddhi ||[41]	
877*.1	duḥṣantāl lakṣmaṇāyāṁ tu jajñe vai janamejayaḥ |	(subst. 89.16ab)
−2	śakuntalāyāṁ bharato dauḥṣantir abhavat sutaḥ |[42] ...	
89.16cd	tasmād bharatavaṁśasya vipratasthe mahad yaśaḥ ||	(end of 1.89 [first half])
☞	After 16, S inserts an (additional) colophon	
571*.1	janamejayaḥ |	
−2	bhagavan vistareṇeha bharatasya mahātmanaḥ |	(formal introductory stanza)
	janma karma ca śuśrūṣus tan me śaṁsitum arhasi |	
62.3	vaiśaṁpāyana |	(Śakuntalā-Up.)[43]
	pauravāṇāṁ vaṁśakaro duḥṣanto nāma vīryavān |	
	pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā bharatasattama ||[44] ...	
69.48	yājayām āsa taṁ kaṇvo dakṣavad bhūridakṣiṇam |	
	śrīmān govitataṁ nāma vājimedham avāpa saḥ ||[45]	
878*.1	so 'śvamedhaśatair īje yamunām anu tīragaḥ |	(before 89.17)
−3	triṁśatā ca sarasvatyāṁ gaṅgām anu catuḥśataiḥ |	
	dauḥṣantir bharato yajñair īje śākuntalo nṛpaḥ |	
89.16cd	*tasmād bharatavaṁśasya vipratasthe mahad yaśaḥ* ||	(line repeated!)
89.17	bharatasya varastrīṣu putrāḥ sanjajñire pṛthak |	(continuation of 1.89 [second half])
	nābhyanandattadā rāja nānurūpā mamety tan ||[46] ...	

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41 15a: G3 M *anadhaṁ śūraṁ*; 15b: G1 *°pūtiṁ*, G3 *°pūraṁ* (for *prapūrvaṁ*), G3 *praśrayaṁ rathapancamaṁ*, M *prasūraṁ cātha pancamaṁ*; 15c: note the reading *mahārāja* (for the *bhavadrāja* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts (G3 *°bhāgo*, G6 M6–8 *°rāja*); 15d: note the reading *durjayo yuddhi* (for the *janamejaya* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts.

42 Line 2: M6–8 *°llakṣaṇāyāṁ*.

43 The insertions of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna have been ignored for the purposes of this reconstruction, but see later.

44 S om. *uvāca*; 3b: T2 G3.5.6 *duṣyan°*; 3c: G3 *sāgarāntā°*.

45 48b: M (except M3) *vidhivad*; 48c: T G1.6 M *śrīmad-*, G2.4.5 *śrīmadbhirvitataṁ*, T2 *°kṛtiṁ*, G3 *°ditaṁ*.

46 17ab: note the reading *bharatasya varastrīṣu putrāḥ sanjajñire pṛthak* (for the *bharatas tisṛṣu strīṣu nava putrān ajījanat* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts; 17c: note the reading *°nandattadā rāja* (for the *nābhyanandanta tān rāja* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts (T1 G3 M3 *°to rājā*); 17d: note the reading *tān* (for the *uta* of the constituted text). Again, this is a feature of all S manuscripts.

880*.1	dharme praṇihitātmānaṁ matvā taṁ puruṣottamam | ...	(after 89.18)
881*.1	catvāro bhārate vaṁśe suhotras tatra vaṁśabhāk | ...	(after 89.21)
{882*.1	ajamīḍhas tu rājendra dharmanityo yaśassu ca |⁴⁷}	(after 89.26 [not all; see note])
{883*.1	aikṣvākyāṁ janayad rājñām ajamīḍho yaśasvinaḥ |⁴⁸}	(after 89.27ab [not all; see note])
884*.1	viduḥ saṁvaraṇaṁ śūram ṛkṣād rāthaṁtarīsutam |⁴⁹ ...	(after 89.28)
{885*.1	anvakīryanta bharatāḥ sapatnaiś ca mahābalaiḥ |⁵⁰}	(after 89.32cd/33ab [not all; see note])
886*.1	te pratīcīṁ parābhūtāḥ prapannā bhāratā diśam |⁵¹ ...	(after 89.34)
887*.1	mahimnā tasya kuravo lebhire pratyayaṁ bhṛśam | ...	(after 89.42)
{888*.1	śabalāśvādayaḥ sapta tathaivānye mahābalāḥ |⁵²}	(after 89.46ab [not all; see note])
891*.1	atirājaś ca nahuṣas tathā śakrapuraṁjayau |	(after 89.51)
−3	tato dharmabhṛtāṁ śreṣṭhaḥ paryaśravasa ucyate | ṛṣiṁ puṇyakṛtāṁ śreṣṭhaṁ tam eva paramaṁ viduḥ |⁵³	
890*.1	bhīmasenān maheṣvāsaḥ pratīpaḥ samapadyata |⁵⁴ ...	(in TG after 891*)
89.55	evaṁvidhāś cāpy apare devakalpā mahārathāḥ | anvavāye mano rājan ailavaṁśavivardhanāḥ ||⁵⁵	(end of 1.89 [second half])
894*.1	gaṅgātīraṁ samāgamya dīkṣito janamejaya |	(after 89.55)
−16	aśvamedhasahasrāṇi vājapeyaśatāni ca | punar īje mahāyajñaiḥ samāptavaradakṣiṇaiḥ | agniṣṭomātirātrāṇām ukthānāṁ somavat punaḥ | vājapeyeṣṭisatrāṇāṁ sahasraiś ca susaṁbhṛtaiḥ | iṣṭvā śākuntalo rājā tarpayitvā dvijān dhanaiḥ |	

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47   After 26, T2 G (except G6) ins.; G3 *api* (for *tu*) and *dharmarājo yathaiva ca*.

48   After 27ab, T1 G2.4.5 ins.

49   T2 G2.4.5 *vīram* (for *śūram*).

50   G1.2.4 ins. after 32cd: T1, after 33ab.

51   G3 *parityajya*, G6 *parājitya*, M *jitā bhītāḥ* (for *parā°*), M *prayātā* (for *°pannā*).

52   After 46ab, S (except T1 G6) ins.

53   Line 1: T G2.4.5 *abhi*(T1 *°ti*)*rājā ca na°*, G3.6 *adhi*(G3 *°ti*)*rājātmajānāhuḥ*; Line 2: T1 *satya°*.

54   T2 G2 *bhīmaseno mahe°*.

55   55a: M6–8 om. *ca*, T2 G (except G3.6) *evaṁvidhā* (T2 *°rūpā*) *mahābhāgā*; 55b: T1 M3.5 *mahābalāḥ* (T1 sup. lin. *°rathāḥ*), T2 G2.4.5 *devarūpāḥ prahāriṇaḥ*; 55c: note the reading *anvavāye mano rājan* (for the *jātā manor anvavāye* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts (T2 G1.4.5 M6–8: *mahārāja* [for *mano rājan*?]); 55d: G2 *eṣa*, G3 *evaṁ* (for *aila°*).

punaḥ sahasraṁ padmānāṁ kaṇvāya bharato dadau |

jāmbūnadasya śuddhasya kanakasya mahāyaśāḥ |

yasya yūpāḥ śatavyāmāḥ pariṇāhe 'tha kāñcanāḥ |

sahasravyāmam udvṛddhāḥ sendrair devaiḥ samucchritāḥ |

svalaṁkṛtā bhrājamānāḥ sarvaratnair manoramaiḥ |

hiraṇyaṁ dviradān aśvān mahiṣoṣṭrān ajāvikān |

dāsīdāsaṁ dhanaṁ dhānya savatsā gāḥ payasvinīḥ |

bhūmiṁ yūpasahasrāṅkāṁ kaṇvāya bahudakṣiṇām |

bahūnāṁ brahmakalpānāṁ dhanaṁ dattvā kratūn bahūn |

grāmān gṛhāṇi kṣetrāṇi koṭiśo 'yutaśas tathā | ⁵⁶

69.49   bharatād bhāratī kīrtir yenedam bhārataṁ kulam |

apare ye ca pūrve ca bhāratā iti te bhavan ||⁵⁷

69.50   bharatasyānvaye jātā hi devakalpā mahārathāḥ|

–51   bahavo brahmakalpāś ca bahavo rājasattamāḥ ||⁵⁸

teṣām aparimeyāni nāmadheyāni sarvaśaḥ |

teṣāṁ tu te yathāmukhyān kīrtayiṣyāmi bhārata |

mahābhāgān devakalpān satyārjavaparāyaṇān ||⁵⁹   (Śakuntalā-Up. ends)

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91.1⁶⁰ vaiśaṁpāyana | (Continuation of the
main narrative)

ikṣvākūṇāmanyatamo rājāsīt pṛthivīpatiḥ |

mahābhiṣaj iti khyātaḥ satyavāk satyavikramaḥ ||⁶¹ ...

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56   Line 1: G3 M6–8 *gangādvāraṁ*, M6–8 *samāsādya*; after line 2, T1 G1.2 M3.5 ins. an additional line (895*): *kṛtvā paitāmahe loke vāsaṁ cakre mahārathaḥ* (v. l. for this line are ignored here).

57   49c: M *vai* (for the second *ca*); 49d: note the reading *te bhavan* (for the *viśrutāḥ* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all TG manuscripts (M: *te smṛtāḥ*).

58   50a: note the reading *°syānvaye jātā* (for the *°syānvavāye* of the constituted text); 50b: note the reading *mahārathāḥ* (for the *mahaujasaḥ* of the constituted text); 50c: note the reading *bahavo* (for the *babhūvur* of the constituted text)—all three are features of all S manuscripts; 50d: T2 G3.6 M3 *babhūvaḥ* (for *bahavo*), T2 G (except G1) *kṣatrasa°* (for *rājasa°*).

59   51a: note the reading *teṣāṁ* (for the *yeṣāṁ* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts; 51b: T2 G (except G1) *saṁtyuta* (for *sarva°*); 51c: note the reading *yathāmukhyān* (for the *yathāmukhyaṁ* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts (except G1: *°nyāyaṁ*).

60   S reads 1.90 after 1.56; 1.91 follows directly on the end of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna.

61   S om. *uvāca* (M5 om. the ref.); 1a: note the reading *ikṣvākūṇāmanyatamo* (for the *ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavo* of the constituted text)—this is a feature of all S manuscripts

I have ignored for the purposes of this demonstration, the additions to the
Śakuntalā and Yayāti narratives in the southern recension, which are exten-
sive.[62] My main purpose, rather, is to understand the problem that arises
concerning the relation of the two episodes to each other and to illustrate the
different ways in which the two recensions respond to this problem. The north-
ern recension places the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna first in its sequence; it, in a
sense, pulls the eponymous Bharata out of his expected place in the Kuru
genealogy and foregrounds him. The southern recension, in contrast, clearly
regards this sequence as a problem. It makes obvious efforts to restore what it
perceives to be the correct order: it moves the entire Yayāti episode (i.e., both
the Yayāti-Upākhyāna and the Uttarayāyāta section) to before the Śakuntalā-
Upākhyāna; it splits the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna itself into two, inserting the
narrative of the descendants of Bharata (Mahābhārata 1.89.17 onward) after
1.69.48, where it indeed seems to be a better fit, but keeping the first half of this
chapter (1.89.1–16) (with some changes) at the end of the Uttarayāyāta, where
this narrative of the descendants of Pūru appears a logical continuation of the
stories of Yayāti and Pūru.

(except G2: *ekṣvāk°*); 1c: note the reading *mahābhiṣaj* (for the *mahābhiṣa* of the consti-
tuted text)—S reads this (uniformly) here and below; 1d: T1 *anasūyakaḥ*.

62   Between 1.62 and 1.69, the southern manuscripts make five longer insertions (App. 1, no.
      45 after 1.67.23; no. 46 after 1.68.9; no. 47 after 1.68.11; no. 48 after 1.68.13; and no. 51 after
      1.68.69) and eighty-one shorter ones (571*, 577*, 579*, 581*, 583*, 585*, 586*, 587*, 588*,
      589*, 592*, 594*, 596*, 598*, 599*, 602* [G3 om. lines 3–6, M5 om. 1–3], 604*, 605* [G3 om.
      lines 3–5], 607*, 608*, 609*, 610*, 611*, 612*, 613*, 614*, 615*, 616*, 617*, 618*, 619*, 620*,
      621*, 623*, 624*, 627*, 628*, 629*, 630*, 631*, 633*, 634*, 635*, 637*, 638*, 639*, 641*, 642*,
      643* [G6 om. lines 6–7], 644*, 645*, 646*, 647*, 649*, 651*, 652*, 654*, 657*, 658*, 659*,
      660*, 662* [G2.4.5 M7 om. line 2], 663*, 666*, 668*, 669*, 670*, 671*, 672*, 673* [G3 om.
      lines 2–3], 674*, 675*, 676*, 677*, 679*, 680*, 681*, 682* [T1 om. lines 1–2], 683*, 684*,
      686*). For a discussion of these passages, see Hiltebeitel, "The First Reading of 'Śakuntalā,'"
      though he is dismissive of the southern innovations. Hiltebeitel also arrives at a slightly
      higher count (eighty-four instead of eighty-one), perhaps because he includes in his list
      some insertions only found in a few southern manuscripts (these are: 570* [TG (except
      G2)], 584* [G (except G3.6)], 590* [T1 G1.2.5 M3.5], 595* [except M3.5], 597* [T2 G (except
      G3.6) M (except M5)], 603* [except G6], 606* [M3.5], 622* [M3.5], 625* [except T2], 626*
      [T2 G (except G3)], 636* [G1.2.4.5], 648* [except G6], 650* [G3], 653* [T G1.3–6 M6–8],
      656* [G2], 661* [except G3], 664* [except G3], 665* [except M6–8]).

The Changes to the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna in the Southern Recension

In the preceding section, we saw that the southern recension makes extensive changes to the sequence of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti episodes. Even disregarding additions to these episodes, the changes present the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna in a completely new light: it is now no longer the first upākhyāna in the Mahābhārata; it has been restored to its proper place in the chronological sequence; and it is just one of the narratives integrated within a continuous genealogy that now runs from 1.62 to just before 1.91. In fact, if we look at the preceding sections (the accounts of the descent of mortals from divine and demonic prototypes) as genealogies of a kind, the southern text now creates a continuous genealogical narrative that runs from the end of 1.56 (where it is immediately followed by the prose genealogy of 1.91, now displaced to just after the eulogy of the Bhāratas) through 1.57 (birth of Vyāsa from Vasu, birth of the elders and the heroes of the Mahābhārata),[63] 1.58 (birth of the demons upon earth, the gods decide to descend with a portion of themselves to uplift the earth), 1.59 and 1.60 (cosmology proceeding downward from Brahmā to genealogy), and 1.61 (the partial incarnations), to the beginning of the Yayāti-Upākhyāna (1.70).

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63   This narrative, the first of all the genealogical narratives Vaiśaṁpāyana narrates in the epic, is significant. As two recent studies by Adluri have shown (Vishwa Adluri, "The Vasu Narratives of the *Mahabharata*: Some Lexical and Textual Issues," in *Proceedings of the Sixth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas* [Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, forthcoming] and Vishwa Adluri, " The Divine Androgyne: Crossing Gender and Breaking Hegemonies in the Ambā-Upākhyāna of the Mahābhārata" in the present volume) the story of King Vasu contains important clues to the interpretation of the epic: the king's name relates semantically to the Vasus, a group of gods responsible for keeping *pravṛtti* in motion. Further, as the "indweller" or the "indwelling one," Vasu perfectly signifies the central theme of an epic that is concerned with the problem of what it means to be or to exist in time. Finally, Vasu's turn away from *nivṛtti* and to *pravṛtti* right at the beginning of the Mahābhārata sets up one of the dominant themes of the epic. Vasu's fall into Becoming, explored paradigmatically in terms of a return to the sacrificial order dominated by Indra, is the appropriate beginning for an epic that claims to explicate not only Being but also Becoming. Like Bharata, Vasu's narrative is pulled out of its expected place and foregrounded in the Mahābhārata. His narrative is the first of the narratives to be related as part of Vaiśaṁpāyana's narration of the Kuru conflict (cf. Mahābhārata 1.54.19, 22, and 23–24.) and thus stands in some way at the head of the entire Mahābhārata.

More remarkable still is the fact that the transitions between the various chapters (e.g., Janamejaya's request to hear how the dynasty of the Kurus came into being [imaṁ tu bhūya icchāmi kurūṇāṁ vaṁśam āditaḥ; Mahā-bhārata 1.62.2ab] or Vaiśaṁpāyana's statement that he will recount the story of Duḥṣanta, a hero of the Paurava line [pauravāṇāṁ vaṁśakaro duḥṣanto nāma vīryavān; Mahābhārata 1.62.3ab]) are now much more appropriate in context—and this is so even before the scribes compose additional verses to bridge the gap between chapters! It is almost as though, realizing that the origi-nal sequence of the narratives, implied or actually extant, has been disrupted, the scribes are now working to repair the text. In the process, they restore not only what is a better order but also specifically *heal the breaches in the text*. For instance, if we look at just these transitions in context, we see how the south-ern recension brings to light an order that is already implicit in the text. As they exist in the northern recension, the transitions from Janamejaya's ques-tions to Vaiśaṁpāyana's responses are quite awkward:

Śakuntalā-Up. (1.62–69)
Janamejaya: I have heard fully from you, O brahmin, how the Gods, Dānavas, and Rākṣasas, and also the Gandharvas and Apsarās, descended to earth with a portion of themselves. Now I wish you to tell me from the beginning in the presence of these brahmins and seers, O brahmin, how the dynasty of the Kurus came into being.
Vaiśaṁpāyana: A dynast of the Pauravas was a mighty hero called Duḥṣanta, herdsman of all the earth to her four horizons.
…

From Bharata springs the Bhārata frame, from the Bhārata race and those other ancient men who are famed as Bhāratas. In the continuing lineage of Bharata there arose great and puissant kings, the likes of Gods, the likes of Brahmā, whose names are famous beyond measure everywhere. I shall celebrate those among them who were their chiefs, O Bhārata, the fortunate and godlike ones, given to truth and honesty.

Yayāti-Up. (1.70–80) and Uttarayāyāta (1.81–88)
Vaiśaṁpāyana: Now I shall celebrate to you, king sans blame, the lineages of all the Yādavas and Pauravas as well as the Bhāratas, in the genealogy of Dakṣa Prajāpati, Manu Vaivasvata, Bhārata, Kuru, Pūru, and Ajamīḍha, and their holy and grand progress in bliss, which brings wealth and fame and a long life.
…

And thus was this most great-spirited king [Yayāti],
Scourge of his enemies, saved by his grandsons.
He crossed beyond earth, he of noblest actions.
And went heavenward, threading earth with his feats.

Pūruvaṁśānukīrtanaṁ (1.89 [first half])

JANAMEJAYA: My lord, I wish to learn who the kings were that became the dynasts in the line of Pūru, how many they were and what manner of men, how mighty they were and puissant. For in this dynasty no king ever lacked in character or prowess or offspring. Of these kings of famous feats and wisdom I wish to hear the exploits in their fullness, O man of austerities!

VAIŚAṀPĀYANA: Aye, I shall tell you of what you ask, of the heroic dynasts of Pūru, whose might matched Indra's.

...

[Lines 14–16 bring the narration up to Bharata:
Ilina fathered on Rathantarī five sons, like the five elements, O king: Duḥṣanta, Śūra, Bhīma, Pravasu, and Vasu. The oldest of them was Duḥṣanta, who became the king, Janamejaya. And from him was born by Śakuntalā the wise King Bharata. It is from him that the great fame of the line of the Bhārata began.]

[Line 17 continues the narration with the story of Bharata's descendants: It is from him that the great fame of the line of the Bhāratas began. Bharata begot nine sons on his three wives, but the king did not approve of any of them, for they were not of his stature.]

...

In the lineage of Bharata many more mettlesome warriors and great kings were born in the image of Gods and seers; and likewise in the line of Manu there were many other godlike warriors of like prowess who made prosperous the dynasty that sprang from Ilā.

Pūruvaṁśānukīrtanaṁ (1.90 [second half])

JANAMEJAYA: I have now heard from you, O brahmin, the vast origins of our ancestors, and the noble kings in our lineage have been recounted. But this account, which I hold dear, has been retold too briefly to please me. Therefore, tell it to me again with greater detail, the same divine account from Manu Prajāpati onward.

VAIŚAṂPĀYANA: Then listen to me recite, just as I have heard it from Dvaipāyana, your own complete illustrious genealogy.

...

[Lines 29–33 repeat Bharata's genealogy; this time the story of Śakuntalā is clearly presumed:

Ilina begot on Rathantarī five sons, the first being Duḥṣanta. Duḥṣanta married Viśvāmitra's daughter Śakuntalā, who bore him Bharata. On that there are two verses: "The mother is the father's water sack. He is the father by whom the son is born. Support your son, Duḥṣanta, do not reject Śakuntalā. A son who has seed, O king of men, saves from Yama's realm. You are the planter of this child, Śakuntalā has spoken the truth." Hence his name Bharata.]

...

Thus has the lineage of Pūru and the Pāṇḍavas been described: he who hears this genealogy of Pūru is freed from all evil. (Mahābhārata 1.62.1–90.96)

In contrast, the southern recension, working almost exclusively with the material of the archetypal text, reinstates not only the broad contours of the narrative (i.e., reversing the sequence of the Śakuntalā—Yayāti episodes) but also specific linkages (e.g., Janamejaya's requests to Vaiśaṃpāyana or the latter's responses to the king). For instance, at Mahābhārata 1.61.1–2, the southern recension has Janamejaya utter his initial request,[64] but then, instead of having Vaiśaṃpāyana narrate the story of Śakuntalā, has him declare, "Now I shall celebrate to you, king sans blame, the lineages of all the Yādavas and Pauravas as well as the Bhāratas, in the genealogy of Dakṣa Prajāpati, Manu Vaivasvata, Bhārata, Kuru, Pūru, and Ajamīḍha, and their holy and grand progress in bliss, which brings wealth and fame and a long life." Thereafter, the southern recension has Vaiśaṃpāyana begin with the story of Yayāti, a story that answers much better to Janamejaya's request to hear how his dynasty came into being, since it begins with a remote ancestor Nahuṣa and then continues on to Yayāti

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64   "I have heard fully from you, O brahmin, how the Gods, Dānavas, and Rākṣasas, and also the Gandharvas and Apsarās, descended to earth with a portion of themselves. Now I wish you to tell me from the beginning in the presence of these brahmins and seers, O brahmin, how the dynasty of the Kurus came into being."

and Yayāti's son, Pūru.[65] The narration of the Yayāti-Upākhyāna and the Uttarayāyāta, are perhaps somewhat longer than the king likely anticipated, but they have the advantage of bringing the narration two generations forward. At the end, his interest whetted by these fantastic accounts of Yayāti and Pūru, Janamejaya asks: "My lord, I wish to learn who the kings were that became the dynasts in the line of Pūru, how many they were and what manner of men, how mighty they were and puissant. For in this dynasty no king ever lacked in character or prowess or offspring. Of these kings of famous feats and wisdom I wish to hear the exploits in their fullness, O man of austerities!" and Vaiśaṁpāyana obliges with a simple list that has the advantage of breaking off just at the point where Bharata is introduced and the birth of Bharata from Śakuntalā (1.89.16). Following a formal introductory stanza, Vaiśaṁpāyana can now recount the story of Bharata's birth in full and we are better placed to hear it, for we now know the history and descent of the dynasty and know, also, who Bharata is and where he fits into that genealogy. When Vaiśaṁpāyana pauses, he will pause at a most opportune place. It is now time to reintroduce, via a single-line insertion, the remainder of the chapter, which has not been forgotten, and because the scribes are not trying to hide anything from anyone, they have no qualms about repeating line 16, which restores the context with the preceding half of the chapter. The transition works beautifully: from a description of the virtues of the deceased king ("He was a king, a Turner of the Wheel, a majestic world monarch. He sacrificed many sacrifices, he was an Indra, lord of the winds. Like Dakṣa, he had Kaṇva officiate at a richly rewarded sacrifice, and, an illustrious king, Bharata offered a Horse Sacrifice that was styled Vast-in-Cows, at which he gave a thousand lotus counts of kine to Kaṇva.") to a discussion of the merits or lack of merits of the next generation ("It is from him that the great fame of the line of the Bhāratas began. Bharata begot nine sons on his three wives, but the king did not approve of any of them, for they were not of his stature.") and, thereafter, a continuation of the narrative that brings the genealogy almost all the way up to the present generation of heroes.[66] All

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65   It is always a rather arbitrary matter to decide where to cut off genealogies in the Mahāb-hārata. I have chosen Nahuṣa here as someone whose story figures significantly in the Mahābhārata. Of his ancestors Āyus and Purūravas, little is mentioned. Perhaps the human genealogy can be traced all the way back to Manu, even though this genealogy does not appear fully human, since Purūravas is born only from Īla (she is said to be have been both his mother and his father; sexual dimorphism or sexual generation appears not to have emerged as yet).

66   Present, that is, in the sense bringing the genealogy down to a generation of warriors one or two generations prior to the heroes involved in the great war; not present in the sense

that remains now is the last two lines of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna that had been suspended while this insertion (1.89.17–55) was being made.

The Restoration of the Text in the Southern Recension

Even though the southern recension changes the order of the narratives, it is important to note that it does not simply create a *new* sequence. Rather, working with a palette provided to it by the archetypal text, the southern recension reconstructs what is intuitively the better sequence. It is almost as though its authors were aware of the fact that the transmission has been interrupted in the northern sources. Their work, though an act of revision, is almost certainly an act of preservation and restoration rather than a new composition.[67] In contrast, the *northern* sequence appears to be a falling away, a deviation from the intended sequence. To understand the nature of the southern revisions, consider the fact that, setting aside *interpolations* to the narrative, the southern recension makes minimal additions to the text. With just a single

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of bringing the genealogy down to Janamejaya. This is accomplished in the northern chapter 90, which the southern recension, however, places rather anomalously after 1.56.

67   I speak of "an act of revision," even though there were probably several and the southern recension did not attain its archetypal form until several centuries of copying had passed. The reason I sometimes speak of the process in this abbreviated manner is because I have not found a good way to speak of the process of emendation as spread out in time. The changes I am speaking of may well have happened through the cumulative agency of two or three or even ten scribes (over as many generations). My "scribes" is obviously intended as the plural and not to imply a collective. We should also remember that we are talking about *one* manuscript, whose changes have come down to us in virtue of our surviving manuscripts (i.e., the manuscripts of the groups T, G, and M) being all copies of this source: we cannot assume that this was the only manuscript in existence at the time or that it was the most important or, indeed, that there was a purposeful redaction of it (as though it were the sole manuscript in existence). More likely, the random changes of various scribes (random in the sense of being uncoordinated and not in the sense of being arbitrary) resulted in this one exemplar, which was later to become so prominent (a fact that they could neither have known nor anticipated back then, since they were making changes to merely one copy, the one available to them). Stemmatic reconstruction always has the effect of magnifying or exaggerating the significance of manuscripts the way looking up the wrong end of a telescope does: from the fact that these are the only ancestors on our stemma, it seems tempting to conclude that they were the only manuscripts in existence, but, in fact, we have to do with the peculiar circumstance that survivors always seem to take up a larger-than-life role in history, even though, to their contemporaries, they may have been perfectly non descript.

formal introductory stanza after Mahābhārata 1.62.2 (570*.1–2: dharmārtha-
kāmasahitaṁ rājarṣīṇāṁ prakīrtitam | pavitraṁ kīrtyamānaṁ me nibodhedaṁ
manīṣiṇām |), the southern retelling gets underway. The text is so economical
in its use of materials that it does not delete 1.62.3 (pauravāṇāṁ vaṁśakaro
duḥṣanto nāma vīryavān | pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā bharatasattama ||);
these lines are merely displaced to after 1.89.16cd. Even the introductory
vaiśampāyana uvāca is retained, prefacing the introductory stanza, before it is
repeated at 1.70.1 (narration of the Yayāti-Upākhyāna) and reappearing at the
head of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna at 1.62.3.

The southern recension is similarly economical in its addition of lines after
the Uttarayāyāta. Substituting the three lines of Janamejaya's request by a four-
line insertion (Mahābhārata 870*.1–4: putraṁ yayāteḥ prabrūhi pūruṁ
dharmabhṛtāṁ varam | ānupūrvyeṇa ye cānye pūror vaṁśavivardhanāḥ |
vistareṇa punar brūhi dauḥṣanter janamejayāt | saṁbabhūva yathā rājā
bharato dvijasattama |) and (only) the first line of Vaiśampāyana's response by
a two-line insertion (871*.1–2: pūrur nṛpatiśārdūlo yathaivāsya pitā nṛpaḥ |
dharmanityaḥ sthito rājye śakravīryaparākramaḥ |), the southern recension
picks up the thread of the narration of Yayāti's (and Pūru's) lineage most effi-
ciently with the fifth verse of this chapter (1.89). In all, it will require only one
more insertion of two lines (877*.1–2: duḥṣantāl lakṣmaṇāyāṁ tu jajñe vai
janamejayaḥ | śakuntalāyāṁ bharato dauḥṣantir abhavat sutaḥ |) to complete
its inversion and to bring its shorter version of chapter 1.89, which it plainly
regards as part of the expanded Yāyāta, to a close. But it is the breaking apart of
chapter 1.89 into two units—a shorter segment from 1.89.5 to 1.89.16cd (16ab is
substituted by 877*.1–2) and a longer segment from 1.89.16cd to 1.89.55—that
holds the most significant clues to the scribes' praxis. The breaks in this chap-
ter are not manufactured by then: they are already evident. It is almost as
though, picking up the shards of broken pottery from an archaeological site,
the scribes realized that the narration of the genealogy of Pūru up to Duḥṣanta
(i.e., 1.89.5–16) belongs together with the Yāyāta as its concluding segment and
that the narration of the genealogy of Bharata from Duḥṣanta onward (i.e.,
1.89.17–55) belongs together with the Śākuntala as *its* concluding segment.
V.S. Sukthankar, commenting on the changes to the text in the southern recen-
sion, noted that

> We thus get in the Southern recension an altogether better sequence of
> the subject matter in adhyāyas 57–89: first, the story of Yayāti; then the
> genealogy from Yayāti's son Pūru to Bharata; and finally, the story of
> Bharata (or the Śākuntala), including the genealogy from Bharata to
> Śaṁtanu. As against this we have in the Northern recension (which the

constituted text follows): first, the Śākuntala (or the story of Bharata); then the genealogy of Yayāti; and finally, the genealogy (in one stretch) from Yayāti's son Pūru to Śaṁtanu. Logically, therefore, the Southern arrangement of the whole of this section is much superior to that of the rival reason; only it looks, in comparison with the other, a trifle artificial, as though it were an afterthought, conceived and carried out by a diaskeuast."[68]

Sukthankar thus sees that the scribes responsible for the revisions are not working with new narratives, but re-sequencing a set of narratives following an order that we too perceive to be intuitive. The scribes are not modifying the epic; rather, they appear to be picking up a text that they realize has been put together wrongly, identifying its breaks or joints or fault lines, and, with a minimum of insertions,[69] taking the text as it has been recompiled apart and bringing it together again. To invoke once again the metaphor of an archaeological site (and to now bring it to its correct and fullest expression), these scribes are like curators in a museum who, noticing that a particular artefact (e.g., an urn) has been put together incorrectly, take it apart along its seams and reassemble it. They do not make new breaks in the pottery; their entire concern is curatorial, restorative, and the only intervention they permit themselves is the use of some glue (i.e., the new lines, which they compose for the occasion) and this too is something they do with extreme care.

   The Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna in the southern recension likewise begins with a minimum of adaptation. A single two-line insertion suffices to bridge the transition and to announce the new chapter (Mahābhārata 571*.1–2: bhagavan vistareṇeha bharatasya mahātmanaḥ | janma karma ca śuśrūṣus tan me śaṁsitum arhasi |) and thereafter almost the whole of the Śakuntalā narrative can come in. Yet, the remaining half of chapter 89 is neither lost from sight nor tacked on randomly to some other bit of the narrative. At 1.62.48, the scribes identify a natural joint (the concluding portion of the chapter is a retrospective summary and a prospective declaration[70]) and choose to

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68   Sukthankar, "Editorial Note (3)," i.

69   That is, considering only those insertions made with the explicit intent of creating transitions between the various episodes. The substantive insertions (i.e., ones that add to details of the narratives), in contrast, are extensive.

70   Cf. Mahābhārata 1.89.49–55:
      bharatād bhāratī kīrtir yenedaṁ bhārataṁ kulam |
      apare ye ca pūrve ca bhāratā iti viśrutāḥ ||
      bharatasyānvavāye hi devakalpā mahaujasaḥ |
      babhūvur brahmakalpāś ca bahavo rājasattamāḥ ||

insert the remainder of 1.89 here. The repetition of line 16, even though used
earlier, is a clear sign that the scribes were aware that they were revising the
text.[71] It should not be read as evidence of ignorance or carelessness, since
verses in fact repeat quite often verbatim in the Mahābhārata. The verse
provides a fitting conclusion to the substantive portion of the Bharata nar-
rative (which ends by narrating that Bharata offered up a horse sacrifice at
which he gave a thousand head of cattle to Kaṇva); it also serves to bracket
off the Śākuntala by recalling its opening line. The authors have achieved the
near-impossible: they have managed to both fit the Śākuntalā-Upākhyāna
into its proper place in the Pūru genealogy and yet to highlight its nature
as a separate, self-contained unit within that genealogy. All they need do is
compose a three-line insertion referring to Bharata's horse sacrifice (878*.1–
3: so 'śvamedhaśatair īje yamunām anu tīragaḥ | trimśatā ca sarasvatyām
gaṅgām anu catuḥśataiḥ | dauḥṣantir bharato yajñair īje śākuntalo nṛpaḥ |)
to bring the narration up to its end (the repeated line 16) and they can now
insert the Pūru genealogy from Bharata onward, culminating in the refer-
ence to the generation of warriors but two before the present generation of
epic heroes—Bāhlīka, Devāpi, and Śaṁtanu.

   The conclusion of the Śākuntala (Mahābhārata 1.62.49–55) follows as
though automatically after the end of chapter 89 (I ignore here the longer
insertion 894*, which seems to me to be one of the substantive additions to the
narrative and not made for the purpose of smoothing over the transitions), and
thereafter the main narrative (the Kuru narrative) resumes from 1.91 onward.
Chapter 90 is moved up entirely (to before the description of the incarnation
of the Mahābhārata narrative in the genealogy of Vasu at 1.57) and functions
now not as it does after 1.89 as a genealogical narrative (where it is obviously
wrong because Janamejaya asks to hear again in "greater detail" [cf. *vistareṇa*;
1.90.2c] but the succeeding narrative at 96 lines is much shorter and more sum-
marizing than the preceding genealogy of Yayāti/Pūru) but as a prospectus of
the entire epic. Thus, it begins with the incarnation of the genealogy from
Dakṣa; proceeds via summaries of the genealogies of Purūravas, Āyus, and
Nahuṣa; mentions the names of Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭha (who will soon play
a major role in the Yayāti narrative); already indicates the partitioning of the

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        yeṣām aparimeyāni nāmadheyāni sarvaśaḥ |
        teṣāṁ tu te yathāmukhyaṁ kīrtayiṣyāmi bhārata |
        mahābhāgān devakalpān satyārjavaparāyaṇān || .

71   An act, however, that may well have been spread out in time (hence, more correctly: acts).
        See n. 67.

Nāhuṣa genealogy into two branches, a divine one headed by Devayānī, which will ultimately give rise to Kṛṣṇa of the Yādavas, and a demonic one headed by Śarmiṣṭhā, which will give rise to the evil-minded and lawless Kauravas; and provides, in two pithy verses, a kind of synopsis of the story of Bharata.[72]

Although in this case it is less easy to determine whether the scribes merely restored an implicit order or have actually modified the narrative, the displacement of 1.90 to before 1.56 is of a piece with the other changes in the southern recension. As with the inversion of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti Upākhyānas, the actual extent of changes made to fit the chapter into its new place are minimal. For instance, the scribes delete the entire first five lines (and substitute the sixth line), which would have made no sense in this new context. In the constituted text, the opening of chapter 90 reads:

> I have now heard from you, O brahmin, the vast origins of our ancestors, and the noble kings in our lineage have been recounted. But this account, which I hold dear, has been retold too briefly to please me. Therefore, tell it to me again with greater detail, the same divine account from Manu Prajāpati onward. For to whom should their holy genealogy not bring, joy, sublime and increased with the glorification of the virtues of the Law of the good? Abundant fame stands firmly rooted in all three worlds, of these men who were gifted with virtues and might and prowess and puissance, character, and enterprise. I cannot listen enough to this history that has the taste of the Elixir of immortality. (Mahābhārata 1.90.1–5)

This passage makes no sense in the chapter's new position (after Mahābhārata 1.56), for Janamejaya can hardly ask to hear again in greater detail the genealogy of his ancestors if this is the first genealogy he is told in the epic. The scribes therefore delete this entire segment; the speaker is now, as before (i.e., in the preceding chapter), Vaiśaṁpāyana and, with a two-line transition (896*.1–2: pūror vaṁśam aham dhanyaṁ rājñām amitatejasām | pravakṣyāmi pitṝṇāṁ te teṣāṁ nāmāni me śṛṇu |) he continues the narration of the Mahābhārata. Yet,

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72 These verses need not be oversight, indicating that the story of Bharata is already presumed at this point in the narrative, because there are many other instances in the chapter of pithy one-verse or two-verse sayings indicating at the meaning or the role of particular characters or narratives (e.g., at 1.90.47–49: atrānuvaṁśo bhavati | yaṁ yaṁ karābhyāṁ spṛśati jīrṇaṁ sa sukham aśnute | punar yuvā ca bhavati tasmāt taṁ śaṁtanuṁ viduḥ | tad asya śaṁtanutvam | or at 1.90.91–92: tam utsaṅgena pratijagrāha pṛthā niyogāt puruṣottamasya vāsudevasya | ṣāṇmāsikaṁ garbham aham enaṁ jīvayiṣyāmīti || saṁjīvayitvā cainam uvāca | parikṣīṇe kule jāto bhavatv ayaṁ parikṣin nāmeti ||).

efforts have clearly been made to integrate this prose genealogy into its new place. First, there is the repetition of *pravakṣyāmi* at line 2, echoing that at 1.55.2c (*pravakṣyāmi mataṁ kṛtsnaṁ vyāsasyāmitatejasaḥ*) and at 1.56.12c (*pravakṣyāmi mataṁ kṛtsnaṁ vyāsasyāmitatejasaḥ*; note also the evocation of the *amitatejasaḥ* of both lines in *amitatejasām*). Second, the concluding *phalaśruti* of this chapter (i.e., 1.90) also echoes the preceding eulogy of the Bhāratas. Once again, there appears to be a conscious effort to recall the intent of the preceding section, especially in the near identical concluding line. In juxtaposition, the parallel between the two *phalaśrutis* is unmistakable:

> The Mahābhārata, they say, is the great Birth of the Bhāratas; he who knows this etymology is rid of all his sins [niruktam asya yo veda sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate]. (Mahābhārata 1.56.28–31)

> Thus has this lineage of Pūru and the Pāṇḍavas been described: he who hears this genealogy of Pūru is freed from all evil [pūror vaṁśam imaṁ śrutvā sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate]. (Mahābhārata 1.90.96)[73]

This leaves us with just one final circumstance to account for and this is the "palpable hiatus" Sukthankar refers to between the end of chapter 69 and the beginning of chapter 70.[74] Sukthankar notes that this hiatus opens up between these two chapters because "the thread of the narrative dropped at the end of adhyāya 69 seems to be resumed at adhyāya 89 (or, strictly speaking, at stanza 17 of that adhyāya), after skipping the entire Yayāti episode."[75] In translation, the two passages are as follows:

> From Bharata springs the Bhārata frame, from the Bhārata race and those other ancient men who are famed as Bhāratas. In the continuing lineage of Bharata there arose great and puissant kings, the likes of Gods, the likes of Brahmā, whose names are famous beyond measure everywhere.

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73 The latter *phalaśruti* is, in fact, the *southern* one. It replaces the northern version, of which Sukthankar notes that it is a "rambling *phalaśruti* [and] contains some repetition and bears other signs of inflation." V.S. Sukthankar, ed., *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1. *The Ādiparvan* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), 397. In a deviation from his normal editorial practice, Sukthankar therefore opted to set the southern benediction above the line, relegating the inflated northern version to the critical apparatus.

74 Sukthankar, "Editorial Note (3)," i.

75 Ibid.

> I shall celebrate those among them who were their chiefs, O Bhārata, the fortunate and godlike ones, given to truth and honesty. (Mahābhārata 1.69.50–51)

> Now I shall celebrate to you, king sans blame, the lineages of all the Yādavas and Pauravas as well as the Bhāratas, in the genealogy of Dakṣa Prajāpati, Manu Vaivasvata, Bhārata, Kuru, Pūru, and Ajamīḍha, and their holy and grand progress in bliss, which brings wealth and fame and a long life. (Mahābhārata 1.70.1–2)

Sukthankar's opinion is that the changes in the southern recension, even though they aim at greater consistency, do not succeed in eliminating this hiatus. In the reconstruction of the southern recension provided earlier, I therefore retained the short line indicating Sukthankar's hiatus. The corresponding passages (in translation) are as follows:

> From Bharata springs the Bhārata frame, from the Bhārata race and those other ancient men who are famed as Bhāratas. In the continuing lineage of Bharata there arose great and puissant kings, the likes of Gods, the likes of Brahmā, whose names are famous beyond measure everywhere. I shall celebrate those among them who were their chiefs, O Bhārata, the fortunate and godlike ones, given to truth and honesty. (Mahābhārata 1.69.50–51)

> There was a king of the name of Mahābhiṣa, a lord of the earth who sprang from the dynasty of Ikṣvāku, true in his promises and of proven prowess. With a thousand Horse Sacrifices and a hundred Horse Race festivals he satisfied the lord of the Gods, and so the king attained to heaven. (Mahābhārata 1.91.1–2)

In Sukthankar's assessment, the southern recension's displacement of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna to after the Yayāti-Upākhyāna was no more successful at eliminating the hiatus than the original arrangement; indeed, he argued, it could not have been intended to eliminate it.

> Notwithstanding that the Southern recension transposes the Śakuntala and the Yāyāta, this hiatus is not removed: owing to the circumstance that this recension further dissects and displaces adhyāya 89, with the result that the portion of this adhyāya which does contain a list of the

descendants of Bharata stands now just *before* the above-mentioned remark of Vaiśaṃpāyana, instead of standing, as it should, after it. Thus Vaiśaṃpāyana's connecting remark is again left hanging in the air. The transposition in the Southern recension, then, was not made with a view to remedying this defect. The context can be restored, as far as I can judge, only by deleting, in the *Northern* recension, the Yayāti episode ... together with the first 16 stanzas of adhyāya 89 (containing the genealogy from Pūru to Bharata), which latter are in a way the connecting link between the Yāyāta and the Śakuntalā.[76]

Yet, I wonder whether Sukthankar might not be interpreting the reference to the "continuing lineage of Bharata" (*bharatasyānvavāye*; Mahābhārata 1.69.50a) too narrowly. He plainly expects an account of the immediate descendants of king Bharata. Yet, the entire story of the Pūru genealogy and especially the birth of Bharata being complete, the statement could also just be a reference to the present generation of heroes, the *bhārataṁ kulam* referred to at 1.69.49a then implying the Bhārata race of the Mahābhārata (i.e., the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas). The references to these two groups as Bhāratas (i.e., descendants of Bharata) both singly and collectively are legion. In fact, we might even speculate that after the narration of the Śakuntala, it is for the first time really appropriate to introduce the expression *bhārataṁ kulam* and to institute its use to refer to characters who will play a central role in the epic's narrative. In that case, if the function of this reference is not to introduce a narrower Bhārata genealogy but to indicate a broadening of the epic's perspective and that its narrative has now come up to the present generation of epic characters or warriors, there would be no hiatus. Chapter 92, which recounts the birth of Śaṃtanu from Mahābhiṣa and the birth of Bhīṣma from the Vasus, would then be an appropriate continuation of the narrative after this reference. The southern recension would then really have healed all the breaches in the archetypal text. It would have created the definitive Mahābhārata account of the beginning.

Evaluating the Two Recensions

It is of course always difficult to determine which of the two versions of a narrative or an account is earlier and I do not wish to be understood to be asserting that that the southern recension is earlier. In fact, Sukthankar was quite clear

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76   Sukthankar, "Editorial Note (3)," ii.

that the southern arrangement of the narratives was a revision, and I think this is substantially correct. The southern arrangement does presume knowledge of the archetypal text. As I have shown, it does not create a new sequence or a new text but works with a palette of materials that have been provided it by the archetypal text. The repetition of 89.16cd after 878*.3 and a whole host of other such details show this to be the case. Yet, what this reconstruction does suggest is that the relation of the two recensions to each other must be rethought: it is not a simple matter of an original arrangement present in the northern recension that is violated or remade by the southern recension.

T.P. Mahadevan has argued in all his articles that the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans brought to the south of India a northern recension text and that this text served as the basis of their (inflated) southern version.[77] This cannot be true for the simple reason that the northern recension is *by definition* not the text from which the southern recension descended. On the contrary, the northern and southern recensions are *both* descended from a common ancestor, the

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[77] See Thennilapuram P. Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti Transposition, the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata*, and V.S. Sukthankar," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 47 ("However, following his lead, we now have a plausible scenario of how the SR came about: a NR *Mahābhārata* text—labelled M1 in Mahadevan 2011, labelled Mbh1 here—came to the peninsula with the Pūrvaśikhā brāhmaṇas, c. 150 BCE, on the eve of the Saṅgam period of the Tamil country. These brāhmaṇas made the ornate SR—termed M2 in Mahadevan 2011, termed Mbh2 here—in the peninsula in the Saṅgam period, 50 BCE–CE 300 (Mahadevan 2008)."). See also Thennilapuram P. Mahadevan, "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, and Āḷvār Vaiṣṇavism," in *Ways and Reasons for Thinking about the Mahābhārata as a Whole*, ed. Vishwa Adluri (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2013), 64 ("In this scenario, the SR of the Mahābhārata takes shape from the *Śāradā text of the Northern Recension (NR) of the epic (the eventual basis of the Poona Critical Edition of the epic [*sic*])."); and, even more egregiously, in Thennilapuram P. Mahadevan, "The Three Rails of the *Mahābhārata* Text Tradition," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 24–25 ("The recensional differences of the *Mbh* tradition can be systematized to give us two principal recensions—a Northern Recension (NR) and a Southern Recension (SR)—the first being, in the language of textual scholarship, *textus simplicior* and the second, *textus ornatior*; and further, of vital importance, that the two bear a 'familial' relationship, the earlier recension serving as a template for the later, most clearly seen between the Śāradā version of the NR family and the Malayalam version of the SR family. It was left for the *Mbh* CE project, the *Prolegomena* concluded, to edit a CE of a recension according to the strict canons of a CE project, but envisioned against the *sui generis* character of the *Mbh* tradition. By and large, the Poona CE did this, choosing the Śāradā version of the NR for its CE and relegating variant readings first to the critical apparatus and then, for the longer variant readings, to appendices.").

hypothetical archetype. As I read Sukthankar (and as he doubtless wished to be understood), both recensions developed from this common archetype at a later moment in time, evolving likely in parallel (although we cannot be sure of this). This means that whatever text the scribes had access to when they carried out their revision[78] cannot have been the northern recension: it may have been a text of the northern type, it may even have been very close to the northern recension, but it was almost certainly *not the northern recension*. (This may be all Mahadevan means when he asserts that the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans brought south with them a northern recension text, i.e., that they brought south with them a text of the northern type.[79])

Sukthankar, in determining the constituted text, opted, based on his reading of Indian history and based on his sense that the northern recension was closer in time to the archetype, to place the reading of the northern recension above the line whenever there was a case of crux (i.e., whenever the northern and southern recensions differed in a way that did not permit the ascertainment of the text of the archetype).[80] But from this we *may not* conclude that the

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78 Again, note that I do not think this was carried out all at once. It is a short—and seemingly obvious—step from speaking about a recension to speaking about a "redaction," but it is a temptation we must avoid.

79 This statement is also not without its problems, but for now I have chosen to address only the main confusion (i.e., between the northern recension [N] and a text of the northern type). See, however, n. 94 for the problems with where to place the southern recension.

80 Incidentally, I cannot agree with Mahadevan's assertion that "Sukthankar's European training orients him to a special type of diaskeuasis, to produce a critical edition of the text that is consonant with the two well-known desiderata of the praxis of critical editing, as developed in the nineteenth century from the editing of the great classical texts in the West: the shortest version, attested in all manuscript traditions, is likely to be the archetype; and the texts of a given script hang together." Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti Transposition," 60 (the same error also occurs in Wolfgang Morgenroth, "Vishnu Sitaram Sukthankar as a Student in Berlin, 1911–1914," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 58/59, *Diamond Jubilee Volume* [1977–78]: 193–201, but is there explained by the German Indologists' need to claim Sukthankar as one of their own). Sukthankar's training may have been European, but his work is thoroughly Indian, being carried out in the same spirit of conservatism and concern with preservation of the tradition that he addresses when he writes, "taking away something from the received text of the Mahābhārata and passing it off as the original work is a thing categorically different from *adding* something to it. To add small details here and there, embellishing and amplifying the original, would be merely a gentle and lowly service *ad majorem gloriam dei*." Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," lii. The decision to not omit "even the seemingly most irrelevant line or stanza, actually found in a Mahābhārata manuscript collated for the edition ... on any account" is

northern recension is the text of the archetype. As Sukthankar himself explicitly says, the reading of the northern recension has been adopted in all such cases only "*as a stopgap*" and "for the sake of consistency and with a view to avoiding unnecessary and indiscriminate fusion of versions."[81] It is therefore incorrect and self-defeating, when looking at the Śakuntalā and Yayāti upākhyānas, to constantly insist that the southern text revises or innovates on the northern recension: the truth is we simply do not know which text the scribes of the southern tradition had access to.[82] We presume it was closer to the northern but it is equally possible that neither text retains the reading of the archetype, that both are cases of simultaneous innovation, and that the problem in the archetype was originally of a quite different kind.[83]

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ultimately rooted in his debt to this tradition. Sukthankar explicitly acknowledges the debt in his "Epic Studies III: Dr. Ruben on the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute* 11, no. 3 (1930): 259–83, when he notes: "No orthodox Hindu work can begin without a maṅgala; and this edition of the Mahābhārata, critical though it be, is and remains a Hindu work, which, could not dispense with a maṅgala." Ibid., 268.

81   Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," xci (Sukthankar's italics).

82   Those who treat the southern recension merely as a derivative of the northern end up cutting off the very branch they are sitting on, because the Critical Edition's reconstruction is based on the *assumption* that the agreement of N with S is the strongest argument for their reading being the reading of the archetype. If S is treated as a derivative of N, they are no longer independent witnesses for each other, which undermines the editor's claim to have been able, on the basis of their evidence, to reconstruct a stage of the transmission older than that contained in *either* taken by itself.

83   Contini frames the question in the same way: "A multiple innovation at the same variation place does not preclude reasoning: why have all the manuscripts […] innovated, and in a colorless manner to boot? Was this not because there was an objective obstacle in the original?" Gianfranco Contini, "La critica testuale come studio di strutture," in *Breviario di ecdotica* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1986), 140 (the translation is Trovato's). Before Contini (originally in a conference paper in 1967), I find that Edgerton had articulated a similar principle: "Moreover, in many cases the context may suggest easily, and so to speak almost necessarily, a particular alteration; especially if the original had any troublesome feature, such as irregularity in metre or saṁdhi or grammar, or if it was recondite and difficult in interpretation. In such cases it often happens that a particular change is so natural that we may easily suppose it was introduced by more than one person, without mutual contact of any sort. On the other hand, it often happens in such cases that *different* changes—sometimes quite a number of them—are made, apparently motivated in the same way (namely, to remove what was felt as a troublesome feature of the original)." Franklin Edgerton, "Introduction," in *The Sabhāparvan for the First Time Critically Edited* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1944), xxxix.

Such would seem, indeed, to be the case in the Śakuntalā and Yayāti upākhyānas. The southern recension is plainly modifying an existing text but that text, it seems to me, is not the northern recension. The divisions the southern recension draws dovetail too neatly into each other for us to believe that they were not already present, either implicitly or in some explicitly realized form, in the text of its source. There is (or, rather, there was) a text that had a clearly defined architecture: whether the southern recension preserves that architecture or is re-creating it after its disruption is something we shall probably never know. What is clear is that the commonalities between the northern and southern recensions concerning these two episodes are a case of a *common inheritance* and not of borrowing (i.e., of the southern from the northern). It is as likely that this architecture was lost in the northern recension (explaining the fact that it has the same episodes and the same joints as the southern recension, only in a jumbled form) as that the northern recension accurately and completely preserved the reading of the archetype and the southern recension improved on it.[84]

T.P. Mahadevan has argued in numerous articles for the literary sophistication of the "southern redactors,"[85] whom he identifies with the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans who migrated to Tamil country around the third century CE.[86] He considers that this period presents us with the necessary literary and scribal culture to undertake such a large-scale re-envisioning of the epic.[87] I agree

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84   We must remember that in both cases, we are speaking only of hypothetical archetypes, reconstructed on the basis of the extant witnesses. We do not have access to these texts nor do we know that they existed exactly in the form that we think they might have existed. One cannot hypostatize N and S and attribute, on their basis, real movements to people, who would have been carrying these precise texts.

85   Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti 'Transposition,'" 52; ibid., 57, where they are referred to as "SR redactors"; and see also Mahadevan, "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, and Āḻvār Vaiṣṇavism," 93–95, 100–105, and 108–9.

86   See his "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, and Āḻvār Vaiṣṇavism," 63–110, see especially the section titled "Redactors, Scribes, Manuscripts and Paleography" (99–110).

87   See ibid., 103–4: "As I have argued, the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans in all probability possessed a script at their departure from the Vedic realm, and from [Iravatam] Mahadevan's data, it has to be a form of the Southern Brāhmī, eventually giving rise to the Grantha script in the Tamil country and the Ārya-eḻuttu in Malabar, both able to meet the phonology of Sanskrit. This gives us the script of the *SR, taking shape ca. 300 CE in the Tamil country, the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans functioning digraphically in the peninsula, during the Sangam period, taking part in the Sangam poetic culture through the Tamil Brāhmī script and redacting the *SR in a Southern Brāhmī script they brought with them. [Iravatam]

with Mahadevan: the literateness of the Mahābhārata scribes is not in doubt.[88] However, because Mahadevan does not distinguish between the archetype and the northern recension,[89] he does not quite realize the full extent of their genius: in his opinion, the "southern redactors" merely improve on the existing northern recension text, changing or adding to sections as necessary. Thus, he writes that

> part of the same chapter, 1.89.1–16, which lists Duḥṣanta's immediate ancestors, may once have been an appropriate prelude to the Śakuntalā episode, but now appears (in the NR) some 30-odd chapters after it. Indeed, the SR recognizes this and attempts to rearrange the narrative .... In addition, the Yayāti episode, which Sukthankar thought itself a possible interpolation ... finds itself placed awkwardly after the Śakuntalā episode in the NR; the SR sets this right.[90]

Mahadevan has drawn emphatic attention to the wide-spread literacy of the Tamil country in the Sangam period, far earlier in it than in the regions that surround it in the peninsula. Wide-spread literacy would imply an active scribal culture, with skilled scribes, writing implements and the necessary manuscript materials. As we know, the very mode of writing—holding an iron stylus enclosed tightly in the right fist, the fingers playing no role in the calligraphy—shapes the evolution of the Tamil Brāhmī syllabary, becoming what comes to be called *vaṭṭeḻuttu* ("round writing") in time; it is reasonable to think that the self-ascribing term, *vaṭṭeḻuttu*, driving from a specific scribal mode, is itself evidence of a wide-spread writing culture. As a corollary, it is possible to envisage the rise of the written text of the *SR in the Sangam period."

88 I take "scribes" quite literally; I think the changes to the southern tradition are better and more economically explained if one assumes the standard processes of emendation and corruption and revision that literate scribes are known to undertake. Mahadevan, however, assumes a single, concerted "redaction."

89 I have found only one instance where Mahadevan distinguishes between them; it is in a long footnote, summarizing the findings of his 2008 *EJVS* study (Thennilapuram P. Mahadevan, "On the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata*, Brahman Migrations, and Brāhmī Paleography," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 15, no. 2 [2008]: 1–143), in his 2013 article. In this note, Mahadevan writes: "A version of the epic, possibly the archetype or the *Śāradā text, came to the peninsula, in what evolves later there as the Southern Brāhmī script, with the first group (Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans) by the beginning of the Common Era, from which they create the SR in the first half of the millenium." Mahadevan, "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, and Āḻvār Vaiṣṇavism." 63, n. 2. It is the only place I find that Mahadevan uses the word "archetype"; otherwise, he confuses the northern recension with the archetype, imagining the former to have been the source of the southern recension.

90 Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti Transposition," 52.

This makes the "southern redactors," in Mahadevan's opinion, "both masters and custodians of the epic,"[91] yet because he thinks that they modified the *northern* recension,[92] he has not fully appreciated the scope of their achievement. Thus whereas he imagines them to be engaged in a revision of a physical text they brought south to serve as a "template" (Mahadevan's expression[93]) for their new southern text, I suggest something more radical. The parallels between the northern and southern sequences of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti episodes I uncovered in the preceding section are, I think, more indicative of the fact that the scribes of the southern recension are working from an implicit template in their heads. They are not, as we saw, creating a new arrangement or even the joints around which this arrangement is built; they are merely making explicit or fully realizing a structure already latent in their source.[94] In

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91   Ibid., 57.

92   See, for instance, his comment that "in the case of the recensions, this [i.e., the fact that all our Mahābhārata manuscripts are descendants of a single, common archetype] forces us to accept the presence of a Mbh1 in the peninsula to function as a template for the Mbh2" (ibid., 62) and see also his identification of this Mbh1 text with the northern recension (an "NR *Mahābhārata* text," he calls it); ibid., 47.

93   See ibid., 62.

94   The reader will have noticed that I have been careful to avoid using Mahadevan's "southern redactors" just as, throughout, I have been careful to distinguish "southern recension" from "the recension from the south." This is because I do not think the case has been made for these scribes (I see no need to call them "redactors"; they are scribes *and* scholars in the sense that Reynolds and Wilson spoke of with regard to the copyists of Greek and Latin manuscripts) being from the south. I also do not think that the move from "southern recension" to "the south Indian recension" (via the intermediate stage of an ambiguous "recension from south India") is warranted, however self-evident such an identification may seem. The definition of the "southern recension," it may help to recall, is: the hypothetical archetype of all our southern manuscripts or, alternatively, the latest ancestor that the manuscript groups T, G, and M have in common. I find nothing in Sukthankar's work to suggest that the origins of this recension would have been in the south. In fact, the earliest reference I can find identifying a location in south India for this recension is the work of T.P. Mahadevan (specifically, in his 2008 study). Mahadevan, however, does not see that the southern recension is a hypothetical archetype, inferred on the basis of certain common features of the southern manuscripts: he takes it to be a real text and attributes the origin of those features to *this* text. Thus, according to him, not only was Sukthankar's S a physical reality but it was also made all at once, that is, there was one single concerted effort at redaction (of a northern source). Based on his research on Brahman migration, he places this redaction in south India (the Tamil country) and attributes it to the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans (who he thinks brought Sukthankar's N south). This is to treat hypothetical ancestors as real manuscripts and, moreover, to significantly distort

fact, we can dispense with this text, except as a kind of heuristic aid, altogether: what the scribes are really modifying is not a physical text (this is Mahadevan's error: he makes the entire process mechanical and does not realize that in doing so he puts his Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans at one remove from the epic's composers) but *an architecture in their heads*. They are the ones who *know* (not merely "correct") what the correct sequence is, because they are the ones who have intended or worked out the narrative. This is why they do not need to compose new narratives or significantly modify their text to bring it into order: the order is already there; it merely requires elucidation.

Let me be very clear: I am not arguing that the southern recension does not represent a revision. I would not debate Sukthankar's findings and indeed, I think the situation is very clear: the southern recension *is* a further development of the archetype. What it, however, is *not* is a further development of the northern recension. Thus, what I am really arguing against is the tendency to view the southern recension as a modification of the northern recension and then to imagine that in cases where we are unable to reconstruct the reading of the archetype all we have to do is substitute the reading of the northern recension and we will soon have the original.[95] Seen from this perspective, the southern recension can only represent a fall away from the northern; it must then be a corruption of the latter. Yet, the question of the southern recension's changes to the Mahābhārata cannot be reduced to a question of mechanical changes to a physical template. It is not a case of two static texts (or, rather, of

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Sukthankar's stemma: S is manifestly not a copy of N. There is simply no evidence that S was "made" in the peculiar sense that Mahadevan understands it (i.e., as a thoroughgoing revision of the text). More likely, the differences between the southern and northern recensions have to be attributed to centuries of copying activity, the two traditions slowly drifting away through the accumulation and reinforcement of changes over time. The question of where to locate the origins of S deserves more study than I can devote to it here; I will, however, note that if there was a single, intentional revision of the archetype of the kind that Mahadevan advocates, then there is no reason why this could not have occurred four hundred feet from the Kuru-Pañcāla area he identifies as the birthplace of the "northern recension" of the Mahābhārata. The thesis of a concerted redaction militates against or, at least, is *counterintuitive to* the thesis of long years of slow changes as the Brahmans moved south, and vice versa. Mahadevan's thesis deserves a more extensive response and I hope to write something on it one day.

95   As Vishwa and I have shown in a recent book, this is a major mistake to make: the northern recension considered as the archetype would in fact yield a text that is younger that the constituted text of our Critical Edition. See Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism* (London: Anthem Press, 2016), especially the section "The Argument from Uncertainty."

one static text and its undesirable but dynamic revision in the other); rather, it is a case of an intellectual architecture, which has been and (for the period we are speaking of) *is being* realized in two very different ways in the northern and southern recensions. The Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans, if we are to accept Mahadevan's claim that they are the agents responsible for the southern recension,[96] are the *very authors and architects of the epic* and not just its recipients or custodians. They are completing with the southern recension what they began doing or set out to do with the archetype but, for various reasons could not carry out to its fullest extent. The southern recension may be more *northern* than the northern recension itself![97]

I have shown in the first two sections of this article that, at least in the case of their revision of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti episodes, they can be seen to be doing one of three things:

1.   They could either be working on an intact archetype, whose sequence is essentially that of their own text. In this case, we must assume that the divergence between the two recensions is due to the correct sequence having been lost in the northern recension.

2.   Or they could be restoring an architecture already present in their archetype and this in one of two ways:

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96   I am skeptical of this claim (see n. 94), but here I wish to represent Mahadevan's views. I would personally have preferred the term "scribe." I also think that we must assume a longer period of time before the southern recension attained its final form (final not in the sense of "intended" or "purposefully shaped," but in the sense of "form in which we now infer it to be").

97   I am, obviously, highly critical of the view that there is something like an identifiably "southern" understanding of the epic, which understanding, moreover, is taken to be characteristic of south India (in an illegitimate move that replaces "southern" with "south Indian"). I do not see that this case has been made either on historical or text-critical grounds; it is mostly a prejudice deriving from "higher critical" views (which, in turn, derive from modern, i.e., late nineteenth-century prejudices about north and south India). At any rate, I find nothing in Sukthankar to associate the "*precision, schematization, and thoroughly practical outlook*" (Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," xxxvi; his italics) he found to be characteristic of the southern recension with south India. The southern tradition is probably the fullest realization of the Mahābhārata architecture (to use an expression from Adluri) for the simple reason that manuscripts were being copied and read with greater intensity in this part of India than any other.

2a.   Either it was fully realized in their archetype and then was lost, giving rise to the varying attempts to recover the sequence in the northern and southern recensions; or

2b.   it was present only implicitly in their archetype and they began the work of completing it as the manuscripts were successively copied and (re)edited.

Of the three scenarios (i.e., 1, 2a, and 2b), I think the first is impossible, because it would contradict much of what we do know about the Mahābhārata tradition. It would also create insurmountable obstacles for textual criticism of the epic, even undermining Sukthankar's signal achievement in establishing for the most part the reading of the common archetype of the two recensions. I also think the second is highly unlikely, though not impossible. It would explain the divergence between the northern and southern recension, without according one tradition priority. But of the three, it is the third option I most prefer. There are three reasons why it appears, to my mind, to be the best solution: first, it retains the priority of the northern recension as required by Sukthankar's critical principles (something the second solution fails to recognize); second, it accords well with the observed fact that, although the solutions of the two recensions are different, the problem is clearly common, being inherited (this is something the first solution sidesteps in making the problem a purely northern one); and third and most important, it reconciles the *chronological priority* of the northern recension with the *logical superiority* of the southern recension.

   If this is indeed the case, it seems to me that we must also begin to reconsider the relation of the two recensions to each other. There is a long-standing prejudice in Mahābhārata scholarship that all that the southern recension does is to provide an inflationary version of the northern. Concomitant with this is the assumption that the southern text is therefore the less accurate text, that it is less faithful to the text of the archetype than the northern recension, and that therefore its variants can be neglected in all cases of doubt for the northern readings. This has been the case in spite of Sukthankar's cautions that:

> It should thus seem that the infidelities of the Southern recension are confined mainly to a tendency to inflation and elaboration. In parts unaffected by this tendency, it is likely to prove, on the whole, *purer, more conservative and more archaic* than even the best Northern version. The

Southern variants, therefore, deserve the closest attention and most sym-
pathetic study.[98]

Such an assumption, however, is the perspective of the novice, who only
regards the additions but does not look at the variant readings themselves.[99]
Yet, as I have shown in this chapter, this conclusion is premature for at least
three reasons:

1.   We do not know what the source (*Vorlage*) of the scribes and authors of
      the southern recension was.
2.   In cases of crux, we do not know which of the two recensions has
      preserved the correct reading.
3.   We do not know if these scribes and authors were modifying, dilating
      on, or merely restoring the text.[100]

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98   Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," c–ci (italics added).
99   See the extensive discussion of this problem in the case of Reinhold Grünendahl in Adluri
      and Bagchee, *Philology and Criticism*, chapter 3 "Confusions Regarding Classification."
100   There is also a *further* reason why this conclusion is false: it seems as though, from the fact
      that the southern manuscripts uniformly contain the interpolations *abcdefg*, we are justi-
      fied in concluding that they owe those interpolations to S, but this expression actually
      entails an ambiguity. If what is meant by "owe to S" is that S is the latest common ancestor
      to which they can owe those interpolations, then the conclusion is correct. If, on the other
      hand, what is meant is that S is the source of those interpolations, then the conclusion is
      probably false: the interpolations, either all or some of them, could have been made into
      an ancestor of S. In that case, we would be incorrect to assume that some person, a "redac-
      tor" or a scribe, made them all into S and, furthermore, that the author of those interpola-
      tions followed a concerted "redactorial" program. The interpolations could have been
      spread out in time (e.g., *a* might have occurred into an ancestor of S, S'; *b* into an ancestor
      of S', S''; *cd* into an ancestor of S'', S'''; and the source of *efg* might have been more remote
      still). Now if all of those interpolations pass through S before being copied into our wit-
      ness manuscripts T, G, and M, it may seem as though S is their source and that the inter-
      polations were made concurrently, but this conclusion would be false: actually, S is not
      even the first manuscript in which all the interpolations occur—that would be S'; it only
      stands out because of its prominent position on the stemma as the source from which the
      branching into regional recensions occurred. The error lies in not disambiguating the
      expressions "latest common ancestor to which T, G, and M owe the interpolations *abcdefg*"
      and "ancestor to which T, G, and M owe the interpolations *abcdefg*" (in the latter case,
      there may be several). Such at least is the error as I find it in Hiltebeitel's discussion in
      "The First Reading of '*Śakuntalā*'." Hiltebeitel attributes all of the southern interpolations
      to "S" whom he takes to be "the agency behind such a re-do [of the archetype]" and says
      that he "will speak of 'him', although *he* is more likely a small team." Ibid., 20 and 21 (italics
      added). Nothing in the canons of textual criticism warrants such a move, nor the

As I have shown in this article, at least in the case of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti upākhyānas the presumption is strongly in favor of the scribes restoring the text. Although it is impossible to know whether the southern recension preserves an order explicitly realized in the archetype or one that was implicitly present but never brought to completion in the archetype or one that was realized in the archetype but lost in the northern recension and late reconstructed in the southern recension, it seems clear that the scribes' revision is not an act of innovation but one of restitution. This corresponds perfectly with what Sukthankar observed to be their "conservative" strain. It also explains why the southern changes do not appear forced to us but merely capitalize on breaks we also feel to be in the text. It is a case of a *Vorlage* that makes a certain *Vorgabe* (a prompt or a guideline or a specification) and, in this case, the southern recension seems to respond correctly to that *Vorgabe*, whereas in the north the *Vorgabe* either went unheard or was instituted but then lost and conditions were such that a later generation of scribes and scholars could never respond to it.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the textual history of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna offers a wealth of clues to the textual history of the Mahābhārata. Even though the common assumption is that the upākhyānas are interpolations and in the case of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna this assumption is further reinforced by the fact that the manuscripts are uncertain about its placement in the epic, this assumption risks overlooking what is most essential about the upākhyānas. Precisely because they are relatively well-defined, independent narrative units, the upākhyānas can sometimes be of the greatest use in interpreting the unfolding of the Mahābhārata narrative. The places they occur (or fail to occur) can be important indices not only for the state of development of the narrative but also of the textual corpus itself.

   This chapter also showed that the shifting placement of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna ought not be taken as evidence of indecision or hesitancy about the narrative. Rather, in both recensions and especially in the recension that appears to not place the episode correctly there is a similar narrative logic. The

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assertion that "S's interpolations simply cannot be accidents of a long-term process of manuscript growth via copyists. S made his interpolations in one run. We can cross-reference them easily. They are a consistent remake." Ibid., 21.

southern recension makes this logic explicit; with the expedient of a handful of extra verses, it achieves a much more consistent unfolding of the first ninety-one or ninety-two chapters of the Mahābhārata. This unfolding, I once again emphasize, may or may not be later but even if it is later in time it can still be earlier in terms of logical priority: the southern recension capitalizes on an architecture, a plan, and a vision already latent in the archetype. Recent scholarship has made it fashionable to speak of the southern recension as a "makeover" of the northern recension of the Mahābhārata, by which is often implied that the southern recension deflects from the blueprint of the Mahābhārata.[101] That this cannot be so is clear from three circumstances:

1. The southern recension does not modify the northern recension but a shared ancestor, the text of the archetype.[102]

2. The southern recension's changes are made in an essentially conservative spirit. Thus, even when this recension adds to the narrative, these additions are made in the interests of *restitution rather than innovation.*

3. As I have shown specifically of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, following a hint of Sukthankar's that "in parts unaffected by this tendency [i.e., the "tendency to inflation and elaboration"], it [the southern recension] is likely to prove, on the whole, purer, more conservative, and more archaic than even the

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101   See, for instance, Alf Hiltebeitel, "From Ṛṣidharma to Vānaprastha: the Southern Recension Makeover of the Mahābhārata's Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 14–45.

102   Although this can be shown quite easily via a comparison of their readings, it would take time to reconstruct even a few lines of the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna. In lieu of such a demonstration, let me cite Sukthankar's discussion in the "Prolegomena": "The presence of an astonishingly large number of additions, some of which are undoubtedly late and spurious, should not be allowed to impair our appreciation of some real merits of the Southern recension. It would be, in fact, a grievous error to ignore on that account the Southern recension or underestimate its value. This recension is an indispensable aid for controlling the deviations of the Northern recension, both in point of readings and sequence. In comparison with γ, it has unquestionably preserved a very large number of original readings, proved by actual agreements between S and ν, as well as by their intrinsic merits. The superiority of the Southern recension in comparison to the Vulgate may be said to be quite evident. It may, however, quite easily happen that in a particular instance, the *whole* of the Northern recension is corrupt, and the true reading is preserved only in the Southern recension." Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," xlv–xlvi (italics in original). Sukthankar goes on to show of one verse (Mahābhārata 1.214.5) that the southern reading is incontrovertibly superior.

best Northern version,"[103] we must make a distinction between revision and expansion. Scholars have frequently assumed that the two go (and must have gone) together, both being encompassed under that rather vague and meaningless rubric "redaction."[104] Yet, as we have seen, the southern recension's revisions (inserting bridging *ślokas*, smoothing over transitions, creating passages evocative of preceding materials) are made in a completely different spirit than its additions. They are minimal, carried out with near surgical precision, and designed to impinge as little on the narrative as possible. In contrast, its additions are extensive and they appear to have been carried out with the intent of establishing the southern recension as a more complete retelling of the Mahābhārata. It is possible therefore that the two—revision leading to restitution of an interrupted tradition and expansion leading to establishment of a new tradition—were carried out in two stages at different times.[105] (Logically as well, one would only want to add to narratives and *could* only go about composing new narratives once the arrangement or re-arrangement of the inherited materials was complete.) We would now have to abandon our view of a single "southern" agency (and even more so of a single "southern" propensity)[106]

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103   Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," c–ci.

104   T.P. Mahadevan, for instance, has argued for a single redaction taking place around the Saṅgam period under the aegis of Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans, this redaction being responsible for the production of the southern recension (Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti Transposition," 47–48, 55–57, 63; see also Mahadevan, "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, and Āḻvār Vaiṣṇavism," 92, 102, 124–128). I am somewhat skeptical of this thesis, as I have indicated in questions throughout this article (see, e.g., nn. 10, 67, 77, 78, 80, 82, 84, 88, 89, 94, 97).

105   Especially as regards the longer additions *within* the narratives, I am skeptical that these need have taken place all at once or been due to the same person. There is no reason to assume they were made of a piece, especially if the "southern" Brahmans had such a coherent group identity and ideology as Mahadevan and Hiltebeitel claim.

106   Let me be very clear: by "We would now have to abandon our view of a single 'southern' agency (and even more so of a single 'southern' propensity)," I do not mean to imply that there were plural Brahman redactions in the south, taking place at different times and in different places and thus vitiating the search for an archetype. What I mean rather is that *within* one-and-the-same process, we must now distinguish between two goals or aims that might have been pursued: on the one hand, restoration and preservation of the text; on the other, its interpretation and exegesis (which is *also* a kind of preservation). Thus, the question of "redaction," even "Brahmanic redaction," which the German scholars have been so assiduous in telling us since the nineteenth century was *a bad thing*, cannot be reduced simply to the question of what additions were made to the text. Redactors have a curatorial interest in the text: thus, even as they add narratives or narrative details, their aim is not to transform the meaning of the text or to *take it over* (this bogeyman of priestly

and instead start distinguishing between two possibly concurrent but almost certainly competing impulses within the intellectual life of the scribes and authors of the epic: the tendency of restoration leading to an epic that is the accurate image of the past and the tendency of realization leading to an epic that is the accurate but only the anticipated image of a future still to come.[107] Indeed, as Adluri has seen, this fact (i.e., the dual task of preservation and interpretation) is noted by the epic itself: "Learned men elucidate the complex erudition of this Grand Collection; there are those who are experienced in explaining it, others in retaining it."[108] Adluri argues that this passage ought to be read as a reference to the two agencies or two skills that played a role in the preservation of the epic. He writes:

> Those who retain it are skilled in memory (*smṛti*) and those who are skilled in explaining it are skilled in hermeneutics. This is the twin task of the introductory nature of the list of contents in particular and the Ādiparvan in general. *Smṛti* goes backward into the past, while hermeneutics goes forward, bringing the text to us in the future. The *smṛti* task of memory, that is, the philological task, which looks backward, is described in verses 51–94, and the hermeneutic task or the philosophical task, which is not textual but eschatological, is described in verses 95–160.[109]

It is in this sense that I have offered a reading of the epic's differing treatment of the Śakuntalā and Yayāti upākhyānas in the northern and southern recen-

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corruption inspired by the anti-Semitic fears of the German scholars). (On the latter, see Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014]). Rather, addition and interpretation are part of the living life of the text. They actually preserve the text with greater fidelity than a naïve historicism would achieve.

107   V.S. Sukthankar had a similar intuition, when he wrote in his "Prolegomena" that "*If the epic is to continue to be a vital force in the life of a progressive people, it must be a slow-changing book!* The fact of expurgation and elaboration is only an outward indication of its being a book of inspiration and guidance in life, and not merely a book lying unused and forgotten on a dusty book-shelf. Those are probably just the touches that have saved the Mahābhārata from the fate of being consigned to the limbo of oblivion, which has befallen its sister epics like the Gilgamesh." Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," ci (italics in original).

108   vividhaṁ saṁhitājñānaṁ dīpayanti manīṣiṇaḥ |
       vyākhyātuṁ kuśalāḥ ke cid granthaṁ dhārayituṁ pare || (Mahābhārata 1.1.51)

109   Vishwa Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the Ādiparvan," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no.2 (Spring 2011): 170–71.

sions as evidence of its ongoing *singularization* (not *multiplication* and
certainly not *corruption*) within the Indian tradition. Whether these insights
apply to other sections of the epic as well or are only restricted to these two
episodes must remain, for now, an open question.[110] But I hope to have shown

110   I have spoken in the preceding sections of the "southern" arrangement of the Śakuntalā
      and Yayāti upākhyānas, but this expression was, of course, an abbreviation and a simplifi-
      cation. There is no arrangement common to the TG and M recensions; as the critical
      apparatus materials included above indicate, there are variances even between the T and
      G manuscripts. However, my reasons for focusing only the TG sequence here is not simply
      that M diverges in key respects: rather, the question of the reading of their common
      archetype (i.e., S) requires much more reflection and study than I am able to provide here.
      It cannot be done merely by looking at the critical apparatus of the Mahābhārata Critical
      Edition. In this respect, I am skeptical of Hiltebeitel's view, "he [Sukthankar] did not see
      well enough what his Critical Edition was unveiling .... Most volume editors of the Pune
      Critical Edition subordinated their work with southern manuscripts to the reconstitution
      of an all-Indian *Mahābhārata*. But miraculously, for the two volumes he edited, the first
      (*Ādiparvan*) and third (*Āraṇyakaparvan*), Sukthankar did the side-job of critically editing
      what I believe we can call a provisionally reconstituted S recension text, calling it pre-
      cisely 'S'. Sukthankar differentiated 'S' from the omnibus Kumbhakonam edition that is
      conflated with many Northern Recension passages .... As far as I can see, Sukthankar's
      work in tracing out what a critical edition of the Southern Recension should look like has
      not been noticed in scholarly discussion of the Pune Critical Edition. Sukthankar clearly
      suggests that 'S' is a prototype for a critical edition of the Southern recension. As he says,
      'S is the ultimate source from which all versions of the Southern recension are, directly or
      indirectly, derived'!" Hiltebeitel, "The First Reading of 'Śakuntalā'," 20. Not only does this
      claim run counter to Sukthankar's stated view, "the gulf between the Northern and the
      Southern recensions is so vast, that it is extremely difficult, if not practically impossible,
      to reconstruct the Southern text, completely and correctly, from the critical notes of this
      edition" (Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," cv), but it also misrepresents the status of S. When
      Sukthankar writes that "S is the ultimate source from which all versions of the Southern
      recension are, directly or indirectly, derived" he is no more saying that his "S" will have to
      be the prototype for any future critical edition of the southern recension than that his "N"
      was the "prototype" for the Mahābhārata Critical Edition when he says "N is the ultimate
      source from which all versions of the Northern recension are, directly or indirectly,
      derived." Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," xxx. Rather, he means that it is the source of all
      manuscripts of the southern tradition; if anything, the text any future critical edition
      would reconstruct would be *his S*. Hiltebeitel is misled by his view that Sukthankar pro-
      vided us with a preview of what "the Southern Recension should look like," by which he
      means that Sukthankar outlined its "Brahmanic" character, that is, its "penchant for 'sen-
      tentious maxims'; for adding new characters; and its tendency to be 'much richer in
      details, leaving little or nothing to the imagination of the reader or hearer'." Hiltebeitel,
      "The First Reading of 'Śakuntalā'," 19. This, of course, is to enter into the domain of "higher
      criticism." I am similarly at a loss as to what to make of Mahadevan's suggestion that " a

in my treatment of these two narratives that the epic's fate cannot be treated as one of inevitable loss and a fall away from the origin: the epic itself possesses the power to renew itself—it *is* the Horse Head that, at the dawn of the eon, will enter the primeval waters to recover the Veda that has been lost.[111]

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critical edition of the SR may nearly be conjured from the apparatus of the Poona Critical Edition: it would be essentially Mbh2M with the Mbh2GT 'excesses' relegated to the apparatus." Mahadevan, "The Śakuntalā-Yayāti Transposition," 61–62. We must give up the idea that a critical text can be created simply by eliminating the "additional passages" from the Mahābhārata—an idea that has devestating consequences for the work of Andreas Bigger and Reinhold Grünendahl, as discussed in *Philology and Criticism*. The relation of M to TG and thus to the entire Mahābhārata tradition deserves a separate study.

111   See Mahābhārata 12.355 (the Nārāyaṇīye Hayaśira-Upākhyāna). When the Veda has been lost, Nārāyaṇa himself takes on the Horse Head (Hayaśiras) form to recover it. This is not an empty boast: the Mahābhārata self-consciously imitates the form of the horse, with a horse's tail at its beginning and the horse's head at its end. Vishwa Adluri argues (personal communication) that this "incarnation" is intentional: the Mahābhārata intends the notion of a transformation of the physical sacrifice into a textual sacrifice quite literally.

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Introductory Notes on the Literary Structure of the Mārkaṇḍeyasamāsyāparvan

Greg Bailey

The Mārkaṇḍeyasamāsyāparvan (Msp) offers one of the most fascinating episodes in one of the most interesting books of the Mahābhārata, the Āraṇyakaparvan (3.179–221).[1] It is a text of great color, humor, drama, and with a large educative and theological program. Much found in this book is preparing the Pāṇḍavas,[2] especially Yudhiṣṭhira, for the decisions that will have to be taken—or not taken, as often seems to be the case—leading up to the inevitability of the great war and what might conceivably happen after it is completed, and reviewing what has already happened to them so far. Equally, it brings into play a whole gamut of religious, philosophical, and behavioral ideas only hinted at in other texts, as if these ideas contextualize the decisions the Pāṇḍavas will be required to make. And though its narrative frame is defined geographically, at least, by the absence of the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa from Hāstinapura and their residence in Kāmyaka forest and elsewhere, it is subdivided into a number of parvans, each having their own thematic focus. Of these, the Msp is one of the longest and is itself sub-divided into many lesser narrative units familiar elsewhere from Vedic literature employed by Mārkaṇḍeya. Arguably one finds here a mirror image of what is found in the Mahābhārata itself. I am not saying the Msp is a mini-epic in its own right; it definitely is not. Rather, I am saying that its use of multi- and mixed genres mirrors one aspect of the Mahābhārata's text construction, as does its apparent aim to give a totalistic view of things.

What is so fascinating about this parvan is that nothing happens in terms of narrated action to the primary interlocutors, the Pāṇḍavas, especially

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1 Since most of my references in this chapter are to the Āraṇyakaparvan, hereafter the number "3" will not be repeated. Where there is only a single number, the reference is to the adhyāya in the Āraṇyakaparvan; where there are two numbers, the reference is to the adhyāya and the verse in the Āraṇyakaparvan.

2 See the valuable article by James Laine, "Out of Character: Marginal Voices and Role-Transcendence in the Mahābhārata's Book of the Forest," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19 (1991): 273–96, which demonstrates the striking levels of initiatory frames and role inversions that occur throughout this book.

Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, and the narrator, Mārkaṇḍeya. It suspends any
narrated action on the part of the principal players, except for Mārkaṇḍeya
himself and Kṛṣṇa. The hearers are simply transported out of their own world
by a series of narratives told to them by Mārkaṇḍeya, a sage possessing all
the best qualifications for instructing audiences who themselves have the
appropriate qualifications to listen. As such it mirrors several other groups of
interlocutors in the Mahābhārata, without, of course, going back to the first
interlocutory level, and also many upākhyānas where narrated action is shifted
to quite another level.

The principal aim of this paper is to ask the question of the logic underlying
the combination of the recognizably distinctive parts of the Msp. I say recog-
nizably distinctive because several of the narratives are quite different from
each other in imagery, narrative style, content, and intention. As such it is not
just interlocutory relationships and content that needs to be explored, but also
the modes of combining this variant material. There is substantial overlap with
combinatorial elements in the Mahābhārata as a whole, which is hardly sur-
prising given the importance of reciters learning how to use these modes of
combining new with recognizably traditional material. But we can rightly ask,
was this primarily a composer's logic designed to help those who received the
text, that is, an audience capable of understanding its content and style? In
asking this we must bear in mind the Sanskrit version is simply one version of
the text and other versions do have different poetic discourses associated with
their composition and interpretation.

In reading the Msp one finds narratives that are substantially different in
content from each other and which would therefore invite different modes of
interpretation and explication, that is, if they were interpreted as a whole by an
indigenous audience.[3] Of course, this assumes the text was read as a unit, and
there is some evidence in Mahābhārata recitation that the individual parvans
were recited and provided a bounded unit. Both content and the names of
individual generic units help create a strongly heterogenous impression but
from the global perspective of the Mahābhārata as a whole the themes raised
in the different units of contents can be seen to fit in quite effectively, but again
this begs the question of Mahābhārata reading/hearing practices. There is
always a tendency to locate a sense of unity in a text of highly varying content,
however this unity might be defined. Even where sub-sections of the Msp, such
as the conflict between Atri and Gautama (183), and Mārkaṇḍeya's theophany

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3 One of the heritages of a structural analysis is the tendency to analyse a text as a whole, often
   arbitrarily defined, overlooking its individual parts as anything other than variants of the
   whole.

(186–87), are strikingly different we still try and locate common features of interpretation. We also continually ask whether the fragmentation of content against desire for unity is intended as another thematic take on one of the themes running across most of the parvan. This concerns the ubiquitous problem of the interpretation of dharma and the question of who is its privileged interpreter. My own feeling, based on repeated readings of the Msp, is that its texts are speaking to brahmans more than any other group, implying that it is them as a class who should know the sound interpretations of dharma, even where in reality they differed amongst themselves on this issue.

Interlocutors and Audience

The Msp is a recitation of heterogenous material by the sage Mārkaṇḍeya to Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas, Draupadī, Kṛṣṇa, Satyabhāmā, and Nārada. Arjuna has just returned from his own initiatory tests in acquiring weapons for the Pāṇḍavas, and Kṛṣṇa too has just arrived from visiting his own people. Thus are the principal players on the Pāṇḍava side reunited for a further period of exile in the forest. Kṛṣṇa offers some news about what has been going on in the external world whilst the Pāṇḍavas have been in exile. But the important event is Mārkaṇḍeya's arrival in the Kāmyaka forest. He is already famous by the time he meets the Pāṇḍavas, for near the beginning of the Āraṇyakaparvan he is described thus:

> "You yourself have seen with your own eyes the great ascetic and seer Mārkaṇḍeya moving about, a man of boundless soul and long-lived in the Law …" (32.10; Van Buitenen, p. 282 modified)[4]

Within the Msp itself there is a constant reinforcement of his virtually unique status as an observer in the foundational events of the cosmos. His status as an appropriate teacher for the Pāṇḍavas must be demonstrated not just assumed. A capacity to see things before one's very eyes is strongly recommended in the Msp,[5] but it is magnified hugely in the narratives where, and because, Mārkaṇḍeya himself actually plays a role in the narrated action, in which he parallels Vyāsa. He describes some of the personal experiences he has had in order to derive his knowledge of the cosmogony and in response to the ques-

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4   pratyakṣaṃ hi tvayā dṛṣṭa ṛṣir gacchan mahātapāḥ |
    mārkaṇḍeyo 'prameyātmā dharmeṇa cirajīvitām || Cf. 191.26 where he is also called *cirajīvinā*.
5   See 181.15c, 186.11, and 196.3a where some variant of *pratyakṣa* is used in every case.

tion asking if there is anyone older than him? Already he has demonstrated his grand antiquity in the famous myth where he appears on the primeval ocean and enters Kṛṣṇa's mouth. What this really means is that he has experienced the world during the *pralaya*, and when he actually sees another world ready to be created in Nārāyaṇa's stomach. In that sense he is almost beyond time because he is seemingly capable of describing, on the basis of eyewitness, the transition between *kalpas* and the course of the yugas. Above all he is concerned with what is primeval and how this evolves. But even this is not enough, because in 191, 1 the sages and Pāṇḍavas ask him: "Is anyone older than you?"[6] And his explanation in that chapter told them what he had actually experienced (*anubhūtam*) and seen (*dṛṣṭam*; 191.26).[7] Why is this asked, given that they already know that he has witnessed events others have never witnessed? Is it because he has experienced it as well as seen it, thus putting his knowledge on a different epistemological register, from just having learnt about it second-hand?

The mode of recitation is virtually the same as that employed by Bhīṣma in the twelfth and thirteenth books of the Mahābhārata. It takes the form of a dialogue, though it is really a monologue where the subjects treated are substantially guided by the questions Yudhiṣṭhira and the others put, and this governs the flow of narrative direction. Whilst all of the teachings and arguments—because this is what they are—are directed towards Yudhiṣṭhira, in particular, it is surely not insignificant that the other Pāṇḍavas also form an important component of the audience, as they will potentially have to sustain Yudhiṣṭhira as king when that possibility eventually arises. We are often reminded that they are present as Mārkaṇḍeya frequently refers to the Pāṇḍavas in the plural at many points in his narrative.

Equally, the presence of Kṛṣṇa is highly significant, especially, since like Mārkaṇḍeya himself, he seems to defy/transcend time—for at one point he is alive during the *pralaya* and then he is hearing Mārkaṇḍeya describe actually what happened then. His presence places special light on Mārkaṇḍeya's description of his own encounter with Nārāyaṇa, reinforcing the special revelatory nature of his own knowledge about cosmogony and cosmology and

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6 asti kaś cid bhavataś cirajātatara iti

7 Similar is: evaṃ saṃsāramārgā me bahuśaś cirajīvinā |
   dṛṣṭāś caivānubhūtāś ca tāṃs te kathitavān aham || (Mahābhārata 3.189.15)
   also referring to Mārkaṇḍeya after narrating the birth and activities of Kalkin. Cf. Yudhiṣṭhira's question to Mārkaṇḍeya:
   tasmād icchāmahe śrotuṃ sarvahetvātmikāṃ kathām ||
   anubhūtaṃ hi bahuśas tvayaikena dvijottama | (Mahābhārata 3.186.11cd–12ab)

his direct experience enlightening the Pāṇḍavas about Kṛṣṇa's true nature, dramatically enhanced because he is presently with them in his mild appearance as a man, which is quite at variance with his appearance in the more theophanic mode in chapters 186–87. Here the devotional intervention must be regarded as a highpoint of the first part of the Msp, containing a particular version of the *bhakti* myth occurring elsewhere in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas.[8] Such a presentation reaches far beyond the immediate audience, as everything in the Msp does, but it is a central feature of this myth that the devotional relationship is always between an individual and a deity, and we note that, as Hiltebeitel has brilliantly shown,[9] the different Pāṇḍavas relate to Kṛṣṇa in obviously different ways, and even here Mārkaṇḍeya is describing to a group what can only be an individual experience characterized by high emotion.

The audience is not just restricted to the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa, but also includes the host of brahmans and tapasvins who are said to have accompanied the former into the forest. These are presented as an undifferentiated host and so provide another backdrop against which the Pāṇḍavas can be placed. But in the narratives that are told the brahmans are not presented as an undifferentiated mass, because sometimes they are presented as being opposed to each other (see 183), and in another text (196–205) as being taught by a woman and then by a seller of meat, always the dispute occurring over an interpretation of dharma and the brahman's role. This suggests to me that the Msp is strongly directed towards a brahman audience, a view given support by the fact that as much as forty percent (20 out of 43 chapters) of the Msp consists of a series of *brāhmaṇasya māhātmyāni*, directed no doubt to the kṣatriya Pāṇḍavas, who must rule the kingdom in conjunction with the brahmans acting as consultants.

Finally, Nārada (180.44 arriving before the narration begins) is also present in the audience, though it is not made clear why he should be so. It could be a consequence of his status as communicator between the gods and men, and his presence accordingly enhances the value of the content of what is being narrated.

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8   See my article, "The Semantics of Bhakti in the Vāmanapurāṇa," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* LXII (1988): 25–57. Having read many more Purāṇas over the years, I am now wondering whether the structural features defining this myth occur mainly in Vaiṣṇava, and not Śaiva texts. However, Arjuna's encounter with Śiva as a mountain man would seem to contradict this. See Mahābhārata 3.38–42 and Laine, "Out of Character: Marginal Voices and Role-Transcendence in the Mahābhārata's Book of the Forest," 286.

9   Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1976]).

Style

The Msp is typical of Sanskrit epic literature in using anuṣṭubh as its basic meter, with triṣṭubh employed for emphasizing particular themes or for concluding adhyāyas. There is also one chapter composed in prose (190.1–59) interspersed with both anuṣṭubh and triṣṭubh, but there is nothing in its content suggestive of any reason why extra emphasis should be given by way of metrical change. Use of anuṣṭubh provides a backdrop of constancy against which other stylistic variation can be made.

These metrical forms constitute the minimal stylistic units, and the next larger one is the adhyāya and the largest the parvan itself. Between these two sizes of content, there is a third level, which I have called Narrative Unit[10] in a different literary context and it applies here as well. In the Msp the obvious Narrative Units are comprised of chapters 196–206 dealing with *pātivratya* and the question of *svadharma* and the final fourteen chapters (207–21) dealing with the related subjects of the lineages of fire and the birth of Skanda. Arguably both of these two sections can be subdivided into two other sections and this is indicated clearly in the questions asked of Mārkaṇḍeya by Yudhiṣṭhira and are bounded by appropriate question and answer. Question and answer and introduction and conclusion do not necessarily correlate with adhyāya beginnings and endings. But the fact that these formal and semi-formal divisions exist does not mean there is no overarching semantic and literary frame transcending them. I will return to this later.

The most basic stylistic distinction, as opposed to units of textual size, and one which transcends bounded units of text is the well recognized difference between didactic and narrative, utilizing texts differing in both content and diction, where the former consists of descriptive statements in dharmaśāstric style as opposed to the latter where a distinctive plot is essential. Both of course can be interrelated, as one can be used to illustrate the content of the other. Didactic teaching is sometimes used to advance an argument within the context of a particular narrative plot, and/or to give emphasis to what has been said in the narrative section by repeating it. Whilst usually quite straightforward in its literary construction, its purported audience is not always so, and

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10 See *The Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*, vol. 1. *Upāsanākhanda* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1995), 26ff. A Narrative Unit always encompasses several individual plots presented sequentially and it can include didactic material as well. Its main distinguishing feature is an underlying thematic relation between all of these. The best indigenous candidates for this narrative type may well be the kathā and/or the itihāsa, both flexible enough to encompass one or more myths and a combination of myths and didactic units.

one wonders how much the obvious stylistic intertextuality of the didactic material limits or broadens its audience. This stylistic difference is fundamental in the Mahābhārata[11]—less so in the Rāmāyaṇa—but it is still not well understood and is derided as literature when it is really one of the fundamental distinguishing features of much Sanskrit literature.

Generic Forms

Sanskrit and Pāli literature by the time of the Mahābhārata already knows of many different generic forms as outlined carefully already by Horsch.[12] I do not want to enter the question of whether the Mahābhārata as a whole is consistent with the sense of itihāsa, but will be content to say that many old generic names commonly enough occur in the Mahābhārata and in the Msp itself. That they occur in the Msp is not surprising, the important consideration being how they combine to create a larger whole and what as individual forms they might have contributed to the whole. A list of them illustrates the variety of names used to cover different forms of recitation: *upamā*[13] (181.33), *māhātmya* (182.1; 196.2, 6; 206.32), *gīta* (184.1), *caritam* (185.1), *purāṇam ... ākhyānam* (185.53; similar is 189.14), *kathā* (186.11; 192.3), *vicitra* (188.7), *anubhūtam* (191.26), *ākhyānam* (192.6; 195.40; 206.33), *prakaraṇaṃ* (196.21), *itihāsaṃ purātanam* (207.6), and *vaṃśaḥ* (213.1). In addition, one chapter also contains a significant number of *subhāṣitas*, even though that term is not explicitly used.

   Of these only māhātmya, carita, ākhyāna, kathā, prakaraṇa, itihāsa, and vaṃśa can be regarded as terms indicative of formal genres. It is difficult to know what to make of upamā, vicitra, and anubhūta, and gīta here simply means what was recited by Sarasvatī—it is not a gītā in the more formal sense. Of these four words upamā is well known in poetics as designating a simile, but it cannot mean this here. I take the sentence where it occurs as meaning: "There is this explanatory statement about this, best of speakers,"[14] where the context tells of whether men acquire things through fate, chance or their own actions, and Mārkaṇḍeya goes on to illustrate this and expand it in verse form. Van Buitenen (p. 576) translates upamā as parable, but it is really a statement

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11   See also Adam Bowles, Dharma, *Disorder and the Political in Ancient India. The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007).

12   P. Horsch, *Die vedische Gathā-und Śloka-Literatur* (Bern: Fancke, 1966).

13   This term is not mentioned in Horsch.

14   imām atropamāṃ cāpi nibodha vadatāṃ vara | (Mahābhārata 3.181.33ab)

that fills out the details of an elliptical verse. Vicitrāṇi, on the other hand seems, to refer to the tone of what Mārkaṇḍeya has been reciting and Yudhiṣṭhira says, "Speak about this in detail as you are speaking about various strange things."[15] Anubhūta, on the other hand, refers to what Mārkaṇḍeya has directly experienced and is rather a qualification as to why his descriptions carry so much weight. It occurs three times and always to past events:

1.   "All that happened before occurred before your eyes, therefore we want to hear your tale (kathā) complete with all the causes. Because it has been experienced (anubhūtaṃ) by you alone many times, best of brahmans. There is nothing ever unknown to you in all the worlds"(186.11–12).[16] Kathā is the generic form and anubhūta the reason why he is able to tell the kathā.

2.   "As such, these paths of transmigration in their multiplicity have been seen and experienced (*dṛṣṭāś caivānubhūtāś*) by me who is long-lived and I have told you of them"(189.15).[17] Again both anubhūta and dṛṣṭa occur together with *kath* as a verb, but the use of the two past passive participles seems to be indicating that Mārkaṇḍeya has not just experienced what he has seen but that his encounter with it has been personal and possibly emotional.

3.   "This is what I, long-lived, experienced and saw (*mayānubhūtaṃ ... dṛṣṭam*)"(196.26A),[18] he said to the Pāṇḍavas, when speaking about which creature might have been older than he.

Excluding these four, it is necessary to determine whether the others are used randomly, and even if they are, whether they create an actual generic frame providing guidance to a possible mode of interpretation by reader/hearers. If this is so it must rest on the fact that these were already established historical genres, implying a well-educated audience. Even for those who were not

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15   vistareṇa mune brūhi vicitrāṇīha bhāṣase || (Mahābhārata 3.188.7cd)
     Does he really consider these individual tales to be strange/colorful or is *vicitrāṇi* included here because it alliterates with *vistareṇa*?

16   etat pratyakṣataḥ sarvaṃ pūrvavṛttaṃ dvijottama |
     tasmād icchāmahe śrotuṃ sarvahetvātmikāṃ kathām ||
     anubhūtaṃ hi bahuśas tvayaikena dvijottama |
     na te 'sty aviditaṃ kiṃ cit sarvalokeṣu nityadā || (Mahābhārata 3.186.11–12)

17   evaṃ saṃsāramārgā me bahuśaś cirajīvinā |
     dṛṣṭāś caivānubhūtāś ca tāṃs te kathitavān aham || (Mahābhārata 3.189.15)

18   etan mayānubhūtaṃ cirajīvinā dṛṣṭam iti pāṇḍavān uvāca mārkaṇḍeyaḥ |. Cf. also in different contexts: Mahābhārata 12.340.9cd–10ab; 14.92.20cd–21.

sophisticated interpreters of these texts there are many clues given as to how they should be read and in the case of the Msp these remain close to the actual contents of the text. Yet there may still be a contrast between content of text and generic type, even where there will be a constancy in use of meter, and where the only real stylistic distinction to be drawn will be between didactic and narrative. Of course, both of these do perform an educative function, and an entertainment function, though differing considerably by scale of degree.

Combinatoric Devices in the Mārkaṇḍeyasamāsyāparvan

Much of the speech activity knitting together the individual chapters and adhyāyas involves question and answer, and provides guidelines for how the relevant passage should be understood. I have tried to trace them sequentially through the Msp, and although it begins at chapter 179, Mārkaṇḍeya's monologue only really begins at the end of 180.43, where Kṛṣṇa speaks on behalf of the brahmans and the Pāṇḍavas, Draupadī, Satyabhāmā and himself, requesting to hear some tales of the past. This gives rise to a more formal request establishing the contents to be addressed: "Tell us the holy tales of the past (*purāvṛttāḥ kathāḥ puṇyāḥ*)—which are about good conduct, which are everlasting—of good kings, women, and seers, Mārkaṇḍeya" (180.43; Van Buitenen, p. 574 modified).[19] Whilst kings, sages, and women are present in all components of the Msp, this categorization is obviously too broad really to function as anything other than a general guideline. Moreover, what part of the Mahābhārata, with the possible exception of the battle books, would lack these three types of characters?

Nārada then arrives and in 181,1ff. Yudhiṣṭhira repeats the question, slightly altering the topics: "The Pāṇḍava, king of the Kurus, observing that the great hermit was willing to speak, urged him so that he might begin the tales: 'Sir, forever have you known the exploits of all the deities, Daityas, great-spirited seers, and wise kings'"[20] (181.1–2; Van Buitenen, p. 574). Two generic terms *kathā* and *carita* are used, consistent with what one would expect of narratives employed in telling about the categories of actors mentioned in verse 2. In

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19   purāvṛttāḥ kathāḥ puṇyāḥ sadācārāḥ sanātanāḥ |
       rājñāṃ strīṇām ṛṣīṇāṃ ca mārkaṇḍeya vicakṣva naḥ ||.

20   taṃ vivakṣantam ālakṣya kururājo mahāmunim |
       kathāsaṃjananārthāya codayāmāsa pāṇḍavaḥ ||
       bhavān daivatadaityānāṃ ṛṣīṇāṃ ca mahātmanām |
       rājarṣīṇāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ caritajñaḥ sanātanaḥ ||.

both cases Mārkaṇḍeya will be telling tales about the deeds/actions of gods, demons, sages, and royal sages. But surprisingly, Yudhiṣṭhira narrows the narrative direction by asking him to speak about karma and this is prefaced by no formal generic category, though it does tie perfectly in with Kṛṣṇa's own reflections (chapter 180) on the injustice of the preceding events. From verses 5–8 Yudhiṣṭhira asks in systematic but straightforward terms about the workings of yoga, and then Mārkaṇḍeya, in a manner found often in this kind of literature commends him for the quality of the question: "This extra question is truly fitting for you, eloquent speaker. You know what must be known and you are asking again to seek confirmation" (181.9).[21] Both *anupraśna* and *sthityartham* are not common in the Mahābhārata, but on the only other occasion where sthityartham is found,[22] it is the object of *anu/pṛcch*. I take it that Mārkaṇḍeya knows that Yudhiṣṭhira has a cultivated knowledge of what he is asking for, but is seeking for somebody with prodigious learning to confirm its validity. As such I regard this as contributing to the discourse rather than functioning as the introduction of a new generic category, though it would certainly be allowable to frame the response using a kathā or an ākhyāna, for example.

The remainder of this chapter embeds systematic homiletic material into mythic narrative and vice versa. Verses 11–20 provide a brief, entirely descriptive (there is no dialogue), narrative of a typical decline story where people who were originally near perfect, become imperfect because of their subjection to various desires. Mārkaṇḍeya ties this back to Yudhiṣṭhira's initial question when he says: "Kaunteya, a dead man's course here is governed by his own acts done here. Where does the treasure of acts stay of both the wise and the foolish, and from whence does he recover his good or ill-done deeds? That was what you were considering, now hear the response"(181.21–22c; Van Buitenen, p. 575 modified).[23] This is a dialogical marker also functioning as a boundary marker between Mārkaṇḍeya's narrative description and his more homiletic presentation of the correct and incorrect understanding of karma that follows (181.23–32), virtually in list form, and drawing on the opinion of the wise and the learned to give it further justification. But this is not enough, for Mārkaṇḍeya then proposes to give an upamā, which must be taken as an

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21   tvadyukto 'yam anupraśno yathāvad vadatāṃ vara |
        viditaṃ veditavyaṃ te sthityartham anupṛcchasi ||
        For other instances of anupraśna see Mahābhārata 3.229.9cd–10ab; 12.128.7; 13.45.8;
        13.118.5.
22   See Mahābhārata 12.265.2ab: viditāḥ sarvadharmās te sthityartham anupṛcchasi | .
23   iti te darśanaṃ yac ca tatrāpy anunayaṃ śṛṇu || (Mahābhārata 3.181.22cd)
        I note that *anunaya* in this meaning seems not to occur elsewhere in the Mahābhārata.

additional illustrative example of a kind found in both Buddhist and Hindu literature. The actual example is begun by a catuṣkoṭi given in śloka meter (181.34), followed by four verses in triṣṭubh (181.35–38) expanding the four theses of the catuṣkoti and then three more triṣṭubh verses predicting the Pāṇḍavas' fate to do great deeds on the Earth and attainment of the highest heaven afterwards. In short Yudhiṣṭhira asks a question, which establishes a proposition, Mārkaṇḍeya praises the question, then tells a short narrative explaining the present state of mankind, following this by true and false understandings of karma. He then gives four likely outcomes of specific forms of karma, and finally, relates this directly back to the Pāṇḍavas' present situation.

This finishes with no formal marker, though the predictive nature of verse 41 might function effectively as a conclusion. However, there seems little immediate continuity between chapter 181 and the following chapter, which begins a *brāhmaṇamāhātmya*.[24] This is the first of the narratives contained in an actual generic form, the *māhātmya*, and it is requested by the Pāṇḍavas as a group, not just by Yudhiṣṭhira. As māhātmya explicitly evokes the sense of "greatness, glorification, magnification of qualities" it is to be expected that it will describe the special qualities of brahmans and this is what it does. The ensuing narrative encompasses one short kathā (though that word is not used) about a king who thought he had killed a brahman, but was astonished when he went to the hermitage of Tārkṣya Ariṣṭanemi, and saw that the apparently dead brahman had been raised from the dead. Tārkṣya explains why this could happen and then offers three (182.17–19) didactic verses each ending in the refrain: "therefore, we have no fear of death" (*tasmān mṛtyubhayaṃ na naḥ*). Their content relates to the purity of brahmans buttressed by constant observance of their own dharma. Here there is an appropriate conclusion to the adhyāya and the narrative plot, as the kṣatriyas return to their own region, but no formal conclusion is provided.

Now that the subject of brahmans has been broached it can continue and the beginning of chapter 183 does this formally when in verse 1 it says: "Hear some more from me about the greatness (*māhātmyaṃ*) of the brahmans." The ensuing short narrative presents a conflict about the sacrifice between Gautama and Atri, but it is resolved in the latter's favor when he rehearses the constant refrain that the brahmans and the kṣatriyas are allied with each other. It ends with no formal conclusion, but at the logical end of the narrative where we are told that on receiving wealth from the king, "Pleased, the self-controlled brahman gave this wealth to his sons, resolved on austerity, and departed for the woods" (183.32; Van Buitenen, p. 579).

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24   māhātmyaṃ dvijamukhyānāṃ śrotum icchāma kathyatām || (Mahābhārata 3.182.1cd)

In chapter 184 there is now an apparent continuation of the brāhmaṇa-māhātmya where Mārkaṇḍeya tells how Tārkṣya asked some questions of Sarasvatī, who chanted (gītā) a response in triṣṭubh. I do not take gītā here as referring to a generic term, but the use of triṣṭubh is surely significant for emphasis and signaling a change to homiletic style pronouncements. It begins with the question:

> "What, good lady, is best for a man here on earth?
> What way should he act so that he does not stray from his Law?
> Pray tell me everything, woman of beautiful limbs:
> Instructed by you I won't stray from my law." (184.2; Van Buitenen, modi-
>   fied p. 580)

This becomes a pivotal verse in allowing Sarasvatī to expatiate on what are the correct forms of behavior that will lead to the acquisition of *śreyas*, but in some ways it is quite conservative as it recommends performance of the *agnihotra* and is utterly steeped in brāhmaṇical imagery. Yet it also foreshadows the powerful theme of adherence to one's own class dharma, something that will be rehearsed often in the next eleven chapters. The fear of falling from one's own svadharma is raised again directly at 189.20[25] by Yudhiṣṭhira after he has already been given a full set of teachings on it, and it may be implied near the end of the Msp when (209.12) Agni is said never to fall away in terms of renown, brightness and splendor. It is all the more important because Sarasvatī, goddess of wisdom has given the teachings about svadharma in this chapter, thus helping to build up a sense of authority already established by Mārkaṇḍeya himself.

The chapter simply concludes with a statement that the worship of the gods in the sacrifice is the *padaṃ paramam* (184.25), not a formal conclusion, but fully appropriate to the context. But the next chapter appears to break the narrative sequence completely, yet is still in the māhātmya since it has not yet been formally completed. Yudhiṣṭhira simply asks to hear of the caritam of Manu Vaivasvata (185.1). I take caritam as a formal genre because it gives specific guidance to the reader/hearer in respect of what might follow. Yet the māhātmya is broken up by the caritam (also called *purāṇa* in verse 53) of Manu (185) which is a creation myth detailing the recreation of the Earth after a huge flood, where Brahmā (185.48) and Manu (49) are brought together as the agents of the creation. Both figures imply a primacy of brāhmaṇical values such that

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25   kasmin dharme mayā stheyaṃ prajāḥ saṃrakṣatā mune |
      kathaṃ ca vartamāno vai na cyaveyaṃ svadharmataḥ ||.

this myth can still form a coherent part of these chapters explicitly dealing with the obligations kings must observe towards brahmans. But it also is another explicit sign of Mārkaṇḍeya's great antiquity and his authority as a teacher. A *phalaśruti* concludes (185.54) this chapter, formally separating it from what follows, but there is a clear thematic continuity, even repetition, between 185 and 186–189 even if the content of the latter eventually shifts away considerably from what is found in the former.

There is a formal ending here, naming (185.53) the source of the tale as relating to the fish,[26] declaring it to be an ancient narrative (*ākhyānam*) and then including a final verse which is a phalaśruti. In that sense this whole chapter is bounded by a formal beginning and ending, fitting for a separate generic piece, even one included in a larger generic space. This enables Yudhiṣṭhira to ask once more (*tataḥ sa punar evātha prapraccha*; 186.1) what is a related question. He reiterates over ten verses that Mārkaṇḍeya alone has the proper credentials for describing the destruction and recreation of the Earth. All this is summed up when he says: "All that happened before your eyes, therefore we want to hear your tale covering the causes of everything (*sarvahetvātmikāṃ kathām*). Because it has been experienced by you alone many times, best of brahmans. There is nothing ever unknown to you in all the worlds"[27] (186.11–12). A certain uniqueness about Mārkaṇḍeya is stressed in Yudhiṣṭhira's affirmation to him when he says "You alone (*tvam eva*) attend upon Brahmā ... (186.3)," "You alone (*tvam eva*) see the beings being created ... (186.4)," "You alone (*tvam ekaḥ*) attend upon Brahmā" (186.10), and "Because it has been experienced by you alone (*tvayaikena*) ..." (186.12). Then follows a description of the decline in behavioral standards during the yugas, a preface to the wonderful narrative of the decline of the yugas and the pralaya, where Viṣṇu appears on the ocean as a child. It is a long section of about 170 verses, crosses two chapters, and could be described as autobiographical to the extent that Mārkaṇḍeya himself has entered the narrated action, shown by the several conversations he has with Nārāyaṇa as a child within a well-known initiatory frame. Chapter 187, lines 50–55 is a stotra and forms a concluding function to these two chapters. Though they depict Mārkaṇḍeya in a condition beyond time, the last two verses of 187 bring him back to the present situation: "On seeing this tiger of the Vṛṣṇis this

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26   I do not want to enter the vexed question of whether some kind of Matsyapurāṇa (*mātsyakaṃ nāma purāṇaṃ*) is the subject of this reference.

27   etat pratyakṣataḥ sarvaṃ pūrvavṛttaṃ dvijottama |
      tasmād icchāmahe śrotuṃ sarvahetvātmikāṃ kathām ||
      anubhūtaṃ hi bahuśas tvayaikena dvijottama |
      na te 'sty aviditaṃ kiṃ cit sarvalokeṣu nityadā ||.

memory came to me about this primordial god, the unborn, Viṣṇu, the Man who wears the yellow robe. He is the killer of Madhu, father and mother of all beings. Bulls of the Kauravas, go to him for refuge as he is conducive to being approached for refuge" (187.54–55).

Such a statement functions as an easily recognizable conclusion to the narrated action, telling us that Mārkaṇḍeya's primordial encounter with Nārāyaṇa works as an argument as to why the Pāṇḍavas must treat Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu. It is both theological and devotional. It has its correlative response in 188.1–2 where the Pāṇḍavas bow to Kṛṣṇa, who correctly acknowledges them in turn. But this is a pretext for changing the direction of the narrative without the need for a new generic category to be introduced. As it happens we have not formally left the *māhātmya* of the brahmans, but there has been a radical shift in content with the revelation of Kṛṣṇa's true status. It continues in 188.3 where Yudhiṣṭhira makes the general request of asking Mārkaṇḍeya about the future course of the world under his sovereignty, where I take this as meaning Kṛṣṇa's sovereignty. This gives rise to some very specific questions (188.4–7) about the Kaliyuga and the transition to the Kṛtayuga, once more giving appropriate guidance to what narrated action will be communicated. Beginning at 188.9, it continues through until 189.15, with verses 14–15 functioning as a concluding statement: "I have declared to you all that is past and future, as I remember the Lore, lauded by the seers, that was promulgated by the Wind God. Long-lived as I am, I have also witnessed and experienced the pathways of transmigration and I have told them to you" (189.14–15, Van Buitenen, p.598).[28] Van Buitenen renders *purāṇa* as "Lore," possibly implying a generic category, as it was spoken by Vāyu. The use of *ākhyātam* as a verb here must also be significant given the importance of ākhyāna as a generic type in the Mahābhārata and much earlier. At the least we are presented with a definite conclusion to what has been a lengthy selection of verses dealing with the four yugas. Then follows a brief interlude dealing with dharma: "Unflappable man, you and your brothers must hear still more of my words so that you will be free from doubts about the Law."[29]

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28   etat te sarvam ākhyātam atītānāgataṃ mayā |
      vāyuproktam anusmṛtya purāṇaṃ ṛṣisaṃstutam ||
      evaṃ saṃsāramārgā me bahuśaś cirajīvinā |
      dṛṣṭāś caivānubhūtāś ca tāṃs te kathitavān aham ||.

29   idaṃ caivāparaṃ bhūyaḥ saha bhrātṛbhir acyuta |
      dharmasaṃśayamokṣārthaṃ nibodha vacanaṃ mama ||
      The translation "unflappable man" for *acyuta* may be free, but I think it resonates with those other places where Yudhiṣṭhira expresses a strong desire not to fall (*cyu*) away from his own dharmic duty. See also 191.2B.

There follows only a few verses about the benefits of observing the Law and then Yudhiṣṭhira breaks in again, asking of his duties as a king: "In what Law should I stand for protecting my subjects, sage? And how should I live (*vartamāno*) and not fall away from my own Law?"[30] (189.20). We might suggest that this is a personal lesson to Yudhiṣṭhira alone after the detailed narrative of the yugas where dharma is dramatically overturned and confusion reigns, but no doubt he has heard it all before. It evokes the theme of falling away (*na cyaveyaṃ*) from his own Law, doubts about which pervade his whole career. It is also a pep talk (21–27) for Yudhiṣṭhira, who duly acknowledges it (28–29), before the discourse moves back to the primary interlocutor Vaiśaṃpāyana who describes the positive reaction to Mārkaṇḍeya's speech, and then informs us that they have heard a kathā: "Then after they had heard that auspicious tale of the wise Mārkaṇḍeya, they were astonished at the communication of the primordial tale"[31] (189.31).

This sets the scene for a new subject to be introduced if so desired, and Yudhiṣṭhira gives the lead, when he asks, "Please speak still further about the exalted status of the brahmans (*brāhmaṇamahābhāgyaṃ*)" (190.1A). This enables Mārkaṇḍeya to narrate the story of a king, Parikṣit who marries the daughter of the king of frogs, and ends up in conflict with the king until the latter resolves this conflict (190.42). Continuing straight on from this is a tale of one of the descendents of Parikṣit and the frog-king's daughter, a certain King Śala who ends up in a conflict with a brahman sage, Vāmadeva, over some horses he has borrowed from the brahman and refuses to return. Only after some examples of the brahman's psychic powers does he return the horses in deference to this power, an example of the brahman's *mahābhāgya*. Mārkaṇḍeya finishes this off by simply stating that the king's wife returned the horses to the hermit and he, in turn, agreed to have a high regard for the king.

Now in 191.1 all the Pāṇḍavas change the subject dramatically by asking Mārkaṇḍeya if anybody is older than him. His response involves a short adhyāya which is really about a king Indrayumna who fell from heaven because he had exhausted his good karma (*kṣīṇapuṇyas tridivāt pracyutaḥ*; 3.191.2B) and how Mārkaṇḍeya had him sent back to heaven when a tortoise recognized a good action he had done. Embedded in the middle are three ślokas in didactic style urging people to good works, and as such taking us back to the themes of Ch.182.

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30   kasmin dharme mayā stheyaṃ prajāḥ saṃrakṣatā mune |
      kathaṃ ca vartamāno vai na cyaveyaṃ svadharmataḥ ||.

31   tathā kathāṃ śubhāṃ śrutvā mārkaṇḍeyasya dhīmataḥ |
      vismitāḥ samapadyanta purāṇasya nivedanāt ||.

Next Yudhiṣṭhira returns to the interlocutory function declaring that Mārkaṇḍeya knows various vaṃśas: "Knower of the Law, you know the gods, the demons, and the rākṣasas, the various lineages (*vaṃśa*) of kings and the eternal lineages of the sages. Nothing in this world is unknown to you. You know the divine tale (*kathā*) of rakṣas, snakes, and humans, sage" (192.2–3).[32] This is the pretext to Yudhiṣṭhira requesting why an Īkṣvāku king named Kuvalāśva became called Dhundhumāra, a question encompassing both lineage and the royally sanctioned killing of demonic figures. Mārkaṇḍeya responds by saying: "Look here, I will tell you. Listen, King Yudhiṣṭhira. Hear this narrative of Dhundhumāra as it relates to the Law" (192.6).[33] And then he repeats the question Yudhiṣṭhira has asked. This shows the obvious, that kathā and ākhyāna were interchangeable categories, but that vaṃśa mentioned earlier offers still further specificity to these categories. Now follows five chapters in which the kathā/ākhyāna is told, illustrating how the king protects the ascetic Utaṅka, who lives in his kingdom, from a demonic figure named Dhundhu. And as befitting a separate kathā/ākhyāna, it is concluded with a phalaśruti: "Whichever man hears this meritorious tale (*puṇyam ākhyānaṃ*), a narrative in praise (*samanukīrtanam*) of Viṣṇu, will become one who is the soul of the Law and will have sons. If he hears it on the moon-phase days he becomes long-lived and resolute, and free of sickness he experiences no fear whatever of danger" (195.38–39).

As such a completely new narrative is to be commenced as a phalaśruti always operates as a formal conclusion. It clears the way for a lengthy narrative running from chapters 196–206, operating as a simple plot mixed with a considerable amount of homiletic material. Then, "The best of the Bharatas asked an extremely difficult question about the law. Illustrious man, I want to hear this superb greatness of women, as you describe it and the truth about the subtlety of the Law" (196.1cd–2).[34] And this is further elaborated in 5cd–6ab, "To me the obedience of a woman faithful to her husband seems extremely difficult, so you should tell me of the greatness of women devoted to their hus-

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32   viditās tava dharmajña devadānavarākṣasāḥ |
      rājavaṃśāś ca vividhā ṛṣivaṃśāś ca śāśvatāḥ ||
      na te 'sty aviditaṃ kiṃ cid asmiṃl loke dvijottama |
      kathāṃ vetsi mune divyāṃ manuṣyoragarakṣasām ||.

33   hanta te kathayiṣyāmi śṛṇu rājan yudhiṣṭhira |
      dharmiṣṭham idam ākhyānaṃ dhundhumārasya tac chṛṇu ||.

34   papraccha bharataśreṣṭho dharmapraśnaṃ sudurvacam ||
      śrotum icchāmi bhagavan strīṇāṃ māhātmyam uttamam |
      kathyamānaṃ tvayā vipra sūkṣmaṃ dharmaṃ ca tattvataḥ ||.

band, Lord." (196.5cd–6ab)[35] This is the pretext, which continues until verse 13, for a lengthy telling of the famous tale about an irascible brahman named Kauśika who ends up being given a detailed teaching about dharma from a woman and then from a pious seller of meat who had been a brahman in a previous life. Mārkaṇḍeya only begins telling it in chapter 197, taking another seven verses to confirm the difficulty of the problem Yudhiṣṭhira has raised and finishing with a verse seemingly indicating to Yudhiṣṭhira that he is dealing with a formal shift in subject: "In respect of this subject (*prakaraṇaṃ*) King Yudhiṣṭhira, concentrate and hear the constant law of wives who are loyal to their husbands" (196.21). Prakaraṇam comes to mean "chapter, treatise" in later Sanskrit literature, but I would not want to take it in this mode here, rather it is simply a precise re-affirmation of the subject that is to be addressed.

   This lengthy narrative finishes at the end of 206 and each of the adhyāyas simply breaks up in the middle of a series of sequential actions or where a particular didactic item has come to its logical conclusion. In all of the chapters following 197 the brahman and the seller of meat engage in a dialogue where the brahman asks questions pushing along the narrative. Yet another interlocutory level is created, but there are constant reminders throughout these chapters that Yudhiṣṭhira and Mārkaṇḍeya are still the primary episodic interlocutors. Each chapter concludes with an explanation, leading onto the development of a new subject in the next chapter, but all relate to the problem of the interpretation of svadharma. Mārkaṇḍeya summarizes the whole thing at the end in six verses, of which the first two bring to a close the dialogue between the brahman and the seller of meat and the final three close off this section of the Msp:

> "All this has been narrated to you in its entirety, Yudhiṣṭhira, that which you asked concerning the Law, son, best of the upholders of the Law, and the greatness of the loyal wife and of the brahman, excellent man, and of the obedience towards the mother and father and the Law as proclaimed in the figure of the hunter."
> Yudhiṣṭhira said,
> "O brahman, this extraordinary, superb, narrative about the Law (*dharmākhyānam*), was narrated by you, best of the upholders of all the laws, excellent brahman." (206.31–33)[36]

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35   pativratānāṃ śuśrūṣā duṣkarā pratibhāti me || (Mahābhārata 3.196.5cd)
     pativratānāṃ māhātmyaṃ vaktum arhasi naḥ prabho || (Mahābhārata 3.196.6ab)
36   etat te sarvam ākhyātaṃ nikhilena yudhiṣṭhira |
     pṛṣṭavān asi yaṃ tāta dharmaṃ dharmabhṛtāṃ vara ||

And he goes on to say that "I am still not satiated, illustrious man, hearing about the supreme Law" (206.34cd).[37] Which may imply that the following, and final, long narrative will be about the Law as well.

This it may be, yet it is not explicitly so. The first verse (207.1ab)[38] simply reiterates what is said at the end of 206, alternating kathā for ākhyāna. Perhaps implying a connecting link to the previous chapter, Yudhiṣṭhira then goes on to ask his questions. These cover two elements: why did Agni go the forest and when he had gone why did Aṅgiras carry the sacrificial offerings to the gods, with the subquestion of why, when Agni is one, does he become many in different rites? The second question relates to the birth of Skanda from the Kṛttikās. Both function in the manner of an anukramaṇikā, not dissimilar to 3.182.2, the verses foreshadowing the broad topics of the Msp, but much more specific. In the remainder of chapter 207 Mārkaṇḍeya relates why Agni disappeared into the forest and how Aṅgiras was required to take over his role, and in the last verse spells out his intention precisely: "I am going to declare the various kinds of very splendid fires as they are named in the Brāhmaṇas according to the many sacrifices and in their multiplicity" (207.20).[39] The subsequent six chapters describe these fires in terms of vaṃśa as a generic form, a series of lists with specific elaborations. There is a formal conclusion at the end of chapter 212 to these vaṃśa chapters: "Such is the very great lineage (*vaṃśaḥ*) of fires which I have recited (*kīrtito*). When purified by different mantras it carries the offering of people." Mārkaṇḍeya said, "The various lineages of fires was recited by me, faultless man. But hear, descendant of Kuru, about the birth of the wise Kārttikeya" (212.30–213.1; Van Buitenen, p. 646).[40] Though this kind of repetition occurs elsewhere in the Msp, here it seems designed to precisely separate the two components of these fifteen chapters. There is also a systematic structuring of the six chapters of 207–212 where specific chapters are

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       pativratāyā māhātmyaṃ brāhmaṇasya ca sattama |
       mātāpitroś ca śuśrūṣā vyādhe dharmaś ca kīrtitaḥ ||
       yudhiṣṭhira uvāca atyadbhutam idaṃ brahman dharmākhyānam anuttamam |
       sarvadharmabhṛtāṃ śreṣṭha kathitaṃ dvijasattama ||.

37   na hi tṛpto 'smi bhagavañ śṛṇvāno dharmam uttamam ||.

38   śrutvemāṃ dharmasaṃyuktāṃ dharmarājaḥ kathāṃ śubhām | .

39   atra nānāvidhān agnīn pravakṣyāmi mahāprabhān |
       karmabhir bahubhiḥ khyātān nānātvaṃ brāhmaṇeṣv iha ||.

40   ity eṣa vaṃśaḥ sumahān agnīnāṃ kīrtito mayā |
       pāvito vividhair mantrair havyaṃ vahati dehinām ||
       mārkaṇḍeya uvāca agnīnāṃ vividho vaṃśaḥ kīrtitas te mayānagha |
       śṛṇu janma tu kauravya kārttikeyasya dhīmataḥ ||.

organized in terms of particular lineages deriving from particular men and two women.

For the next three chapters the birth of Skanda is narrated with the plot sequence proceeding smoothly across these chapters. And finally at the end of 221 there occurs a phalaśruti signalling a formal ending to this section: "Who, when fully concentrated, cites this birth of Skanda, attains prosperity here and then goes to Skanda's world" (221.80). This story of Skanda extends for nine chapters and uses Skanda's birth, appointment to the position of general of the gods and his defeat of Mahiṣa as the armature crossing the entire nine chapters, providing them with thematic cohesion. But within the individual chapters it is arguable that there are also some more instances of vaṃśa to be found, associated with Skanda but also potentially independent of him as well. Yet they are not vaṃśas in the vertical sense, rather they are descriptions of Skanda's companions (217) and his six mothers who become snatchers of foetuses (219) and such are classificatory in terms of present time rather than of temporal sequentiality.

Thematic Continuities across the Msp

As an hermeneutical procedure there is a strong tendency to find an architectonic frame that allows a global interpretation of the Mahābhārata, and descending from it as the interpretative archetype to its smaller episodes like some of the individual upākhyānas and parvans such as the Msp. Madeleine Biardeau's name[41] is best associated with this and there is a natural tendency to find semantic- and plot-based continuities reaching across the entire text. Similarly, I have scoured the Msp to see if such an architectonic frame can be found. That is a different task from locating the combinatoric principles integrating the parts, as arguably that might only operate on the surface of the text, yet we can hope to find some clues as to an architectonic frame of meaning and content in the questions and answers associated with the combinatoric principles. Clues to this are obviously given in continuity of themes throughout the Msp and the extent to which they correlate with the interlocutors' questions

and answers. Biardeau, I suspect is correct in saying, "Il ne semble pas possible d'aligner ces chapitres (depuis III, 182) comme s'ils étaient simplement juxta-poses au hazard des questions suscitées par la curiosité de Yudhiṣṭhira."[42] But what are the thematic principles of alignment?

To begin with it is necessary to return to the anukramaṇikā-type listing at 180.43: "Tell us the holy tales of the past—which are about good conduct, which are everlasting—of good kings, women and seers, Mārkaṇḍeya." As so often in early Sanskrit literature the past is definitely a model for the present and Kṛṣṇa is asking that Mārkaṇḍeya tell them of good conduct authenticated because it is in some measure beyond time in the sense that it is eternal, and classified by means of three fundamental categories of actors: kings, women, and sages. This good conduct is directed towards the Pāṇḍavas and especially Yudhiṣṭhira, the main recipient of the teachings, in part because he is such a fragmented character. Besides the three categories of characters listed here, the kathās have three qualities attached to them: they refer to what has happened in the past (purāvṛttāḥ), they are concerned with communicating good conduct (sadācārāḥ)[43] and they are everlasting (sanātanāḥ). I take "good conduct" as being the dominant descriptor here because so much that follows in the Msp is about ācāra, a concept relating to dharma, and though denoting a very broad sense of conduct, correlates directly with the dilemma in which Yudhiṣṭhira always finds himself: to act or not to act. The word ācāra occurs thirty-two times in the Msp, overwhelmingly in chapter 198 in the discussion between the seller of meat and the irascible brahman, yet it is definitely a pivotal sub-text of the Msp.

What is significant here because of its absence is the category of the brahman. The status of the brahman and his responsibility in regard to dharma is the preoccupation of about two thirds of the Msp, yet it is not mentioned in Yudhiṣṭhira's question, unless the category ṛṣis is meant to include brahmans. I am uncertain why it should be omitted from his question, unless the brahman is regarded as a marked category in the Mahābhārata and so requires no extra mention in its different parvans. If we accept as a valid measure words designating brahmans a statistical count shows that they are by far the most

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42   M. Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata, Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 632–33.

43   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 640, fn. 13 associates *sadācāra* with the Manusmṛti and notes that "Contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait croire, la notion de sadācāra employée par Manu est strictement applicable au seul brāhmane et sert de modèle aux brāhmanes moins 'éduqués'. Le chasseur [of Msp 207–12] se l'approprie comme modèle."

common in chapters 197–201, the heart of the instruction to the brahman by the seller of meat.

Within this broad framework of topics listed in 180.43 it is Yudhiṣṭhira who goes on primarily to drive the narrative by the specific questions he puts to Mārkaṇḍeya, questions not seemingly reflecting his immediate concerns, but perhaps building up a larger image of his character through repetition. Yet it is broader than this and Biardeau is right in saying that: "Ce qu'il faut maintenant aux Pāṇḍava, c'est une "vision" de leur destin, la possibilitē de concevoir leur place en ce monde, la nature du devakārya dont ils sont chargées."[44] That is, it concerns the future. But there does not always seem to be a discernible thematic continuity flowing between the episodes—suggesting a sense of autonomy associated with the individual episodes they introduce—that would create a practicable view of what might happen in the future. Yet going outside of this particular parvan does provide a context as the war has not yet begun, the Pāṇḍavas remain in the forest and Yudhiṣṭhira continues to look for direction. As such the initial question he asks after the anukramaṇikā may make full sense. It is about karma, a subject debated earlier in this very parvan, but now referred to again. Of course, it is really about the Pāṇḍavas' own karma and not so much about the potential future karma they may produce, but above all the vital need for them as potential kings to engage in activity. Yudhiṣṭhira's concern is that the evil Kauravas are doing well whilst the Pāṇḍavas, who do good, are languishing away in the forest. There is a learned disquisition about karma and then a final declaration that the Pāṇḍavas will go to heaven as a result of their acts (181.41). But the underlying theme is always the necessity for kings to act.

It is at the beginning of chapter 182 that the theme of the exalted nature of the brahman is introduced as a māhātmya, and arguably, on the basis of content, this māhātmya continues until the end of chapter 206 because narratives dealing with brahmans and kings dominate in its first half (190.192–95) and the education of a brahman by a lower class seller of meat the second half (198–206). Initially in chapter 182 the power of the brahmans is demonstrated in Tārkṣya Ariṣṭanemi's capacity to raise another brahman from the dead, but this power is connected to the brahmans' particular svadharma, exemplified from verses 17–19 where such qualities as knowing the truth, not engaging in falsehood, observing their own dharma, proclaiming the brahmans' auspicious (*kuśala*; 18) deeds and not speaking of their bad deeds, feeding guests and dependents and living in the lands of powerful people (*tejasvideśavāsāc*; 19c), are enumerated. This is one of a number of passages where (see also 197.31–39)

44   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata,* vol. 1, 633.

the brahman is depicted by listing a set of abstract categories, known widely from elsewhere in the Mahābhārata.

If all the Msp taught about brahmans was couched in the language of homilies it would not attract much attention. However, it moves far beyond this in developing its theme of brahmanic power, or undermining it, in two ways; firstly, it shows brahmans arguing with each other about their appropriate behavior; and, secondly, it presents one brahman being taught about his own dharma from two people of considerably lower status than himself. Both possibilities raise the question, fundamentally important throughout the Mahābhārata, as to how dharma and svadharma should be interpreted. The first is really only represented in chapter 183 and is somewhat obscure and ambiguous, but on close analysis it rehearses all of the problems about dharma and the appropriate brahman life-style that is further explored until the end of chapter 206.

It initially involves an internal conflict for Atri, a prominent traditional brahman, who expresses self-doubt as to whether he should be a worldly brahman or a brahman renouncer who dwells in the forest. To this extent we are told that he knew king Vainya was to perform a Horse sacrifice and "We heard that Atri set out to go to him to gain wealth (*vittārtham*). But then he was no longer happy with this because the splendid man saw the specificity of his law (*dharmavyaktinidarśanāt*), pondered and preferred the forest" (183.1ef–2). What this means is that he wanted to follow the path of the ascetic brahman, but when he suggested this to his wife she told him to get the money and then resort to the forest, that is to be an urban brahman, initially at least. This he decided to do but he expressed reservations, fearing that other brahmans who lived in the kingdom hated him and would spurn anything he said as being worthless (*nirarthakam*; 8d), even though it was *dharmakāmārthasaṃhitām.* He then went to the sacrifice and praised the king: "King Vainya, you are the Lord, you are the prime king on the Earth and the hosts of sages praise you. No one else than you knows the Law." But another sage was very angry and told him to shut up, whereupon Gautama gave an opposing view: "He who stands first of us here is great Indra, the Lord of creatures. Then Atri responded to Gautama, saying 'He [Vainya] is the Ordainer as much as is Indra, Lord of creatures'" (12ef–13cd). This led to Gautama accusing Atri of being deluded and only of praising Vainya in order to acquire prosperity: "You praise him, looking for prospertity (*abhyudayaprepsus*) on the basis of visiting him. You do not know the supreme Law (*paramaṃ dharmaṃ*) nor do you understand its application (*prayojanam*). You are a child, deluded, and yet in some way you have become venerable" (14cd–15).

This is a straight forward ad hominen attack but then Kaśyapa, described as *paramadharmātmā ... sarvadharmavit* arrives, wondering why they were debating loudly. Gautama (19ef) said: "Atri says that Vainya is the Organizer/ Disposer, but we are full of doubt about that." At this point they decide to visit Sanatkumāra, also a *dharmajña*, because he would resolve their doubt (20cd). He hears what they have to say then responds in words "redolent of the Law and wealth," saying "The brahmandom stands with warriorhood, and warrior- hood stands with brahmandom" (22ab). He follows this with a set of epithets describing the king, but indicating that he refers to the earthly king (*bhūpatir*, 23b). He adds that "Frightened of the absence of Law, the sages collectively place their strength in the martial power" (25cd), and that "Just as the sun in the sky drives away darkness amongst the gods by its fiery energy, so the king on the earth vigorously drives away what is not the Law. Then the primacy of the king was established by the evidence of the judgement of the learned trea- tises and the upper side succeeded, by which he was called the king" (26–27). At this point it is said the king was utterly delighted that his side won, indicat- ing that he accepted Atri's decision of him being the pre-eminent king and gave him all kinds of wealth. This Atri gave to his sons, then he decided to per- form austerities in the forest.

This narrative is seemingly insignificant in relation to some of the more spectacular content and visions found in some of the chapters that follow. Yet it raises all of the dominant themes in the Msp, except for those found in chap- ters 207–21 dealing with Skanda's birth. The words dharma and artha occur too frequently not to jump out immediately as highly significant, seventeen and seven times respectively, with another eight words designating wealth. And it seems to be a question of whether the brahman should aspire for artha or dharma, though the conclusion, where Atri finally goes to the forest, is that both wealth and dharma are acceptable as long as they are used in the appro- priate way. Whilst the conflict between Atri and Gautama remains unclear to me, it seems to turn on whether a brahman should be a complete renouncer or someone who lives in society performing rituals for the king, hence the formu- laic expression of the conjunction of brahmanic and royal power. Gautama seems to be arguing for the authority of a divine king (who, as the epithets sug- gest, is a combination of Brahmā and Indra), whereas Atri is more pragmatic, arguing for an earthly king.

The other important feature of the exchange is the very fact of a debate between two leading brahmans. Each is renowned for his knowledge of dharma, as are King Vainya and Sanatkumāra. Atri has located his own specific dharma, which his wife says is wrong, but he also fears that other ṛṣis will say it

is wrong, and eventually Gautama insults him when he accuses him of being deluded. It is the eternal sage Sanatkumāra who finally breaks the deadlock and the king, who is several times associated with dharma in no specific sense, accepts Atri's opinion, bolstered by Sanatkumāra's as to how a brahman and a king should relate. That is, though he is a *rājarṣi* and *dharmārthasaṃyuktaḥ* (183.6), and someone of whom the sages say: *tvad anyo nāsti dharmavit* (183.11), he accepts the judgements of the brahmans in spite of these sterling qualifications.

This chapter is pivotal in asserting three themes that will be thoroughly explored over the next twenty-three chapters: firstly, the brahmans' disagreements over the nature of dharma and, more specifically, of svadharma; secondly, the role of the brahman as interpreter of dharma and the king as its enforcer; thirdly, the role of low status people such as women in making contributions to the proper understanding of dharma. Collectively they question how sound are the received understandings of dharma, especially of svadharma, in the manner these have been taken up in the Mahābhārata, which attempts in so many places to throw light on the real difficulties involved in giving dharma a clear epistemological and pragmatic foundation. In this sense the Msp is being directed at both royalty and the brahman class, the latter of which had most to gain from a universalistic notion of dharma, but most responsibility in disseminating it.

Chapter 184 consolidates the view that the brahmans' status is based on the Vedas and the sacrifice, perhaps skirting over the vexed issue of interpreting the more complex understanding of dharma that only emerges in the Mahābhārata and post-Vedic literature. But then the narrative takes us into the myth (185) of Manu and the fish and and onto chapters 186–189, the famous *yugakṣaya* narratives where twice in 186 and 188 there is given a detailed description of the Kaliyuga and of its transformation into the Kṛtayuga. These have been well studied already by González-Reimann[45] so I need not go into them in any detail. It is the themes of the pralaya and Mārkaṇḍeya's transformation into a devotee of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa that dominate these chapters, yet, given that the

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[45]   L. González-Reimann, *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas: India's Great Epic Poem and the Hindu System of World Ages* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002). Writing of inconsistencies he finds in the yugakṣaya chapters he says, "Biardeau seems willing to pass over these and other contradictions for the sake of an elusive unity in the text, a unity that requires considering all chronological references to a larger mythological plot based on the need for the periodic appearance of Viṣṇu's avatāras." Ibid., 96. But the point for this article is that even if there are inconsistencies, as there seem to be, how do they fit together?

former is a brahman sage and the latter represents kṣatriya values, they still fall within the range of the larger context of the māhātmya of the brāhmaṇa. The lengthy narratives that follow are as much about Mārkaṇḍeya himself as about the cosmogony and the transformation of the world during the yugas. When he goes into detail there is much directly impinging on the status of brahmans in the "new" society, but told in a negative sense as an overthrow of brāhmaṇical values (186.25–28, 31, 33) and the mixing up of the classes in such a manner as to prevent the distinctiveness of each from being apparent. Kings (38) will refuse to uphold the status of brahmans, and brahmans will become false beggars (39), and so it goes on with a consistent statement of the reversal of normative relations, demonstrating a relationship between kings and brahmans quite the opposite of what is laid down in chapter 183 and a complete reversal of dharma, but not anarchy.

From 186.55–92 we are given a description of the pralaya and of Mārkaṇḍeya's vision of the amazing child sitting on the banyan tree, and his subsequent entry into his mouth. In 99–100 a description is given of the four classes engaged in their appropriate duties, a deliberate and sharp contrast with what is seen in the earlier verses where their status is completely ignored. Then for another fifty-one verses (186.100–129 and 187.1–22) brahmans are not mentioned, the content being taken up with a devotional dialogue. Then the yugakṣaya theme resumes from 188.14 and continues in a famous section, where brahmans are specifically referred to in verses 26, 41, 57–58, 60–61, 63, 64, 69–70, suggesting the declining socio-economic conditions in the world are essentially a reversal of the brāhmaṇical order held to be normative if not achievable. And this is reinforced in verses 85ff. describing the regeneration of the world from the brahmans onward (*dvijātipūrvako lokaḥ*), and goes onto describe how a brahman named Kalki Viṣṇuyaśas:

> ... will be born in the village Saṃbhala, in a pious brahman dwelling, and at his mere thought all vehicles, weapons, warriors, arms, and coats of mail will wait on him. He will be king, a Turner of the Wheel, triumphant by the Law, and he will bring this turbulent world to tranquility. That rising brahman, blazing, ending the destruction, noble-minded, will be the destruction of all and the revolver of the Eon. Surrounded by brahmans, that brahman will extirpate all the lowly barbarians, wherever they are." (188.90–93; Van Buitenen, p. 597)

In 189, 2 the defining features of the system are reestablished:

He will establish the good limits of behavior as laid down by the Self-born, and renowned and meritorious in his deeds he will take refuge in the forest in his old age. (189.16ce–18).

Brahmans are at the center of the cultural reconstruction that occurs at the beginning of the Kṛtayuga and this is the normative model, which is the obverse of the greater social and cultural complexity to which the composers and disseminators of the texts must have been constantly exposed. It is against a background of local power based in part on possession of economic resources, where class status was not necessarily an essential factor.

If the yugakṣaya chapters stress again the tight cooperation between the kṣatriyas and the brahmans, the devotional relationship developed between Mārkaṇḍeya and Nārāyana could also symbolize this if it is construed as an allusion to the avatāra doctrine. Biardeau suggests that when Mārkaṇḍeya sees the world inside of Nārāyaṇa's body, "Bref, tout est en ordre, tout est prêt pour une nouvelle naissance. Le monde est guéri de son adharma par l'habitation bien réglée en Nārāyaṇa."[46] And she adds later that "Nārāyaṇa s'identifie successivement aux différentes formes qu'il a prises dans les myths où il est question du sort de la terre ..."[47] This is most obvious in the brief narrative of Kalkin, but Biardeau also finds avatāric activity in the tale of Utaṅka and Dhundhumāra (192–95).[48]

But once it is accepted that limits of behavior[49] have to be established, the details of these limits must be defined in some detail and the mode by which they can be interpreted. Because in spite of, or perhaps because of, the vagueness of the normative role of the brahmans it was felt necessary to expose the limits of behavior and the difficulties in observing it in detail. The point is that the didacticism of the homiletic passages is too abstract to make sense to anyone who would continually witness the fluidity of social relations at village levels, even more complex in large urban conurbations. This difference between the homiletic abstractions and the much greater complexity of actual social life is the key to understanding what will follow in the remaining chapters dealing with brahmans. But there is also another important thematic development coming into play from chapters 190–206. That is the inviolability

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46   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata,* vol. 1, 603. See also Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 590–94.

47   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 605.

48   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 618–20.

49   *Ācāra* being the practical manifestation of behavior, dharma its theoretical underpinnings.

of dharma as the foundation for the abstract system of behavior and its application to real life situations.

This shift is somewhat suggested by Mārkaṇḍeya in 189 after he has described the re-establishment of a world where normative boundaries are found. After stating the sources for his just completed narration, he goes on to say: "Now listen to these other words of mine, … which will set you free from doubts concerning the Law. Always embrace the Law, chief upholder of the Law, for a king who embodies the Law always enjoys happiness here and hereafter. Listen to the auspicious message that I shall declare to you, blameless prince: never insult a brahman, for an offended brahman can destroy the worlds" (189.16ce–18; Van Buitenen, p. 598 modified).[50] And this is where Yudhiṣṭhira generalizes the question, if it can be further generalized, in saying: "In what Law should I stand for protecting my subjects, sage? And how should I live and not fall away from my own Law?" (189.20). The point is that even where the questions and potential answers can be general to the point of abstraction, they will always be personalized because of the presence of the audience to whom the answers are directed. This is especially highly profiled for Yudhiṣṭhira who has already several times been exposed as being deeply troubled about the whole question of dharma and of his own svadharma. And this returns us to the theme of chapter 183 again where not even brahmans can agree upon the correct dharma. But it must also be noted that given the intervening chapters 186–89, the whole thesis of the cooperation of the brahmans and the warriors has been presented in reverse, where kings refuse to support brahmans as a class in the correct manner. Hence Mārkaṇḍeya's instructions to Yudhiṣṭhira, a potential king.

Mārkaṇḍeya immediately gives an answer to this, but one characterized by an annoying generality:

> Have compassion and profit all creatures lovingly, contentedly, and devote yourself to your subjects as though they were your own children. Heed the Law, shun what is not the Law, honour the deceased ancestors and the Gods, and repair what you neglected to do with an appropriate gift. Don't be prideful and always be one who helps others. When you

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50   dharmasaṃśayamokṣārthaṃ nibodha vacanaṃ mama ||
dharme tvayātmā saṃyojyo nityaṃ dharmabhṛtāṃ vara |
dharmātmā hi sukhaṃ rājā pretya ceha ca nandati ||
nibodha ca śubhāṃ vāṇīṃ yāṃ pravakṣyāmi te 'nagha |
na brāhmaṇe paribhavaḥ kartavyas te kadā cana |
brāhmaṇo ruṣito hanyād api lokān pratijñayā ||.

have conquered the entire Earth be joyful and happy. This is the Law of the past and the future that has been proclaimed to you.[51] (Van Buitenen, p. 598)

But though dialogical in form this is mainly homiletic in style with minimum entertainment value or illustration through actual case studies. It makes more sense to present these arguments through actual examples and this conforms to a long established principal that a precept will be illustrated by an example. Accordingly it is a straightforward process to move directly from an "historical" narrative illustrating the origins of dharma and the necessity for its application at the hands of brahmans to several situations demonstrating how it might be used in situations paralleling real world crises and possibilities. Thus follows a series of illustrative examples, but they too are furnished with a semi-formal introduction such as in the lengthy prose chapter 190 where Yudhiṣṭhira asks to hear more about the exalted position (*brāhmaṇamahābhāgyam*) of the brahmans, but which leads to the story of the king who marries the frog princess where no brahmans play any role at all. This leads into another myth where an illustration is given of King Śala insulting a brahman sage named Vāmadeva by stealing some of his magical horses and the negative consequences flowing from this. The two narratives that occur here and the following killing of the demon Dhundhu each represents a shifting attitude of a king towards a brahman. King Śala behaves initially how a king should not behave towards a brahman, by stealing his property, whereas Kuvalāśva protects Utaṅka in the manner appropriate for a king towards a brāhmaṇical sage.

But now the subject appears to change, though it really just deepens one aspect of what has been raised earlier. Initially Yudhiṣṭhira asks about the supreme greatness of women, and the perennial question of the subtlety of the law.[52] Both are foreshadowed at the beginning (180.43) of the Msp and they are given more specificity when Yudhiṣṭhira asks: "To me the obedience of a woman faithful to her husband seems extremely difficult, so you should tell me

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51   dayāvān sarvabhūteṣu hito rakto 'nasūyakaḥ |
      apatyānām iva sveṣāṃ prajānāṃ rakṣaṇe rataḥ ||
      cara dharmaṃ tyajādharmaṃ pitṝn devāṃś ca pūjaya |
      pramādād yat kṛtaṃ te 'bhūt samyag dānena taj jaya |
      alaṃ te mānam āśritya satataṃ paravān bhava ||
      vijitya pṛthivīṃ sarvāṃ modamānaḥ sukhī bhava |
      eṣa bhūto bhaviṣyaś ca dharmas te samudīritaḥ || (Mahābhārata 3.189.21–23)

52   śrotum icchāmi bhagavan strīṇāṃ māhātmyam uttamam |
      kathyamānaṃ tvayā vipra sūkṣmaṃ dharmaṃ ca tattvataḥ ||
      pratyakṣeṇa hi viprarṣe devā dṛśyanti sattama | (Mahābhārata 3.196.2–3ab)

of the greatness of women devoted to their husband, Lord."[53] Both questions are then answered in the following ten chapters which are dominated by two narratives where the thematic continuity is represented by the arrogant, violent brahman who is instructed in his own svadharma by a woman and a seller of meat, both ostensibly of lower status than the brahman. Once more all this is foreshadowed in chapter 183 where Atri was concerned about the specificity of his own dharma, but the use of marginal characters to instruct brahmans is really just a variant on brahmans arguing between themselves as to what constitutes correct dharma. The peak of this is perhaps chapter 198 where words for dharma occur many more times than in other chapters in the Msp, showing how the brahman Kauśika has been exposed to his own lack of understanding of svadharma as a standard of behavior regulating a member of any class.

It is the resulting tension between the homiletic and narrative portions of the Msp that question the validity of dharma and the symbiotic relationship between the king and the brahmans whilst simultaneously asserting it. But this tension may be further raised by Yudhiṣṭhira's behavior leading up to his instruction from Mārkaṇḍeya, and the anticipated modification of his behavior and/or justification of it leading up to the war.[54] The emphasis in the sections dealing with brahmans is that they are telling brahmans how to behave and how political elites should behave towards them. That lower caste people and women are educating brahmans is also highly significant, but of what? Who beyond brahmans and warriors would have spoken Sanskrit and even where portions of the text were recited in a vernacular form, it may have been the case that they were directed at brahmans as much as anybody else.

The Shift to Śiva

It is the third part of the Msp that should attract our attention because it contains almost no reference to Viṣṇu, yet is strongly theological, and appears not

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53   pativratānāṃ śuśrūṣā duṣkarā pratibhāti me ||
       pativratānāṃ māhātmyaṃ vaktum arhasi naḥ prabho | (Mahābhārata 3.196.5cd–6ab)

54   To whom are the brahman chapters directed? Is it not likely that brahmans came in many shapes and sizes (as Kosambi pointed out many years ago) and that attempts were being made to try and unify them according to some criteria apart from the formulaic ones associated with the traditional duties of the brahman and his prerogative over Vedic learning? They must have come from different ethnic groups (though only ones that had been long acculturated with speakers of Indo-Aryan languages) and somehow or other new brahmans must have been recruited, or was their enough families with reliable gotras to facilitate expansion from an existing stock?

to be foreshadowed by the themes developed in chapter 183. If it is theological it is not explicitly devotional in the manner of chapter 186 where Mārkaṇḍeya develops a devotional relationship with Nārāyaṇa. Yet it is arguably strongly Śaivite in tone and presents many highly iconic images of Skanda as if it was drawing directly from contemporary iconography, which I suspect to be unlikely. It is centered on Agni's loss of his capacity to function as fire and the birth of Kārttikeya, whose birth is complex to say the least, but he is always known as Śiva's son, hence the Śaivite connections in this passage.

This section of fourteen chapters seems unrelated to the previous one[55] and it is not foreshadowed by it, but analyzing the text from a structuralist perspective inevitably asks us to explain how these chapters fit in with what has preceded in the Msp and from a larger context, the Āraṇyakaparvan as a whole. There occurs similarity of content insofar as the broad theme of the devāsura conflict is strongly present and in Kārttikeya's killing of Mahiṣa falls roughly within the avatāra frame. But where there is a substantive difference is in the absence of explicit references to dharma in these chapters 207–21. They occur seven times as opposed to one hundred and sixty-five times in the chapters 179–206. I suspect this reflects the substantively Vaiṣṇava underlay of the first two sections, whereas the third section is substantially Śaivite.

Yudhiṣṭhira simply asks,

> What was the reason that the Fire once departed for the forest and that the great seer Aṅgiras, in the absence of the Fire God, became fire and carried the oblations? Though the Fire God is one he appears to be many in the various rites, reverend sir. I wish to know all this. And also, how Kumāra was born, how he became the son of the Fire God, how he was born from Rudra by the Ganges and the Pleiades. (207.2–4; Van Buitenen, p. 640 modified)[56]

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55   Biardeau's point at *Le Mahābhārata,* vol. 1, 659 is worthy of further exploration which will the form the topic of another paper. "Une première réponse, la seule peut-être que nous puissions donner avec assurance, c'est qu'en introduisant Skanda cet épisode introduit aussi au premier plan Maheśvara et un foisonnement de déesses dont beaucoup sont sanguinaires."

56   katham agnir vanaṃ yātaḥ kathaṃ cāpy aṅgirāḥ purā |
      naṣṭe 'gnau havyam avahad agnir bhūtvā mahān ṛṣiḥ ||
      agnir yadā tv eka eva bahutvaṃ cāsya karmasu |
      dṛśyate bhagavan sarvam etad icchāmi veditum ||
      kumāraś ca yathotpanno yathā cāgneḥ suto 'bhavat |
      yathā rudrāc ca saṃbhūto gaṅgāyāṃ kṛttikāsu ca ||.

This implies prior knowledge of the events surrounding Agni, Aṅgiras, and Kumāra, all of whom are associated in some way with fire and destruction. It is behind this association with both of these motifs that Śiva himself is present in his role as destroyer in the trimūrti formulation. Besides the theological/devotional aspect of these chapters, especially chapters 221–22, it is rather a mystery why Yudhiṣṭhira should be interested in these mythologemes, unless the birth of Kārttikeya and his defeat of Mahiṣa is to be regarded as a framework within which the conflict against the Kauravas might be carried through.

Initially (207) Agni goes, apparently without reason, to the forest to perform tapas and Aṅgiras takes over the role of fire as dispeller of darkness and carrier of oblations. Maybe here there is a conflict between fire used for others (Agni's traditional role) and fire used for oneself in the form of the performance of tapas. Agni complains to Aṅgiras, who tells Agni to become fire again and that he should make Aṅgiras his first-born son. The latter gives birth to Bṛhaspati (207.17), Agni tells them the reason for this, leading Mārkaṇḍeya to list a genealogy of fires and the functions to be performed by specific fires.

The principal myth in these final chapters of the Msp narrates the birth of Kārttikeya and here it directly brings Agni into association with Śiva, thus developing an ontological and functional picture of these deities. At the very least the circumstances of Kārttikeya's birth are complicated, but lead in chapters 220–21 to a clear veneration of Śiva. Even before he is born the time when his conception is foreshadowed by Indra is one in which the hour of Rudra is present in the constellations (213.27–30). Eventually Svāhā, Dakṣa's daughter, who is in love with Agni, assumes the body of Śivā, Aṅgiras's wife, in order to attract Agni (214.1). It is hardly coincidental that her name is Śivā, even if she is not Śiva's wife. She and Agni make love and she assumes the appearance of six of the wives of the seven great sages and six times[57] casts down Agni's seed.

Eventually Kārttikeya/Kumāra is born, but the ensuing chapters narrate how the sages are concerned by the portents associated with his birth and how Indra initially engages in physical conflict with him. Extensive description is given of malevolent mothers, and the so-called Graspers who harass men after their sixteenth year. Only in the two penultimate chapters (220–21) does the text revert to Śiva and reflect the development of his image as a deity of devotion. Even 219.45 tells us that "Now after an obeisance to Maheśvara, I shall proclaim the Graspers that afflict men after their sixteenth year" and at 58cd: "no Graspers touch those who are devoted to God Maheśvara." In the next chapter the tortuous details of Kārttikeya's birth are firmly sheeted back to Śiva and Umā.

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57   ṣaṭkṛtvas tat tu nikṣiptam agne retaḥ kurūttama | (Mahābhārata 3.214.15a).

But this is a prelude to Rudra affirming Kārttikeya as head of the seventh division of the Maruts, after which Kārttikeya is severely tested as pralaya-like conditions arise and the demon Mahiṣa presents himself, requiring the new head of the divine army to step forward. Heading the demonic army he attacks, eventually focusing his attack on Rudra himself (221. 57–61ab). Finally, Mahāsena issues forth, kills Mahiṣa and saves Rudra. A few more references to Rudra follow and at the end of the chapter Indra says to Skanda,

> Invincible are you in battle to any foe, like the lord who is Umā's hus-band. This deed shall be your first claim to fame and your glory will be imperishable in the three worlds …. Rudra went on to Bhadravaṭa and the celestials returned. The Gods had been told by Rudra to look upon Skanda as himself … (221.75cd–76cd, 77cd–78ab; Van Buitenen, p. 664)

The level of intimacy defining the relationship between Mārkaṇḍeya and Nārāyaṇa is certainly absent here, the devotional aspect of the Skanda narra-tive, insofar as it applies to Śiva, being quite muted in comparison with the spectacular events of 186–87 where vaiṣṇava theology is certainly present in the formulaic derivation of Nārāyaṇa's name and the introduction of the Kalki avatāra. In this formulation Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa, since the connection is explicitly made) performs the overarching function of the trimūrti, but Brahmā is still portrayed as the creator. This final section of the Msp demonstrates clearly that a trimūrti theology is a subtle sub-text shaping the whole parvan.

Unarguably, chapters 185–95 are pervaded with the influence of Viṣṇu/ Nārāyaṇa, Chapters 207–12 are dominated by Agni and the remaining chapters everywhere reflect the presence of Śiva even if Kārttikeya is in the forefront. Biardeau is surely right when she says that, speaking of Skanda serving Indra, "Il préfère être au service d'Indra et lui obéir, ce qui fait de lui un personnage de type avatārique assez inattendue. On a ici confirmation que l'introduction de Skanda dans le discours du Visionnaire sert à mettre les forces rudraiques au service de la cause des dieux."[58] And in this sense there is still an avatāric con-nection, which is so strongly marked in the earlier sections of the Msp.

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58   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata,* vol. 1, 657.

Conclusion

It is almost a truism to say that like the Mahābhārata as a whole, the narrative of the Msp is dominated by these themes: devotional theologies, cosmogony, the difficulty in interpreting dharma, the excesses of kings and kṣatriya power, the irascibility of sages, and brahman power. Unlike the entire Mahābhārata there appears to exist no overarching narrative plot tying the whole lot together.[59] Yet the Msp does contain the usual combinatoric devices found in *itihāsa* and Purāṇa: primary and secondary interlocutory systems, questions guiding the direction of the immediate narrative and *phalaśrutis*. The obvious connecting point of the whole is established by the questions Yudhiṣṭhira puts to Mārkaṇḍeya, suggesting that this parvan is a fundamental component in the former's education, to use Alf Hiltebeitel's term.

Equally it is an education to the other Pāṇḍavas about Kṛṣṇa, Śiva and the role of the brahman. Why the latter? A simple answer would be that it is directed towards the hosts of brahmans who have accompanied the Pāṇḍavas into the Kāmyaka forest. However, this by itself is an inadequate explanation. In the figure of the cursing brahman named Kauśika (197.1) we are given the image of a figure who is unsure of his own *svadharma* and it is only following the intervention of a woman and a seller of meat that he is able to be given the fundamental message that absolute adherence to one's dharma, determined by birth, is the foundation for status in this life and the next. Clearly Yudhiṣṭhira, with his constant vacillation is in the sights here, rehearsing a theme found everywhere in the Mahābhārata, and virtually from beginning to end. Repetition is used to make a point, a common rhetorical device in all literature. But beneath this brahmans are speaking to each other in an attempt to create a unity in dharma interpretation, an impossible task the Mahābhārata never stops trying to achieve.

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59   Though could anybody ever have held the entire epic in their head along the lines of the Ṛgveda or another text of similar size? No doubt there were early attempts made to summarize its contents in the manner found in some Purāṇas.

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Of Daddies and Demons: The Rāmopākhyāna and the Rakṣovaṃśa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

Sally J. Sutherland Goldman

Among the more intriguing and yet largely unexamined points of differentiation between the Rāmakathā as it is found in the Mahābhārata's Rāmopākhyāna and the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is the history and representation of the *rakṣovaṃśa*, or the lineage of the *rākṣasas*. The relative prominence that both epics give this lineage is an indicator of its importance to the narrative. The differences between the two histories of the *rākṣasas* are remarkable in a number of significant ways, and an examination of them can shed new insights into the relationship between the two epics and the socio-cultural worlds that they reflect. This paper will compare these superficially parallel narratives of the *rākṣasa* race with an eye toward identifying underlying internal narrative structures that can aid us in understanding the narrative logics of the two passages in terms of their loci within their respective epics, their relationships to their corresponding sister epics, as well as the needs and concerns of the epic audiences.

A full one-third of the sargas of the Uttarakāṇḍa of the critical edition of Vālmīki's epic tale concerns itself with the history of the *rākṣasa* race.[1] While this section of the epic has been largely ignored, there have been, nevertheless, a few, somewhat convincing, rationales put forth to explain and contextualize this seemingly tangential narrative. The foremost among these argues that this section of the Uttarakāṇḍa was originally an independent epic tale.[2] Yet, this opening section of the *kāṇḍa* is more than a haphazard afterthought on the part of redactors. The critical edition of the Uttarakāṇḍa devotes the first thirty-four of its one hundred *sargas*, some one thousand two hundred seventy-seven *ślokas*, "verses," to the history of the *rākṣasa* race. This might be compared, for example, with epic's treatment of the *vānara* race found in the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, the epic's shortest kāṇḍa (sixty-six sargas) of which the first thirty-eight sargas tell of the events in Kiṣkindhā and contain approxi-

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1　All references are to the Critical Edition of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (*The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: Critical Edition*, 7 vols., ed. G.H. Bhatt and U.P. Shah [Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960–75]).

2　Robert Antoine, *Rama and the Bards: Epic Memory in the Ramayana* (Calcutta: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1975), 46–54; also cited in John L. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 391–92.

mately twelve hundred ślokas. Moreover, the length of what Jacobi called "*die Rāvaṇeïs*"[3] is even more striking, when we understand that the average length of the individual sargas that make up this narrative is approximately twice that of the remaining sargas of the book, making this first section actually account for over one-half of the entire Uttarakāṇḍa. Virtually all earlier studies of this section of the kāṇḍa,[4] whatever be their methodology, are primarily concerned with the relative dating of the passage and what it can tell us about the Uttarakāṇḍa's relationship to the larger Rāmāyaṇa narrative.

Of all the scholarship on the Uttarakāṇḍa, in general, and the section that concerns the history of the *rākṣasa* lineage, in particular, only Antoine's[5] looks to the narrative structure as a mechanism through which embedded cultural concerns might be understood historically and contextually. He focuses on two specific instances in the epic, one in the Bālakāṇḍa and the other in Uttarakāṇḍa, where the narrative seemingly pauses to relate extensive histories of two important characters, Viśvāmitra and Rāvaṇa, respectively. While admitting that both of these narratives might have originally been "independent epic songs," he argues that their role in Vālmīki's epic is not only concerned "with the faithful transmission of the inner spirit of the epic" but additionally offers "a very rich study in contrast which enables the modern reader to share something of the vision which inspired the ancient bards and fascinated their listeners."[6] Antoine is silent on whom he understands the "modern reader" to be.

Antoine further understands that the two passages share a parallel construction of genealogy, for both figures trace their origins to Prajāpati,[7] and a

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3   Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, 392.

4   See, for example, M.V. Kibe, "Is the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Un-Historical?" *Journal of Indian History* 20 (1941): 28–33; A.K. Chatterjee, "A Note on the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*," *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda* 22, no. 3 (1972–73): 304–15; and Dilip Kumar Kanjilal, "The Genuineness of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*," *Journal of Oriental Research, Madras* 52–56 (1992): 318–25.

5   Antoine, *Rama and the Bards: Epic Memory in the Ramayana*, 46–70.

6   Ibid., 46.

7   This is to say, of course, Brahmā, in his form of lord of creatures. Thus, we are told of Viśvāmitra's lineage at 1.50.18:
    prajāpatisutas tv āsīt kuśo nāma mahīpatiḥ |
    kuśasya putro balavān kuśanābhaḥ sudhārmikaḥ ||
    and of Rāvaṇa's at 7.2.4. Here we are told that Pulastya, Rāvaṇa's ancestor, was a son of Brahmā Prajāpati.
    purā kṛtayuge rāma prajāpatisutaḥ prabhuḥ |
    pulastyo nāma brahmarṣiḥ sākṣād iva pitāmahaḥ ||
    However, this argument is rather weak. Brahmā Prajāpati had ten mind-born sons and was the progenitor of virtually all the major lineages of ancient brāhmaṇical India.

similarity in narrative, as both are basically tales of "*digvijayas*," wherein the protagonists respectively conquer the directions—as does Viśvāmitra—or the *lokapālas*—as does Rāvaṇa. He notes:

> Both epic heroes in the pursuit of their respective ambition will be engaged in a long struggle. Both aspire after power. But while Rāvaṇa relies on brutal force in his plan to defeat the gods, Viśvāmitra resorts to penance ....[8]

Antoine concludes that the two narratives set "before us two types of attitudes to life, two different sets of values,"[9] and he ultimately understands these attitudes to reflect important aspects of larger narrative concerns. While in some places he is perhaps a bit overzealous in his analysis of formulaic parallels that are found throughout the epic and purāṇic narratives and in others he seems to conveniently overlook narrative parallels (such as Rāvaṇa's own austerities, which gain for him the power through which he can challenge and defeat the gods), Antoine has presented some intriguing arguments and should be given credit for trying to understand the narrative in ways that allow a more careful reading of cultural concerns both on the part of author and audience.

While Antoine focuses primarily on the digvijayas of Rāvaṇa, he expends much of his initial energy suggesting parallels between the genealogies of both Viśvāmitra and Rāvaṇa, primarily based on their common descent from Prajāpati. However, while the narrative of Viśvāmitra includes some information about his paternal line—Brahmā Prajāpati, Kuśa, Kuśanābha, and Gādhi (1.50.18–19)—it occupies only two ślokas of the Bālakāṇḍa's sarga 50.[10] The narrative in the Bālakāṇḍa is completely silent on Viśvāmitra's maternal ancestry. In stark contrast with this, sargas 2–9 of the Uttarakāṇḍa detail the history of the lineage of Rāvaṇa, with sarga 2 primarily detailing his paternal lineage and sarga 3 narrating the birth of his paternal half-brother, Kubera. Most striking, though, are the contents of sargas 4–9, which provide a detailed history of the maternal line of Rāvaṇa.

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8 Antoine, *Rama and the Bards: Epic Memory in the Ramayana*, 53.

9 Ibid., 70.

10 The Bālakāṇḍa, however, is not silent on these figures, but they are not included in what Antoine understands as the "Viśvāmitra narrative." See sargas 31–32, which relate the narrative of the one hundred daughters of Kuśanābha. Although narrated by Viśvāmitra, these sargas do not directly mention Viśvāmitra's relationship to the lineage. See Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Gendered Narratives: Gender, Space, and Narrative Structures in *Vālmīki's Bālakāṇḍa*," in *The Ramayana Revisited*, ed. Mandakranta Bose (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47–85.

Note, in further contrast, that Vālmīki is relatively terse in his treatment of the genealogy of Rāma, taking it up in only a few instances in the epic. In the Bālakāṇḍa, Rāma's ancestors are mentioned in two distinct contexts: (1) as a part of a narrative tied to other concerns[11] and (2) as a formal listing in a ritual context. While we find scattered references to Rāma's lineage throughout the kāṇḍa, it is only at its the end, in sarga 69, that there is a more sustained presentation of the family history. Here Vasiṣṭha will recite the Sūryavaṃśa. Nevertheless, when we are first introduced to the hero in sargas 1 and 3, with the two retellings of the epic narrative, we are met with virtual silence as to who Rāma is from the standpoint of lineage. Upon Vālmīki questioning Nārada at 1.1.2:

> Is there a man in the world today who is truly virtuous? Who is there who is mighty and yet knows both what is right and how to act upon it? Who always speaks the truth and holds firmly to his vows?[12]

Nārada tells us only (1.1.8):

> His name is Rāma and he was born in the House of Ikṣvāku. All men know of him, for he is self-controlled, mighty, radiant, steadfast, and masterful.[13]

Sarga 3 is completely silent on the lineage of Rāma. Of course, even before sarga 69, the Bālakāṇḍa is not entirely silent on Rāma's family history. On their journey to Mithilā, Viśvāmitra tells Rāma numerous stories, a number of which concern the "Raghuvaṃśa." Thus at sargas 37–43, we are told the story of Sagara and his sons. Sagara, childless, as so many kings are, is given a boon: he shall have a large number of children. One of Sagara's two wives, Keśinī, will bear an evil son, Asamañja, whose descendants will carry on the dynasty, while the other, Sumati, will bear sixty thousand noble sons (1.37.8). The narrative continues with the story of Sagara's sacrifice, the stealing of his sacrificial horse by Indra, who has taken the form of a *rākṣasa*, and the sixty thousand sons of Sagara digging up the earth to find the stolen horse. Eventually after digging up the entire earth, they see Vāsudeva in the form of Kapila and the horse standing nearby (1.39.24). Kapila, uttering the syllable "*huṃ*," reduces

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11   Ibid.

12   ko nv asmin sāmprataṃ loke guṇavān kaś ca vīryavān |
      dharmajñaś ca kṛtajñaś ca satyavākyo dṛḍhavrataḥ || (Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.2)

13   ikṣvākuvaṃśaprabhavo rāmo nāma janaiḥ śrutaḥ |
      niyatātmā mahāvīryo dyutimān dhṛtimān vaśī || (Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.8)

them all to a pile of ashes. The story continues, telling of Aṃśumant, the son of the wicked Asamañja,[14] and his search for holy water in order to perform the funerary libations for his half brothers. Aṃśumant is told by Garuḍa that in order to perform them he needs water from the heavenly Ganges, which must be brought to earth. We are then told of the descendants of Aṃśumant, Dilīpa, and Bhagīratha, each of whom performs austerities in order to bring the heavenly Ganges to earth. Eventually it is Bhagīratha who brings the holy river to earth through his austerities (sarga 43). While the narrative is told in a frame that provides a brief history of some of Rāma's ancestors, it is primarily a story that is concerned with the descent of the Ganges as is emphasized as Viśvāmitra concludes his narrative:

> The tale I have just told you, "The Descent of the Ganges," brings one wealth, fame, long life, heaven, and even sons.[15]

Only this selective genealogy of the epic's hero, Rāma, told in the Bālakāṇḍa, can be said to vie in length with that of Rāvaṇa's narrated in the Uttarakāṇḍa. Yet it takes up merely seven, relatively short sargas, containing but one hundred seventy-two ślokas, and its focus is largely on the descent of the Ganges rather than the lineage of Rāma.

It is only at sarga 69.15–32 that we find an actual listing of Rāma's ancestors. Rāma, upon breaking Śiva's bow (1.66), has been given Sītā in marriage (1.67). Daśaratha is then summoned to Mithilā to participate in the wedding ceremony. The ceremony is preceded by the recitation of the lineages of each family, first Rāma's, and then Sītā's (1.70). Rāma's lineage is recited by Vasiṣṭha, while Sītā's, is narrated by her father, Janaka. The names given for the Ikṣvāku lineage are the nearly the same as those found later in the epic (2.102) and are generally in line with those found in other contexts, for example, in Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśa, which, as the title indicates, supplies us with a detailed narrative of the Sūryavaṃśa.[16]

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14 Asamañja is introduced again into the narrative in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, where Kaikeyī, in her anger, likens Rāma to Asamañja (Rāmāyaṇa 2.32.12–16). He is also included in both accounts of the lineage (1.69.25 and 2.102.20–21).

15 dhanyaṃ yaśasyam āyuṣyaṃ svargyam putryam athāpi ca |
idam ākhyānam ākhyātaṃ gaṅgāvataraṇaṃ mayā || (Rāmāyaṇa 1.43.20)

16 The first nine sargas of the Raghuvaṃśa tell of Rāma's four immediate ancestors: Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, and Daśaratha. Sargas 16 through 19 tell of the descendants of Rāma, starting with his own sons, Kuśa and Lava, and ending with the dissolute Agnivarṇa, who, suffering from consumption (19.51), is secretly placed on the funeral pyre by his ministers (19.54) and cremated. In the last verse of the poem we are told that his queen, pregnant,

Vālmīki once again takes up the lineage of Rāma in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, toward the end of that book. Here, Rāma, despite the pleas of Bharata to return and rule Ayodhyā, refuses to go back on his word. Rāma is urged by the minister Jābāli to consecrate himself in the kingdom, but he rejects this suggestion as it is not in keeping with dharma (2.101). Vasiṣṭha, in order to demonstrate that it is always the eldest son who inherits the kingdom, then recites Rāma's lineage (2.102.1–31).

Of the families of the women in Vālmīki's epic we are told little. As noted above, Sītā's lineage is recited by King Janaka in 1.70 as part of the preliminary celebrations of her wedding ceremony, and later in the Uttarakāṇḍa, in a passage that has been improperly relegated to the critical apparatus, there is a somewhat curious narration of Janaka's forefather Nimi and his descendants.[17]

The Rāmāyaṇa is virtually silent concerning the family of Rāma's mother, Kaikeyī, or the women in Daśaratha's lineage,[18] while of the two remaining wives of Daśaratha, it is only Bharata's mother's family, the Kekeyas, that is explicitly referenced. Mention is made of Aśvapati, Kaikeyī's father (2.1.6; 2.64.2–22) and his maternal uncle, Yudhājit, is also named (2.1.2.5; 2.64.22).[19] We

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is consecrated and rules awaiting the birth of her unnamed son (19.57). The Harivaṃśa, too, knows this lineage (Harivāṃśa 8–10). See Simon Brodbeck, "Solar and Lunar Lines in the Mahābhārata," *Religions of South Asia* 5 no. 1 (2011): 128–30.

17   The story of Nimi is told at Uttarakāṇḍa Appendix I, No. 8, lines 83–212. However, the lines in question have universal manuscript support and should have been admitted to the critical text. See Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Critical Evidence: Vālmīki's Uttarakāṇḍa and the Critical Edition," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 298–324 and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Appendectomies: Textual Surgeries in the Construction of 'The National Epic of India,'" paper presented at the conference on New Directions in the Study of the Epics of South and Southeast Asia, October 26–27, 2012, University of California at Berkeley. See note 19.

18   The one possible exception to this might be the history of Śāntā, who becomes the wife of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (1.8.11–23, especially verse 16). See, too, Asoke Chatterjee, "The Problem of Śānta's Parentage as Affecting the Text of the *Rāmāyaṇa*," *Our Heritage* 2, no. 2 (1953): 353–74 and Asoke Chatterjee, "Śāntā's Parentage," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 33 (1957): 146–51. See note 19.

19   Yudhājit is mentioned some ten times in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (1.72.1; 2.1.2; 2.1.5; 2.64.22; 3.66.6; 3.66.8; 7.90.9; 7.91.1,3), while the name Aśvapati is mentioned six times (2.1.6; 2.9.16;2.38.4; 2.65.23; 2.68.9; 7.90.4). As suggested by M.R. Parameswaran (email to Robert P. Goldman dated September 21, 2012), it appears that the only named kings invited to Daśaratha's sacrifice in the Bālakāṇḍa are those that have close family ties. Parameswaran notes that at Rāmāyaṇa 1.12.19–20, the kings invited are:
(1) Janaka of Mithilā (1.12.18cd–19):

are also told of the marriage contract between Kaikeyī's father and Daśaratha (2.99.3). Other family histories that include the mother's lineage[20] in the epic

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mithilādhipatiṃ śūraṃ janakaṃ satyavikramam ||
niṣṭhitaṃ sarvaśāstreṣu tathā vedeṣu niṣṭhitam |
tam ānaya mahābhāgaṃ svayam eva susatkṛtam |
pūrvasambandhinaṃ jñātvā tataḥ pūrvaṃ bravīmi te ||

You are personally and with great respect to escort Janaka, that truly valorous hero, the illustrious ruler of Mithilā; for he is well versed both in the *vedas* and in every traditional science. Knowing him to be our ancient kinsman, I mention him first.

(2) The king of Kāśi (1.12.20):

tathā kāśipatiṃ snigdhaṃ satataṃ priyavādinam |
sadvṛttaṃ devasaṃkāśaṃ svayam evānayasva ha ||

But you must also personally escort the friendly and godlike lord of Kāśi, who always speaks kindly and whose conduct is impeccable.

(3) The king of the Kekeyas (1.12.21):

tathā kekayarājānaṃ vṛddhaṃ paramadhārmikam |
śvaśuraṃ rājasiṃhasya saputraṃ tam ihānaya ||

Also bring the father-in-law of our lion among kings, the aged and exceedingly righteous king of the Kekayas [Aśvapati] and his son [Yudhājit].

(4) Romapāda, the king of Aṅga (1.12.22), who is a "renowned friend" and, whose ties with Daśaratha come through his daughter Śānta, whom he gave to Romapāda to be his adopted daughter, and who eventually marries Ṛśyśṛṅga.

Janaka is destined to be Rāma's father-in-law, and has ties to him through Janaka's ancestor Nimi, who is said to have been one of the sons of Ikṣvāku (see note 17 and Sutherland Goldman, "Appendectomies: Textual Surgeries in the Construction of 'The National Epic of India'"). Romapāda similarly has a connection with Daśaratha through a child [Śāntā]. Note in both cases the importance of the female connection (see note 18 above). The two remaining kings are the king of Kāśi and the king of the Kekeyas. The latter is well known to be the father of Kaikeyī, King Daśaratha's second wife. But who or what is the purpose of including the king of Kāśi? Remaining are only Kausalyā's father and Sumitrā's. One assumes that since Kausalyā's name is derived from Kosala, that her family is from there. We are told nothing of her parents or family. That leaves only Sumitrā's family to be accounted for. Paramesvaran hypothesizes that the king of Kāśi must be her father. The idea is intriguing, but one would also need to ask, why was her father given precedence over the Kekeyas, since he was mentioned first. He further argues that neither Kausalyā nor Sumitrā has a brother, and so, Daśaratha upon his marriage with these women, inherited their family's kingdoms. Paramesvaran also notes that a number of royal families only had daughters. One might add that, if he is correct, it was through these daughters that inheritance passed. See Brodbeck's arguments on the *putrikā* of the Mahābhārata (see note 50).

20 I have avoided in general using the technical terms normally associated with family histories, such as patrilineal and matrilineal, etc., in this paper in order not to be confined to labels that here might prove restrictive of identifying other meaningful relationships. The

corpus are rare for the most part and never detailed[21] Yet, in the Uttarakāṇḍa, the narrative of Rāvaṇa's lineage takes up approximately twenty-seven percent of the sargas making up the Rāvaṇa-carita, and it includes a significant number of stories that relate the family histories of Rāvaṇa's mother's family and even includes some stories about the women specifically. Clearly such detail must be understood as an indicator that both author and audience considered Rāvaṇa's maternal and paternal lineages to be important.

A further index of how important the lineage of Rāvaṇa is to these narratives as well as how really remarkable this description of the histories of the women's families found in the Uttarakāṇḍa can be gleaned from the Mahābhārata's much shorter version of the Rāmakathā, where we also find a genealogy of the lineage of Rāvaṇa. The very existence of this lineage in the Rāmopākhyāna has been used as evidence, I might note, to argue that the Mahābhārata was aware of the Uttarakāṇḍa.[22] There, however, the entire narrative of Rāvaṇa's lineage is pushed to the front of the episode, where we are initially given a brief introduction to the Rāmakathā in four ślokas (Mahābhārata 3.258.1–5), fol-

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terms patrilineal and matrilineal are understood as social structures and are defined as relating to, based on, or tracing ancestral descent through the paternal and maternal lines, respectively. The terms are also used of traditions wherein the father's or mother's surnames are inherited from father to son, or mother to daughter and or wherein hereditary succession or other inheritance is handed down through the father's or mother's line. Brodbeck distinguishes the terms patriarchy and matriarchy from patriliny/patrilocy and matriliny/matrilocy; the *–archy* suffix is associated with power; while the *–liny* associated with a "lineal" descent, and the *–locy* with location of residence and understands the Mahābhārata to be patrilineal and patrilocal, at least in theory (Simon Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline: Gender, Culture, and the Royal Hereditary* [Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009], 14).

21   An exception would be, for example, the history of Śakuntalā's family. Note that a similarly disproportionate amount of attention is evident in the Rāmopākhyāna (259–75). The narrative there is particularly interesting because the lineage and adventures of Rāvaṇa are the only sections of the Uttarakāṇḍa narrated as part of the Rāmakathā in the Āraṇyakaparvan (258.10–16; 259.1–13). Like many other aspects of the story, the events found the Mahābhārata are much less detailed. See Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline,* 57–63, 133–38. The epic does, however, provide a brief lineage of Sītā's family at Bālakāṇḍa 70 and at Ayodhyākāṇḍa 110.26–52. The former is narrated by Janaka during the wedding ceremony of Rāma and Sītā and the latter by Sītā, who tells Anasūyā how she came to have a *svayaṃvara* and wed Rāma. See the discussion below. The Uttarakāṇḍa's App. 1, No. 8, lines 89–212 tell the history of Nimi, who is an ancestor of Janaka, Sītā's father. See note 17.

22   Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, 398.

lowed by an equally brief, and somewhat uninspired, lineage of Rāma and his brothers in two plus ślokas:

> There was a great king named Aja, born of the Ikṣvāku lineage.
> His son, Daśaratha was virtuous and ever dedicated to the study of the vedas.
> He had four sons, learned in dharma and artha. They were Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna, and the mighty Bharata.
> Rāma's mother was Kausalyā, and Bharata's Kaikeyī. Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna, those scorchers of their enemies, were the sons of Sumitrā.[23]

And one about Sītā:

> Janaka was the king of Videha, and his daughter was Sītā, O lord, whom Tvaṣṭṛ himself had created to be the beloved queen of Rāma.[24]

Mārkaṇḍeya, finished with the lineages of the hero and the heroine, turns to the antagonist's lineage.

> This origin of Rāma has been declared to you, and of Sītā as well. I will now relate to you the origin/birth of Rāvaṇa, O lord of men.[25]

Mārkaṇḍeya then narrates Rāvaṇa's lineage, which occupies the next twenty *ślokas* (Mahābhārata 3.258.10cd–16, and 3.259.1–13 [up until Rāvaṇa's birth]). The contrast is extraordinary. One, of course, might argue that, despite the ignorance reflected in Yudhiṣṭhira's question to Mārkaṇḍeya at 3.258.5 (kasmin rāmaḥ kule jātaḥ kiṃvīryaḥ kimparākramaḥ, "In what lineage was Rāma born? What was his valor? What was his strength?") that both Rāma and his lineage are well-known and need, as it were, no introduction, while Rāvaṇa does. Nevertheless the almost excessive attention given to Rāvaṇa must still be seen

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23   ajo nāmābhavad rājā mahān ikṣvākuvaṃśajaḥ |
     tasya putro daśarathaḥ śaśvat svādhyāyavāñ śuciḥ ||
     abhavaṃs tasya catvāraḥ putrā dharmārthakovidāḥ |
     rāmalakṣmaṇaśatrughnā bharataś ca mahābalaḥ ||
     rāmasya mātā kausalyā kaikeyī bharatasya tu |
     sutau lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrāyāḥ paraṃtapau || (Mahābhārata 3.258.6–8)

24   videharājo janakaḥ sītā tasyātmajā vibho |
     yāṃ cakāra svayaṃ tvaṣṭā rāmasya mahiṣīṃ priyām || (Mahābhārata 3.258.9)

25   etad rāmasya te janma sītāyāś ca prakīrtitam |
     rāvaṇasyāpi te janma vyākhyāsyāmi janeśvara || (Mahābhārata 3.258.10)

as unusual. Yet, even with all of this focus, the story in the Mahābhārata provides only a somewhat confused version of the patrilineal descent of Rāvaṇa and does not concern itself even minimally with the maternal side of his family. Mārkaṇḍeya now tells of the birth of Rāvaṇa:

> The grandfather of Rāvaṇa was the god Prajāpati, himself, the self-existent, ascetic lord, and creator of the entire world.
> His beloved, mind-born [*mānasaḥ*] son was named Pulastya. On a cow he had an excellent son, named Vaiśravaṇa.
> Having left his father, he approached his grandfather. And, O king, his father from anger created [a second] self by means of himself.
> Then a twice born, embodying that anger,[26] was created named Viśravas, in retaliation against Vaiśravaṇa.
> But the grandfather [Prajāpati], pleased, gave to Vaiśravaṇa immortality, lordship of wealth, and the status of being a protector of the world,
> as well as friendship with Īśana, a son, Nalakūbara, and a capital city, Laṅkā, inhabited by the *rākṣasas*.[27]

The lineage so far is notable in that only the males in the family are mentioned—the one exception being Pulastya's somewhat unclear relationship with a cow in verse 12, marked by the word *gavi*, "in *or* on a cow." Prajāpati's begetting of Pulastya is indicated by the word *mānasaḥ*, "mental," and in this context "mind-born" is clearly the intent, while Pulastya's creation of his second self, named Viśravas, is said to be self-generated from anger (tasya kopāt pitā rājan sasarjātmānam ātmanā, "His father created a [second] self by himself from anger" [13]). Finally, Vaiśravaṇa's son Nalakūbara is given to him by his grandfather Prajāpati along with his other rewards (15–16).

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26   "embodying that anger" *sakrodhaḥ*: Literally, "with that anger."
27   pitāmaho rāvaṇasya sākṣād devaḥ prajāpatiḥ |
      svayaṃbhūḥ sarvalokānāṃ prabhuḥ sraṣṭā mahātapāḥ ||
      pulastyo nāma tasyāsīn mānaso dayitaḥ sutaḥ |
      tasya vaiśravaṇo nāma gavi putro 'bhavat prabhuḥ ||
      pitaraṃ sa samutsṛjya pitāmaham upasthitaḥ |
      tasya kopāt pitā rājan sasarjātmānam ātmanā ||
      sa jajñe viśravā nāma tasyātmārdhena vai dvijaḥ |
      pratīkārāya sakrodhas tato vaiśravaṇasya vai ||
      pitāmahas tu prītātmā dadau vaiśravaṇasya ha |
      amaratvaṃ dhaneśatvaṃ lokapālatvam eva ca ||
      īśānena tathā sakhyaṃ putraṃ ca nalakūbaram |
      rājadhānīniveśaṃ ca laṅkāṃ rakṣogaṇānvitām || (Mahābhārata 3.258.11–16)

The relationship between Pulastya and Viśravas is not that of father and son, but literally a second or half-self (*ardhadehaḥ*), although one hesitates to use the term split personality, this seems to be the intent: Viśravas is Pulastya's "angry half." This is made clear at 3.259.1–2ab:

> And that muni, named Viśravas, who was a half-body [of Pulastya's] from the wrath of Pulastya, looked upon Vaiśravaṇa with rage.
> That lord of the *rākṣasas* realized that his father [*pitaram*] was angry at him.[28]

Thus, the term father (*pitaram*) here can only refer to Viśravas, the second-self of Pulastya, while *rākṣaseśvaraḥ* must refer to Vaiśravaṇa, his son, who is also known as Kubera.

The narrative in the Rāmopākhyāna reduces the lineage to a somewhat incestuous situation between the two, Pulastya/Viśravas and Vaiśravaṇa. At 3.259.3cd, Kubera Vaiśravaṇa gives his father—again the word used is *pitur* ("of/to the father")—three *rākṣasīs* to wait upon him (rākṣasīḥ pradadau tisraḥ pitur vai paricārikāḥ). And these women set about to soothe the angry sage Viśravas:

> Those women then undertook to please that great *ṛṣi*, O tiger among the Bharatas, skilled as they were in singing and dancing.[29]

The three *rākṣasī* women, named Puṣpotkaṭā, Mālinī, and Rākā (259.5), compete with one another, each desiring happiness (puṣpotkaṭā ca rākā ca mālinī ca viśāṃ pate | anyonyaspardhayā rājañ śreyaskāmāḥ sumadhyamāḥ || 5). Viśravas, pleased, grants them boons, that is, children (tāsāṃ sa bhagavāṃs tuṣṭo mahātmā pradadau varān | 3.259.6ab) Puṣpotkaṭā gives birth to Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa; Mālinī to Vibhīṣaṇa; and Rākā to Śūrpaṇakhā and Khara.[30]

The names of the women are significant and differ in both number and identity from those found in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. In

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28 pulastyasya tu yaḥ krodhād ardhadeho 'bhavan muniḥ |
    viśravā nāma sakrodhaḥ sa vaiśravaṇam aikṣata ||
    bubudhe taṃ tu sakrodhaṃ pitaraṃ rākṣaseśvaraḥ | (Mahābhārata 3.259.1–2ab)

29 tās tadā taṃ mahātmānaṃ saṃtoṣayitum udyatāḥ |
    ṛṣiṃ bharataśārdūla nṛttagītaviśāradāḥ || (Mahābhārata 3.259.4)

30 puṣpotkaṭāyāṃ jajñāte dvau putrau rākṣaseśvarau |
    kumbhakarṇadaśagrīvau balenāpratimau bhuvi ||
    mālinī janayāmāsa putram ekaṃ vibhīṣaṇam |
    rākāyāṃ mithunaṃ jajñe kharaḥ śūrpaṇakhā tathā || (Mahābhārata 3.259.7–8)

Vālmīki's text, Kaikasī is the mother of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, and Śūrpaṇakhā (7.9.21–27). Both Khara and his mother are, however, mentioned at 7.30.28–34, where Rāvaṇa tells Śūrpaṇakhā that she should take up residence with Khara, "the son of your mother's sister (tatra mātṛṣvasuḥ putro bhrātā tava kharaḥ prabhuḥ; 7.24.30a)." But Khara's mother is not named. The Uttarakāṇḍa does, however, know at least two of the women's names. At 7.5.36, we are told of the numerous offspring of Sumālin. Among these are included the names of four daughters: Rākā,[31] Puṣpotkaṭā, Kaikasī of the lovely smile, and Kumbhīnasī. Thus, for Vālmīki, Rākā, Puṣpotkaṭā, and Kaikasī are sisters. Among these, only the Rāmopākhyāna explicitly uses the names Rākā and Puṣpotkaṭā in connection with Rāvaṇa's and his brothers' lineage. The third name found in the Rāmopākhyāna, Mālinī, is not used in association with the *rākṣasa* lineage in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa or in any of the purāṇas consulted, although the name could be a patronymic and might technically refer to any daughter of Mālin.[32] However, we are told at 7.5.37–39 that Mālin and his wife Vasudā have only four sons, Anala, Anila, Hara, and Saṃpāti, who become Vibhīṣaṇa's ministers. No daughters are mentioned.

Relevant in this context are the names of the mothers in various purāṇas. The Padmapurāṇa's Pātālakhaṇḍa, which has an extensive and greatly expanded narrative of the events of the Uttarakāṇḍa, provides only a very brief version of Rāvaṇa's lineage: Brahmā's son is Pulastya and Pulastya's son is Viśravas. Viśravas has two wives: Mandākinī and Kaikasī, the daughter of Vidyunmālin. Mandākinī is the mother of Kubera and Kaikasī, the mother of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, and Vibhīṣaṇa. The evil traits of Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa are attributed to their being born from a *rākṣasī* and because they were born in the evening.[33] Neither Rākā nor Puṣpotkaṭā is mentioned.

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31   The name Rākā is marked as doubtful by the editors of the Critical Edition. Variants include *vākaḥ*, *bālā*, and *bakā*. Rākā could well be the woman to whom Rāvaṇa is referring here.

32   The term *mālinī*, the feminine of *mālin*, "wearing a garland *or* a florist," ususally refers to a woman who makes garlands or the wife of a man so employed. It is also the used as the name of a meter, and is the name of various women. The *–inī* suffix is normally possessive and is not typically used in connection with *apatyavācaka*, "genealogical," derivations.

33   rājan sṛṣṭakaro brahmā pulastyas tatsuto 'bhavat |
      tatas tu viśravā jajñe vedavidyāviśāradaḥ ||
      tasya patnīdvayaṃ jātaṃ pativratyacaritrabhṛt |
      ekā mandākinīnāmnī dvitīyā kaikasī smṛtā ||
      pūrvasyāṃ dhanado jajñe lokapālavilāsadhṛk |
      yo 'sau śivaprasādena laṅkāvāsam acīkarat ||
      vidyunmālīsutāyāṃ tu putratrayam abhūn mahat |

The Kūrmapurāṇa 1.18.7–13 identifies Puṣpotkaṭā, Rākā, Kaikasī, and Deva-varṇinī as sisters, the daughters of Viśravas Ailavili. Devavarṇinī [=Devarūpiṇī] gives birth to the eldest [son], Vaiśravaṇa [Kubera]. Kaikasī bears Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Śūrpaṇakhā, and Vibhīṣaṇa. Puṣpotkaṭā is the mother of Mahodara, Prahasta, Mahāpārśva, and Khara, while Rākā is the mother of Kumbhīnasī.[34]

On the other hand, Agnipurāṇa 11 understands the lineage to be: Brahmā has a son, Pulastya, and Pulastya's son is Viśravan. Viśravan's wives are Puṣpotkaṭā and Naikeṣī (v.l. Naikasī). Puṣpotkaṭā's son is Kubera, and Naikeṣī's son is Rāvaṇa (11.3). Apparently she is also the mother of Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, and Śūrpaṇakhā. Meghanāda Indrajit is Rāvaṇa's son (Agnipurāṇa 11.2–5).[35] The name Naikeṣī is given as a variant name of Kaikasī at Rāmāyaṇa 7.5.36 in two Bengālī manuscripts.

The Liṅgapurāṇa understands that Devavarṇinī is the daughter of Bṛhaspati, while Puṣpotkaṭā and Balākā[36] are the two daughters of Mālyavān, and Kaikasī is the daughter of Mālin (1.63.60–61). It then identifies Kaikasī as the mother of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, and Śūrpaṇakhā (1.63.62) and Puṣpotkaṭā

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rāvaṇo kumbhakarṇaś ca tathā puṇyo vibhīṣaṇaḥ || (Padmapurāṇa 4. [Pātālakhaṇḍa] 6.17–20)

34   naraprakṛtayo viprāḥ pulastyasya vadāmi vaḥ ||
tṛṇabindoḥ sutā viprā nāmnā tv ilavilā smṛtā |
pulastyāya sa rājarṣis tāṃ kanyāṃ pratyapādayat ||
ṛṣis tv ailavilis tasyāṃ viśravāḥ samapadyata |
tasya patnyaś catasras tu paulastyakulavardhikāḥ ||
puṣpotkaṭā ca rākā ca kaikasī devavarṇinī |
rūpalāvaṇyasaṃpannās tāsāṃ vai śṛṇuta prajāḥ ||
jyeṣṭhaṃ vaiśravaṇaṃ tasya suṣuve devarūpiṇī |
kaikasī janayat putraṃ rāvaṇaṃ rākṣasādhipam ||
kumbhakarṇaṃ śūrpaṇakhāṃ tathaiva ca vibhīṣaṇam |
puṣpotkaṭā vyajanayat putrān viśravasaḥ śubhān ||
mahodaraṃ prahastaṃ ca mahāpārśvaṃ kharaṃ tathā |
kumbhīnasīṃ tathā kanyāṃ rākāyāṃ śṛṇuta prajāḥ || (Kūrmapurāṇa 1.18.7–13)

35   brahmātmajaḥ pulastyo 'bhūt viśravās tasya naikaṣī |
puṣpotkaṭābhūt prathamā tatputro 'bhūd dhaneśvaraḥ ||
naikaṣyāṃ rāvaṇo jajñe viṃśadbāhur daśānanaḥ |
tapasā brahmadattena vareṇa jitadaivataḥ ||
kumbhakarṇaḥ sanidro 'bhūd dharmiṣṭho 'bhūd vibhīṣaṇaḥ |
svasā śūrpaṇakhā teṣāṃ rāvaṇān meghanādakaḥ || (Agnipurāṇa 1.11.2–4)

36   Very likely this is a variant of the name Rākā. See note 31 above.

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as the mother of Mahodara, Prahasta, Mahāpārśva, Khara, and a daughter named Kumbhīnasī (1.63.63–64ab).[37]

Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa 2.8.37–40, 47, names Puṣpotkaṭā and Vākā[38] as the two daughters of Mālyavān, Devavarṇinī as the daughter of Bṛhaspati, and Kaikasī as the daughter of Mālin. Devavarṇinī is the mother of Kubera, and Kaikasī is the mother of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Śūrpaṇakhā, and Vibhīṣaṇa. Puṣpotkaṭā's offspring are not mentioned.[39]

The maternal lineage of Rāvaṇa's family given in these various versions clearly presents a confused family history. However, all versions mentioned, with the exception of that found in the Mahābhārata agree on one point: Kaikasī is the mother of Rāvaṇa. Puṣpotkaṭā is mentioned as the name of the mother of Mahodara, Prahasta, Mahāpārśva, Khara, Kumbhanāsī, and even Kubera, but nowhere among the above-mentioned texts, outside of the Mahābhārata, is she identified as the mother of Rāvaṇa. That the Mahābhārata knows the names Rākā[40] and Puṣpotkaṭā, but does not mention the name Kaikasī is intriguing. Still the identification of the third woman, Mālinī, is

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37   ṛṣir airavilo yasyāṃ viśravāḥ samapadyata |
      tasya patnyaś catasras tu paulastyakulavardhanāḥ ||
      bṛhaspateḥ śubhā kanyā nāmnā vai devavarṇinī |
      puṣpotkaṭā balākā ca sute mālyavataḥ smṛte ||
      kaikasī mālinaḥ kanyā tāsāṃ vai śṛṇuta prajāḥ |
      jyeṣṭhaṃ vaiśravaṇaṃ tasmāt suṣuve devavarṇinī ||
      kaikasī cāpy ajanayad rāvaṇaṃ rākṣasādhipam |
      kumbhakarṇaṃ śūrpanakhāṃ dhīmantaṃ ca vibhiṣaṇam ||
      puṣpotkaṭā hy ajanayat putrāṃs tasmād dvijottamāḥ |
      mahodaraṃ prahastaṃ ca mahāpārśvaṃ kharaṃ tathā ||
      kumbhīnasīṃ tathā kanyāṃ balāyāḥ śṛṇuta prajāḥ |
      triśirā dūṣaṇaś caiva vidyujjihvaś ca rākṣasaḥ ||(Liṅgapurāṇa 1.63.59–64)

38   This is a variant of the name Rākā. See note 31 above.

39   tretāyugamukhe rājā tṛtīye sa babhūva ha |
      tasya celavilā kanyālambuṣāgarbhasaṃbhavā ||
      tasyāṃ jāto viśravās tu paulastyakulavardhanaḥ |
      bṛhaspatibṛhatkīrtir devācāryas tu kīrttitaḥ ||
      kanyāṃ tasyopayeme sa nāmnā vai devavarṇinīm |
      puṣpotkaṭāṃ ca vākāṃ ca sute mālyavatas tathā ||
      kaikasīṃ mālinaḥ kanyāṃ tāsāṃ tu śṛṇuta prajāḥ |
      jyeṣṭhaṃ vaiśravaṇaṃ tasya suṣuve devavarṇinī ||
      ...
      rāvaṇaṃ kumbhakarṇaṃ ca kanyāṃ śūrpaṇakhīṃ tathā |
      vibhīṣaṇacaturthāṃs tu kaikasy ajanayat sutān || (Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam 2.8.37–40; 47)

40   See note 31 above.

problematic. Both the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa and the Liṅgapurāṇa understand that Kaikasī is the daughter of Mālin, and, as noted above the name Mālinī could possibly be a patronymic derivation of the name Mālin. Thus the name Mālinī could possibly be applied to Kaikasī. If the Mahābhārata's use of the term Mālinī is a reference to Kaikasī, it might suggest that the authors of the Rāmopākhyāna passage were familiar with a version of the *rākṣasa* lineage more in line with that of the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa and the Liṅgapurāṇa than with that found in Vālmīki's Uttarakāṇḍa. But it still does not resolve the question why of all the texts consulted, it is the only one that identifies Puṣpotkaṭā as Rāvaṇa's mother. The names employed in the Rāmopākhyāna are thus clearly not random and their use demonstrates some familiarity with a history of the women of the *rākṣasa* lineage, but one that is not familiar with Kaikasī's role as Rāvaṇa's mother. That the Rāmopākhyāna even includes them indicates an awareness that these women somehow belong to the narrative, but that that very inclusion is so elliptical and seemingly divergent from all other known versions suggests that the authors find them of little interest to or concern for the rendering of their version of the Rāmakathā.

Similarly, for the Mahābhārata, while the three women are identified as *rākṣasīs*, their *rākṣasī-tvam*, as it were, is almost incidental and their inclusion in the narrative is apparently necessary to soothe the irascible sage Viśravas, but clearly back-grounded. The anger of the father toward his son, and the appeasing of the father by the son's gift of what can only be understood as sexualized objects becomes the basis of the narrative. Of the women themselves, other than their names, we know only that they are servants (*paricārikāḥ*—3.259.3), lovely-waisted (*sumadhyamāḥ*—3.259.5), charming (in that they made efforts to satisfy the angry sage *saṃtoṣayitum udyatāḥ*—3.259.4), talented in arts of seduction (i.e., singing and dancing *nṛttagītaviśāradāḥ*—3.259.4), desirous of [the *ṛṣi's*] well-being (*śreyaskāmāḥ*—3.259.5), and *rākṣasīs* (259.3). Such adjectives clearly mark the women as objectified creatures whose sole function is to sexually sate an irascible father figure.

On the other hand, in the Uttarakāṇḍa, equally as striking as the sheer length and attention devoted to the genealogy, is the prominence that these narratives allocate to the women of both the paternal and maternal sides of the family. Now, much of the narrative is given over to the histories of the various *rākṣasas* of Rāvaṇa's mother's clan, but the stories of the women of his lineage, albeit, primarily in their role as the bearers of offspring, are noteworthy as well.

In fact, Rāvaṇa's genealogy itself is framed by two such stories: the first, told at sarga 2, tells of the birth of Rāvaṇa's father, Viśravas, and the second told at sarga 9, narrates the story of Rāvaṇa's mother, Kaikasī, and culminates in his

birth. Not insignificantly, the first narrative we have in the Uttarakāṇḍa concerns Rāvaṇa's patrilineal descent. That both the kāṇḍa and the history of Rāvaṇa begin with such genealogical stories again suggests their importance to both author and audience.

The narrative begins in the second *sarga* and tells of the birth of Viśravas, the father of Rāvaṇa (7.2.4–29). Pulastya, a *brahmarṣi* and the mind-born son of Brahmā Prajāpati, lives in an *aśrāma* near the ashram of the royal-seer Tṛṇabindu on the slopes of Mt. Meru. But young girls—the daughters of the gods and great serpents as well as the *apsarases* and the daughters of the royal-seers—repeatedly come there to play, and in doing so distract Pulastya from his austerities (7.2.4–7.2.9). Pulastya becomes furious and curses them (atha ruṣṭo mahātejā vyājahāra mahāmuniḥ; 7.2.11ab): "Any young girl that comes within my sight shall become pregnant."[41] Needless to say the girls stop coming. But Tṛṇabindu's daughter (who remains unnamed throughout the passage) does not hear the sage's pronouncement, and goes there, absolutely fearlessly (tṛṇabindos tu rājarṣes tanayā na śṛṇoti tat | gatvāśramapadaṃ tasya vicacāra sunirbhayā ||; 7.2.11). As soon as she hears the sound of his vedic recitations and catches sight of the sage, she manifests the signs of pregnancy (14–15). Upon her return home, Tṛṇabindu discovers her condition and asks: "How could you have come to have so unseemly an appearance?"[42] Tṛṇabindu's daughter, still ignorant of what has happened, tells her father that she went alone to the heavenly ashram of Paulastya to look for her friends. Through meditation, Tṛṇabindu discerns what had happened. He takes his daughter to the ashram of Paulastya and offers her to him, to which Pulastya, who all along has desired her, agrees (24). Pulastya is pleased with the already pregnant young girl, and blesses her with a son named Viśravas. Viśravas will eventually become the father of both Kubera and Rāvaṇa.

This story, like so many others, links the power of asceticism with that of fertility and calls to mind the sexual potency of the male gaze. But the narrative is not so straightforward. The phrase *yā me darśanam āgacchet* (7.2.10a) in this context is somewhat ambiguous. The term *me*, "mine, of me" can be understood as either the object or subject of the *darśanam*, "seeing." Thus, one is unable to tell whether the curse means: "[any young girl] who would see me

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41   yā me darśanam āgacchet sā garbhaṃ dharayiṣyati || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.2.10cd)
     The motif of coming within the range of sight of a powerful being at an inappropriate
     time and being subsequently cursed, is common. See, for example, Rāmāyaṇa 7.78.11–29,
     where King Ila wanders into the region where Śiva and Parvatī are making love and is
     cursed to become a woman.
42   kiṃ tvaṃ etat tv asadṛśyaṃ dhārayasy ātmano vapuḥ | (Rāmāyaṇa 7.2.16cd)

(lit., who would come to a seeing of me) *or* would come within my sight," or both. The term *darśanam* is significant as well, as it is commonly used in a religious sense of seeing *or* perceiving the sacred. But the term can be understood both actively and passively. Thus the devotee can gaze upon the deity, or the deity might gaze upon the worshipper, or both actions can occur reciprocally.[43] The context here is clearly sacral. The region is sacred, as it is here that the religious activity of Pulastya is undertaken. We are told that the sage is practicing austerities, engaged in vedic recitation, and of restrained sense organs (*tapas tepe … svādhyāyaniyatendriyaḥ*; 7.2.7). Additionally, Tṛṇabindu's daughter is said to hear the vedic chanting (*vedadhvaniṃ śrutvā*; 7.2.14). While the agent of the action at 7.2.10 is ambiguous, at 7.2.14 it is made clear. The young girl is the visualizer of the sage (*sā … dṛṣṭvā … tapodhanam* [7.2.14]), and her transgression is the very activity of gazing. This agency makes her both an aggressor and the transgressor.[44]

   Not unexpectedly, the narrative reflects the deeply ingrained cultural attitudes toward young women and the ease with which they become threatening sexual and sexualized beings.[45] The narrative also highlights the virtual obsession of the epics to avoid depicting its sages and other males as having physical sexual intercourse as a means of procreation. Immediately outside of the protective world of her father and friends, Tṛṇabindu's daughter, seeming unaware of her sexual viability, nevertheless is marked as the transgressor and "suffers"

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43   See Diana Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Devine Image in India,* 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 3–7. The history and significance of the gaze in the early Indian tradition is discussed extensively by Jan Gonda (*The Eye and Gaze in the Veda*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe reeks, deel 75, no. 1 [Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1969]).

44   Compare Mahābhārata 1.104.6–10, where Kuntī, having pleased Durvāsas, is given a *mantra* to the effect that whichever god she might summon would give her a son. Curious, Kuntī, still a virgin, employs the mantra and, gazing upon the Sūrya, the sun god, whom she has summoned, is impregnated. Note particularly that Kuntī is the agent of the seeing (*dadarśa sā; dṛṣṭvā*, 9) and that the immediate result of that visualization is pregnancy (*tasyāṃ garbhaṃ dadhau tataḥ*, 10ab).

45   Perhaps most influential and best known of the expressions of a woman's position in society is found in Manusmṛti, a text on *dharmaśāstra*, dating from around 200 CE, which has codified attitudes that predate it by many centuries. Manu succinctly situates a woman's place in its patriarchal world:
bālye pitur vaśe tiṣṭhet pāṇigrāhasya yauvane |
putrāṇāṃ bhartari prete na bhajet strī svatantratām || 5.148.
In childhood she should be under her father's control, in youth, in the control of her husband, who has taken her hand. But when her husband has passed away, a woman should be under her sons' control. A woman should never enjoy independence.

as it were its physical manifestation. Pregnancy—both a visual representation of male weakness, that is, sexual activity, and the consequence of female transgression—is, after all unseemly for an unmarried girl. Additionally, the use of this story as the opening narrative of the kāṇḍa, I would argue, sets the tone for the book, preparing the audience for the epic's most controversial moment.

The sarga ends in the birth of Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera 7.2.28–29). The following sarga (7.3) tells of the birth of Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera), how he obtains Devavarṇinī, the daughter of Bharadvāja, as his wife, how he becomes the lord of wealth and a world guardian, how Brahmā gives him the Puṣpakavimāna, and how he comes to reign in Laṅkā, which, although built for the *rākṣasas*, was now empty and deserted. Surprised that there had been *rākṣasas* in Laṅkā before that time, Rāma then hears their history from the sage Agastya. Again Agastya tells of the births of *rākṣasa* brothers Heti and Praheti (7.4.14). In sargas 5–8, Agastya then narrates the history of the *rākṣasa* lineage beginning with Heti and ending with his great-grandson, Sumālin, who is the father of Rāvaṇa's mother Kaikasī. This history, although impressive in its detail, largely concerns itself with the male members of Kaikasī's family.[46]

The second such story, told at sarga 9, follows upon this history and ends with the birth of Rāvaṇa and his brothers and sister. The episode is used to complete the genealogy and merge the two Houses that will make up Rāvaṇa's family. This is the final story in the narrative of the genealogy, completing the history of Rāvaṇa's maternal family. That the narrative concerns the history of his mother's, rather than his father's lineage, is, as noted, a rare occurrence in the epic. But perhaps even more unusual is that it does not involve the male members of Rāvaṇa's maternal family but, much like the opening story of the unnamed daughter of Tṛṇabindu, specifically concerns his mother.

Here the story tells of the young *rākṣasī* Kaikasī, the daughter of Sumālin, who although perfect in every way, is still unmarried. Sumālin is worried that suitors for his daughter are afraid to ask for her hand. For even though he has made every effort on her behalf, no suitor has come forth, for fear of rejection. He says to her:

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46   A story found at sarga 4.20–31 might possibly be considered a partial exception as it in part concerns both a mother and her son. There we are told the story of Sukeśa's birth. The son of Heti, Vidyutkeśa is give the daughter of Sandhyā, Sālakaṭaṅkaṭā. She becomes pregnant, and gives birth to a son, Sukeśa. But in her eagerness to make love with her husband she abandons the child. The abandoned child, crying, is found by Umā and Śiva. Umā, moved by the child's unhappiness, makes him the same age as his mother, and Śiva, in order to please Umā, gives him as boons, immortality and a city that could fly through the sky. Umā the gives all rākṣasīs the boon that they might conceive and deliver a child at the very same moment and that the child would instantly become the same age as its mother.

Daughter, it is time to give you away, as your youth is passing. Intent on practicing righteousness, we have made every effort on your behalf.[47]
For you, dear daughter, are endowed with every virtue, like Śrī with her lotus. Still, you have not been chosen by any suitor out of fear of rejection.[48]

And, moreover, it is well known that:

For all those concerned about their honor, being a father of an unmarried girl is a great trouble. For, dear daughter, one does not know who might marry the girl.
A young girl will always remain a source of suspicion for three families—that of the mother, that of the father, and that of the one to which she is given.[49]

Sumālin instructs Kaikasī to as to what she must do:

Daughter, you must approach Viśravas Pulastya, that foremost of eminent sages born in the lineage of Prajāpati, and choose him yourself.
Without a doubt, daughter, you shall have sons, equal in blazing energy to the sun, maker of day, who will be just like the lord of wealth.[50]

Kaikasī is hesitant, but, fearful of disobeying her father, she approaches the sage even though it is at a bad time:

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47 putri pradānakālo 'yaṃ yauvanaṃ te 'tivartate |
    tvatkṛte ca vayaṃ sarve yantritā dharmabuddhayaḥ || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.4)

48 tvaṃ hi sarvaguṇopetā śrīḥ sapadmeva putrike |
    pratyākhyānāc ca bhītais tvaṃ na varaiḥ pratigṛhyase || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.5)
    On the term *putrikā* and its use, primarily in the Mahābhārata, see Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 49–56, 64–65, passim and Simon P. Brodbeck, "Solar and Lunar Lines in the Mahābhārata," *Religions of South Asia* 5, no. 1 (2011): 127–52. Note that here the term is apparently used interchangeably with *putrī* in the verse.

49 kanyāpitṛtvaṃ duḥkhaṃ hi sarveṣāṃ mānakāṅkṣiṇām |
    na jñāyate ca kaḥ kanyāṃ varayed iti putrike ||
    mātuḥ kulaṃ pitṛkulaṃ yatra caiva pradīyate |
    kulatrayaṃ sadā kanyā saṃśaye sthāpya tiṣṭhati || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.6–7)

50 sā tvaṃ munivaraśreṣṭhaṃ prajāpatikulodbhavam |
    gaccha viśravasaṃ putri paulastyaṃ varaya svayam ||
    īdṛśās te bhaviṣyanti putrāḥ putri na saṃśayaḥ |
    tejasā bhāskārasamā yādṛśo 'yaṃ dhaneśvaraḥ || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.8–9)

At that very time, the brahman, Pulastya's son, who was like a fourth sac-
rificial fire, was performing an Agnihotra rite.
Ignoring that fearsome hour out of deference to her father, she approached
and stood before him, her gaze lowered to his feet.[51]

Viśravas, gazing upon her, questions her, although he, as an omniscient sage,
already knows the answers to his questions:

Looking at that fair-hipped woman, her face like the full moon, the highly
illustrious sage, blazing, as it were, with his vital energy, spoke:
"Whose daughter are you, my good woman? Where have you come from
and for what reason? What can I do for you? Tell me truthfully, lovely
lady."[52]

Kaikasī, however, is no fool, and is clearly aware of the sage's powers:

Addressed in this fashion the young girl cupped her hands in reverence
and then said: "Through your own power, sage, please determine my
intention.
However, brahman, you must know that I have come here on my father's
instructions and that I am known by the name Kaikasī. Please determine
the rest for yourself."[53]

Having done so, Viśravas agrees to grant Kaikasī's wish and gives her offspring,
but on one condition:

After having entered into meditation, the sage said these words: "My
good woman, I have discovered the purpose that you have in mind.

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51   etasminn antare rāma pulastyatanayo dvijaḥ |
      agnihotram upātiṣṭhac caturtha iva pāvakaḥ ||
      sā tu tāṃ dāruṇāṃ velām acintya pitṛgauravāt |
      upasṛtyāgratas tasya caraṇādhomukhī sthitā || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.10–11)
52   sa tu tāṃ vīkṣya suśroṇīṃ pūrṇacandranibhānanām |
      abravīt paramodāro dīpyamāna ivaujasā ||
      bhadre kasyāsi duhitā kuto vā tvam ihāgatā |
      kiṃ kāryaṃ kasya vā hetos tattvato brūhi śobhane || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.12–13)
53   evam uktā tu sā kanyā kṛtāñjalir athābravīt |
      ātmaprabhāvena mune jñātum arhasi me matam ||
      kiṃ tu viddhi hi māṃ brahman śāsanāt pitur āgatām |
      kaikasī nāma nāmnāhaṃ śeṣaṃ tvaṃ jñātum arhasi || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.14–15)

> However, since you approached me at a fearful hour, now learn to what
> sort of sons you will give birth."[54]

Viśravas tells her that, since she has come at a fearful hour (*dāruṇāyāṃ tu velāyām*), her sons would be *rākṣasas* of cruel deeds. Kaikasī then implores him not to give her only cruel sons, and he grants a small reprieve, the youngest shall be righteous (7.9.17–20).

The last part of the story of the birth of Rāvaṇa and his siblings is fairly well-known, but how Kaikasī is forced to find her own husband and how she comes to conceive her children is less so. The theme of a young woman being forced to find her own husband is found elsewhere,[55] and the narrative parallels in a number of ways the story of the birth of Viśravas: a young woman, who is a potential [sexual] danger to her family, is sent or comes into the presence of a powerful sage, who, engaged in ritual practices, is distracted from those practices by the very presence of the young woman. The result is that the young girl is impregnated. In the story of the birth of Viśravas, the power of the male gaze is explicit. In this story it is implicit, as the gaze is mediated by the mental concentration or focus—a mental gaze, as it were. Both stories tell of female intrusion into a masculine space that is ritually sacred (marked by mental concentration and religious observations) and both lead to impregnation. We are left with little doubt that the mere gaze or sight of a male is potent enough to impregnate a female, and we are also reminded that no young woman is safe outside of the immediate supervision of her family or husband. Once again, the narrative clearly establishes the woman as the sexual aggressor and transgressor, a theme repeated from the opening story.[56]

What is unique here is that these two clearly parallel narratives frame the lineage of the *rākṣasa* Rāvaṇa, while providing both sides of the family with a similar story of female ancestry. Rāvaṇa descends from noble, but clearly

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54   sa tu gatvā munir dhyānaṃ vākyam etad uvāca ha |
     vijñātaṃ te mayā bhadre kāraṇaṃ yan manogataṃ ||
     dāruṇāyāṃ tu velāyāṃ yasmāt tvaṃ mām upasthitā |
     śṛṇu tasmāt sutān bhadre yādṛśāñ janayiṣyasi || (Rāmāyaṇa 7.9.16–17)

55   This theme of a beautiful woman with no suitor is seen, for example, in the Mahābhārata's tale of Sāvitrī, the daughter of Aśvapati (277–279). Sāvitrī is so beautiful, and all were so overpowered by her energy that none could wed her. Thus, Aśvapati sends her out to find her own husband.

56   See note 46 above, where we are told of Vidyutkeśa's wife, Sālakaṭaṅkaṭā. She is so distracted by her sexuality that she abandons her infant son. Note both the sexual aggressiveness attributed to the women and how the narrative sets in juxtaposition sexuality, gender, and the demonic.

flawed lineages. And at the heart of that flaw is sexual transgression, which is located in the feminine. Here at Rāvaṇa's birth we have the perfect storm, as it were—sexual transgression, misogyny, and the demonic—wherein the demonic is located in and emerges from the sexualized female body. This alignment is one repeated earlier in the epic, particularly in the Sundarakāṇḍa, and forms a core element of the imagination of the Rāmāyaṇa poet[s].[57]

This understanding is further reinforced in the Uttarakāṇḍa by the history of Rāvaṇa's half brother Kubera, whose own history is also given at this point, and serves as a foil, for he and Rāvaṇa share a father, Viśravas—whose own mother, Tṛṇabindu's unnamed daughter, it will be recalled, is sexually transgressive, but not a *rākṣasī*. Kubera's mother is Devavarṇinī, the daughter of the sage Bharadvāja. We know little of her history except that she is given in marriage and then conceives and bears a child (7.3.3–4). She is nowhere in the Uttarakāṇḍa associated with transgressive behavior and as the daughter of a sage, clearly lacks any *rākṣasa* blood. It comes as no surprise that her offspring does not suffer a similar fate to Rāvaṇa's.

Elsewhere in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, sexual transgression and the demonic are located on/in the body of the female.[58] To see how this is an explicit concern of Vālmīki, we can turn again to the Rāmopākhyāna, which, as I noted earlier, removes the narrative from its gendered frame, and, although once mentioning the *rākṣasa* association of the three women given to Viśravas, virtually silences any other information concerning them. We are only told what is absolutely necessary to explain the birth of Rāvaṇa and his siblings:

> Pleased with them, that blessed and magnanimous [sage] gave them boons.[59]

The Rāmopākhyāna's narrative does not concern itself with any sexually transgressive behavior of the women nor does it construct the *rākṣasa* women inherently as negative, at least any more so than other women (although, like

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57   See note 46 above and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, "Re-siting Sītā: Gender and Narrative in *Vālmīki's Sundarakāṇḍa*," *Purāṇa* 45, no. 2 (2003): 115–35; "Nikumbhilā's Grove: *Rākṣasa* Rites in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*," in *Proceedings of the XIIIth World Sanskrit Conference, Edinburgh: Epic Studies*, ed. J. Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 2009), 255–75; "Illusory Evidence: The Construction of *Māyā* in *Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa*," in *Epic and Argument in Sanskrit Literary History: Essays in Honor of R.P. Goldman*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 209–33.

58   See Goldman, "Re-siting Sītā: Gender and Narrative in *Vālmīki's Sundarakāṇḍa*"; "Nikumbhilā's Grove: *Rākṣasa* Rites in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*."

59   tāsāṃ sa bhagavaṃs tuṣṭo mahātmā pradadau varān | (Mahābhārata 3.259.6ab)

Devavarṇinī, they are associated with actions constructed as sexualized). In fact, the Rāmopakhyāna, while clearly at pains to provide a lineage for Rāvaṇa, is largely unconcerned with the women of his lineage. This leaves the Mahā-bhārata's audience somewhat at a loss to explain Rāvaṇa's evil ways, although the anger of Pulastya and his creation of a second self from his anger, may be an attempt to compensate for this lack or merely a muddled version of the episode found in Vālmīki. Note, too, how Kaikasī, Rāvaṇa's mother, is omitted from the Rāmopākhyāna's lineage, which instead provides three wives for the now five offspring [Khara has been included] of Rāvaṇa's immediate family. Perhaps we can find in this an attempt to parallel the family configuration of Rāma himself.

Finally, while the Uttarakāṇḍa's stories of Tṛṇabindu's daughter and Sumā-lin's daughter Kaikasī satisfy a narrative and structural agenda in the Rāvaṇa-carita, they can also be understood to serve a purpose in the larger logic of the kāṇḍa, which is to remind the audience of the fragile nature of a woman's purity and the constant threat she presents, themes that will resonate strongly in the later parts of the kāṇḍa, where accusations concerning Sītā's purity and her alleged sexually transgressive behavior become central to the kāṇḍa's nar-rative. That the Rāmopākhyāna's explanation of the lineage of Rāvaṇa is an apparent attempt to refashion the Uttarakāṇḍa's version to one more in keep-ing with its own concerns might give us pause to reflect once again not only on the relationship between the two narratives but to the relationship between the Rāmopākhyāna and the Uttarakāṇḍa.

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The Tale of an Old Monkey and a Fragrant Flower: What the Mahābhārata's Rāmāyaṇa May Tell Us about the Mahābhārata

Bruce M. Sullivan

I want to focus attention on an episode in the Mahābhārata in which Bhīma seeks *saugandhika* flowers to please Draupadī (Mahābhārata 3.146–53), resulting in his meeting Hanūmat.[1] Included in this encounter is a brief rendition of Hanūmat's heroic actions with and devotion to Rāma, a story that this episode calls "the Rāmāyaṇa." This is a fascinating story with many possible implications for our understanding of the Mahābhārata's history. Although it is not one of the Mahābhārata's sixty-seven subtales (upākhyāna),[2] it resembles them in a variety of ways and is linked to many passages of the Mahābhārata, as will be indicated below. My interest is in raising questions about what this surprise appearance in the Mahābhārata of a figure from the Rāmāyaṇa may tell us about the Mahābhārata.

Alf Hiltebeitel has stated: "I date *Manu* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* a little later than or possibly even overlapping with the completion of the *Mahābhārata* …" and has argued that the Sanskrit text of the Mahābhārata was written by brahmans

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1 I would like to thank those who attended the session at which I presented this paper during the 41st Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in October, 2012. Particular thanks go to Vishwa Adluri, Greg Bailey, Simon Brodbeck, Robert Goldman, James Laine, and Philip Lutgendorf for comments after the presentation, to Vishwa Adluri for organizing the event, and to Alf Hiltebeitel both for comments on an earlier version of this paper, and for inspiring me to approach the *Mahābhārata* in a new way. All citations of the Mahābhārata are to the Critical Edition: Sukthankar, V.S., *et al.* (eds.). *The Mahābhārata: For the First Time Critically Edited*, 19 vols. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933–59). It is conventional to use as his name either Hanūmān or Hanumān, and as noted by John Brockington (p. 134, note 1), the spelling with long u is more frequent in the Mahābhārata: see John Brockington, "Hanūmān in the *Mahābhārata*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 12, no. 2 (2004): 129–35. However, for the sake of consistency with other names cited in the stem form, I will use Hanūmat in this article.

2 Hiltebeitel lists (on pp. 467–69 [pp. 23–24 in this volume]) the 67 episodes the Mahābhārata names as upākhyāna, which he translates as "subtales." He comments, "I will favor the translation "subtale" for *upākhyāna*, with perhaps a hint of subtext." See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (2005): 455–511; 455, note 2.

working as a committee over a generation or two between 150 BCE and the year
1.[3] He adds that, "To speak of the temporal priority of the *Mahābhārata* over
the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manu* is thus not to rule out the possibility that the last two
might have been started before the *Mahābhārata* was finished."[4] Hiltebeitel
has also maintained that the Mahābhārata provided the pattern for the
Rāmāyaṇa, and I quote: "… the *Rāmāyaṇa* poet is familiar with the *Mahābhā-
rata*'s archetypal design and intent upon refining it."[5] Hiltebeitel's view is that
Vālmīki composed the Rāmāyaṇa by refining the Mahābhārata's (already exist-
ing) mode of expression into *kāvya,* refining also its structure and style by
reducing and incorporating into the main story the subtales for which the
Mahābhārata is famous.

Some have assumed or argued that the size of the Mahābhārata, the sheer
number of words, is evidence of a long compositional history—it would take
a long time to write so much, perhaps 400 or 800 years. Some have assumed
or argued that the diversity of literary styles and religious ideas would require
hundreds of years to be composed.[6] These, however, are assumptions rather
than persuasive arguments. As a counter-example, I can cite Isaac Asimov,
who wrote some 500 books—on popular science, history, chess, and science
fiction—while also serving as professor of biochemistry at Boston University.
I mention him not only because of the number of his many works, but also
their diversity: he published in all ten major categories of the Dewey Decimal
System, so he was not simply producing quickly written romance novels.
Indeed, as another example, Alf Hiltebeitel has written perhaps as much about

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3   See Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford
     University Press, 2011), 190–91; see also 11, and his *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's
     Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001),
     18–20.

4   Hiltebeitel, *Dharma*, 200.

5   Ibid., 413.

6   See, for example, E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin* (New
     York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), especially 396–400, in which he imagines a work prior to
     the Mahābhārata that did not feature the Pāṇḍavas, with growth and "intrusions of didactic
     matter" (398) in stages from 400 BCE to 400 CE, without much evidence to support such a
     chronology. An even more elaborate pattern of development in stages is proposed by James
     L. Fitzgerald in "Mahābhārata," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 2, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen,
     Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010). A similar but
     less elaborated view of its development over time can be seen in J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Ma-
     hābhārata*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), xxiii–xxv; see also his com-
     ment (ibid., xvi): "Whatever historical realities may also have been woven into the epic, it is
     not an accident of dynastic history; however fortuitous its career of expansion, the epic is not
     an accident of literary history. The grand framework was a *design*."

the Mahābhārata as he credits Vyāsa's committee with having accomplished! And these are individuals working without contributions from committees.

I focus our attention on this one episode in which Bhīma meets Hanūmat, not to throw a monkey wrench in the works, but because I think it provides an opportunity to test Alf Hiltebeitel's theory of the relationship between the Mahābhārata and other texts, as well as the early date for the completion of the Mahābhārata as we know it from the Critical Edition.

The Text Hanūmād-Bhīma-Samāgama (146–53)[7]

I will now summarize the passage in which Bhīma meets Hanūmat. Draupadī sees a remarkable flower brought by the wind and asks Bhīma to fetch more.[8] He climbs the mountain Gandhamādana ("intoxicating with fragrance"), along the way destroying a banana grove. Then he encounters a huge monkey, who yawns and slaps his tail on the ground, the sound echoing all around (the text tells us that his name is Hanūmat). Bhīma roars defiantly, and Hanūmat asks why he has been awakened when he is ill. He states that while animals do not know dharma, humans endowed with reason should have compassion for all creatures, but Bhīma has destroyed dharma by harming the forest and its creatures. He advises Bhīma to turn back (146).

Bhīma identifies himself as a kṣatriya named Bhīmasena Pāṇḍava, and a son of Vāyu. The text identifies Hanūmat as another son of the Wind, and he again advises Bhīma to turn back—he will not make way for Bhīma. When Bhīma insists, Hanūmat says that he does not have the strength to rise, so Bhīma should just jump over him. Bhīma declines the offer so as not to humble him, while asserting that he could have jumped over both the monkey and the mountain, like Hanūmat jumped over the ocean. Hanūmat asks for details, and Bhīma replies that Hanūmat is his brother, famous from the Rāmāyaṇa,

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7   *Ādhyāya* colophons in the manuscripts consulted for the Critical Edition have a variety of titles, including both long and short u, the word *samāgama* ("meeting") replaced by *saṃvāda* ("discussion"), and some that omit reference to Bhīma: Hanumad-Vākyaṃ ("Hanūmat's Speech") and Hanūmad-Darśanaṃ ("The Vision of Hanūmat"). I call this passage "Hanū-mād-bhīma-samāgama" because of the prevalence of this title in devanāgarī and Kāśmīrī manuscripts.

8   In stating that the flower is "floating down a river" (p. 180), Van Buitenen is wrong—it is wind-borne, appropriately for an episode featuring two sons of Vāyu. Nonetheless, there are reasons to see the Samāgama and "Five Indras" episodes as linked to one another, as he indicates and as I discuss below. See J.A.B. van Buitenen, trans. *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975).

Hanūmat's role in which Bhīma summarizes in one sentence: "For the sake of Rāma's wife, that Indra of monkeys jumped the 100-*yojana* sea in a single leap" (Mahābhārata 3.147.12). Bhīma claims to equal Hanūmat in strength and in battle, so he demands that the monkey move or Bhīma will defeat him. Hanūmat, regarding Bhīma as overly impressed with his own strength, asks that Bhīma take pity on him and just move his tail to pass by. Unable move the tail at all, Bhīma asks to be forgiven, and asks the identity of the monkey: is he a Siddha, a Deva, a Gandharva, or a Guhyaka? Hanūmat identifies himself by name for the first time, and summarizes his interaction with Rāma, whom he calls "Viṣṇu in human form" (*viṣṇur mānuṣarūpeṇa*; 3.147.28). Hanūmat recounts that after Rāma had recovered his wife, Hanūmat asked, "May I live as long as the story of Rāma (*rāmakathā*; 3.147.37) lives on in the worlds," which Rāma granted.

Bhīma bows to Hanūmat and asks to see the form in which Hanūmat leaped the ocean. Hanūmat replies that no one can see that form from another *yuga*, as all creatures comply with the time in which they live. Bhīma asks for knowledge of the yugas and Hanūmat teaches him the characteristics of each of the four eons in detail (Mahābhārata 3.148). Bhīma refuses to go until he sees Hanūmat's old form, so Hanūmat, in order to grant his brother a favor, grows to a mountainous size which both delights and surprises Bhīma. When Bhīma closes his eyes, Hanūmat announces that this is all Bhīma can stand to see, though he could grow as large as he wants. Bhīma asks that Hanūmat reduce his form, and wonders why Rāma didn't have Hanūmat alone defeat Rāvaṇa, to which Hanūmat replies that he did not want to detract from Rāma's glory. Hanūmat teaches Bhīma about dharma: he advocates worship of the gods with offerings and devotion (*bhaktyā*; 3.149.24), and urges Bhīma to adhere to his *svadharma*, namely *kṣatriya-dharma* (37), then goes on to describe a king's duties.

Only then does Hanūmat resume his smaller form; he embraces Bhīma, telling him that he reminds Hanūmat of Rāma. He offers Bhīma a boon, and Bhīma says that with Hanūmat as protector the Pāṇḍavas will conquer all enemies. Hanūmat offers to do a kindness: he will add his roar to Bhīma's on the battlefield while stationed on Arjuna's flagstaff. With that, Hanūmat disappears (*antaradhīyata*; 3.150.15), asking Bhīma to keep his location secret. The remainder of the story features Bhīma completing his search for the flowers by killing a contingent of Yakṣas and Rākṣasas who had opposed his flower-gathering, after which Draupadī and the Pāṇḍava brothers (other than Arjuna) were reunited with Bhīma, and Draupadī's desire for these flowers was fulfilled (153).

The Analysis

This episode, "Hanūmād-bhīma-samāgama," is striking for many reasons. The first to which l call attention is that this episode includes the only use of the term *avatāra* in the whole Mahābhārata! The word is not used in reference to Hanūmat and in its narrative context it has nothing to do with divinity either; it refers to Bhīma, being regarded by the consorts of Yakṣas and Gandharvas as if he were "a new incarnation of beauty."[9] As David Gitomer observed, this episode has "… a romantic framework with delicate hints of the erotic mood …. Such a place must also abound in all the *vibhāva*s of *śṛṅgāra rasa*—beautiful flowering trees, flocks of cuckoos, tranquil lakes variegated with lotuses and lilies, fragrant breezes."[10] Indications of the subtle suggestion of the erotic mood can be seen, for example, in the fact that Bhīma goes on a quest for flowers in this idyllic setting due to Draupadī's demand, "if you love me, bring me many more" (146.11). Repeated references in the text to her desire for these flowers, and his intention of pleasing her by gaining possession of them through heroic acts, establish a mood of *śṛṅgāra rasa.* This erotic motif is striking in its narrative context, as Draupadī and her husbands the Pāṇḍavas are in exile, living much as ascetic renouncers would have lived, and with hints of celibacy. Despite repeated references just before this passage to their asceticism (e.g., *tapas* twice in 3.141.22), they are not renounced ascetics: as observed by James McHugh, flowers are forbidden to celibate Vedic students and Buddhist monks because of their sensuous qualities, but Bhīma follows the "scent-trail" of the *saugandhika*:

> The wind is instrumental in bringing the flower to Draupadī, but it is the perfume and beauty of the flower itself that creates in her the desire for more flowers, and it is the subsequent desire of Bhīma to please her that leads him to his brother: wind, perfume, desire, and union.[11]

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9   Quoting the translation of Van Buitenen, *Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 500: *navāvatāraṁ rūpasya* (Mahābhārata 3.146.33). Sutton is thus incorrect when he states that the Mahābhārata "has a more limited understanding of the concept and in fact never once in the Critical Edition uses the term *avatāra*." See Nicholas Sutton, *Religious Doctrines in the* Mahābhārata (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 156.

10   See David L. Gitomer, "Rākṣasa Bhīma: Wolfbelly among Ogres and Brahmans in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* and the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 310.

11   James McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93–95. He cites Mānavadharmaśāstra 2.175 and 177 on the prohibition of flowers to ascetics.

Bhīma's desire-driven quest is the context for the female residents of the forest regarding Bhīma as if he were "a new incarnation of beauty" while seated beside their lovers, gazing with interest at him. But this noun *avatāra*, of course, has other and very significant connotations that have nothing to do with the erotic, but with attitudes of devotion to God. Just as the erotic *rasa* is being suggested by the setting, Draupadī's demand, etc., the presence here of the term avatāra may be taken as suggesting an attitude of religious devotion (*bhakti*), a subtle cue to the audience just before Bhīma meets Hanūmat. Use of the word *avatāra* at the beginning of this passage is no accident, and is worth bearing in mind as we look at other aspects of the episode.

This Samāgama episode features one of the main characters, Bhīma, in his current life so it is part of the main story of the Mahābhārata, not a "mirror story" such as Nala's that features other characters.[12] Bhīma is very much in character: he destroys a banana grove, is aggressive, and kills Yakṣas for the sake of flowers. There are, however, two surprising incidents in this episode regarding Bhīma. The first is his response to Hanūmat's suggestion that Bhīma just jump over him: Bhīma refers to having come to know the Supreme Soul (*nirguṇaḥ paramātmeti*) beyond all qualifications, so he won't humble or insult him by jumping over (Mahābhārata 3.147.8–9). The occasions in which Bhīma offers a spiritual reason for not being heroic are few and far between in the Mahābhārata—indeed, this must be unique. The second surprise regarding Bhīma is that he does not accept the offer of extraordinary food from Hanūmat—roots and fruit that are similar to *amṛta* (146.81). This too must be the only occasion in the Mahābhārata on which Bhīma declines an offer of food; his nickname "Wolfbelly" (Vṛkodara) is due to his appetite, an excess of which is stated to be partly responsible for his death in the Himālayas.[13] But he returns to his usual character once Hanūmat is gone. It is noteworthy, however, that this episode involves only Bhīma among the main characters, and he does not

12 As discussed by Madeleine Biardeau in *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 412–13.

13 Mahābhārata 17.2.23–25. Danielle Feller, in a publication that only appeared as this article was going to press, makes a similar observation about "Bhīma, the notorious glutton." Danielle Feller, "Bhīma's Quest for the Golden Lotuses (*Mahābhārata* 3.146–153 and 3.157–59)," in *Battle, Bards and Brāhmins. Papers of the 13th World Sanskrit Conference*, Volume II, ed. John L. Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012), 88. She also here (in note 22) remarks on Bhīma ignoring the offer of extraordinary roots and fruit, "This also shows that Bhīma had a different sort of *amṛta* in mind just then." Her important article on this episode compares it with Vedic poems about *amṛta* and the sun, and states that Bhīma "fits into a lineage of subversive heroes who go against the established powers to climb to heaven and to obtain immortality in one form or another." Ibid., 83.

mention to anyone else that he had met Hanūmat. The end of the episode reunites him with his brothers and wife, but Bhīma neglects to mention this particular event of his day: that he has met a God and been blessed by him, that this God offered to wipe out their enemies for them, and that this deity will from now on reside on Arjuna's flagstaff. Nor does he mention that he has already met Hanūmat when, later in our text, a fuller account of the story of Rāma is told to all of them, the "Rāmopākhyāna" (Mahābhārata 3.258–75). Hanūmat asked that his location be kept secret, but Bhīma keeps secret the entire encounter.

Bhīma comments that he is aware of the exploits of Hanūmat in the Rāmāyaṇa, a story he knows by that name. The Critical Edition text has no variant readings for the line in which the Rāmāyaṇa is named.[14] Van Buitenen, in his brief introductory remarks on the Samāgama asks, "Has this episode been the inspiration of the later retelling of *The Rāmāyaṇa* story?"—by which he means the "Rāmopakhyāna."[15] To me, the reverse is the more likely, as I see this episode as dependent on a number of other episodes and subtales which would have had to be in place in our text for this episode to have been created, as it echoes themes of those other passages. As Philip Lutgendorf states, "… Bhīma's quest for the *saugandhika* flower offers a masterful display of one of the *Mahābhārata*'s most striking features: its fugue-like variation on its own themes …."[16] In my view, indeed, this episode is best understood, by analogy with the fugue, or (perhaps better) Karṇātak music, as restating and elaborating themes already introduced elsewhere in the work.[17]

Are we to conclude from use of the title Rāmāyaṇa that this whole Samāgama episode was composed once Vālmīki's text was known to Vyāsa's committee, and to audiences? I do not think that this conclusion is warranted. It is important to notice that the title Rāmāyaṇa occurs elsewhere in

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14   bhīma uvāca
      bhrātā mama guṇaślāghyo buddhisattvabalānvitaḥ |
      rāmāyaṇe 'tivikhyātaḥ śūro vānarapuṁgavaḥ || (Mahābhārata 3.147.11)

15   See Van Buitenen, *Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 180.

16   See Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 281–82.

17   As A.K. Ramanujan observed, "I'd suggest that the central structuring principle of the epic is a kind of repetition. One might say that repetition or replication is the central principle of any structuring …. Indian artworks, like the Hindu temple, or the decads (*pattu*) of Tamil classical or bhakti poetry, or the rāgas of Karnatak music, are built on the principle of interacting structures of repetition and elaboration and variation." See A.K. Ramanujan, "Repetition in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 421.

the Mahābhārata as well, in Ādiparvan's table of contents, the Parvasaṃgraha (*rāmāyaṇam upākhyānam*; Mahābhārata 1.2.126c), but here the title refers to the "Rāmopakhyāna" as the Rāmāyaṇa subtale. Clearly the table of contents is using the title *Rāmāyaṇa* without reference to Vālmīki's text, since whatever the "Rāmopakhyāna" is—a compendium, an epitome, or a work entirely independent of and perhaps prior to Vālmīki's—whatever its relationship to the Rāmāyaṇa, the "Rāmopakhyāna" is not Vālmīki's text. Yet the Mahābhārata uses Rāmāyaṇa as the title of its subtale about Rāma. Since Bhīma can refer to his brother's exploits as known from the Rāmāyaṇa, and the Mahābhārata can call the "Rāmopakhyāna" the *rāmāyaṇam upākhyānam*, it would be reasonable to conclude that Rāmāyaṇa was a term in use generally for the story of Rāma even before Vālmīki used it as his title.[18]

  This Samāgama depiction of Hanūmat differs markedly from that in the "Rāmopākhyāna" by emphasizing his role, particularly jumping over the ocean. I want to highlight how this short episode, the "Samāgama," magnifies the importance of Hanūmat, compared with his depiction in the "Rāmopākhyāna" subtale and the Rāmāyaṇa. He appears to be immortal: he asked for and received the boon from Rāma of living as long as the story of Rāma was known, hence his lifespan was lengthened in both the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. Moreover, Hanūmat calls to the attention of Bhīma that the roots and fruit of the banana trees he is devastating taste like *amṛta*, suggesting that Hanūmat's daily diet has not only lengthened his lifespan but made him immortal. As a result, he has outlived Rāma from a prior *yuga*. Hanūmat can dramatically change his form, making it as large as he wants, and to leave he "disappears" (*antaradhīyata*), something even the most heroic of the warriors cannot do— Vyāsa can "disappear" but not the heroes. Arjuna's Hanūmat flagstaff similarly "disappears" at the end of the war (*kapir antardadhe divyo dhvajo*; Mahābhārata 9.61.12). Four times Hanūmat is compared to Indra: he is introduced as "tall

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18   Van Buitenen interestingly conforms to the same usage in referring to the "Rāmopakhyāna" subtale as "The Rāmāyaṇa story." *Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 180. His discussion of the two (*Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 207–14, quoting 213–14) concludes that the tale, "after its contents were fixed in the story of Rāma ("Rāmopakhyāna"), underwent further development, acquired a new beginning and a new end, attracted subsidiary elements, and became known as the original poem (*ādikāvya*) of Vālmīki. The ones responsible for the inclusion of the story of *Rāma* in *The Book of the Forest* either did not know of Vālmīki's poem, or knew that the story of *Rāma* was different from it." Brockington demonstrated close correspondence between the Northeast recension of the Rāmāyaṇa and the "Rāmopakhyāna" but also acknowledges the latter's influence on the former, a literary feedback loop; see John L. Brockington. *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 473–77; and in greater detail, *Epic Threads: John Brockington on the Sanskrit Epics*, ed. Greg Bailey and Mary Brockington (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 288–325.

as an Indra pole" (146.60); and his tail is described as "stretched high like Indra's rainbow" (147.18). Twice he is an "Indra of monkeys" (147.1 and 12). In addition to emphasizing his power and divinity, these comparisons to Indra may also have been made to reinforce the idea of his great antiquity (another indicator of immortality), a subject to which I shall soon return.

What then are the other episodes in the Mahābhārata, besides the "Rāmo-pākhyāna," that the Samāgama echoes, or with which it resonates? It is parallel to the other two episodes in this parvan in which one of the trio of elder Pāṇḍava brothers encounters a divine relative: Arjuna meets his father Indra and Yudhiṣṭhira meets his father Dharma in disguise as a riddling Yakṣa. The other two meetings feature deities who appear in the Mahābhārata's main story elsewhere. This is not so regarding Bhīma's meeting with Hanūmat (except insofar as Hanūmat could be regarded as present on Arjuna's flagstaff, but, as indicated below, he is not explicitly identified in these other references). These meetings occur in our text with the pattern youngest to eldest brother, so Bhīma's encounter is appropriately the middle one. In each case, the Pāṇḍava has an encounter with a divine family elder who tests and teaches him: as James Laine has indicated, these "visions of God" are initiatory encounters.[19] Despite the dazzling nature of Bhīma's initiation, his is surely the least transformative of the three encounters; perhaps it was added to complete a pattern, echoing themes from elsewhere in the text.

Additionally, this episode is linked to the "Burning of the Khāṇḍava Forest."[20] This episode that ends the Ādiparvan includes Arjuna receiving from Varuṇa the distinctive chariot with which he triumphs in the Mahābhārata:

> On this greatest of chariots was fastened a shining flagstaff, like Indra's rainbow, made of gold, superb and magnificent. On top of it perched beautifully a divine monkey, marked with the signs of lion and tiger, which seemed to roar out. On the banner there were large creatures of many sorts whose roars made the forces of the enemy faint.[21]

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19   See James W. Laine,"Out of Character: Marginal Voices and Role-Transcendence in the *Mahābhārata*'s Book of the Forest," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19 (1991): 273–96, and his *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1989), which includes a partial translation of the Samāgama episode.

20   Mahābhārata 1.214–25; see also an early article by Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Burning of the Forest Myth," in *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 208–24.

21   Mahābhārata 1.216.12–14:
āśritā taṁ rathaśreṣṭhaṁ śakrāyudhasamā śubhā |
tāpanīyā surucirā dhvajayaṣṭir anuttamā || 12

We see the same comparison made between the flagstaff in this episode (*śakrāyudhasamā*) and Hanūmat's arching tail in the Samāgama (*indrāyudham*): both are like Indra's bow. Throughout the Mahābhārata there are many references to Arjuna's chariot being "monkey-bannered" (*kapiketu*, etc.). The "Hanūmād-bhīma-samāgama" is unique in the Critical Edition in identifying the "divine monkey" on Arjuna's banner as Hanūmat, and supplying a reason for the monkey to be his emblem.[22] As we have seen, the text states that Hanūmat seeks to do a favor for his brother Bhīma, so he will add his roar to Bhīma's on the battlefield, and he will reside on Arjuna's banner.[23] This means that Arjuna has been driving around in his chariot for some years with a divine monkey on its flagstaff before Hanūmat announces his kind offer to reside there. Notice that Hanūmat does not say that he has been there already for several years; he seems only now to be taking up residence on Arjuna's flagstaff. This, and the fact that Hanūmat occupies Arjuna's rather than Bhīma's own banner, suggest to me that the numerous references to Arjuna's monkey emblem were already in place throughout the text, and this episode is amplifying on those, explaining the identity of that divine monkey. In other words, this episode is dependent on the many references to Arjuna's monkey banner, and takes its place in the text at the end of its period of composition, however long that was, in explanation of the numerous existing monkey-banner references. Since we know of no connection between Hanūmat and Arjuna—after all, they never met—we must wonder why Arjuna has a monkey as his emblem, here uniquely identified as Hanūmat.

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tasyāṁ tu vānaro divyaḥ siṁhaśārdūlalakṣaṇaḥ |
vinardann iva tatrasthaḥ saṁsthito mūrdhny aśobhata || 13
dhvaje bhūtāni tatrāsan vividhāni mahānti ca |
nādena ripusainyānāṁ yeṣāṁ saṁjñā praṇaśyati || 14.

22   Though as Hiltebeitel observes, one Kāśmīrī manuscript Sukthankar (*Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, xii, li) regarded as "carelessly written" omits three lines (147.11c–12d), including this one; see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Authorial Paths through the Two Sanskrit Epics, Via the Rāmopākhyāna," in *Epic Undertakings: Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, vol. 2. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009), 205–6, n. 71.

23   The key passage is 3.150.13–15; note the future tense verbs describing what Hanūmat will soon be doing: evam uktas tu hanumān bhīmasenam abhāṣata |
bhrātṛtvāt sauhṛdāc cāpi kariṣyāmi tava priyam || 13
camūṁ vigāhya śatrūṇāṁ śaraśaktisamākulām |
yadā siṁharavaṁ vīra kariṣyasi mahābala |
tadāhaṁ bṛṁhayiṣyāmi svaraveṇa ravaṁ tava || 14
vijayasya dhvajasthaś ca nādān mokṣyāmi dāruṇān |
śatrūṇāṁ te prāṇaharān ity uktvāntaradhīyata || 15.

The only possible answer I see for this is Vedic. There is one Vedic poem in which Indra is associated with a monkey, Vṛṣākapi, the "bull-monkey" (Ṛgveda 10.86). This poem is difficult to interpret, and is the only one in which Vṛṣākapi appears. As Stephanie Jamison indicates, the poem may have been part of the horse sacrifice's liturgy.[24] In any case, this Vedic poem would provide a reason for Arjuna, son of Indra, to have as his battle-emblem a divine monkey—namely, that this monkey is associated with Indra, and therefore with Vedic sacrifice and timeless truth. Clearly Vṛṣākapi was not Hanūmat in the Ṛgveda, but the Mahābhārata here identifies the monkey banner with Hanūmat and that association has persevered.[25] Indeed, Hanūmat and Bhīma remain associated in the popular imagination in a variety of ways, among which these can be noted:

1. An old temple to Hanūmat (at Yamuna Bazaar or Nigambodh Ghat in Delhi) is regarded as having been founded by Bhīma;[26]
2. Popular Kathakali enactments in Kerala of this saugandhika episode;[27]
3. The Hindu nationalist movement, as Joseph Alter observes concerning the ideology of the RSS: "Poetic verses and slogans commemorate the heroic glory of epic characters such as Bhim, the Pandava brother who possessed phenomenal strength, and Hanuman, whose martial exploits in the service of Ram are regarded as the essence of courageous duty and just aggression."[28]
4. India's wrestling tradition, to which I shall soon return.

The Samāgama episode thus draws on the association between Indra and Arjuna, well established throughout our text, and associates Hanūmat with both Indra and Arjuna. The rest of the Critical Edition, however, does not know Hanūmat as the identity of the monkey on Arjuna's banner. To me this suggests

24   See Stephanie W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife, Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 74–88.

25   As noted by Brockington in John L. Brockington, "Hanumān in the Mahābhārata," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 12, no. 2 (2004): 133.

26   See Philip Lutgendorf, "Monkey in the Middle: The Status of Hanuman in Popular Hinduism," *Religion* 27 (1997): 313.

27   See Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Kathakali Dance-Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play* (London: Routledge, 2000), 101–17 for a translation of the dance-drama Kalyāna-Saugandhikam, composed about the year 1700, with pictures and discussion.

28   See Joseph S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 261.

that this identity was entered into the text at the very end of its compositional history.

Another episode linked to the Samāgama is the Bhagavadgītā. Hanūmat complies with Bhīma's request to see his "incomparable form" (*rūpam apratimaṁ*; Mahābhārata 3.148.3) in which he leaped over the ocean, just as Kṛṣṇa fulfills Arjuna's request to see his supreme form (*rupam aisvaryaṃ*; Bhagavadgītā 11.3) in the Gītā. In that incomparable form, Hanūmat delivers teachings on *kṣatriya-dharma* and *rājā-dharma* as well as time and the four-yuga system of world eons.[29] Such teachings parallel themes in the Bhagavadgītā, as when Kṛṣṇa refers to himself as Time (Bhagavadgītā 11.32) and insists that Arjuna fulfill his dharma as a *kṣatriya*. Another parallel between the Samāgama and the Gītā is their references to Viṣṇu. Hanūmat identifies Rāma as "Viṣṇu in human form" (147.28), and Kṛṣṇa is addressed twice as "Viṣṇu" when Arjuna is viewing the supreme form Kṛṣṇa reveals (Bhagavadgītā 11.24 and 30). In addition, both Hanūmat and Kṛṣṇa promote devotion as a religious practice. Hanūmat advocates that Bhīma worship the gods with offerings and *bhakti* (149.24), and while this is less specific as to the object of that devotion than Kṛṣṇa's admonition to be devoted in particular to him (Bhagavadgītā 18.65), the religious practice is the same. And note that the vision of Kṛṣṇa's form is a secret available only to Arjuna,[30] as the vision of Hanūmat and his location is to be Bhīma's secret.[31] This episode magnifies the importance of Hanūmat by comparing him implicitly to Kṛṣṇa; the depiction of the two of them performing such similar actions and imparting such similar teachings, each to a Pāṇḍava brother, suggests that we view Hanūmat and Kṛṣṇa as comparable divine figures. Certainly this

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29   Luis González-Reimann has argued that the yuga teaching is not integral to the Mahābhārata, and not consistently presented either; Mārkaṇḍeya's discourse (187) disagrees with Hanūmat's (147) in certain respects; see Luis González-Reimann, *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas: India's Great Epic Poem and the Hindu System of World Ages* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 102–6. In my view, the four-yuga idea may be "integral" to the Mahābhārata even if it is not discussed frequently in the text. That the four-yuga conception of time is taught may be seen as a likely indicator of the relative lateness of this passage, but that does not mean that it is irrelevant to the conception of the text as we have it in the Critical Edition. Certainly, our understanding of the historical relationship between the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa cannot be based on the traditional understanding that the latter describes events of a yuga prior to the Mahābhārata's events—even if the Mahābhārata depicts Hanūmat as ancient.

30   Kṛṣṇa states that no one but Arjuna has ever beheld his supreme form, and it cannot be seen by anyone but Arjuna (Bhagavadgītā 11.47–48 = Mahābhārata 6.33.47–48).

31   In like fashion, Yudhiṣṭhira is the only one to get a vision of his father Dharma, since Dharma talks to him only when Yudhiṣṭhira's four brothers are unconscious (end of book 3) or already dead (book 18).

episode also has a humorous dimension: the audience knows the identity of Hanūmat while Bhīma does not, and so he is humbled. This contrasts with the serious tone of the Gītā, but the divinity of Hanūmat is no joking matter. That the Mahābhārata's audience needs no introduction to Hanūmat and is in on the joke from the outset is worth noticing. The fact that these two Pāṇḍava brothers each received such similar teachings, each having begged forgiveness and asked the deity to reveal his supreme form, after which each warrior requested that he resume his prior, smaller form, can only indicate that one account is based on the other. This suggests to me that the Bhagavadgītā, so much more dramatic and well-integrated into the Mahābhārata as a whole, has provided the model and the Samāgama resonates with the Gītā, which it here foreshadows in the text.

Another episode linked to the Samāgama is parallel to it and follows it almost immediately in the text (157–59). This passage features Bhīma going on a quest for more *saugandhika* flowers up Gandhamādana mountain at Draupadī's request, where he finds the flowers, kills Yakṣas, meets Kubera who blesses him, and collects more flowers for Draupadī (though she had a bunch of them a couple of chapters earlier!).[32] Van Buitenen had thought that the second ascent of the Gandhamādana was "a recast of the first."[33] Grünendahl points out correctly that the Parvasaṃgraha table of contents (Mahābhārata 1.2) shows no awareness of the "Samāgama," only the second ascent of Gandhamādana, which he deems the original version.[34] Themes in the two paired

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[32] The other three Pāṇḍava brothers and Draupadī joined Bhīma (Arjuna not having returned as yet), and Bhīma handed over the lotus flowers (Mahābhārata 3.153.28):

anuśāsya ca kaunteyaṃ padmāni pratigṛhya ca |
tasyām eva nalinyāṃ te vijahrur amaropamāḥ ||

Danielle Feller rightly observes, "After this great effort on Bhīma's part to get the lotuses for Draupadī, the end of the story is something of an anti-climax … we would expect Bhīma to give them to Draupadī with some pomp and ceremony." Feller, "Bhīma's Quest for the Golden Lotuses (*Mahābhārata* 3.146–53 and 3.157–59)," 91. I take this verse as indicating that Draupadī does receive the flowers for which she had sent Bhīma, not as Feller does when she states, "We do not even know if Draupadī herself … ever receives them." Ibid., 91–92.

[33] Van Buitenen, *Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 201–2.

[34] Grünendahl argues that efforts have been made by the interpolator of the Samāgama to accommodate it, and mark what had been the original ascent account (155–58) as the second; see Reinhold Grünendahl, "Zu den beiden Gandhamādana-Episoden des Āraṇya-kaparvan," *Studien Zur Indologie und Iranistik* 18 (1993): 110–11. However, as noted by Hiltebeitel both accounts have Southern Recension interpolations, with the Samāgama episode having even more than the other, a finding that does not support Grünendahl's idea that the text's second ascent (155–58) was necessarily in place earlier than the

ascents of Gandhamādana resonate with the Nārāyaṇīya section of the
Śāntiparvan (12.321–39).[35] As Austin shows, the two accounts of the Gandha-
mādana mountain ascent also foreshadow actions and themes of the last two
parvans of the Mahābhārata, in which the final ascent of the Himālayas leads
our heroes to heaven. Austin's reading of the text is that its conclusion influ-
enced the structure of the pair of mountain-climbing episodes in Book 3:

> [T]he author of this passage, being intimately familiar with the epic con-
> tents before him and in particular with the special rapport between the
> Pāṇḍavas' deeds while in exile and their final acts, naturally reflected
> these themes within his account of the Gandhamādana ascent and in so
> doing deepened and enriched the text's narrative integrity.[36]

So this episode can be seen as linked to important segments of the Mahābhā-
rata that convey some of the text's most profound messages: about Nārāyaṇa,
about dharma, and about the attainment of heaven.

   These ascents of the Gandhamādana are part of the Tīrthayātrā segment of
the third parvan, a series of visits to sacred places. This is the only mountaintop
site visited by our heroes, and is often called Kailāsa (145.15)—the names are
used interchangeably—so it is associated not only with Kubera but with Śiva.[37]
The Pāṇḍavas were making a pilgrimage to the *āśrama* of Badarī, ancient site
of the *tapas* of Nara and Nārāyaṇa (145.16). That the mountain is actually a
heavenly site is suggested by Hanūmat's repeated statements to Bhīma that he
must go no further as humans cannot travel beyond this point.[38] Bearing in
mind this feature of Gandhamādana/Kailāsa, its association with both Śiva
and Nārāyaṇa, and the seemingly celestial source of the extraordinary flowers,
note that there is another episode with which the Samāgama might be seen as

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"Samāgama." See Alf Hiltebeitel, "On Sukthankar's 'S' and Some Shortsighted Assessments
and Uses of the Pune Critical Edition (CE)." *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011):
109.

35   As argued by both Grünendahl, "Zu den beiden Gandhamādana," and Christopher Austin,
"Draupadī's Fall: Snowballs, Cathedrals, and Synchronous Readings of the Mahābhārata,"
International Journal of Hindu Studies 15, no. 1 (2011): 111–37.

36   Austin ("Draupadī's Fall," 130) also states: "… we are witnessing, I believe, an echo from the
epic conclusion bouncing back into a later contribution to Book 3."

37   As noted by Grünendahl ("Zu den beiden Gandhamādana," 125–28) for Mahābhārata
3.140 through 3.152. He also cites Mahābhārata 2.10.22, describing Kubera's *sabhā*, which
floats in the sky like a peak of Mount Kailāsa, at which Śiva and his *gaṇas* reside.

38   3.146.78–81 and 3.147.40–41. Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 546–47, and Feller, "Bhīma's
Quest," 85 also state that the mountain is a heavenly site.

linked thematically, The Five Indras (1.189). I see these as sharing a theme of a quest for a special flower that results in a revelation: Indra climbs a mountain seeking the source of the golden lotus flowers floating down the River Gaṅgā and aggressively encounters Śiva, who humbles him. Śiva decrees, and Nārāyaṇa agrees, that this Indra and four former Indras will be born as the five Pāṇḍavas, and that the Goddess Śrī will take birth as their wife. Vyāsa then reveals this secret to King Drupada, so this revelation about the divine plan comes from a family elder. Perhaps the saugandhika flower episode is echoing the pattern of the quest for a special flower in The Five Indras with its revelation to a Pāṇḍava family member by a family elder. This would be another instance of repetition, elaboration, and variation on an important theme.

I cannot resist commenting on one other way in which this episode is suggestive and thematically rich. Not long after Bhīma meets Hanūmat, the Pāṇḍavas spend their year incognito, and Bhīma announces that his disguise would be as cook and wrestler.[39] As Joseph Alter observes, "Kings have kept wrestlers because the physical strength of the wrestler symbolizes the political might of the king."[40] Obviously, Bhīma is well suited to such symbolic representation. Not only does he defeat some professional wrestlers, he mangles the general Kīcaka with his bare hands to protect Draupadī. I mention Bhīma's depiction as a wrestler because of the strong association modern wrestlers in India have with Hanūmat, whom they worship, and with Bhīma, who is also praised and commemorated at their gymnasiums.[41] Interestingly, Bhīma defends Draupadī from the relatives of Kīcaka by magnifying his size, after which he found it necessary to rearrange his clothing before smashing them with an uprooted tree.[42] Like his elder brother Hanūmat, Bhīma too here man-

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39   Mahābhārata 4.2.1–7, where the term (used twice) for wrestler or pugilist is *niyodhaka-*.

40   See Alter, who also states: "Royal courts and princely estates have sponsored wrestlers probably since the time of Kansa, Krishna, Ravana, and the Pandava brothers. However, there is no detailed historical record of this and no way of telling whether wrestling patronage has changed over time. In all likelihood, the formal aspect of patronage has not changed significantly ...." *The Wrestler's Body*, 71–72.

41   Alter comments, "In spite of the incipiently sectarian tone of much wrestling rhetoric— where images of Shiva, shakti, and previous Pandava war heroes abound—there is usually also a more pervasive tone of secular, non-communal fraternity." Ibid., 262.

42   Mahābhārata 4.22.17–18.
     ity uktvā sa mahābāhur vijajṛmbhe jighāṃsayā |
     tataḥ sa vyāyataṃ kṛtvā veṣaṃ viparivartya ca |
     advāreṇābhyavaskandya nirjagāma bahis tadā ||
     sa bhīmasenaḥ prākārād ārujya tarasā drumam |
     śmaśānābhimukhaḥ prāyād yatra te kīcakā gatāḥ ||

ifests an enormous form for a heroic act. While I find no textual basis in the
Mahābhārata for thinking that his meeting with Hanūmat led Bhīma to his
disguise as a wrestler, or his ability to enlarge his form, it is a tempting idea; it
would be so appropriate!

The Samāgama may be a relatively late addition to the Mahābhārata, but it
is incontestably part of the Critical Edition, and we are exceedingly limited in
our ability to envision any version of the Mahābhārata prior to the Critical
Edition; indeed, to imagine any earlier version is precisely that, an act of imagi-
nation.[43] This episode is linked thematically to many other episodes, even if
the Critical Edition has no other references to Bhīma meeting Hanūmat. The
Samāgama episode uses the term *bhakti*—does this help us date this episode?
I note that the last verse of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad advocates that one cul-
tivate bhakti for God and for one's *guru*. Patrick Olivelle has stated that the
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad was "composed probably in the last few centuries BCE."[44]
If he is correct, such a date for this use of the term *bhakti* would correlate well
with Alf Hiltebeitel's theory that the Mahābhārata was written between 150
BCE and the year 1.

Perhaps the feature of this episode that is most problematic with regard to a
date of composition about 100 BCE for the Mahābhārata as a whole, as Alf
Hiltebeitel envisions, is that it presents Hanūmat as a deity. The episode does
not exactly depict Bhīma worshiping Hanūmat—he asks if Hanūmat is a *deva*
or some other type of being greater than human, but gets no answer, he bows,
he asks forgiveness, as one might of a deity. Although Hanūmat advocates
bhakti, he does not specify that it should be directed toward him in particular,
but he is certainly shown to be divine. In that respect, this episode represents
Hanūmat as a more exalted being than does the Rāmāyaṇa or the Rāmo-
pākhyāna! I say this in light of the depiction of Hanūmat in the "Samāgama," a
depiction clearly intended to parallel that of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā. The
text shows Kṛṣṇa and Hanūmat each revealing to a Pāṇḍava warrior his
supreme form, which is overwhelming to the warrior, who then requests that
he resume his more familiar form. In addition, each deity transmits teachings
on the importance of following one's dharma, specifically kṣatriya-dharma,
teachings transmitted privately and as a secret. In both the Mahābhārata and

Rāmāyaṇa, Hanūmat is clearly extraordinary: he can fly, for example. Neither the Rāmāyaṇa nor the Rāmopākhyāna, however, depicts Hanūmat as a deity in such a clear and unequivocal a fashion as in the revelation to Bhīma.

The Samāgama episode thus raises an important question. Does our willingness to accept Alf Hiltebeitel's understanding of the composition of the Mahābhārata depend on a willingness to accept that Hanūmat was seen as divine—at least in certain circles—in the first century BCE? How early in the history of the Hindu religious tradition are we willing to think that Hanūmat might have been regarded as a deity and worshiped? Indeed, should this episode in the Critical Edition be understood as an invitation to worship Hanūmat? If it is, we have no evidence that this invitation to worship Hanūmat resulted in such worship until additional centuries had passed, and that is true whether one dates the Critical Edition's text at 100 BCE or 400 CE. Presumably conditions were not propitious for worship of Hanūmat until well after the Mahābhārata depicted him as a deity worthy of worship.

This short episode uses the term *bhakti*, seems to have the first use of the noun *avatāra*, and cites Rāma as a form of Viṣṇu; these may be relatively late in the history of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa as well, but they do not specify a date for us. And while this episode, in my view, can only have been imagined and written once the Burning of the Khāṇḍava Forest, the Bhagavadgītā, the final parvans, and indeed perhaps the Nārāyaṇīya were largely finalized, even this does not provide us a definite date. Hiltebeitel has stated that he is not convinced by arguments that the the Nārāyaṇīya segment is at odds with the rest of the Mahābhārata and as late as the Gupta period.[45] I would say the same for the Samāgama episode: even if it is the very last piece put into an otherwise completed text of the Mahābhārata, it is indisputably part of the Critical Edition. It echoes and elaborates on the text's themes, as we hear in any *rāga*. It may not itself be cited or echoed elsewhere in the Mahābhārata—but then it is Bhīma's secret! The Samāgama episode is a fascinating portion of the text, and has that one remarkable feature of Hanūmat's divinity. Is its depiction of Hanūmat as a deity problematic for those who want to see the Mahābhārata as composed before the Common Era by Vyāsa's committee?

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45   Alf Hiltebeitel, "The *Nārāyaṇīya* and the Early Reading Communities of the *Mahābhā-rata*," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 227.

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Supernatural Conflicts, Unanimities, and Indra in the Main Story and Substories of the Mahābhārata

Fernando Wulff Alonso

Introduction

This book is one of the many ways in which we are recognizing Alf Hiltebeitel's contribution as a brilliant researcher and a lucid witness of nearly half a century of research on the Mahābhārata.

It is difficult to define the major changes in the field during this time, and it is even more difficult for someone like me who works in another field; however, we could certainly point to several elements common to various social sciences, which could, perhaps, be further fleshed out by referring to closer fields, such as studies of Greek mythology and epics.

The first major change is the impact of Parry's and Lord's perspectives on oral composition and performance in the epics. The second change, which is more complex, is the impact of French thought after World War II, the movement that we could broadly define as "structuralism." The role of the Annales School, created under the direction of Lucien Febvre, who was director of the *Annales* and of the Sixth Section of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and of scholars such as Louis Gernet and Jean-Paul Vernant clearly parallels Louis Dumont or, more specifically, Madeleine Biardeau of the Fifth Section of the École and its Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud.

It is certainly difficult to review all of these changes and to simultaneously consider contributions as varied as those of Georges Dumézil, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Biardeau, or Gernet. However, their most essential trait here, as in other social sciences, is likely the call for understanding processes and phenomena as a whole and not in isolation. For myths or epics, the question is the same: consider the works as a whole and connect them with all that surrounds them, from the creators, performers, and audience to the genres, tradition, and society.

Surely, we must add two additional components: the impacts of gender studies and the criticisms of Eurocentric models. Postcolonial concepts imply not only setting aside perspectives that define other societies and their productions as inferior to Western canons, but also discussing these perspectives

and their implications. The values that supported aesthetic valuations, for example, were full of assumptions about the existence of a single (classical) aesthetic and rationality and automatically implied assessments about the capabilities of the societies that produced such texts or works of art.

In this landscape, Alf Hiltebeitel's and Madeleine Biardeau's[1] ideas about the Mahābhārata's unity and internal consistency are not surprising. Their ideas involve further strengthening and outcropping a position that was despised and even ridiculed by those who adhered to the idea of an accumulative Mahābhārata, the dominant paradigm. What is, perhaps, surprising is the practically undisputed hegemony of these positions, when their basis—analysts' interpretations of the Homeric question—has been systematically revised during the century between Hopkins and the present day. Although Alf Hiltebeitel noted the upākhyānas as the new frontier of research on the Mahābhārata,[2] I would say that there is another disregarded frontier: historiographical questions, which Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee have begun to explore.[3] The existence of scholars resistant to the "invasion" of such analysts will not be the only surprising consequence of Adluri's and Bagchee's work.

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1   See, for example, Madeleine Biardieu, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vols. 1–2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002); Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, [1976] 1990); *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); *Dharma. Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, vol. 1, ed. Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), and "'You Have to Read the Whole Thing': Some Reflections on Madeleine Biardeau's *Mahābhārata*," in *Du texte au terrain, du terrain au texte. Dialogues interdisciplinaires au tour du l'oeuvre de Madeleine Biardeau*, Journée 2011 du Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud. Paris, 2011, <http://ceias.ehess.fr/docannexe.php?id=1862> for Hiltebeitel's reflections on Biardeau and her influence on his work. The question is also addressed in Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, "Introduction," in *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, xi–xxxvi.
2   See, in particular, Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.
3   See Vishwa Adluri, "The Critical Edition and its Critics: A Retrospective of *Mahābhārata* Scholarship," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 1–21 and this special issue of the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*; Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Alf Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It—Part 1," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 2–26 and Alf Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It—Part 2," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–14.

It is well-known that there are two distinct groups in the new unitary paradigm: one that believes in a systematic reworking of earlier Mahābhā-ratas within a previous epic tradition, and the other—represented by Alf Hiltebeitel—that believes in a work made *ex novo*. The latter would involve the work of a team attempting to formulate a story that would develop a complex ideology in competition with other ideologies, such as Buddhism, in the context of redefining the monarchy under the shadow of *bhakti*, and after Alexander the Great. This position confronts the traditional idea of a massive accumulation of components and developments in all directions and defends the idea of a complex work that seeks to define a competitive ideology, an ideological pretention that I would describe more as the search for a popular front than for a political party. It would also draw on all sources and resources for its establishment and dispersion, articulating in writing the main story, side stories and doctrinal perspectives, allowing different interpretations and performances.

The upākhyānas have traditionally been considered by the dominant paradigm as obvious examples of the cumulative component of the Mahābhārata, often incompatible with the main story. New approaches require reconstructing the thought and aesthetic frames that the authors display in a way that allows us to understand their functions in a work, which can easily be described as experimental and foundational.

My point here is simple. I raise the question of the existence of a contrast between the architectures of power and the role of Indra in the main and side stories of the Mahābhārata. My conclusion is that there is such a contrast, which I will attempt to define, and I will suggest answers to the questions of why and how.

I will not address a major problem in defining the upākhyānas, which has already been raised by Alf Hiltebeitel: the upākhyānas are not all the same. For example, we must distinguish between those that explain the birth of the key characters (Bhīṣma or Satyavatī), the prior or contemporary exploits of the essential characters (Rāma Jāmadagnya or Kṛṣṇa), the stories that are not directly related to the main plot (Nala and Damayantī), the reworkings of Vedic stories (Indra and Vṛtra), and the stories that are narrated by characters who tell another story that mirrors the current situation (for example, Kuntī tells Kṛṣṇa a story for Yudiṣṭhira, to incite him to war in the Udyogaparvan [Mahābhārata 5.131–4]). I believe that the contrast I suggest is valid for the different categories of upākhyānas.

I shall focus on the architecture of power. This concept aims at defining the hierarchical framework deployed and put into play in epics. The worlds that epic poets construct in polytheistic societies necessarily cover macrocosms

and microcosms[4] and define hierarchical structures in both levels and the relations between them. Conflicts in epics, which are by definition conflicts of power and hierarchy, are categorized in these structures and put them in play.

The presence of the macrocosm wherein deities play the leading roles in the story (as is normally the case in the Ancient Near East) is obvious enough. However, the Ancient Near East offers us an example, almost an exception, of a story featuring a human being: the poem of Gilgamesh. To more precisely define the concept, it may be useful to briefly refer to this poem, the earliest story that could be defined as an epic.

The general framework of the story is clear: the difference between gods and humans.[5] Sacrifice is the sign of submission and feeds the gods. The protagonist is a Kṣatriya, the king of Uruk, Gilgamesh, the son of a goddess and a man, but he is also a human, who is responsible, as king, for establishing a connection between the two worlds: handling human affairs with justice and maintaining the necessary links with the gods.

The first conflict is not a direct conflict with the gods but is between the king and his subjects. Gilgamesh is a powerful king who, in some respects, is abusive to his subjects, an aspect that relates to his excessive force and virility. The focus, then, is the *dharma* of this Kṣatriya. The subjects complain to the gods because he does not fulfill his role as king well. The gods create and send Enkidu against him, at first a wild man, who is then civilized by a prostitute. Their confrontation, though, ends in friendship.

This story opens two new conflicts. First, through their heroic activities, together they both (literally) break more boundaries with the divine sphere, which, in turn, leads to the second conflict: the amazed goddess Ishtar proposes a sexual-marital liaison to Gilgamesh, which he refuses, offending her. After a failed attempt to punish him for this offense and another offense to the goddess, his inevitable punishment takes the form of the death of Enkidu.

It would not be useful here to deal with the core of the problem: the encounter of a powerful female with an inferior man, which is all but commonplace in epics (think of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and the *Mahābhārata* itself[6]). What is useful is underscoring that the punishment is simply a reminder of the inferiority of human beings to gods, which

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4 I am using these terms as a tribute to one of Hiltebeitel's masters, Mircea Eliade.

5 See the edition, translation and commentaries by A.R. George (Andrew R. George, ed. and trans. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]).

6 See Fernando Wulff Alonso, *El peligro infinito: Diosas, héroes y mujeres poderosas en cinco grandes épicas* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2015).

makes Gilgamesh's quest for immortality impossible. The meeting with Uta-napishti (the proto-Noah) allows him to understand the secret of the gods: the flood that had wiped out all of humanity except for Uta-napishti and his family. If a flood is needed for only one man to become immortal, there is little hope for Gilgamesh. At the end of the poem, his learning and fate are clear: to be a good king, to enjoy human life, and to tell his marvelous story.

The story of Gilgamesh is inseparable from the hierarchies of the human and divine orders (which are the same), the king as an intermediary (incidentally, an almost inevitable factor in monarchical societies prior to industrialization), and the obvious importance of the king's role and, in particular, his morality. There is no epic without ethics; the epic is not a production created by (or dedicated to) dull warriors who are only interested in pure military exploits. Additionally, there is no possibility of understanding the story without a global view and without taking into consideration its architecture of power. The poem speaks of contrasts in these areas, neither of mediations (in spite of Lévi-Strauss) nor of negotiations.

Some Unanimities

This approach could enable us to achieve enough perspective to apply this set of criteria to the Mahābhārata. Its main story shows some clear points of correlation with the epic poem of Gilgamesh:

1. The separation between the divine and human beings (although with nuances that we will see in the case of the Mahābhārata) is reinforced by the death of humans and is, in a sense, its demonstration.
2. The poem focuses on intermediaries between the human and divine beings: the Kṣatriya-kings.
3. It is inseparable from the ethics and justice of the kings, who are essential intermediaries between the divine and the human.

We could connect two further components with the theme of the flood:

4. It details a planned massacre, which is the secret of the gods. In the case of the Mahābhārata, its narrative itself reveals the "secret of the gods" as an apocalypse in the double sense of the word: a pending catastrophe and a revelation of this secret.[7]

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7   As hinted in James L. Fitzgerald, "Mahābhārata," in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (New York: Routledge, 2004), 103 and 122, although in a more specific sense of the word.

5. It is directed by what I call "Celestial Forces," not by their enemies and, going more deeply, by Destiny.

There are seven factors that differentiate these epics:

1. The Mahābhārata is a widespread slaughter of warriors who exterminate one another (although with the help of celestial forces as would be expected).
2. It is performed in two successive confrontations (Kurukṣetra and Dvārakā).
3. It aims to alleviate the weight of the Earth, who asks for help, the reason for which is the huge mass of people.[8]
4. It is placed in the perspective of world history, in which there are various eras with successive degradations, and it marks a change of an era.
5. This change was just before the present time of the listener (us, in short), a less glorious time that is inhabited by ethically and physically inferior people.
6. The offended human side, the injured party, wins the war, but the slaughter is widespread and includes them, though they have more survivors.
7. Both sides practice the same religion (including sacrifice) and ethical values. The moral degradation process affects both, but the good side is degraded in the second part of the story, paving the way for their slaughter.

I would like to note here that these seven points (like the previous five) correspond to the interpretation of the *Iliad* in our oldest indirect sources on it, particularly Hesiod but also in the Homeric Cycle poems, the *Cypria*.[9] According to this interpretation, the wars of Thebes and Troy were devised by

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8   This theme, not present in the poem of Gilgamesh (see George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, vol. 1, 509–10), is however part of another ancient near east story which most probably influenced Greek versions; see Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 100 ff.

9   See *Poetae Epici Graeci. Testimonia et Fragmenta*, ed. Alberto Bernabé (Leipzig: Teubner, 1988), *Cypria* fragm. 1; 2 ff. and the abstract of Proclus; Scholiast to *Iliad* 1, 5; Hesiod in Hesiod, *Theogonia, Opera et Dies, Scutum*, ed. Friedrich Solmsen; *Fragmenta Selecta*, ed. R. Merkelbach and M.L. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), fragment 204; Hesiod, *Works and Days* 156 ff.; Fernando Wulff Alonso *Grecia en la India: El repertorio griego del Mahābhārata* (Madrid: Akal Eds, 2008), 110 ff.; 147 ff.; *The Mahābhārata and Greek Mythology*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2014), 127 ff.; 175 ff.

Zeus to exterminate the generation before us, the heroes' generation, leading to the present time. Zeus is a guardian of destiny who looks for the end of a generation produced by the dangerous mixture of humans and gods. After their glories and sins are eliminated comes an age of decadence.

Again, I find some differences between the Mahābhārata and this interpretation of the *Iliad* that are particularly interesting for this discussion:

1. There is no god like Zeus, guardian of destiny, who controls and manipulates the Olympian gods, who favor one side or the other. On the contrary, there is substantial unanimity in the celestial forces.

2. The confrontation is more indirect and occurs elsewhere. The conflict is with other supernatural beings, the Asuras, and takes place through the human beings involved. The war is to be won by the celestial forces. There are no direct clashes between the celestial forces and the Asuras in the main story. As in the Greek world, the Asura-Titans had been previously defeated, but unlike in that story, they are able to battle to dominate the coming era, the *Kaliyuga*. Both Asuras and gods resort to the same expedient: partial incarnations, a very specific component in religious terms but also in terms of narrative structures. The confrontation becomes substantial among humans incarnated by these two groups of supernatural beings. There is a certain tendency for the celestial forces to reincarnate in the Pāṇḍavas and for the Asuras in the Kauravas, but this tendency is not so radical, as Karṇa, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Aśvatthāman, fight with the Kauravas. As in the *Iliad*, there are sons of the celestial forces on both sides (Bhīṣma, Karṇa/the Pāṇḍavas). The confrontation between them, like clashes between pro-Achaean and pro-Trojan Greek gods, actually feeds the final kill.

3. Although both human parties present similar religious perspectives, the celestial forces' project faces the Asuras' project. Their project involves a king that protects the *dharma* among human beings and their connections with the celestial forces, defending, for example, justice, the Vedas, Brahmans, ascetics and asceticism, and pilgrimage sites. This idea appears in the main and secondary stories as well as in the wisdom sections: good kings produce good human worlds, whereas bad kings or the absence of kings implies droughts, famines, Rākṣasas' and Asuras' attacks, perversion of the social order, and a lack of sacrifices, ascetics, and food for the gods.

4. The celestial forces are defined in the text as a complex group with two main participants, gods and great Ṛṣis, but also with other groups, guests and servants of the gods (ancestors of the Kṣatriyas' lineages, Gandharvas, Apsarās …). There are no pro-Kaurava gods (though Sūrya specifically supports

his son Karṇa and Gaṅgā her son Bhīṣma)[10] or great Ṛsis, and Brahman warriors, such as Droṇa, reluctantly take this side, expressing his feelings of guilt, degradation and disgrace.

5. Indra appears as the nominal king of the celestial forces. He, like Zeus, contemplates the main events from his celestial abode, expressing approval or rejection of Arjuna's display after learning the art of fighting and his confrontation with Karṇa, Draupadī's *svayaṃvara*, Yudiṣṭhira's coronation in Indraprastha, the sufferings of Draupadī in the *sabhā* of Hāstinapura, Kaurava's defeat by Arjuna in the kingdom of Virāṭa, and the vicissitudes of war, amongst other things. Indra intervenes directly in few cases and usually in relation to his son, Arjuna. For example, Indra welcomes Arjuna into his heaven, advises him on how to obtain more weapons, disarms rival Karṇa (though before the war), and supports Arjuna in their confrontations with him. Even his strange appearance in the scene of the burning of the Khāṇḍava forest—a story, moreover, that is not part of the conflict between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas—is related to Arjuna, though entailing a confrontation with him, Kṛṣṇa and Agni.

6. Indra's nominal hegemony is scarcely challenged in the main story. The Khāṇḍava forest scene is precisely one of the few exceptions, though occasionally his powerlessness is paramount, such as when the Brahmans officiating the sacrifice commissioned by Janamejaya force him to drop the snake Takṣaka that is about to be devoured by the fire (Mahābhārata 1.51.11-13).

7. However, at the same time, Indra is not the Zeus who controls and directs gods acting on the earth. While Zeus manipulates Athena, Hera, or the pro-Trojan gods (let alone the humans involved), the agents of the celestial forces on Earth are fully independent: the great Ṛṣi Vyāsa and the *bhakti* god Kṛṣṇa. Vyāsa, the perfect Brahman,[11] directs the processes and gives birth to some of the actors; Kṛṣṇa also directs the processes and specifically controls the two killings so that he intervenes directly to achieve the double aim of the game: the general massacre and the (relative) triumph on the side of justice. Vyāsa tells the story and, within it, gives Saṃjaya voice and protects him until the end of the first war, when his gift of vision and speech runs out (Mahābhārata 10.9.58). At the end of this war, he gives Gāndhārī voice in a battlefield turned into a terrible cemetery (11.16.1–4) and Kṛṣṇa gives the dying Bhīṣma strength and the divine eye of knowledge so that he can pass his wisdom to Yudiṣṭhira

10   The possible exception of Balarāma requires a specific treatment: see Andreas Bigger, *Balarāma im Mahābhārata: seine Darstellung im Rahmen des Textes und seiner Entwicklung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 44–51 for the main texts.

11   See Bruce M. Sullivan, *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and the Mahābhārata: A New Interpretation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 50–51; 57ff. for this aspect and Vyāsa's activities.

(12.52.15–21). We will return to this point, but it should be stressed now that it is not accidental, as they both represent the two essential groups forming the celestial forces, great Ṛṣis, and gods, although Kṛṣṇa is much more than that. Kṛṣṇa is conceived as the reincarnation of the God of gods, Viṣṇu, which marks one of the few doctrinal differences between the two sides: the Pāṇḍavas all recognize Kṛṣṇa as such and act accordingly, but Duryodhana, the Kaurava leader, neither recognizes Kṛṣṇa nor acts in a way that would suggest such recognition, even though a number of his followers do.

8.   The purpose, the secret of the gods, is performed as a collective endeavor by both great Ṛṣis and gods. It involves creating the characters, as their birth itself is part of the plan, as a mystery of the gods (*rahasyaṃ khalu idaṃ rājan devānām iti naḥ śrutam*; Mahābhārata 1.58.3), which applies both to their birth itself and to the processes leading up to it in which the two groups take part, sometimes together. The great Ṛṣis contribute to their generation through rape (Satyavatī), misleading boons (Kuntī), not so misleading boons (Gāndhārī), curses (Bhīṣma), semen spilling (Droṇa) or directly (Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāndu, Vidura). The gods of *bhakti* are also involved in the births of the characters of the play, for example, resurrecting a dead child (Parikṣit and Kṛṣṇa) or through boons (Śiva and Ambā-Śikhaṇḍin; Śiva and the five Pāṇḍavas), whereas conventional gods are more conventionally involved in generating them (the Pāṇḍavas, Karṇa). All of them, not only Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, are involved in partial incarnations. They jointly contribute to the slaughter by giving weapons to both parties: conventional gods (Indra and the Four Guardians of the World, Agni), the *bhakti* gods (Kṛṣṇa and Śiva to Arjuna and Śiva to Aśvatthāman), and the great Ṛṣis (Rāma Jāmadagnya to Droṇa and other characters).

Blurring Indra

Despite its relative lack of importance in the development of events compared to Vyāsa or Kṛṣṇa, the Indra of the main story is a figure of authority, although perhaps more as a figurehead than as a true authority. As noted, the poet presents him in his best light: contemplating the events of the war with his entire heavenly court, happy in his heaven, proudly introducing his son Arjuna to Lomaśa; descending before the Pāṇḍavas in his wonderful chariot, full of luster, accompanied by Apsarās and Gandharvas, and surrounded by the sound of heavenly music and bells; or receiving Yudiṣṭhira there at the end.

His place in the upākhyānas is, however, very different. Here, the architecture of power differs. The same god who is qualified in these last two moments

of glory with his epithet of Thousand-eyed (*sahasrākṣa*; Mahābhārata 3.162.5; cf. also 17.3.2: *sahasrākṣam*) is one of the characters of a story (13.40–1) in which Vipula, an apprentice of Ṛṣi, avoids the seduction of Ruci, the wife of his master Devaśarma, spiritually introducing himself in her, and terrifying Indra. Vipula reminded him that one day the great Ṛṣi Gautama had avenged a similar fault by cursing him: he had filled his body with female genitals, and only after did he receive a reduction in sentence that changed these female genitals into his thousand eyes (13.41.21). The authors of the Mahābhārata refer to Indra as *sahasrākṣa* (13.41.16), thousand-eyed, after the handsome and conceited god vainly tries to seduce Ruci and Vipula warns him to be alert to his position. Just in this moment, they write that the Thousand-Eyed Indra saw everything with his spiritual eye and describe how Vipula rebuked and menaced him.

The old epithet "Thousand-Eyed" now becomes a sign of humiliation: female genitalia received by Indra as a punishment for his sexual relationship with the wife of a great Ṛṣi are turned into eyes. It is not the only epithet for him in a story in which he is repeatedly called "the Chief of the Celestials."[12]

Similarly interesting is the accompanying diatribe of Vipula, in which Indra is described as childish, uncontrolled and, therefore, unworthy of worship by humans or gods, a god unable to understand that the Brahmans with their curses and *tapas* are stronger than the freedom he believes he can enjoy because of his immortality. In this story, next to the epic formula of Indra, is a frightened Indra besieged by the values of asceticism, whose divine status does not protect him from the curses of a Ṛṣi's apprentice. It is also unclear whether he has a place in a world where self-control is one of the main virtues.

The Mahābhārata's secondary narratives are filled with stories that describe a not-so-simpleton Indra, but a no-less-frightened one, who seems to have a section of Apsarās on duty for tempting and debilitating any person who is dedicated to a dangerous buildup of asceticism, e.g., Brahmans, Kṣatriyas, or Asuras, although their visits meet with varying success. In other stories, Indra is unable to maintain the Celestial Forces' superiority against the Asuras, which forces them to resort to new gods, such as Skanda, the gods of *bhakti*, Śiva and, in particular, Viṣṇu, the great Ṛṣis, Brahmā, or any combination of them. Indra is not the decisive factor in the outcome of fighting with the enemies of the celestial forces.

In other stories, his victory does not depend on his strength or skill but on competing knowledge between his great Ṛṣi-chaplain and the Asuras' chaplain, being his only role in such a game just plotting, not fighting, such as in the

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12   See, for example, its use in the same verse Mahābhārata 13.41.16.

story of Yayāti.[13] Indra must also seek advice from his chaplain, in general (see 12.85, for example) and in moments of defeat to the Asura (12.124.18 ff.). It is easy to understand why the author/s of the Mahābhārata claim that Indra bows to Brahmandom (133.2).

The background of the question is obviously larger and can be clearly observed when, during their first exile in Book 1, the Pāṇḍavas are presented as helpless without a chaplain (Mahābhārata 1.159). Similarly, in another story, the king Mucukunda blames his court priest Vasiṣṭha for his loss to Kubera's Rākṣasas; the seer, after severe penances, then drives them away and Mucukunda defends his dependence on the Brahman's power to Kubera (12.75).

Indra's power is continually and systematically challenged, threatened by the great Ṛṣis but also by mere humans who use, for example, asceticism,[14] the instrument of accumulation of power par excellence. One of the most illustrative stories in this regard is that of Kuśika, a king who practices awesome austerities to obtain a powerful son, lord of the three worlds. Indra's only recourse is to become that child (Mahābhārata 12.49.1–6). When the authors write this story, they emphasize that this is the same Indra who had defeated the Asura Pāka, which recalls a highly meaningful parliament of Indra that the poets introduce in the story of Nahuṣa, when after conquering Triśiras with difficulty, Indra is defeated by Vṛtra and, powerless, states: "nothing can stand up to him. In older times I was capable of doing it, but now I am impotent" (5.10.1–2; Van Buitenen trans.). The question is not simply the obvious fact that the new Indra is no longer the old Vedic Indra: the authors make the Vedic Indra aware of now being the powerless new Indra.

In this sense, this story is directly connected to the very well-known story of Nahuṣa (Mahābhārata 5.11–17), which provides another instructive example of the concentration of elements that reflects this weakened Indra, as is to be expected in a narrative that begins referring to the many sufferings of Indra and his wife. This narrative is essential because it shows, as some of the previous examples do, the Mahābhārata author/s' use of the old mythic legacy, for example, when the intervention of Viṣṇu is needed for the defeat of Vṛtra, and

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13   Mahābhārata 1.71 ff.; see 1.73.2–4: all the gods say to Indra, the god of the hundred sacrifices, that it is the time for him, Sacker of Cities, to destroy the enemy. Immediately he changes into a breeze and mixes up the clothes of a group of girls to sow discord between them.

14   See Monika Shee, *Tapas und Tapasvin in den erzahlenden Partien des Mahābhārata* (Reinbek: Verlag für orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 1986) for its value and narrative uses.

Viṣṇu is proclaimed as sovereign of the gods, the one who made Śakra the overlord of the gods after the killing of the Asura Bali.[15]

Everything is notable in Nahuṣa's story, including Indra's inability to face Nahuṣa, a death king who has attained Indra's heaven by his own merits, when he becomes master of the world in his absence. Note that Nahuṣa justifies his pretention of sleeping with Indra's wife, arguing that Indra had committed abuses, such as the violation of Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama, among many other deceptions, lawless deeds, and cruelties, without being stopped by the gods (Mahābhārata 5.12.5–7). The great Ṛṣis, with the mediation of Viṣṇu, rid the world of Nahuṣa and reinstate Indra.

It is even more meaningful that Indra dwells concealed in the waters far away out of shame and brahmanicide, that the death of an old Vedic enemy becomes brahmanicide and that this crime must be expiated by this strange king of the gods. Viṣṇu purifies him, and Indra must sacrifice for him. Viṣṇu also reassures the gods prophesying the end of Nahuṣa (Mahābhārata 5.13.10 ff.).

Not incidentally, after the war, Vyāsa recommends to Yudisthira a purification by sacrifices, as Indra had performed after beating Pāka and his enemies (Mahābhārata 12.34.27–28; 34). We speak of gods, including Indra, conceived as Kṣatriyas, as is explicitly stated: the first god created the divinities, and they have succeeded by behaving according to Kṣatra law.[16] Dependent as they are on his chaplains, clearly distinct from them and limited by brahmanic power, the gods are increasingly close to men and Kṣatriyas.[17] The great Ṛṣis, like the gods of *bhakti* or Brahmā, leave them the necessary but inferior task of governing.

The very power of Indra over the gods, as noted many years ago by Holtzmann,[18] not only depends on his martial virility but also on sacrifices (Mahābhārata 12.20.11; see also 14.94.4); his cultivation of the virtues of patience, self-control, restraint of the senses (5.29.12); his positive attitude toward

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15   baliṃ baddhvā mahādaityaṃ śakro devādhipaḥ kṛtaḥ | (Mahābhārata 5.10.7)
      See also 3.13.18: tataḥ sarveśvaratvaṃ ca sampradāya śacīpateḥ | .

16   sādhyā devā vasavaś cāśvinau ca; rudrāś ca viśve marutāṃ gaṇaś ca sṛṣṭāḥ purā ādidevena devā; kṣatre dharme vartayante ca siddhāḥ || (Mahābhārata 12.64.9)

17   See John L. Brockington, "Indra in the Epics," in *Vidyārnavavandanam. Essays in honour of Asko Parpola*, ed. Klaus Karttunen and Petteri Koskikallio (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), 80 on the relationship between Indra and the Kṣatriyas' varṇa as a possible major factor in Indra's decline. However, he is not the only one, and this is not the only factor.

18   Adolf Holtzmann, "Indra nach den Vorstellungen des *Mahābhārata*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32 (1878): 290–1.

Brahmans (13.36.19); or of their veneration of *bhakti* gods. His obvious infe-
riority makes him a useful provincial governor, as we have observed in the
case of Viṣṇu. In the history of Sunda and Upasunda (1.201–4), only Brahmā's
maneuvers save the world from these two terrible Asuras, not Indra, and after
their defeat, Brahmā puts Indra in charge of the universe (1.204.24) and returns
peacefully to his Heaven, a place that had sheltered the gods during the Asuras'
attack and is superior to Indra's heaven. Of course, Śiva's exaltations also imply
his superiority over the gods, who cannot even understand him, his invincibil-
ity, their status as just parts of him, and the concession to Indra of sovereignty
over the celestials.[19]

Indra and the other gods appear in the upākhyānas purifying and/or accu-
mulating power in *tīrthas* and pilgrimages, sacrifices, asceticism, and even by
worshiping Viṣṇu or Śiva, all very human activities (perhaps too human). The
gods of the Mahābhārata must defend their superiority and must compete in
the same fields as their competitors. This position implies a triple weakness:
first, because their superiority is not at all taken for granted; second, because
this assimilates them with humans; and third, because they can be imagined as
able to be overcome, not only by beings who are intrinsically superior to them
(great Ṛṣis and *bhakti* gods) but also by their potential or actual enemies (e.g.,
Asuras and humans).

The story of the meeting of Indra with Śiva leading to Indra's humiliation
and to Śiva showing the existence of four Indras before him is particularly
representative of another source of weakness (Mahābhārata 1.189.9 ff.): in a
broader conception of cosmic cycles, conventional gods disappear and repeat-
edly return to be created and recreated by the primordial creator. The God
(whoever it may be) who survives the great cosmic cycles is the real key to the
game of time and destiny. If, at the beginning (1.189.1 ff.), the gods are con-
cerned about the lack of human deaths because it means that there is no
difference between human beings and gods, its end shows that Indra also dies,
that he can be punished by Śiva, because of his pride and pretentions of supe-
riority to him, and his humble position in a chain of four previous Indras. The
punishment of the five Indras (to be reborn as men, the Pāṇḍavas) allows us to
see the entire structure of the narrative and the involved architecture of power:
human beings/conventional gods/*bhakti* gods. The superiority of gods over
men is as real as the superiority of *bhakti* gods over conventional gods, and
death is the bitter reminder of these facts for human beings—but also for con-
ventional gods, who must experience death as gods, and even if they do not
understand their real position, must experience the degradation of being born

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19   Mahābhārata 13.14 (Critical Edition and Ganguli's edition).

in a human womb and the corresponding death. The first story, which is quite traditional and even quite similar in appearance to Greek epics and Gilgamesh, receives new meaning in such a context, just as the position of human beings does.

Death also becomes another component of impairment for conventional gods: in a context where there is a beyond for human beings after death and there are different paths to the beyond that leave behind the very palaces of the gods, the gods become passengers on the same airline but on more advanced flights. If all gods without exception must be reborn as mortals and mortals as gods (Mahābhārata 12.250.40), it is easy to understand the hermit Mudgala's doubts (247). After terrible austerities and a disturbing visit from Durvāsas, the envoy of the gods informs him that he has earned heaven. He asks him for information about heaven, which of course includes Indra's heaven and the Brahmā's heaven beyond it, and refuses to go with him at the prospect of falling back down again. Extinction, *nirvāṇa*, is the only worthwhile travel.

In another twist, even the old enemies, the Asuras, can be aware of the reality of the world and its mutability. In a fascinating story (see Mahābhārata 12.216–7; 12.220; and more specifically 12.217.54 and 58; 12.220.41), after defeating Bali, Indra asks Brahmā where to find Bali to scoff at him. Although Brahmā attempts to discourage Indra, the god looks for and finds him in the form of an animal, and Bali answers his sarcasm, reminding Indra of the mutability of everything and the role of fate, pointing out that many thousands of Indras have passed, all powerful, and that he too shall pass.

There is no need to wait so long to see the dangers that lurk and new multiplications of Indras. In another story (Mahābhārata 1.27.5 ff.), a group of tiny ascetics, the Vālakhilyas, feel offended by Indra for a minor issue and, out of revenge, make a sacrifice to obtain a new Indra to all the gods. Indra becomes very upset and appeals to Kaśyapa. The seer appeases them, stating that "this Indra has been made lord of the Three Worlds at the order of Brahmā" (1.27.18; Van Buitenen trans.) and suggests the solution of the birth of an "Indra of the birds," Garuḍa. Not surprisingly, Garuḍa overcomes Indra but not Viṣṇu some lines after (1.28–29).

A framework of power where this situation can be imagined or where Aurva, a child of the Bhārgava family, can be presented as newborn and about to destroy the worlds by his anger at the killing of his family (Mahābhārata 1.170.10 ff.), in a world where the major forces are great Ṛṣis and *bhakti* gods, the king of these kṣatriyized gods could not be but a nominal king, the king of a fortress rather gradually abandoned as besieged. The undercurrents that

undermine the building while constructing another with its ruins and other materials have reduced these gods and their king to this precarious position.

Contrasts and Compatibilities

The contrast between the Indra of the main story and the Indra of the upākhyā-nas is evident. At the same time, these Indras are perfectly compatible, first if we take account of the different requirements of the script in both sections of the work. The main story emphasizes the celestial forces unit, and internal conflicts are not explored. As mentioned, the main story is not characterized by direct collisions between Brahmans and great Ṛṣis, or gods and kings, or gods and *bhakti* gods but by clashes between humans. Nothing should disturb their slaughter. Of course, there is enough room for some exceptions and even more for confrontations of men, in particular the Pāṇḍavas, with beings that represent, in principle, the evil to overcome, such as Asuras and Rākṣasas, with more ambiguous creatures, such as snakes, or with semi-divine and positive beings, such as the Gandharvas. The Gandharvas finally blur the boundaries between hostility and friendship in the Pāṇḍavas' case, but not in the case of the Kaurava's.

   The few clashes between men and gods mark the direction in which hierarchies work. When Arjuna faces Śiva (Mahābhārata 3.40–1; 3.163), he does not know who is he, and the sense of this story is the recognition of the inferiority of the human and the granting of a terrible weapon for the slaughter of other humans by the God, a weapon with which conventional gods and even Indra are not familiar. The story of the confrontation of Arjuna with Indra himself in the Khāṇḍava Forest (1.214–25) makes clear that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, Nara and Nārāyaṇa, can again defeat conventional gods and even sets of gods, including Indra. Finally, when Duryodhana pretends to kidnap Kṛṣṇa in the assembly hall of Hāstinapura (5.129), Kṛṣṇa shows his divine form and all the gods, Pāṇḍavas, and Vṛṣṇis appear as part of it, producing terror in his enemies. Of course, Indra and Brahmā are but parts of that mystical body of the God who is the Unmade Maker. It is worth remembering that Duryodhana also openly despises the advice of the great Ṛṣis and receives their recriminations.[20]

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20   The two clashes of Bhīma with Kubera's familiars in Book 3 serve a specific function: they negatively mark Bhīma as someone who does not know the limits between the human and the divine spheres, as they mark Draupadī, who sends him, all in contrast with the respectful Yudiṣṭhira's behavior.

Even clashes between gods and Asuras are carried out by humans in which they incarnate *ad maiorem gloriam interfectionis*. The poet/s of the Mahābhā-rata are interested in showing how celestial forces deal with two aims: the general slaughter and the relative victory of the Kṣatriyas representing the forces of dharma, in that way establishing the basis and foundation of the future monarchy for the troubled times of Kaliyuga. A king of the celestial forces is needed, by definition, as are great Ṛṣis-Brahmans and harmony between them. They are not, however, interested in hiding his condition of nominal king. Not coincidentally, Vyāsa, other great Ṛṣis, and Kṛṣṇa lead the implementation process.

The narrative strategy that focuses on the killing of humans and in super-natural consensus tends to shift internal conflicts, including the questioning of the power of Indra and the debility of traditional gods, towards the upākhyā-nas; however, the weakness—the character almost nominal of his/their power—is also visible. Two curses of great Ṛṣis on the gods producing the birth of two main protagonists of the story show the continuity of the underlying questions: the case of Dharma sentenced to rebirth as Vidura (Mahābhārata 1.101), and the Vasus convicted of rebirth as Bhīṣma and his brothers (1.93). The case we have already observed of the five Indras, doomed to be reborn as the five Pāṇḍavas, leads us back to the other great expression of power—a god of *bhakti*, Śiva.

The poets of the Mahābhārata concentrate on conflicts and clashes in the upākhyānas, which are merely mentioned or suggested in the main story. However, we must not forget that it is precisely the juxtaposition of the main story with the entire set of upākhyānas, not ignoring the wisdom sections, which make the whole work and achieve its effect on the reader or listener. This juxtaposition also, among other things, leads the reader to see the fragile architecture of power in the main story and to conclude that neither great Ṛṣis nor *bhakti* gods are interested in temporal power and that both are necessary nuisances to be handed over to other inferior actors.

In contrast, the upākhyānas allow a rich and contradictory deployment of imagination, ideological positions, and contrasts. It is a forest of stories in which the protagonists and their categories, conflicts, confrontations, and narrative resources are multiplied and explored. We are referring to confrontations or contrasts of Asuras/gods; Asuras/great Ṛṣis; Asuras/Kṣatriyas; Asuras and great Ṛṣis/gods, great Ṛṣis and *bhakti* gods; Brahmans or great Ṛṣis/gods; Brahmans or great Ṛṣis/Kṣatriyas; Brahmans or great Ṛṣis/Brahmans or great Ṛṣis; older Brahmans or Brahman fathers/younger Brahmans or sons; Ṛṣi learned in the Vedas/ignorant of the Vedas; Brahman teacher/student; Brahman/his Brahman brother/s; conventional god/conventional god; conventional god/*bhakti* god;

bhakti god/Asura; *bhakti* god/great Ṛṣis; Kṣatriya and Śiva/great Ṛṣi; Brahman/ members of other castes and groups (hunters, housewives, Vaiśyas), Brahmans' or great Ṛṣis' ancestors/celibate Brahmans; ancestors of royal lineages and inhabitants of heavens/gods. We have limited this list to male protagonists but have not forgotten the number of stories in which the protagonists are female: Brahmans, Kṣatriyas, ascetics, Asuras, goddesses, and the strong presence of conflicts related to their offspring, between members of the different categories of beings involved over females, or conflicts between ascetic woman/ ascetic Kṣatriya; ascetic woman/Garuḍa, amongst others. There is room for other protagonists, for example, different animals or trees, and the wind.

Few critics have failed to see that a crucial—perhaps the most crucial—element is the conflict between the Brahmans and Kṣatriyas, which is still more evident if we consider that this conflict is also projected as clashes between conventional, kṣatriyized gods/great Ṛṣis or, more clearly, great Ṛṣis/Kṣatriyas (Viśvāmitra/Vasiṣṭha, for example). We have merely pointed to its presence in the stories of Dharma-Vidura and the Vasus-Bhīṣma, which are the type of upākhyānas that are more directly connected to the main story. Contrasts, contradictions, and competitions between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas do not imply doubts about the fundamental strategic message involved: the need for collaboration between them, but quite the opposite, in the same way that stories about the contradictions between asceticism and its values and the continuity of Brahman or Kṣatriyas stocks do not question asceticism, Brahmans or Kṣatriyas. In fact, the main function of Greek mythology is probably to reinforce the difference between and the complementarity of the two basic categories involved in its stories: human beings and gods. The world's order is reinforced by contrasts and hubris is a perfect instrument for doing it

As noted, consensus among these groups dominates the main story: great Ṛṣis and gods are on the same side, as are ascetics and Brahmans. They are all worshipped by the two sides, though the inevitable presence and ritual activities of Brahmans in the Kaurava's court allows us to see slight counterpoints, such as the refusal of the Brahmans to officiate at the *agnihotra* after the abuses suffered by Draupadī (Mahābhārata 2.72.20). In fact, the Asuras' instruments, the Kauravas, are not aware that they are their minions. Indra's theme is not, therefore, the only one in which the requirements of the script lead to a different treatment between the main story and the upākhyānas.

These points can be reinforced if we consider the mortal sphere. Again, the rule of consensus does not mean that the problem of the relationship between kings and Brahmans is not essential. It is clear that the issue of the contrast between them appears, but hardly as a direct conflict. When Duryodhana despises the great Ṛṣis' counsels, he also despises his mother's, the court

counselors', and Kṛṣṇa's and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's counsels. When Jayadratha abducts Draupadī, he offends the chaplain of the Pāṇḍavas, and the ascetics and great Ṛṣis under whose protection she lives—an indirect question again. When Pāṇḍu kills the Brahman who was copulating as a deer, it is only an accident.

The greatest paradox is that the contradiction between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas is presented as invasions of role and conflicts between them and directly relates to this break with the good order of things. We should not forget that the central conflict is, by definition, between male Kṣatriyas. In this context, what is striking is not so much the necessary existence of ambitious and evil Kṣatriyas (the Kauravas) but rather the crucial role of Kṣatriyas who do not act as Kṣatriyas, but as Brahmans. Recall that the conflict is unleashed when Bhīṣma renounces offspring and sex, meaning renunciation to a component directly related to his virile and warlike condition, at odds with it. This Brahman-like characterization is essential in Yudiṣṭhira, the brahmanic son of Dharma who enables through his too-brahmanic behaviors the coming of the Kaliyuga, the perfect example of how the old dharma is incompatible with the new times.

For their part, Brahman warriors are essential to the plot. Droṇa, a master of arms and not of Vedas, and his conflicts with Drupada and the Pāṇḍavas is the most obvious example: a vengeful and cruel warrior who is not alone in the task (Aśvatthāman and Kṛpa) and under whose generalship all the rules of war are broken. Rāma Jāmadagnya's presence in the story, more specifically his confrontation with Bhīṣma in the Ambā-Śikhaṇḍin's issue, and his role as a military instructor, connects this idea with the previous transit between yugas (Tretāyuga/Dvāparayuga), directly produced by the Kṣatriya massacre of this out-of-role great Ṛṣi. In the field of the human characters of the Mahābhārata, supplanting of roles signifies massive destruction.

If the two brahmanized Kṣatriyas suffer from excessive kindness, kṣatriyized Brahmans break entirely with the characteristic of a Brahman, as indeed do all (or almost all) the Brahmans who simply curse. Their defeats and the reproaches of their ancestors to the degeneration of their misuse of Brahmanic power makes clear the inappropriateness of their behavior. It is certainly an interesting paradox: if great Ṛṣis and Brahmans are on the side of justice, encouraging the Pāṇḍava and paving their path, the representatives of misuse of Brahmanic power are all on the side of the Kauravas, although not by their will. If it is true that there is no Mahābhārata without Kṛṣṇa and without yugas, we could also say that there is no Mahābhārata without out-of-role Brahmans.

The central problem of the relationship between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas, which is the subject of so many stories full of drama in the upākhyānas and of so many wisdom speeches in the wisdom sections, is also projected in the

main story but in this characterization of some of its most essential actors. The Dharma King's learning is linked to moderate his Brahmanical components in present times, times of Kaliyuga full of heretics, barbarians, and Yavanas, invaders or inhabitants of the kingdom of King Dharma himself. Let me stress again that the construction of these Brahman warriors is inseparable from their end, their disappearance, and their defeats by Kṣatriyas. Their own words, the words of their enemies and those of their ancestors point to their inappropriate condition as warriors. The core message is clear enough: Brahmans in arms must only exceptionally have room in the new order needed in the Kaliyuga time of crisis.

Additionally, it is no coincidence that Rāma Jāmadagnya's defeat, the great Ṛṣi who marks the previous transition between yugas, takes place before the war leading up to Kaliyuga and that the victor was Bhīṣma, who was at the same time the first human responsible for the origin of the war at the beginning of the story and responsible for transmitting the wisdom of government to Yudiṣṭhira, the new King, at the end of it.

Kṣatriyas' and Brahmans' unity is advocated and can be viewed as the continuity of the unity of the Celestial Forces in the main story. The authors of the work explore the tensions between them in different ways: the authors use them to construct (or deconstruct) the characters they invent, including their blurred old Indra, by letting them overflow in the upākhyānas or developing them in a more theoretical way in the discourses of the wisdom sections.

Some Final Notes

We have attempted to argue that there exists a contrast between the role of Indra in the architecture of power in the main story and in the substories of the Mahābhārata. We have also defended the compatibility of this two presentations, taking into account the different roles that the authors of the Mahābhārata assigned to both sections of their work. We argue that in any case, Indra's fragility as king of the gods is conspicuous. We also note that something similar can be found in some of the most essential aspects of the work: the relationship between Kṣatriyas and Brahmans, an essential aspect of the Vaiṣṇava sacral monarchy proposed as a solution to the times of Kaliyuga.

We have noted how the stories and dialogues of the Mahābhārata project religious elements, which allow us to grasp religious global rethinking and the era that produced it. The trends undermining conventional gods of Vedic lineage are obvious: ideas such as the universality of reincarnation, that ideal final destination leaving behind the gods and their heavens; *kalpas* and yugas

and the image of a creator God who creates and recreates the world and the very gods, and encompasses them all; ways of liberation that emulate or surpass the merit of sacrifice (e.g., pilgrimage, asceticism, meditation, ethical behavior), and, last but not least, devotion; or the fact that conventional gods were depicted as needing each of these expedients to advance in the chain of beings, as human beings or to maintain their power.

Some years ago, Shee noted how *tapas* was projected in the narrative sections of the Mahābhārata in the form of power, a prevailing and cumulative instrument. I would note that one of its essential aspects is that *tapas* and all such components (e.g., the god of *bhakti*, the kalpas, the path of incarnations) come into play in the work as narrative resources. Substories do it much more freely, concentrating and projecting these components in all directions, in such a way that we could say that one of their roles is a more or less discrete demolition of the traditional gods. A reader or listener could have asked after reading or listening to them: What is Indra compared to ascetic power? What is Indra compared to a real transcendent God? The old architecture of power, in fact, the type of architecture of power present in the Gilgamesh epic or in the *Iliad* has changed despite the necessary appearances. It is no longer a question of Marduk succeeding Ea. We could say, as it were, that its demolition is the message.

Into this construction flow the ever-changing trends and changes in Indian religiosity, which can be viewed as a type of workaround that eventually culminates in another articulation of the architecture of power, with the disappearance of Indra and the conventional gods and the full exaltation of the *bhakti* gods. However, it would be a mistake to confuse its place in time, in the processes of change, with its own reality. It is a consistent system, a structure that makes sense by itself, although it does not correspond to the model to which we are accustomed. It is not madness, and substories are part of its method.

I have begun to mention the king's role as articulator of the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm. When the work presents the offer of a Vaiṣṇava king for the times of Kaliyuga, what appears is an impossible proposition for the blurred Indra, a god, as we see, with no *bhakti* cults, no devotion, no provisional beyond, and traditionally depicted as a character without the new necessary virtues. He cannot meet the new demand, he cannot be the real supernatural partner and protector of the new monarch. Although the work has at least one story referring to his ritual role in this field (Mahābhārata 1.57.1–27), despite everything, the unfolding of the plot shows his limitations: he gives King Vasu (or Uparicara) a chariot and a protective garland for battle and, in particular, a bamboo pole for a festival of Indra at the end of the year, a

ritual, the text says, continued into the present. But Indra does so because he is worried that Uparicara, through his austerities, may aspire to become like him. The frightened Indra is all-pervasive. The persistence of a link between monarchy, rituals, and Indra is inevitable, particularly if the rain holds as his sphere of competence. Note that even in the case of this possible last sphere of activity, an ascetic (actually a very young ascetic), Ṛśyaśṛṅga, can force Indra to rain, for fear of his curse. Indra, in the middle of all this humiliation, is called the slayer of Bala and Vṛtra (*balavṛtrahā*; 3.110.3).[21] King Māndhātar can also make it rain after a twelve-year drought, whereas Indra, described at the time as the Thunderbolt-wielder (*vajrapaṇinaḥ*; 3.126.39) just looks on. The good relationship between Indra and the king does not erase the fact that the king does not seem to need him to do so, which corresponds to the fact that he was born of a male after the intervention of a Bhārgava, who had promised his father a son "possessed of the might of austerities" who could even kill Indra (126. 20, Van Buitenen trans.). In fact, this specialization of Indra places him in a subordinated position, just as his condition as member of the group of the four World Guardians, the *lokapālas*, the gods of the four points of the compass, frequent in the Mahābhārata and quite popular in the Purāṇas. A nominal king of the Three Worlds whose power is just a grant given by others simultaneously can be a provincial governor and can change his position for the worse to become only a provincial governor before practically disappearing. There is no safe space for gods like him, no *mysterium tremendum* around such a god full of *metus tremendus*.

The Mahābhārata is a witness in his fall and, simultaneously, one of his executioners. In fact, the construction of this story makes sense precisely because there is a god of *bhakti*. Clearly, "this grotesque butchery" that "would not have happened" (Mahābhārata 11.27.20; Fitzgerald trans.), as Yudhiṣṭhira says at the end of the slaughter, generates ideological and religious problems of paramount importance,[22] for example, the meaning or just the possibility of human action before the inevitability of fate and the divine plan or what to do with the terrible image of the God who directs all this desolation and slaughter—these are feelings that are conveyed well by the Strīparvan. Nothing in Indra suggests that a god like him could have been adapted to providing the solutions offered by Kṛṣṇa, such as devotion or to provide a solid background for a transcendent monarchy. Indra's offer of a heaven in a string of heavens

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21   Incidentally, like Enkidu, he is brought from the jungle to the city by a prostitute.

22   See, for example, Julian Woods, *Destiny and Human Initiative in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) for some of the problems involved.

comes to nothing compared to a beyond without intermediations nor return[23] and compared to a god who encourages and protects his devotees' actions to arrive there and whose divine personality can be understood in such a comprehensive view that allows him to absorb much of the previous legacy from the perspective of a new ideological and political project centered in a brahmanic dharma king.

In this sense, it may be illustrative to examine the Greek model. There was also no solution to the similar problems faced by what may be called the *Iliad* of the *Cypria* or of Hesiod. Zeus had no solution to offer for a beyond that could balance human sufferings (think of Achilles in the *Odyssey*, who is but a shade in Hades). The image of Zeus programming human slaughter by a merciless manipulation of men and gods, minds and actions, was so unbearable that the main stream of Greek culture could not accept it. This non-acceptance helped Zeus be the god of justice and the Polis. It is no coincidence that people like Socrates and Plato who denied the traditional Zeus's stories—not to mention the Zeus of the *Cypria*'s *Iliad*—at the same time opened the way to an afterlife with rewards, punishments, and reincarnations.[24] Mystery gods such as Dionysos have been paving the way. The authors of the Mahābhārata constructed a story in which the extermination of a generation of heroes was directed by a *bhakti* god who promised an afterlife to the warriors killed in the war (in fact, two wars), offering to his devotees examples (as Arjuna), doctrines and even a better afterlife, and justifying their activity and actions even if the inevitability of fate had to be accepted.

The authors of the Mahābhārata transmuted and translated these issues in stories, the most effective way to help build their particular popular front, focusing on the main story, a thrilling war story, and creating a garland of stories around it. A war story by its very nature was closed off to other competing groups, such as Buddhists, who were also great builders of stories and writings but of a very different nature. They were very aware of their creativity and novelty, but this creativity necessarily had to be developed using (or manipulating) Vedic religion and stories because among other things, one of the essential components of the front that they were trying to build was their more or less formal defense of the Vedas and what they imply against Buddhists and other heretics who populate the present Kaliyuga.

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23 See, for example, Bhagavadgītā 8.15–16; 20–22.

24 See Fernando Wulff Alonso, "Mitos, divinidades, reencarnación: entre Platón y la India," in *Realidad, Fantasía, Interpretación: Funciones y pervivencia del Mito Griego, Estudios en Honor del Profesor Carlos García Gual*, ed. Aurelio Pérez Jiménez (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2014), 571–85.

If they need Indra, Indra will need Viṣṇu to defeat Vṛtra—and Brahmā's counsel and the bones of the great Ṛṣi Dadhīca (Mahābhārata 3.98–9)—if it is useful to allow him to be in charge of his nominal monarchy presiding over the unanimous celestial forces, a great Ṛṣi and Kṛṣṇa direct actions and characters; even his heaven, after all the heaven of the old warrior god, can be useful for the dead warriors, a path well opened by the Upaniṣads. He was useful and could continue his existence by becoming the figurehead of a ship that he never steered and, at the same time, being ridiculed even in his own sex.

It is not a surprise that these new perspectives were accompanied in the wisdom sections of the work with exhortations to implement an open and creative use of the old legacy, reinterpreting, without dogmatism, religious knowledge and practices, including the old Vedic animal sacrifice, and religious (and non-religious) books. The entire story is intended to articulate the popular dogma, but upākhyānas and wisdom sections, because of their greater variability, may have served more particularly to vary, enrich and even correct possible interpretations of the main story, to increase focus, integrate cults and religious practices, and to attract people, allowing open debate among the potential members of that front, and to offer more possibilities for adapting its performance to different audiences or readers.[25] Let me qualify a previous sentence: it is not madness, and substories are part of its method.

I have attempted to suggest some perspectives that may explain differences between the pantheon and the power dynamics of the substories and main stories of the Mahābhārata, focusing, in particular, on Indra. So far, I have avoided addressing controversies with Hopkins's traditional perspective. It is fortunate that we can follow it in three different works produced over close to a century: Adolf Holtzmann in 1878, E. Washburn Hopkins in 1915 and John Brockington in 2001.[26] All three are interesting works, as they collect many

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25   See James W. Laine, *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1989), 259–60 for his description of "a society of competing ideologies" in "which the traditions that survived where those that gained credibility and legitimacy by absorbing into a grand hierarchy all those possibilities that other religions had to offer." See the interesting remarks of Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 185, on the concept of "inclusivism" as a tool of assimilation, "a process by which a multitude of various sects, philosophies, gods and modes of worship are united under a single overarching concept"; and see also the remarks on the existence of other parallel strategy, negation and even demonization in 185 ff., and 186, 195, 200–201, 203 in particular.

26   See Holtzmann, "Indra nach den Vorstellungen des *Mahābhārata*"; Edward Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1915), particularly 122–41; and John L.

of the important texts, and I believe they are based on the same principles: (1) The Mahābhārata reflects a Vedic Indra corresponding to the first phases (or layers) of the work, the oldest ones; (2) However, newer layers can be observed through analysis of the different treatments of Indra, arriving at the last stages (or layers) when Indra becomes subordinate to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, or Śiva; (3) The Vedic Indra is depicted as dominant, which would demonstrate the survival of the oldest layer and Indra's role in rituals, for example. Epithets reflecting Indra as conqueror of his enemies, slayer of Bala and Vṛtra, or Thunderbolt-wielder, would demonstrate his dominance.

Analyzing these elements and their variants is tempting. I am thinking, for example, of the ideas of Holtzmann[27] on the first Indra, the almighty god of the heroic age (*Heldenzeit*) of the Indian people, a Hero-god (*Heldengott*) who was a Nature-god (*Naturgott*) based on the storms. Also of note is his evolution to another Indra when in a superior state, the growing speculative capacities of people (*erwachende speculative Geist des Volkes*) perceived divine unity in the multiplicity of the forces of nature and, therefore, transformed the divine sphere into a more moral one in an age already dominated by priests and represented by Brahmā.

However, it is more useful to simply note that the first two proposals are highly speculative (and have not been tested on the text) and that they start from an unproven hypothesis, that is, the work is the result of the reworking of an old epic core. There is no evidence of other epics that are contemporary to this supposed old epic, and there is no sound evidence of the existence of epics that are contemporary to the Mahābhārata we have, except the also splendidly isolated Rāmāyaṇa—and let us remember that only new epics (for example, the *Aeneid*) can appear in such an isolated way.

The third proposal is more than questionable. As we have seen before, the presence of elements referring to the old Vedic Indra cannot let us forget that even in the main story, Indra is not the real leader of the Celestial Forces, that in the upākhyānas he is quite systematically derided, and that it is possible to individuate the processes and forces at work that lead to his demolition with the very internal evidence of the work.

From this perspective, it is easy to understand that some of their specific arguments are untenable. The idea, for example, that epic epithets referring to

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Brockington, "Indra in the Epics" *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honour of Asko Parpola*, ed. Klaus Karttunen and Petteri Koskikallio, Studia Orientalia 94 (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), 67–82; see also his *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 232 ff. for his view of Indra and the whole pantheon.

27   Holtzmann, "Indra nach den Vorstellungen des *Mahābhārata*," 290, 292, 336–37.

Indra would show the survival of the old conceptions can be perfectly coun-tered with the evidence that, as we have observed, epic epithets appear everywhere, even where Indra is ridiculed, and one of them (the thousand-eyed Indra) is directly subject to ridicule. Obviously, such an epic creation had to deal with Vedic hymns and stories and to reuse and recreate its useful parts. It is safer to conclude that the prominence of certain such uses demonstrates that there were no intermediate stages or other available epics or materials to draw on. The same could be said about formulae such as "x attacked y like Indra the Danavas."[28]

Vedic Indra and Vedic myths were much more than a precedent that accorded authority and prestige.[29] They had to be used and developed. Epi-thets, *formulae* or the very myths can be seen as available materials, and the supposed layers can be seen as different operational modalities, depending on the authors' interests in general and on the different parts of their work. This idea is clearly consistent with the flexible use of the old heritage advocated in doctrinal and religious matters and with the fact that the Mahābhārata's authors defended the superiority of their work on the Vedas.

The three mentioned authors aim to analyze the supposed different stages in the work, without analyzing the work itself—the work as a self-contained construction, as a whole to be interpreted, not mutilated or denied.

The options for use and reworking of the components available to the authors of the Mahābhārata are certainly plentiful, but it is useful to remember that they are not as many options as those of the Buddhists. Hopkins notes,[30] for example, that "in Buddhistic narratives the excellence of a virtuous person "makes hot the throne of Indra." The epics have no such absurd figure." We must ask: Absurd to whom? Absurd for what? Certainly it is not easy to imag-ine such *formulae* in the Epics (although it is enjoyable to imagine them) and

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28   To end these notes, I can not but quote here an eighty-year old criticism to the position of
      those authors who defended "a distinction based on differing conceptions of the gods
      between the earlier and later parts," noting that: "I make no attempt at a criticism .... Their
      widely differing results cannot be considered reliable. I shall merely add one remark con-
      cerning Dr. Finsler's method, because it is of most importance for my purpose. His prem-
      iss is that certain descriptions of the gods are later than others and he judges the age of
      various passages according to this presumption. If this premiss is questionable, he is
      working with a *petitio principii*." Martin P. Nilsson criticizing these premises on the *Iliad*
      in Martin P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles,
      London: University of California Press, 1932), 223–24, 228.

29   Danielle Feller, *The Sanskrit Epics: Representation of Vedic Myths* (New Delhi: Motilal
      Banarsidass, 2004), 299–300.

30   Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, 139.

not just for stylistic reasons, though the image of Indra in a permanent state of alert of possibly losing his throne is paramount.

It is good to take this reference to indicate that the need for absorbing outside influences while opposing them, which largely explains the very existence of the *Mahābhārata*, also involves Indra. Using Indra or not using Indra is not a real option, because, without ever forgetting the conventional Vedic tradition, he was widely used in less conventional perspectives. So far as I know, the first uses of the iconography of Indra occur on coins of the Greek kings in the northwest of the subcontinent, producing syncretic representations of Indra-Zeus, and the second uses are in Buddhist art.[31] It would be tempting to follow the Greek path. It suffices to cite one short example of a story we already know, the story of Vipula. The characterization of Indra in this story as a god who assumes different forms for his seductions (e.g., holding the thunderbolt, or as a bird, a quadruped, the wind, a mortal, or invisible; Mahābhārata 13.40.28 ff.),[32] arises the difficult problem of the Indian sources used,[33] but it is obvious enough that this problem does not exist in the case of the Greek Zeus. Iconography and texts explore the same fields.[34]

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31   Leona Anderson, *Śakra in early Buddhist Art*, MA Thesis, McMaster University, 1978, 18–19, <http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/opendissertation5624>.

32   See Fernando Wulff Alonso, "Indra en femenino: notas entre la India y Grecia a propósito del *Mahābhārata*," in Δῶρον Μνημοσύνης. *Miscelánea de Estudios ofrecidos a Ma. Ángeles Durán López*,, ed. Aurelio Pérez Jiménez and Isabel Calero (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2011), 347–70.

33   Note Renate Söhnen-Thieme, "The Ahalyā Story Through the Ages," in *Myth and Mythmaking: Continuous Evolution in Indian Tradition*, ed. Julia Leslie (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 39: "If Indra is imagined as a "womanizer" in Indian literature, one may well ask who were the women who were his prey … evidently there is only this one instance [Ahalyā] and it may be worth while look at it more closely." Although a very few more examples could be added, the fact is that they are scanty and have nothing to do with these alleged seductions.

34   I have avoided making overly explicit reference to my hypothesis on the use of Greco-Roman materials in the Mahābhārata. However, a brief note could be useful here. The Zeus of Socrates and Plato cannot be the Zeus of mythology, because their concept of reincarnation entails ethics, a moral compass: a god who perpetrates crimes, sexual assaults, or rapes, cannot preside over a world ruled by morality, where, after death, humans are rewarded or punished in direct relation to their previous lives. I have suggested that is one part of the components undermining Indra after the introduction of reincarnation into the Vedic and Brahmanic tradition, in a parallel but separate process. The Mahābhārata's use, and recreation of Greek mythological tradition relating to Zeus may have resulted—perhaps deliberately—in undermining Indra even further.

No reader of Alf Hiltebeitel's recent book on dharma[35] would be surprised by the existence of a direct connection between the Buddhists and the Mahābhārata on the subject of Indra. In fact, many of the features of the weak Indra in the Mahābhārata are visible in the Buddhist texts, such as the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*: a leader of the gods against the Asuras, a non-absolute king, living in a secondary heaven, a devotee of the Buddha with obvious moral limitations, who is still on a middle path towards perfection, in the context of gods who give in to the *arhants*. The same could be said of the Jain world. Therefore, the authors of the Mahābhārata most likely had to deal not only with possible previous re-interpretations of Indra coming from what they would consider their own field, but also with constructions and undermining attempts coming from their rivals. They also had the opportunity to use these Indras, perhaps without choice.

The authors of the Mahābhārata build both an epic and the mythology surrounding it. Studies of Greek Epics and mythology have highlighted the impossible attempt to clearly differentiate the epics from the mythology. On the one hand, there was an image of the Greek epic and religion painted as rational and transparent, which was centered on a specific interpretation of the *Iliad* and was created at the expense of some of the most meaningful components of Greek religiosity, from Dionysos onwards. On the other hand, there was a mythology painted as immoral, grotesque, and irrational. One of the primary reasons for the birth of studies of mythology in the nineteenth century was to explain such scandalous stories.[36]

When the authors of the Mahābhārata created a mythology alongside their epic, it opened the way for a similar interpretive scandal, which is evident in authors such as Hopkins and Van Buitenen defending the analyst and cumulative theory on the work. As stated above, I am quite sure that their perceptions, borne of approaches generated in Homeric studies and deeply rooted in the Eurocentric and classicist perspectives of the late nineteenth-century mythologists, have not been subjected to sufficient critical and historiographical questioning. The historiographical frontier is awaiting new approaches to these themes.

It is well-known that the analysts, in their search for the previous imagined Mahābhāratas, from the supposed epic core on, have quite systematically divided up the work. If they could imagine a Mahābhārata without Yugas, without Kṛṣṇa, and even without Pāṇḍavas, how could they not imagine it without substories? Alf Hiltebeitel wonders what a Mahābhārata would be

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35   Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative.*

36   Marcel Detienne, *L'invention de la mythologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

without stories that, for example, explain the origins of characters and so many other issues having clear developments in the work.[37]

It is fair to say that this ability to ignore substories has very interesting precedents in the *Iliad* academy: for example, the tendency to deny no less a reference than the Judgment of Paris as the origin of Hera's and Athena's hatred of the Trojans (*Iliad* 24.25–30). Nevertheless, it is perhaps more surprising to see that a clear reference to the warriors' slaughter in Troy, identifying it with the end of the race of half-god men (ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν; 12.23), can be forgotten and not connected to the beginning of the work, which directly associates the killing of so many heroes with the fulfillment of the plan of Zeus (πολλὰς δ᾽ ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν ἡρώων ... Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή; 1.3–5). Perhaps the idea of a transparent *Iliad* based on the idea of a no less rational and transparent Greek religion was not compatible with a merciless and fatalistic image projected on a work so directly connected to such "ancestors." In my opinion, the Mahābhārata's authors did not make such a mistake.

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37   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 480–81.

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Pride and Prostitution: Making Sense of the Mādhavī Exhibit in the Mahābhārata Museum[1]

Adheesh Sathaye

One of the most striking features of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata is the intricate maze of subnarratives that courses through nearly every book. Its vast array of side stories, digressions, and anecdotes make the epic appear as dense and sprawling as a modern-day metropolis, and equally as impenetrable for its modern readers. Like tourists visiting Tokyo, London, or Mumbai, we may traverse the Mahābhārata's broad central avenues with relative confidence and gaze in wonder at its majestic skyscrapers, but few of us dare to venture into its tiny bylanes and alleyways, lest we become hopelessly and irreparably lost. The current generation of readers is fortunate to have an experienced guide in our midst, who knows the epic's streets by heart and who has steered us through its more shadowy neighborhoods, helping us to appreciate their delicate and extraordinary beauty along the way. More so than any other modern scholar, Alf Hiltebeitel has insisted that we treat the Mahābhārata's narrative complexity not as a problem to be solved, not as calcification to be scraped away from a more real core, but as a literary testament to the genius of its composers. He has emboldened us to situate the epic's composition in a specific time and place—the post-Mauryan milieu of North India, "between the mid-second century BC and the year zero"[2]—and to read the text as a coherent and masterly *written* institution within an emergent early Indian public culture.

Hiltebeitel especially encourages us to read the Mahābhārata for its "sub-tales" (upākhyānas) in order to appreciate the epic's "archetypal design."[3] It is still an open question, however, how this complicated design of embedded stories and speeches would have impacted the cultural lives of its early Indian

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2   Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 18.

3   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 479.

audiences. For despite its "encyclopedic" appearance, the Mahābhārata could not have worked quite like the *Britannica* or the *World Book*. As Hiltebeitel puts it, encyclopedias "don't drape themselves around long stories."[4] Instead, because of its "rough joins, repetitions and reiterations, multiple and deepening causalities, overdeterminations, and intriguing contradictions,"[5] he argues for the epic as being a literary proceedings of a "symposium"[6] of Brahman intellectuals that combines "bold instructive teachings with a delight in concealment."[7] This scholastic analogy allows him to identify a deeper thematic amidst the maze of subnarratives: the "liberating instruction on both truth and *dharma*."[8]

Other scholars, though less inclined to accept Hiltebeitel's arguments for epic unity and literariness, have also approached the Mahābhārata's multidimensional structure through analogy. Christopher Minkowski and Michael Witzel find the epic's framing devices to be parallel to the embedded structure of Vedic sacrificial ritual.[9] Robert Goldman has compared the communicative modes of the epic to those of modern mass media.[10] And James Fitzgerald has likened its design to that of a Hindu temple, observing that a devotional (*bhakti*) theology of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa is placed at its narrative center, precisely where one places a deity in a shrine.[11]

Along similar lines, I have found it helpful to think of the Mahābhārata as resembling a modern museum, insofar as it was a cultural institution whose textual floors and corridors were designed to regulate its visitors' experience of

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4   Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 162.

5   Ibid., 164.

6   Ibid., 167.

7   Ibid., 164.

8   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 507.

9   Christopher Z. Minkowski, "Janamejaya's *Sattra* and Ritual Structure," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 3 (1989): 401–20; Michael Witzel, "On the Origin of the Literary Device of the 'Frame Story' in Old Indian Literature," in *Hinduismus Und Buddhismus: Festschrift Für Ulrich Schneider*, ed. Harry Falk (Freiburg: Hedwig Falk, 1987), 380–414.

10   Robert P. Goldman, "Gods in Hiding: The Mahābhārata's Virāṭa Parvan and the Divinity of the Indian Epic Hero," in *Modern Evaluation of the Mahābhārata* (*R.K. Sharma Felicitation Volume*), ed. S.P. Narang (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1995), 73–100.

11   James L. Fitzgerald, "The Great Epic of India as Religious Rhetoric: A Fresh Look at the '*Mahābhārata*,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983): 611-12; James L. Fitzgerald, "The Many Voices of the Mahābhārata," review of *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*, by Alf Hiltebeitel, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 4 (2003): 815.

artifacts from what James Hegarty calls the "significant past."[12] A more thorough investigation of this museological analogy is forthcoming, but I may outline my basic principles of comparison here. Just as the layout, lighting, and text panels enable the otherwise absent curator to regulate a museum-goer's appreciation of the value of the items on display, I suggest that the epic's anonymous composers introduced a number of textual devices within the primary narrative in order to control its audience's reception of its embedded subnarratives. First, the epic's two outer frames establish a kind of discursive "lighting" that shapes the appearance of the narrative materials contained within.[13] Second, epic subnarratives are typically told within question-and-answer dialogues between sagacious figures and the Kaurava or Pāṇḍava princes; like the "text panels" placed next to exhibits in a museum, these provide immediate and authoritative commentary on the value of the subnarrative.[14] Last but not least, the unilinear arrangement of subnarratives induces intertextualities between otherwise independent story material. Just as museum exhibits are ordered through chronological or thematic sequences that subtly restrict how a visitor evaluates them, subnarratives within the Mahābhārata have been sequenced to create narrative trajectories that determine how its audiences should interpret the nonstandard characters and events portrayed within them. It is through such museic devices, I suggest, that the Mahābhārata came to have a normative impact upon early Indian public life.

On the other hand, the Mahābhārata was not *actually* a museum, and ultimately, the analogy must remain a heuristic device for jump-starting the historical analysis of the text itself. How was this work of Sanskrit literature

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12   Adheesh Sathaye, "Was the *Mahābhārata* an Encyclopedia? Orality, Narrative Structure, and the Legends of Viśvāmitra in the Sanskrit Epic," paper presented at the 217th Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Chicago, IL, March 2008; James M. Hegarty, *Religion, Narrative, and Public Imagination in South Asia: Past and Place in the Sanskrit Mahabharata* (London: Routledge, 2011).

13   On the nature of the Mahābhārata's doubled opening frame, see Mahesh Mehta, "The Problem of the Double Introduction to the Mahābhārata," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93 (1973): 547–50; Minkowski, "Janamejaya's *Sattra* and Ritual Structure"; and Vishwa Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the Ādiparvan," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 144, who recovers a "non-narrative space" generated between the two frames, through which the epic's "hermeneutic apparatus" is delivered.

14   On the question-and-answer structure of epic and purāṇic literature, see Friedhelm Hardy, "Information and Transformation: Two Faces of the *Purāṇas*," in *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*, ed. Wendy Doniger (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

received by early Indian audiences? How was it used by performers and intellectuals of the day? Barring the unearthing of significant documentary evidence, we may never be able to answer such questions definitively. In the meantime, we are forced to speculate, and analogy can provide a conceptual framework around which to congeal our conjectures. Furthermore, thinking of the Mahābhārata as a narrative museum—or maybe better, a museological narrative—steers us away from interminable debates about its orality or writtenness, and of what is authentic and what is a later addition. Just as the contents of a museum are continually in flux, while the overall building plan remains fixed, we may think productively of the extant Mahābhārata text as a "fixed" archive of an otherwise "fluid" narrative tradition.[15] Thus, even if certain subnarratives were later additions to an older narrative core, the epic's "curators" would have added these items because they spoke to the social, political, and religious concerns of its "visitors"—mainstream Hindu communities in Northern India roughly between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the imperial Guptas (c. 185 BCE–300 CE). That is to say, we may begin to historicize the epic without first requiring a positive textual history.

This essay will explore an especially dusty and dimly-lit corridor branching off from one of the Mahābhārata's grandest exhibits: the diplomatic mission of Kṛṣṇa to the Kuru court on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas. This event takes up most of the epic's fifth book, the Udyoga Parvan (The Book of Effort), where amidst an assortment of myths and legends we find a curious story that has drawn much scholarly interest. In support of Kṛṣṇa's plea for peace, the divine sage Nārada tells the Kaurava prince Duryodhana a lengthy saga called the Gālavacarita— the "Chronicles of Gālava" (Mahābhārata 5.104–121). Its primary plot arc involves the young Brahman Gālava, who, in order to pay an extraordinary graduation fee (*dakṣiṇā*) demanded by his *guru* Viśvāmitra, prostitutes a princess named Mādhavī to three celebrated kings of North India, and then even to his teacher. This sexual odyssey leads to the birth of four noble kings who will eventually come to the rescue of their famous maternal grandfather, Yayāti, when he falls from heaven in disgrace.

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15   On the relationship of "fixed" and "fluid" categories in Indian cultural traditions, see Wendy Doniger, "Fixed and Fluid Texts in India." Here, by invoking the "fluidity" of the epic narrative tradition, I do not mean to argue against the validity of the critically reconstructed text of the written Sanskrit Mahābhārata, but rather, as Franklin Edgerton had acknowledged, the idea that "before the establishment of this text, the ancestor of all our MSS., there were already different versions of the [Mahābhārata] stories." Franklin Edgerton, "Introduction," in the *Sabhāparvan* (Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1944), xxxvi. I thank Vishwa Adluri for this reference as well as a number of other comments that have considerably strengthened this essay.

As we will see, this shocking story of pimping and promiscuity is not told in isolation, but on the heels of two rather different stories, creating a three-part narrative "installation." Furthermore, the epic employs two distinct modes of referentiality as a kind of "lighting" to illuminate the Gālavacarita. Its main characters, we will find, are all Vedic personae, while the events take place at important sites of post-Mauryan power. Finally, Nārada's introductory and concluding remarks work as "text panels" through which epic's composers sought directly to regulate the reception of the story. What exactly did they want epic audiences to think? To foreshadow my conclusions, I will argue that despite its seemingly racy contents, the epic's Gālavacarita is ultimately a story-exhibit meant for mainstream public audiences in post-Mauryan North India. Within it, there appears a unique fusion of morality and political discourse, or "*dharmārtha*," that encouraged the consolidation of power through kindness and friendship rather than despotism and conquest.

But first, what should we make of the exhibit itself? A number of feminist historians have read the curious tale of Mādhavī's prostitution for its implications regarding the subordination of women in early Indian society. For rather different reasons, it also captured the attention of the comparative mythologist Georges Dumézil, who discovered it to be a narrative "relic" with a long "pre-Indian" history. Both lines of inquiry have yielded insights into this remarkable narrative that are well worth considering before embarking on our "museulogical" approach.

Narrative Curiosities: Feminist Readings of the Mādhavī Story

It is difficult to read the Gālavacarita without wondering what Mādhavī's plight can tell us about the status of women in early India. Madhusraba Dasgupta finds Mādhavī's treatment "so repulsive that it is hard to contemplate with detachment," as she becomes "nothing but a commodity created for men's convenience."[16] Not only is she sexually objectified, the princess is then "dispossessed of every single son she bears," and "when her use as sexual and reproductive coinage has ended, she is returned to her father, who sets about arranging her marriage as if nothing had happened." Vijaya Ramaswamy also sees the story as revealing the "unquestioning submissiveness" expected of

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16   Madhusraba Dasgupta, "Usable Women: The Tales of Ambā and Mādhavī," in *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India*, ed. Mandakranta Bose (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 53.

women in early Indian society.[17] Sukumari Bhattacharji analyzes the story as reflecting a premodern patriarchal economy that exploited women as sexual commodities, insofar as "women's sole worth lay in their reproductive roles."[18] Examining the history of prostitution in early India, Bhattacharji concludes that "all along this dismal history, we notice that women had very little initiative or choice about their destiny."[19]

Still, it is unclear how closely Mādhavī's treatment might be linked to the actual, historical exploitation of women. Arguing that the story "cannot be treated simplistically as another instance of MCP [male chauvinist pig]-ism,"[20] Pradip Bhattacharya points out that Mādhavī herself proposes the idea of prostitution to help Gālava acquire his requisite tuition fees. And she also announces her boon of eternal virginity. This leads him to argue that commodification is "*not imposed* on her, for she could well have remained with the first king Haryaśva by keeping the secret of her boon safe."[21] He connects this motif to earlier epic scenes in which Kuntī had insisted upon Draupadī's polyandrous marriage and on herself becoming a "child-producing machine." Rather than simply blaming patriarchy, Bhattacharya argues, we should instead ask why epic women would volunteer for exploitation, suggesting that "obviously, some sort of self-fulfillment is involved in the transaction."[22]

To what extent, however, is this *actually* a case of self-fulfillment? Though it is true that Mādhavī does offer herself willingly, it still must be emphasized that (1) she has no agency when her father initially gives her to the brahman as a bartering chip, and (2) this is a story told by Brahman men. That is, its telling is shaped by a deeper normative social discourse that naturalizes the subordination of women by making it seem like a form of "self-fulfillment." What the epic text presents as an autonomous act—Mādhavī's volunteering for sexual exploitation—in fact fits consistently within the patriarchal worldview in which this self-subordination is presented as always and already the right choice for good women. At the same time, as Danielle Feller has shown,

17   Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Gender and Transcendence in Early India," in *A Social History of Early India*, ed. Brajadulal D. Chattopadhyaya, vol. 2, part 5 of *A History of Science, Philosophy, and Culture in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Center for Studies in Civilizations, 2009), 234

18   Sukumari Bhattacharji, "Economic Rights of Ancient Indian Women," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 (1991): 507.

19   Sukumari Bhattacharji, "Prostitution in Ancient India," *Social Scientist* 15 (1987): 55.

20   Pradip Bhattacharya, "Women in Ancient India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 24 (1991): 1426, col. 2.

21   Ibid., 1426, col.1 (emphasis in original).

22   Ibid., 1426, col. 2.

even the most patriarchal of texts, the *dharmaśāstras*, do not condone such commodification within its idealistic social vision, and in many cases explicitly prohibit it for high-caste women.[23] There remains, therefore, a deeper cultural ambivalence in the Mahābhārata surrounding Mādhavī's strange polyandry—just as in the more famous polyandrous marriage of Draupadī.[24]

Though she may ultimately be a pawn of the men around her, Mādhavī does engage in one clear "act of autonomy" at the close of the narrative.[25] After she gives birth to four sons, and after Gālava is done with her, Yayāti arranges for a marriage ceremony (*svayaṃvara*) in which his daughter is granted the right to choose her own husband. But Mādhavī selects none of the suitors, and instead enters the forest as a renunciant, choosing to live out her days "like a fawn (*mṛgavatī*)."[26] Ramaswamy reads this to be an essentially soteriological act, for "Mādhavī's salvation lies in her silence."[27] while Bhattacharji interprets it as a form of social protest.[28] Dasgupta splits the difference, explaining that renunciation induces a "breach between Madhavi's habitual compliance and her new self-assertion," and views the story to be "an ethical puzzle rather than a straightforward model" for Brahmanical patriarchy.[29]

The Mahābhārata never makes the solution to this puzzle entirely clear. Feller's study shows that that the epic's audiences, both male and female, would certainly have found these events to be morally problematic. She proposes therefore that it falls within the scope of the legal discourse on *āpaddharma*, or "emergency law," but I find this argument difficult to sustain. Indeed, a number of legally viable options were open to Gālava, including simply begging for the horses from the three kings, as he had initially done in Yayāti's court. He wasn't forced to prostitute Mādhavī. He also could have offered the girl straightaway to Viśvāmitra, as his teacher himself quips. Furthermore, the extraordinary circumstances necessary for invoking *āpaddharma*—the total breakdown of moral order, the need for physical survival, or a clear and pres-

23   Danielle Feller, "The Strange Story of Princess Mādhavī," paper presented at the Fifth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas, August 11–16, 2008.

24   Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1976]), 223.

25   Dasgupta, "Usable Women: The Tales of Ambā and Mādhavī," 53.

26   Perhaps conflating it with the Ambā legend, Dasgupta speculates that Mādhavī had fallen in love with Gālava, who did not reciprocate (ibid., 52); such a reading is not found in the Critical Edition text.

27   Ramaswamy, "Gender and Transcendence in Early India," 235.

28   Bhattacharji, "Economic Rights of Ancient Indian Women," 511, col. 3

29   Dasgupta, "Usable Women: The Tales of Ambā and Mādhavī," 53.

ent political danger—are absent in this narrative.[30] If we instead consider the context in which Nārada is telling the story to Duryodhana, it then follows that Gālava must be making a *mistake*—one that Nārada wishes to advise the Kaurava prince against committing himself. Moreover, the error is not one of ethics, but of strategy. Because he lacks sufficient tactical intelligence (e.g., that the requisite number of *śyāmakarṇa* horses simply do not exist), Gālava has made the wrong decision. It is, in other words, an issue of *artha* (power) rather than dharma (moral law)—though as I will argue at this essay's conclusion, the Mahābhārata pushes a special brand of dharma-fused artha, or "*dharmārtha*," as a viable solution.

There remains a lingering question about gender in this story: if Mādhavī is neither a model for womanhood nor its antithesis, what, then, does she represent? In a long series of publications,[31] Pradip Bhattacharya has noted that Mādhavī's persona is consonant with a set of epic women known as the "Five Maidens" or *pañcakanyā* (Ahalyā, Draupadī, Kuntī, Tārā, Mandodarī), who are traditionally contrasted with the "Five Chaste Women" or *satīs* (Satī, Sītā, Sāvitrī, Damayantī, and Arundhatī).[32] This binary opposition concords quite neatly with the classical Hindu "split-image" of women as either chaste/nurturing or violent/erotic.[33] If the five *satīs* embody the ideal of feminine chastity,

30   For an extended analysis of the construction of āpaddharma in the Mahābhārata, see Adam Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India: the Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007).

31   Pradip Bhattacharya, "Pañcakanyā: Women of Substance," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 35 (2000): 13–56; "Five Holy Virgins, Five Sacred Myths: A Quest for Meaning," *Manushi* 141 (July 2004): 4–12; "Of Kunti and Satyawati: Sexually Assertive Women of the Mahabharata," *Manushi* 142 (August 2004): 21–25; "'One-in-Herself': Why Kunti Remains a Kanya," *Manushi* 143 (October 2004): 25–33; "She Who Must Be Obeyed: Draupadi: The Ill-Fated One," *Manushi* 144 (December 2004): 19–30; "Living by Their Own Norms: Unique Powers of the Panchkanyas," *Manushi* 145 (February 2005): 30–37; "The Riddle of the 'Pancha Kanyā' (Five Maidens)," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32 (2009): 3–45; "Pancha Kanya, A Quest in Search of Meaning–Part I." *Journal of Human Values* 12 (2006): 1–29; "Pancha Kanya, A Quest in Search of Meaning—Part II," *Journal of Human Values* 12 (2006): 107–36.

32   These Five Maidens are memorialized by a proverbial verse (*subhāṣita*) within the Hindu oral tradition: "Ahalyā, Draupadī, Kuntī, Tārā and so too, Mandodarī—these Five Maidens are ever to be kept in one's memory, for they eliminate the greatest of sins" (ahalyā draupadī kuntī tārā mandodarī tathā | pañcakanyā smaren nityaṃ mahāpātakanāśakāḥ ||, cf. Bhattacharya, "Pañcakanyā: Women of Substance," 13).

33   Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); A.K. Ramanujan, "Two Realms of Kannada Folklore," in *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India*, ed. Stuart H. Blackburn and

the *kanyās* exemplify how realworld women should *not* behave, for all of them engage in quasi- or fully adulterous sexual relationships, think and speak for themselves, and have fiery, self-assured personalities.

On the other hand, the Five Maidens are not criticized within the Hindu tradition, but instead venerated as auspicious figures who "eliminate the greatest of sins" (*mahāpātakanāśakāḥ*). In searching for the reasoning behind this paradox, Bhattacharya rather unconvincingly argues that the *kanyās* represent the Jungian *Anima* archetype.[34] Simon Brodbeck, in reviewing Bhattacharya's work, demystifies the situation by pointing to "specific tensions between matriliny and patriliny and between matrilocy and patrilocy" that run through the stories of *kanyā*-types in the epics.[35] In contrast to the *satīs*, the *kanyās* represent an older "relic of a disused system" of women-centered marriage and inheritance in which royal consorts were connected to the king's lands and fortune (Śrī).[36] This system, Brodbeck notes, came into conflict with the patrilineal/patrilocal system of the *dharmaśāstras*. It is an observation that helps to clarify why *kanyā*-types were significant for the Mahābhārata's composers: they exposed a misalignment between the preferred, patrilineal model of kingship and the alternate systems of certain older Kṣatriya lines that were being incorporated into the Hindu mainstream at the time of the epic's composition. A "relic" of times gone by, the only option for Mādhavī—and the old matrilineal/matrilocal system she represents—was to disappear.

Narrative Relics: The Indo-European Prehistory of the Mādhavī Story

Brodbeck's discussion of the Mādhavī story as a relic resonates with a second strain of Indological scholarship that regards it to have been a cultural survival from a more ancient, pre-Indian past. In a landmark study, Georges Dumézil argued for a cognate relationship between the Mādhavī story and the Celtic

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A.K. Ramanujan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 41–75; see Gloria Goodwin Raheja and Ann Grodzins Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 32–38.

34   That is to say, Bhattacharya posits them to be embodiments of a feminine inner personality, the *Anima*, embedded within the male subconscious, the *Animus*, which serves to connect the (male) individual to a collective unconscious.

35   Simon Brodbeck, Review of *Pancha-Kanya: The Five Virgins of Indian Epics. A Quest in Search of Meaning*, by Pradip Bhattacharya, *South Asia Research* 26 (2006): 103.

36   Ibid., 104.

legend of Medb, the principal figure of the Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.[37] On the most basic level, Dumézil observed that the name of the two princesses derive from the same Indo-European root, **medhuā-*, meaning "intoxicating" and related to Sanskrit *madhu* ("honey, sweet") and English "mead."[38] Second, he noted an obvious parallel between the two storylines: both queens marry four different kings in the course of their career. Finally, Dumézil explored deeper structural affinities between the two stories, arguing both Medb and Mādhavī to be feminine personifications of an Indo-European conceptualization of royal power.[39] That is, both stories operate on "an Indo-European theory of the nature, the chances, the risks of royalty and, above all, the qualities it requires."[40] These qualities are specifically embodied first by the princesses' husbands and then her sons, who represent a tripartite division of social functions.[41] Most important for Dumézil's analysis is the congruence between the personae of their fathers—Eochaid Feidlech and Yayāti. Noting that both kings clash with their sons but have obedient, self-sacrificing daughters, Dumézil maintained that their saga illustrates "a vast theory of kingship"[42] that was active in archaic Indo-European thought. Within this mythological scheme, Yayāti/ Eochaid embodies an originary, universal kingship (pIE **rēg-*). His grandsons further divide this royal power into the three functions that order traditional society, while the daughter, Mādhavī/Medb, serves as a matrilocal pathway for its distribution.

Building off of Dumézil's insights, a number of Indologists have explored how the Mahābhārata "indigenized" the Indo-European tradition.[43] J.A.B. van Buitenen, for example, argues that this older "raw material" has been repackaged to form a "sequel" to the Mahābhārata's other legends of Yayāti.[44] As

37   Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

38   Ibid., 81–4.

39   Ibid., 83.

40   Ibid., 94.

41   Ibid., 28–29. On Dumézil's trifunctional theory of Indo-European social thought, see Nicholas J. Allen, "Hinduism, Structuralism and Dumézil," in *Miscellanea Indo-Europea*, ed. Edgar C. Polomé, *Journal of Indo-European Studies Monographs* 33 (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of Man, 1999), 241–60; and Emily B. Lyle, "Dumézil's Three Functions and Indo-European Cosmic Structure," *History of Religions* 22 (1982): 25–44.

42   Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, 103.

43   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Comparing Indo-European 'Epics'," *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 94.

44   J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction [to Book 5. The Book of the Effort]," in *The Mahābhārata: 4. The Book of Virāṭa; 5. The Book of the Effort* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978).

part of the adaptation, Hiltebeitel examines how the Indo-European elements have been reshaped by "such specifically Indian themes as reincarnation, yoga, *dharma*, and *bhakti*" in the epic.[45] Elsewhere, Hiltebeitel also notes a convergence between Mādhavī and Draupadī, who are both "rescuers of royal lineages" and symbolic manifestations of the Hindu concept of Śrī, or "Fortune."[46]

Dumézil's approach also offers another way to understand Mādhavī's prostitution. Like Bhattacharya, Dumézil notes it to be an act of "heroic self-sacrifice" that repays the debts of her father and provides him with grandsons.[47] However, Dumézil argues this to have been a Brahmanical "domestication" of a more licentious Indo-European original as captured in the ribald characterization of the Irish Medb.[48] Thus, according to Dumézil, by the time it appeared in the Mahābhārata, the story's Brahman authors, "who were better casuists and more uncompromising moralists than the Druids,"[49] essentially cleaned it up. Mādhavī's actions were now "steeped in piety,"[50] such that she and the other characters "acted out of pure *dharma* (virtue) with no trace of *kāma* (desire)— and the *artha* (profit) with which she has been concerned is an *artha* also pure in essence, intended for another person's advantage."[51] Underneath this veneer of classical piety, however, Dumézil discovers a far more ancient discourse at play. "What if," he asks, "these edifying motivations are no more than an Indian attempt to put a modest garment over a more ancient mechanism, one of a totally different order"?[52] To be sure, Dumézil cautions against reconstructing an Indo-European "nebula of matriarchy" from this story; still, he perceives the existence of a matrilocal mechanism of power transfer alternating with

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45   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Dumézil and Indian Studies." *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1974): 137; see also Hiltebeitel, "Comparing Indo-European 'Epics,'" 94.

46   Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1976]), 223.

47   Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, 107.

48   The common early Indological theory that Brahmans had Bowdlerized or otherwise tampered with the Mahābhārata (e.g., Adolf Holtzmann Jr., *Zur Geschichte und Kritik des Mahābhārata* [Kiel: C.F. Haessler, 1892]; Frederick Eden Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* [London: Oxford University Press, 1922]) remains problematic, at best—see Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) for an important critique of the German nationalist discourses embedded within the idea of a Brahmanical textual takeover.

49   Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, 98.

50   Ibid., 78.

51   Ibid., 79.

52   Ibid., 79.

the normative, patrilineal mode.[53] We come full circle, in other words, to Brodbeck's insights regarding the deeper threads of genealogy and royal succession within the epic.[54]

What can these two lines of scholarship reveal about the cultural significance of the Mādhavī story? It is important to know that it is a relic from an older Indo-European saga, and to appreciate how it reflects a *long durée* subordination of women. But why has such an odd legend been told at such an unlikely moment in the epic, and how were the epic's audiences supposed to appreciate it? Returning to the analogy of the museum, I suggest that we cannot understand the cultural mediation of any relic, even the lowliest of potsherds, by examining the artifact alone, in isolation. Rather, it requires a consideration of context: how it has been installed, how lighting has been used, and what is written on the juxtaposed text panels. The narratological equivalents of these museic devices are the sequencing of narrative elements, intertextual references, and the dialogical passages that frame the story. And it is to these features that we may now turn.

The Installation: Narrative Sequencing in the Gālavacarita

The Gālavacarita involves the sequencing of three distinct plot incidents: (1) the sage Viśvāmitra achieves Brahmanhood and then demands an exhorbitant tuition fee from his pupil Gālava (Mahābhārata 5.104-5), (2) the eagle Garuḍa takes Gālava to meet a female ascetic named Śāṇḍilī (5.106-11), and (3) Gālava meets Yayāti and prostitutes his daughter Mādhavī, first to three different kings and then Viśvāmitra himself, to acquire the fee (5.112-21). This results in the birth of Yayāti's four grandsons, whose combined merit (along with that of Mādhavī and Gālava) rescues him as he falls from heaven. The Gālavacarita's three plot incidents are further juxtaposed with two independent subnarratives presented immediately beforehand: the story of Dambhobhava, told by Rāma Jāmadagnya (Mahābhārata 5.94), and that of Indra's charioteer Mātali, as told by Kaṇva (5.95-103).

The arrangement of the three subplots of the Gālavacarita, as well as the two other legends that come before it, involves a structural process I will call *preconditioning*, equivalent to what Hegarty has called "recursive elaboration"

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53   Ibid., 106–7.

54   Simon Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline: Gender, Culture, and the Royal Hereditary* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

and what Mary Brockington deems "backwards composition."[55] That is, the first plot incident contours the interpretation of the second, and the second contours the third. Thus, before audiences get to the morally shocking treatment of Mādhavī, they are already made to think of it as abnormal, if not abhorrent, by the events of the Śāṇḍilī subplot.

Before taking him to meet King Yayāti and his daughter Mādhavī, Garuḍa, who has come to help his friend Gālava, first carries the young Brahman to a mountain named "Ṛṣabha" where they are shown hospitality by a female ascetic named Śāṇḍilī.[56] After a nice meal, the pair fall into a kind of "food coma" (*annamohitau*) (Mahābhārata 5.111.3d), but Garuḍa soon awakens to discover that his wings have been clipped, so that "the bird resembled a lump of flesh with a head and feet."[57] Gālava asks the bird, "What inauspicious, morally despicable thing have you been thinking of?"[58] Garuḍa confesses that he had contemplated taking the woman around to visit Prajāpati, Mahādeva, and Viṣṇu (5.111.8d–9ab). He begs for mercy, explaining that he had done it only "with good intentions" (*priyakāmyayā*) (5.111.10b). After admonishing the eagle for insulting her, Śāṇḍilī forgives him and restores his original form, on the condition that he "is never to disrespect women, even if they be worthy of such abuse."[59]

Garuḍa makes the promise, and the pair move on to see Yayāti—but the moral landscape has already been given shape: before the epic audiences may hear about how Mādhavī is subordinated, they are shown a strong, independent female who resists male dominance. Her subject-position, we are told, is based upon a perfected spiritual state (*siddhi*) that she has acquired through

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55 James M. Hegarty, "Encompassing the Sacrifice: On the Narrative Construction of the Significant Past in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 7 (2006): 108; Mary Brockington, "The Art of Backwards Composition: Some Narrative Techniques in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*," in *Composing a Tradition: Concepts, Techniques and Relationships, Proceedings of the First Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, August 1997,* ed. Mary Brockington and Peter Schreiner (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999), 99–110.

56 The location of this Ṛṣabha is uncertain. In the Rāmāyaṇa (4.39.39), Mount Ṛṣabha is placed in the Himālaya near Kailāsa. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (10.79.15), Ṛṣabha is in the Tamil country, while the sixteenth-century Caitanyacaritāmṛta (Madhyalīlā 9.166) locates it specifically in the Palani Hills north of Madurai. The Mahābhārata here describes Mount Ṛṣabha as located on the "chest of the ocean" (*sāgarorasi*) (5.110.22b), also suggestive of a southern location.

57 māṃsapiṇḍopamo 'bhūt sa mukhapādānvitaḥ khagaḥ | (Mahābhārata 5.111.5ab)

58 kiṃ nu te manasā dhyātam aśubhaṃ dharmadūṣaṇam | (Mahābhārata 5.111.7ab)

59 ninditāsmi tvayā vatsa na ca nindāṃ kṣamāmy aham |
na ca te garhaṇīyāpi garhitavyāḥ striyaḥ kva cit || (Mahābhārata 5.111.16cd)

good behavior (*ācāra*) (Mahābhārata 5.111.14).[60] It is also presumably based on her being a Brahman and not a Kṣatriya, though this is not explicitly stated. Garuḍa's behavior is morally ambiguous in this episode—he does swear to have only good intentions towards Śāṇḍilī, but a passage relegated to the apparatus of the Critical Edition reveals some ulterior motives: "Spying on that chaste ascetic woman, with her delicate limbs, he made a mind to snatch her away—since her beauty made her appear like the Goddess Śrī incarnate."[61] Clearly, Garuḍa's behavior foreshadows Gālava's pimping of Mādhavī, and contours how audiences are to receive the plot incidents that are to come. It also makes it all the more significant that Mādhavī offers herself for exploitation. First, at least on a generic level, the forced trafficking of women, even those who may be "worthy of such abuse," is judged to be an immoral act, with severe legal consequences. Second, Garuḍa is shown to be a morally problematic friend and guide.

This latter point in fact had already been impressed upon the epic's audiences through an independent subnarrative told immediately before the Gālavacarita, which in some manuscripts is titled, "Mātali's Search for a Bridegroom" (*mātalivarānveṣaṇa*). The sage Kaṇva tells this story to Duryodhana to warn him of the folly of his arrogant boasting against the Pāṇḍavas. The legend details the journey of Indra's chariot driver into the underworld to find a suitable husband for his daughter. Mātali eventually chooses a groom from among the Nāga serpents, who are continually being terrorized by the eagle Garuḍa. Taking his future son-in-law back to Indra's heaven, Mātali asks his master to protect the snake from the bloodthirsty Garuḍa, who comes in pursuit of his natural prey. But Indra meekly defers to Viṣṇu, who then intervenes against his servant's assault. Garuḍa arrogantly challenges the physical superiority of his master, but fails miserably even to lift Viṣṇu's right arm. Humbled and defeated, the contrite Garuḍa is given a gentle warning by Viṣṇu that is not dissimilar from what Śāṇḍilī will tell him: "Don't do this again!" (*maivaṃ bhūya iti*; Mahābhārata 5.103.30cd). The epic audience is thus preconditioned to question Garuḍa's character even before the Gālavacarita begins.

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60   This good behavior involves an orientation towards both *dharma* and *artha*, a matter to which we will return. The epic states a proverb here: "A person attains *dharma* through good behavior, and through good behavior one also gets money; a person achieves prosperity through good behavior, and good behavior nullifies bad omens" (ācārāl labhate dharmam ācārāl labhate dhanam | ācārāc chriyam āpnoti ācāro hanty alakṣaṇam ||; Mahābhārata 5.111.15).

61   tāṃ dṛṣṭvā cārusarvāṅgīṃ tāpasīṃ brahmacāriṇīm |
      grahītuṃ hi manaś cakre rūpāt sākṣād iva śriyam ||) (Mahābhārata 5*453 after 5.111.4b).
      This verse is a marginal insertion found in one Devanāgarī manuscript, labeled "K1" by the Mahābhārata's critical editors, that is dated 1566 CE and allied with the Kashmiri Śāradā manuscripts.

Given Garuḍa's tarnished moral record, why then does Gālava so readily trust him as a friend? The question never comes up because the first subplot of the story has already provided an answer: Gālava is desperate, thinking himself to be at the end of his rope. The story begins with Gālava attending to his teacher Viśvāmitra, who is tested by the god Dharma as he attempts to gain Brahmanhood. Dharma takes on the disguise of his archrival Vasiṣṭha and comes begging for alms. Viśvāmitra produces a pot containing homemade, steaming-hot rice porridge, but Dharma tells the sage that he has already eaten, asks him to wait a while, and leaves. Holding the pot on his head, Viśvāmitra patiently remains motionless for one hundred years—attended upon by the dutiful Gālava. When Lord Dharma returns disguised as Vasiṣṭha, he is impressed with Viśvāmitra's forbearance and dedication, and declares him to have become a Brahman.

Viśvāmitra then dismisses his loyal student, but Gālava insists on giving a *gurudakṣiṇā*, a graduation fee, to his teacher. Viśvāmitra repeatedly declines the offer, but Gālava refuses to take "No" for an answer. Losing his patience, Viśvāmitra demands an impossible gift of eight hundred *śyāmakarṇa* horses— pure white stallions each with one black ear (Mahābhārata 5.104.26). On hearing this request Gālava fall into intense self-pity, for he has no money, no friends, and no hope to keep his promise. Contemplating suicide, he makes a final appeal to Viṣṇu, and it is precisely at that moment that Garuḍa comes to his rescue.

It is important to consider what Viśvāmitra might represent in the Gālava-carita. As a king who turns himself into a Brahman, Viśvāmitra is a robust counter-normative figure in Hindu mythology, a man who achieves the impossible due to extraordinary hubris and personal will.[62] He is a terrifying Oedipal father figure in both epics,[63] but the Mahābhārata especially exoticizes Viśvā-mitra as the Brahman "Other," a persona to be feared and respected for his violent power and extraordinary accomplishments, but never to be emulated by "normal" Brahmans.[64] By invoking Viśvāmitra, I suggest that the composers precondition what their audiences are to think of Gālava—one expects that he

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62   Adheesh Sathaye, *Crossing the Lines of Caste: Viśvāmitra and the Construction of Brahmin Power in Hindu Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

63   Robert P. Goldman, "Fathers, Sons and *Gurus*: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6 (1978): 325–92 and Robert P. Goldman, "Matricide, Renunciation, and Compensation in the Legends of Two Warrior-Heroes of the Sanskrit Epics," *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 117–31.

64   Adheesh Sathaye, "The Other Kind of Brahman: Rāma Jāmadagnya and the Psychosocial Construction of Brahman Power in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Epic and Argument in Sanskrit Literary History: Essays in Honor of Robert P. Goldman*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 185–207.

will operate at the margins of social propriety, following in the footsteps of one of the most notorious examples of such behavior. The demonstration of Viśvāmitra's extraordinary perseverance in achieving Brahman status further preconditions the audience's reception of his pupil's stubbornness: Gālava is, in a sense, learning to be like his teacher in challenging social laws that good people are discouraged from challenging.

Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood, one might say, also takes on a "metamythical" capacity in the Gālavacarita, gluing an older Indo-European narrative relic into a more contemporary mythological tradition.[65] Apart from his famous change of caste, epic audiences would certainly have known of Viśvāmitra's being one the seven preeminent Vedic seers (*saptarṣi*), his prominence in the genealogies of kings and sages, and his involvement in Hariścandra's aborted human sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa.[66] At this point in the epic's narration, audiences would already have heard of Viśvāmitra's rivalry with Vasiṣṭha (Mahābhārata 1.165-7), his irascibility, and his potential for unleashing violent curses (1.65-66). They would have also known at least one version of the story of his miscegenated birth and its connection to the *śyāmakarṇa* horses (115).[67] Those with more advanced Vedic training would have known Viśvāmitra had a son named

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65   On Viśvāmitra legends as "metamyths" see Robert P. Goldman, *Gods, Priests, and Warriors: The Bhṛgus of the Mahābhārata* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 7-8, 104, 111.

66   On Viśvāmitra's place within the Seven Seers, see John E. Mitchiner, *Traditions of The Seven Ṛṣis* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982); for Viśvāmitra's genealogical lines, see V.G. Rahurkar, *The Seers of the Ṛgveda* (Poona: University of Poona, 1964) and Umesh Chandra Sharma, *The Viśvāmitras and the Vasiṣṭhas: An Exhaustive Historical Study, Vedic and Post-Vedic* (Aligarh: Viveka Publications, 1975); on Śunaḥśepa, see H.L. Hariyappa, *Ṛgvedic Legends through the Ages* (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate Research Institute, 1953), Hermann Lommel, "Die Śunaḥśepa-Legende," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 114 (1964): 122–61, David Gordon White, "Śunaḥśepa Unbound," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 203 (1986): 227–62.

67   These horses, as is revealed at the end of the Gālavacarita but already discussed in the Āraṇyakaparvan (Mahābhārata 3.115.15-18), miraculously emerged from the Ganges at a site called the "Horse Ford" (*aśvatīrtha*) due to a boon given to Ṛcīka, a Bhārgava Brahman who had married Viśvāmitra's sister Satyavatī. Her father Gādhi had demanded as a bride price from Ṛcīka a thousand *śyāmakarṇa* horses, which did not exist prior to their miraculous emergence from the river (115.12). Afterwards, these divine horses were distributed to various kings, but, we learn, four hundred of them drowned in the Vitastā river. Since only six hundred now remained, it turns out that Gālava had been given an impossible task. On the epic and purāṇic Satyavatī legend, see Robert P. Goldman "Akṛtavraṇa vs. Śrīkṛṣṇa as Narrators of the Legend of Bhārgava Rāma: A Propos Some Observations of Dr. V.S. Sukthankar," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 53 (1970): 161–73; Sathaye, "How to Become a Brahman" and Sathaye, "The Other Kind of Brahman."

Aṣṭaka—here, with Mādhavī—who succeeded him in kingship.[68] And those familiar with the purāṇic tradition might perhaps have heard that Gālava was also Viśvāmitra's son, so named because his mother, during a famine, had put him up for sale with a cord tied around his neck (*gala*), at which time he was rescued by the Ikṣvāku prince Satyavrata Triśaṅku.[69] The subplot of Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood at the start of the Gālavacarita, in other words, does more than just highlight the theme of Gālava's obstinacy. Functioning as an intertext, Viśvāmitra's appearance enables the epic's composers to connect Mādhavī to a larger mythological storyworld while also designating exactly what this story is about: a socially counter-normative, "Other" kind of Brahman.

The Lighting: Vedic and Geo-Cultural Referentialities in the Gālavacarita

Intertextuality, returning to the museological analogy, forms a kind of discursive "lighting" through which the epic illuminates its Gālavacarita story-exhibit. The Mahābhārata's linkages to Vedic literature have had a long history of Indological scrutiny, and more recently, Danielle Feller has examined at length the "Vedic foundation" underlying the textual production of the epics.[70] The Viśvāmitra metamyth surely falls into this larger cultural project, but it is only one of many Vedic references in the Gālavacarita. And there is even more to it, for while one set of references invokes a Vedic past, another connects these events to key sites in the cultural geography of post-Mauryan North India. In doing so, the Mahābhārata's composers cast two kinds of discursive lighting

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68   Aṣṭaka is named as the seer of Ṛgveda 10.104, while the Brāhmaṇas state that he was the son of Viśvāmitra (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 7.17; Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra 15.26) and installed into kingship (*rājyam*) by his father (Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa § 145). For an exhaustive analysis of Aṣṭaka in Vedic literature, see Umesh Chandra Sharma, "Aṣṭaka Viśvāmitra: A Study," *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 23 (1975): 169–74.

69   Harivaṃśa 9.97-100; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 63.86-89; Vāyu Purāṇa 88.88-90; Śiva Umāsaṃhitā 37.56-59. The Mahābhārata knows of Triśaṅku's ascension to heaven while being cursed as an outcaste (1.65.34), but not the events of the Satyavrata legend. F.E. Pargiter posits that the legend dates from the sixth or seventh century BCE (1913: 902), while other scholars more realistically place the *purāṇa-pañcalakṣaṇa* corpus, in which the legend is found, in the fifth or sixth centuries CE (Hans T. Bakker, "Early Mythology Relating to Vārāṇasī," in *Banāras* (*Vārāṇasī*)*: Cosmic Order, Sacred City, Hindu Traditions* (*Festschrift to Prof. R.L. Singh*), ed. Rana P.B. Singh, *Cultural Traditions of India* 5 [Varanasi: Tara Book Agency, 1993], 21).

70   Danielle Feller, *The Sanskrit Epics: Representation of Vedic Myths* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 15–17.

upon this curious narrative relic: one of religious significance and the other of early Indian political geography.

The names of nearly all of the characters in this story—Brahman and Kṣatriya—are found in the Vedic corpus (Mādhavī does not appear in Vedic literature). The Brahmans Viśvāmitra, Aṣṭaka, and Gālava, as we have seen, were well-known Vedic seers. As for the Kṣatriyas, Yayāti is mentioned twice in the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā (1.31.17, 10.63.1), while Mādhavī's second husband Divodāsa appears throughout Vedic literature (e.g., ṚV 6.16, 6.61, 9.61) and was "one of the leading princes of the early Vedic Age."[71] Pratardana is found in the Yajurveda (Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā 21.10; Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 26.2.5) and is said to be Divodāsa's son (Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 3.1). Mādhavī's third husband, Uśīnara, appears in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (8.14), while Śibi, son of Uśīnara, is mentioned in the Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra (21.18). The only kings not having explicit Vedic antecedents are Mādhavī's first husband Haryaśva, king of Ayodhyā, and his son Vasumanas. However, even these two appear in an important passage within one Vedic ancillary text in which nearly all of these kings are unified.

The *Ṛgvedasarvānukramaṇi* of Kātyāyana (c. second century, BCE) attributes the seership of a single, three-line Ṛgveda verse (ṚV 10.179) jointly to Śibi Auśīnara ("the son of Uśīnara"), Pratardana Kāśīrāja ("the king of Kāśī"), and Vasumanas Rauhidaśva ("the son of Rohidaśva").[72] This correspondence is no coincidence, and the epic composers may have been grafting the Mādhavī story onto the older Vedic attribution, perhaps as a way of filling out the background details. The concluding scene of the story, in which the three half-brothers (together with Aṣṭaka) conduct a sacrifice for their grandfather, thus offers an epic narrativization of the original Vedic *mantra* in question: "Your friends with their treasures are sitting around you waiting like tribal leaders for their wandering king."[73] This is precisely what takes place at the story's end as Yayāti

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71   Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995 [1912]), 363.

72   The situation is further clarified by the commentary of Ṣaḍguruśiṣya (late twelfth century CE) who explains that "each one saw each verse in sequence" (*ekaikasyā ṛcaḥ krameṇa draṣṭāraḥ |* ; Vedārthadīpikā 10.179). "Rohidaśva" here must be a variant for Haryaśva, as both have the same meaning of "possessing bay horses." Also, while Macdonell and Keith state that Pratardana "is not in Vedic literature a king of Kāśī," he clearly has become one by Kātyāyana's time. Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995 [1912]), 29.

73   *pári tvāsate nidhíbhiḥ sákhāyaḥ kulapā ná vrājápatiṃ cárantam |* (ṚV 10.179.2); Ralph Griffith translates this line as: "Friends with their stores are sitting round thee waiting like lords of clans for the tribe's wandering chieftain." Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973 [1889]).

tumbles from heaven, his merit depleted due to an excess of pride, along the smoke trail generated by his grandsons' sacrificial rite. The Gālavacarita thus absorbs two generations of otherwise obscure Vedic kings into the dynastic lines of a better-known progenitor: Yayāti.

These rulers of Vedic pedigree are all also tied further to specific northern Indian cities, a geocultural mapping that constitutes a second type of "lighting" cast upon the Gālavacarita. Divodāsa and his son Pratardana are placed at Kāśī (modern-day Vārāṇasī), Haryaśva and Vasumanas are at Ayodhyā, while Uśīnara and Śibi are in the city of Bhojapura. And while Aṣṭaka's capital is unstated, the epics consistently locate Viśvāmitra as a ruler of Kānyakubja, or modern-day Kanauj.

What are we to make of these geographical references? Vedic, Buddhist, and Jain sources make it clear that Kāśī was one of the sixteen Great States (*mahājanapadas*) that constituted the political landscape of North India in the sixth century BCE and that it was "at one time, one of the most powerful states of north India."[74] Vārāṇasī was Kāśī's capital but was perhaps more important as a commercial center, owing to its strategic location at the confluence of the Gaṅgā, Varaṇā, and Asī rivers.[75] And while nearby Sarnath was a major center of Buddhist activity, Vārāṇasī appears not to have grown in significance for Hindu practice until the end of the third century CE when it began a several-centuries-long transformation into the premier site for Śaiva worship.[76] Hans Bakker links this to the emergence of four cycles of Śaiva myths, in which Divodāsa plays a key role in the founding of the city, its abandonment due to a curse, and the arrival of Śiva to build his home there.[77] Divodāsa, in other words, was central to the cultural imagination of Vārāṇasī as a site of political and religious power.

Ayodhyā was located in the *janapada* of Kosala, which, like Kāśī, was a well-known North Indian polity in the sixth century BCE. But, like Vārāṇasī, the

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74   Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century* (New Delhi, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2008), 262; cf. Parmanand Gupta, *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1989), 118–9.

75   Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology: The Archaeological Foundations of Ancient India, Stone Age to AD 13th Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 331.

76   Hans T. Bakker, "Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Vārāṇasī," *Numen* 43 (1996): 33.

77   Bakker, "Early Mythology Relating to Vārāṇasī," 23–28. Bakker notes that Divodāsa's founding of the city is already mentioned in the Mahābhārata (13.31), as is the connection of Vārāṇasī to Śaiva worship (82.69, 13.26.14).

town of Ayodhyā itself perhaps was still a place on the rise. Then called "Sāketa," it was a center of trade, while Śrāvastī to the north was Kosala's capital.[78] The city is a place of importance in early Buddhist and Jain literature and both epics do connect it to Rāma's Ayodhyā.[79] Still, it seems not to have risen as a center of power until Kumāragupta made it the Guptas' imperial seat in the late fifth century.[80]

Unlike Divodāsa and Kāśi, the connections of Haryaśva and Vasumanas to Ayodhyā remain obscure. Clearer, however, are Ayodhyā's commonalities with Vārāṇasī—both were important commercial centers at North Indian cross-roads before the Mahābhārata's composition and both were important sites of Buddhist and Jain activity. While the two classical *janapadas* in which they were located—the fierce rivals Kosala and Kāśī—were annexed by the Mauryans, Ayodhyā and Vārāṇasī rose to lasting cultural and political prominence in the centuries after the empire's disintegration.

The home of Mādhavī's third son, Śibi Auśīnara, is somewhat more difficult to determine, and several possibilities exist. The most likely candidate is the Panjab, as both Pāṇini (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.4.20) and Patañjalī (*Mahābhāṣya* 9.2.118) place the Uśīnaras or Śibis in the Beas river valley, while the Macedonians under Alexander encountered a tribe called the Sibae at the confluence of the Jhelum (Gr. Hydaspes) and Chenab (Gr. Akesines) rivers.[81] But they don't appear to have stayed there exclusively: coins of the Śibis dated from c. 150 BCE have been found near Chittor in Rajasthan, and so Parmanand Gupta argues that the Śibis migrated from the Panjab into Rajasthan shortly before this time.[82] Other scholars have placed the Śibis in the upper Gangetic valley near Dehradun or Haridwar.[83] Because of the city's name, Feller suggests that Śibi

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78   Ayodhyā's commercial prominence was likely due to its being at a crossroads—with high-ways going east to Vārāṇasī, south to Pratiṣṭhāna, and west towards Taxila (Hans T. Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, Groningen Oriental Studies, vol. 1 [Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986], 13).

79   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Empire, Invasion, and India's National Epics," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2 (1998): 402.

80   Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, 30.

81   Gupta, *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals*, 42; Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, 274. The Jātakas also place King Śibi in the Shorkot region of the Panjab (Debarchana Sarkar, *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, [Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2003], 213–14).

82   Gupta, *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals*, 43. Sarkar (*Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 213) provides corroborative evidence of this migration from Buddhist literature.

83   Gupta, *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals*, 44; Bhagwan Singh Suryavan-shi, *Geography of the Mahabharata* (New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1986), 162;

Auśīnara belonged to the Bhoja tribe, which the Mahābhārata locates in the Vindhyas.[84] On the other hand, the exclusively southern location of the Bhojas is not so clear, since the Sabhā Parvan, in describing the fanning out of the various branches of the Lunar Dynasty, speaks of a vast dispersal of the descendants of Yayāti and the Bhojas in all the cardinal directions (Mahābhārata 2.13.6).[85] This is perhaps a mythic echo of the historical migrations of the Śibis to Rajasthan, the upper Ganges, Sindh, and Vidarbha. Another possibility arises, I suggest, if we take Bhojapura to be a variant of "Bhojanagara" or "Bhoganagara," a town that Buddhist sources locate on the road between Vaiśālī and Kapilavastu, and which scholars have identified with the village of Badaraon in Bihar.[86]

The exact location of Śibi's Bhojapura must ultimately remain a mystery. However, the identity of the king is not at all mysterious—this is clearly the same Śibi of Buddhist fame, who in Jātaka literature selflessly cuts off pieces of his flesh to ransom a dove from a predatory hawk, and pulls out his own eyes to give to a blind man. The fourth-century Chinese traveller Faxian (as well as Xuanzang two hundred years later) speaks of two *stupas* in northwest India where Śibi's acts of self-sacrifice were commemorated, and the Buddhist narrative tradition features a number of stories of Śibi's generosity and virtue as a *bodhisattva*.[87] As Reiko Ohnuma points out, Śibi exemplifies in these texts the supremacy of the universal Buddhist *dharma* over what is termed "*nīti-dharma*," a context-based ethics of conduct.[88] In the Mahābhārata on the other hand, Śibi represents the "moral essence of ksatriya dharma."[89] In Śibi, then,

Vijayendra Kumar Mathur, *Aitihasik Sthanavali* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Standing Committee on Scientific and Technical Terminologies, 1969), 102.

84   Feller, "The Strange Story of Princess Mādhavī," 13; Sarkar *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 235. There is also Buddhist textual evidence as well as the mention of a "Bhojakaṭa" in the Barhut inscription that would place the Bhojas in Vidarbha (Sarkar, *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 235).

85   Suryavanshi, following K.D. Bajpai (*The Geographical Encyclopaedia of Ancient and Medieval India, Based on Vedic, Puranic, Tantric, Jain, Buddhistic Literature and Historical Records* [Varanasi: Indic Academy, 1967], 69), claims Mathurā to be the capital of the Bhojas (Suryavanshi, *Geography of the Mahabharata*, 23), but also corroborates Sarkar's suggestion by noting that a "Bhojakaṭanagara" has been mentioned as the capital of Vidarbha in the Mahābhārata (ibid., 166).

86   Sarkar *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 235.

87   Reiko Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, And Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 2–3, 275–76.

88   Ibid., 114.

89   Arti Dhand, "The Politics and the Dharma of Conversion: Reflections from the Mahabharata," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 15 (2002): 9, col. 2. The only complete

we may see a figure of early Indian cross-religious significance—an epitome of ethics-based kingship embraced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions alike.

Mādhavī's fourth son, Aṣṭaka, though born after Viśvāmitra has turned into a Brahman, takes up his father's royal throne at Kānyakubja, or Kanauj.[90] Kanauj was located in the Pañcāla *janapada*, which, like the others, was absorbed into the Mauryan imperial formation. Around 150 BCE, Patañjali speaks of "Kānyakubjī" women hailing from the city, and coins from this period have also been found bearing the names of Kanauj rulers.[91] The city finds mention in the Buddhist *Mahāvastu*, and Faxian describes the presence of monasteries (*sanghārāmas*) at Kanauj as well as a pillar commemorating the site of Buddha's sermon on impermanency and sorrow.[92] But, like Vārāṇasī and Ayodhyā, the rise of Kanauj as a city was to come later in history. For it was only after the ascension of the Maukhari kings in the sixth century CE, and especially after King Harṣavardhana made it his capital in the seventh, that Kanauj became a nexus of political, economic, and literary activity. Famed for its wealth, its armies, and its Sanskrit poets, Kanauj would serve as the preeminent site of cosmopolitan courtly culture in the subcontinent for the next five hundred years.

There is something systematic about the Mahābhārata's treatment of these cities in the Gālavacarita. If we accept George Erdosy's argument that the descriptions of cities in the Sanskrit epics were inspired by Mauryan and post-Mauryan urban sites, the Gālavacarita may then help us to understand why such back projections were happening.[93] Kāśī, Ayodhyā, Kanauj and the mysterious Bhojapura—onto these four early Indian polities, all of which had been incorporated within the Mauryan empire but which subsequently gained independence and prominence, were mapped legendary rulers of well-known

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telling of the Śibi story in the Mahābhārata has been relegated to an appendix of the Critical Edition (Mahābhārata 3, App. 1, no. 21). For a comparative analysis of Śibi in the Mahābhārata and Buddhist texts, see Edith Parlier, "La légende du roi des Śibi: Du sacrifice brahmanique au don du corps bouddhique," *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 9 (1991): 133–60.

90   Rama Shankar Tripathi, *History of Kanauj to the Moslem Conquest*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1959), 15; Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, 267–70.

91   On Patañjali, see Tripathi, *History of Kanauj to the Moslem Conquest*, 16; for numismatic evidence, see Gupta, *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals*, 100.

92   On the *Mahāvastu*, see Sarkar, *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 247; for Faxian's reports on Kanauj, see Tripathi, *History of Kanauj to the Moslem Conquest*, 18, and Baij Nath Puri, *Cities of Ancient India* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1966), 27.

93   George Erdosy, "The Origin of Cities in the Ganges Valley," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28 (1985): 84.

Vedic pedigree. Just as a single verse links them together in Vedic ancillary literature, their genealogical lines are here tied together by a single mother, Mādhavī, who serves in a matrilocal capacity for one of the most famous Lunar Dynasty kings. That is to say that behind the geocultural mappings there is a genealogical power-play—one that may be better appreciated by looking more closely at the capital of Yayāti, the fifth and most important king in our story.

Yayāti's prominence in the Mahābhārata is especially due to pivotal role he plays in the genealogy of the Lunar Dynasty.[94] The site of the king's capital, however, is generally not named and does not really form an integral part of his career. In the Gālavacarita, Yayāti is called "the Lord of Vatsa and Kāśī" (*vatsakāśīrāja*), and his capital is placed at Pratiṣṭhāna, a city that the epic locates near the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, near modern-day Allahabad (Mahābhārata 5.118.1; 3.83.72). Scholars have identified it with the town of Jhusi and as part of a hierarchical network of urban settlements in the area headed by Kauśāmbi.[95] I find it tempting to conjecture that the name of Yayāti's capital might also covertly invoke another Pratiṣṭhāna, located further to the south in Vidarbha on the banks of the Godāvarī river, which came to be the capital of the Sātavāhana rulers in the post-Mauryan period. Like the other cities in the Gālavacarita, this Pratiṣṭhāna, identified with the modern Maharashtrian town of Paithan, was a noted commercial center in the mid-first millennium BCE, and Buddhist texts identify it as the capital of the *janapada* of Aśmaka ("Assaka").[96] Like Vārāṇasī, Ayodhyā, and Kanauj, this Pratiṣṭhāna rose in prestige in the centuries after the fall of the Mauryas. The Sātavāhanas appear to have been singularly responsible for its fame—for at this site they fostered both material uniformity and interregional communication, leading to the flourishing of industry, agriculture, and classical religion across the Deccan.[97]

In a Nashik cave inscription dated c. 141 BCE, the Sātavāhana ruler Pulumāyin Vasiṣṭhīputra compares himself to a list of epic heroes that includes Yayāti,

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94   Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 103–117; see also Michel Defourny, *Le Mythe de Yayāti dans la Littérature Épique et Purānique*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, 221 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978).

95   Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, 285.

96   Sarkar, *Geography of Ancient India in Buddhist Literature*, 260; Puri, *Cities of Ancient India*, 61; Alexander Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, edited and with introduction and notes by Surendranath Majumdar Sastri (Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee & Co, 1924), 746.

97   Aloka Parasher-Sen, "Urban Centres—Deccan," in *Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia*, ed. Gautam Sengupta and Sharmi Chakraborty (New Delhi: Pragati Publications, 2008), 328.

providing a link both to the Mahābhārata and the Gālavacarita.[98] Could it be that this subnarrative has been composed in the context of this powerful new imperial formation to the South of the old Mauryan domains?[99] Could it be that by connecting the name of their capital to some of the more famous centers of power (Kāśī, Ayodhyā, Kanauj, and Śibi's Bhojapura) the Sātavāhanas are being granted entry into a prestigious network within a new, post-Mauryan political landscape? Such a positivist historicization of the epic must of course remain only conjecture, but there is another, less speculative observation to be made regarding the discursive "lighting" being cast onto the Gālavacarita. No matter where Yayāti's Pratiṣṭhāna or the other towns were actually located, there is abundant evidence that these place names garnered significant cultural prestige at the time of the epic's composition, and we know that these political and economic centers were all subsumed within the Mauryan empire. The weakening of this imperial formation in the second century BCE would have meant new opportunities for political growth of such centers into early Indian city-states. Placing famous Vedic kings at these emergent realworld sites, and further connecting them to one another through matrilocal genealogy, constructs what I suggest to be a new discourse of power through interregional alliance rather than imperial conquest. The Gālavacarita's geo-mapping helps to imagine new ways in which power might be gained, shared, and maintained in the wake of the Mauryan collapse: through the establishment of a sense of translocal unity and cooperation between states linked together by common genealogy, prestige, and mutual participation in Vedic religious culture.

It is worthwhile here to examine briefly a third form of discursive "lighting" being cast upon the Gālavacarita, though not quite as brightly as the other two: classical Vaiṣṇava theology. When he realizes that he has no way to acquire his *guru's* gift, the hopeless Gālava makes one final appeal to Viṣṇu: "I will seek out that God who is supreme among the Gods," he declares,

> Viṣṇu, the Lord of all three worlds—that Kṛṣṇa, who is the highest path for mortal creatures. He pervades all the other gods and demons, and

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98   *EI* 8.61. See Defourny, *Le Mythe de Yayāti dans la Littérature Épique et Purānique*, 11. The connection with the upstart Sātavāhanas might perhaps explain why Yayāti informs Garuḍa, "I am not as rich as you used to know me, my friend, for I have lost my wealth" (yathā jānāsi māṃ purā | na tathā vittavān asmi kṣīṇaṃ vittaṃ hi me sakhe ||; Mahābhārata 5.113.6bcd).

99   Along these lines, we should note that Yayāti appears to have been a favorite name among the Lunar Dynasty kings of early medieval Orissa (see Defourny, *Le Mythe de Yayāti dans la Littérature Épique et Purānique*, 11).

> thereby establishes all enjoyments. Sincerely do I wish for audience with
> that imperishable being who has great divine power.[100]

It is then that Garuḍa, with Viṣṇu's permission, rushes to take Gālava on his
adventure.

Viṣṇu appears no further in the Gālavacarita, but he does play a larger
role within the two legends that precede it. The Mātali story reinforces
Viṣṇu's supremacy over his servant Garuḍa as well as Indra, his older Vedic
brother, and thereby shows the folly of challenging Viṣṇu's power. The
Dambhodbhava legend presents an even more lucid vision of Viṣṇu's divin-
ity. The Brahman sage Rāma Jāmadagnya—better known in popular Hinduism
as "Paraśurāma"—tells Duryodhana the "Subnarrative of Dambhodbhava"
(*dambhodbhavopākhyāna*) in order to discourage the prince from going to war
with the Pāṇḍavas.[101] Believing himself invincible and "intoxicated with great
pride" (*darpeṇa mahatā mattaḥ*; Mahābhārata 5.94.8c), this universal king
(*sārvabhauma*) boastfully asks a group of Brahmans if anyone is more powerful
than him. They tell him that there is in fact a pair of sages, Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
to whom he could never be equal. Dambhodbhava brashly gathers his armies,
marches to their hermitage and attacks the two mystical beings. To repel his
onslaught, Nara grabs a fistful of reeds and launches them at Dambhodbhava's
forces. These magically pierce the soldiers and the king is soundly defeated.
Dambhodbhava falls at Nara's feet seeking refuge, and Nara blesses him in
terms quite similar to what Śāṇḍilī and Viṣṇu use to rebuke Garuḍa: "Be good
to brahmans, keep a righteous nature, and don't ever act like this again!"[102]
Rāma Jāmadagnya then explains that Nara is now Arjuna, while the even more
powerful Nārāyaṇa has become Kṛṣṇa. This is why Duryodhana should ensure
his own welfare (*svārtham*; Mahābhārata 5.94.45d) and make peace with the
Pāṇḍavas.

The "lighting" of classical Vaiṣṇava theology, which starkly illuminates the
Dambhodbhava legend, grows progressively more diffuse in the subsequent
stories. Viṣṇu intervenes only at the very end of the Mātali legend, while,

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100   *ahaṃ tu vibudhaśreṣṭhaṃ devaṃ tribhuvaneśvaram | viṣṇuṃ gacchāmy ahaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ*
        gatiṃ gatimatāṃ varam || bhogā yasmāt pratiṣṭhante vyāpya sarvān surāsurān | prayato
        draṣṭum icchāmi mahāyoginam avyayam || (Mahābhārata 5.105.14–15)

101   Like his grand-uncle Viśvāmitra, Rāma Jāmadagnya is one of the most striking epic repre-
        sentations of counter-normative behavior, and the two are connected by the same birth-
        legend involving the princess Satyavatī and the thousand *śyāmakarṇa* horses that are
        magically produced by the sage Ṛcīka. Rāma Jāmadagnya's appearance here, then, takes
        on a metamythic capacity much as Viśvāmitra does in the Gālavacarita.

102   *brahmaṇyo bhava dharmātmā mā ca smaivaṃ punaḥ kṛthāḥ ||* (Mahābhārata 5.94.31cd)

throughout the Gālavacarita, he remains passively in the background. In the Dambhodbhava legend, however, Viṣṇu is front and center and explicitly revealed to be Kṛṣṇa—a theophany that occurs publicly a short while later in this very book.[103]

Text Panels: The Opening and Closing Frames of the Gālavacarita

The voice of the epic's composers is most clearly heard through the third feature of our museological analogy—the dialogues that frame each epic subnarrative and serve as explanatory "text panels" for the story-exhibit. Indeed, if we want to know why Nārada tells the Gālavacarita, we ought to consider his own explanation in its opening and closing dialogues. Like the information that curators place next to artifacts in a museum, these dialogical frames were clearly designed to regulate the audience experience of the narrative relic to which they are juxtaposed.

Nārada begins his narration by cautioning Duryodhana against behaving like Gālava: "You shouldn't be obstinate, because obstinacy [*nirbandha*] is very dangerous. And in this regard, there is an old chronicle illustrating how Gālava found himself defeated through his obstinacy."[104] But this explanation, however nice it sounds, does not actually fit the story. For upon closer scrutiny, we can see that while Gālava's troubles are no doubt initiated by his stubbornness to give his *guru* a *dakṣiṇā*, it is not really his main problem. Not only does it pale in comparison to Viśvāmitra's extraordinary perseverance in becoming a Brahman, obstinacy turns out *not* to lead Gālava to ruin but to success. Doesn't Gālava actually satisfy his teacher's demands? Don't his efforts lead to the successful continuation of four separate royal lines and doesn't it help save Yayāti when he falls from heaven in disgrace? If everything eventually works out for the best, what then is the point of criticizing Gālava's obstinacy? Why then shouldn't Duryodhana behave like him?

As if anticipating this very criticism, Nārada reworks his message in his closing remarks. After describing how Yayāti had fallen from heaven, only to be restored by the merits of his grandsons, his daughter, and Gālava, the sage explains:

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103   See James W. Laine, *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1989).

104   na kartavyaś ca nirbandho nirbandho hi sudāruṇaḥ ||
         atrāpy udāharantīmam itihāsaṃ purātanam |
         yathā nirbandhataḥ prāpto gālavena parājayaḥ || (Mahābhārata 5.104.6cd–7)

> It was with pride [*abhimāna*] that Yayāti had been corrupted, long ago, and from extreme obstinacy [*nirbandha*] that Gālava had been as well, Lord. You should listen to friends who have good intentions, and those who wish you well. And do not be obstinate, because obstinacy only brings ruin. And so, Duryodhana, you yourself should let go of your pride and anger. Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas, and forget about war, mighty King.[105]

Nārada's takeaway message synthesizes the key issues of the story's three plot incidents: Gālava's stubborn nature (in the Viśvāmitra incident), the problematic friendship of Garuḍa (in the Śāṇḍilī episode), and Yayāti's prideful fall from grace (in the Mādhavī subplot). Obstinacy may have been one reason for Gālava's "corruption" (*doṣa*), but it has here been subordinated to pride—*abhimāna*. In doing so, this "text panel" refocuses critical attention onto the pressing anxieties of kings and princes in the post-Mauryan political milieu: the perils of pride, disrespect, and not listening to friends—or more precisely, listening to the wrong kind of friends, who lack moral compass, and who, like Garuḍa, may not always show respect to those who deserve it, be they high or low. It was a point already made in the Dambhodbhava legend when Nara had urged the repentant king to be "righteous" (*dharmātman*):

> Don't ever get puffed up with pride [*darpa*] and persecute others, King, whether they are important or inferior—that is the best plan for you. Be wise, lose your greed, be selfless but self-aware. Be forgiving, forbearing, gentle, and comforting, and take care of your people, King. Take our blessings and go—but don't ever behave this way again.[106]

Both admonitions reinforce a new vision of virtue-based leadership that the Mahābhārata is trying to push: a fusion of the moral and political imaginary, or "*dharmārtha*."[107]

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105   eṣa doṣo 'bhimānena purā prāpto yayātinā |
       nirbandhataś cātimātraṃ gālavena mahīpate ||
       śrotavyaṃ hitakāmānāṃ suhṛdāṃ bhūtim icchatām |
       na kartavyo hi nirbandho nirbandho hi kṣayodayaḥ ||
       tasmāt tvam api gāndhāre mānaṃ krodhaṃ ca varjaya |
       saṃdhatsva pāṇḍavair vīra saṃrambhaṃ tyaja pārthiva || (Mahābhārata 5.121.18–20)

106   mā ca darpasamāviṣṭaḥ kṣepsīḥ kāṃś cit kadā cana |
       alpīyāṃsaṃ viśiṣṭaṃ vā tat te rājan paraṃ hitam ||
       kṛtaprajño vītalobho nirahaṃkāra ātmavān |
       dāntaḥ kṣānto mṛduḥ kṣemaḥ prajāḥ pālaya pārthiva ||
       anujñātaḥ svasti gaccha maivaṃ bhūyaḥ samācareḥ | (Mahābhārata 5.94.32–34ab)

107   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*.

There is good statistical evidence that *dharmārtha* is the principal thematic within the Udyogaparvan. The compound *dharmārtha* occurs a total of 261 times in the epic, and 54 of these occurrences (21%) are found in the Udyoga. This is second only to the Śāntiparvan, where the compound is found 69 times (26%). But the Śānti is a much larger book, and if we compare rate of occurrences per chapter (adhyāya), we find that the Udyoga deploys the compound 0.27 times per chapter while the rate is 0.20 in Śānti. This is by far the highest rate of occurrence in any book of the epic. We can say, in other words, that the term *dharmārtha* is found more frequently in the Udyoga than anywhere else in the Mahābhārata, and 35% more than its closest rival, the Śāntiparvan.

The semantics of this compound are also important to consider. *Dharmārtha* takes on four distinct meanings in the epic: (1) as an independent paired (*dvandva*) compound meaning "*dharma* and *artha*"; (2) within a longer determinative (*tatpuruṣa*) compound, applied to particular people or their speech, in which the *dvandva* pair is followed by an adjective of possession in order to mean "endowed with *dharma* and *artha*" or "lacking *dharma* and *artha*"; (3) within a longer *dvandva* compound that lists the three or four aims of life (e.g., "*dharmārthakāma*"—"*dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*"); or (4) as an adverbial (*avyayīpada*) compound meaning "for the sake of *dharma*." Of these, the latter two meanings do not actively fuse together moral and political discourse, and it is revealing that the third sense is found only twice in the Udyoga—and the fourth, not at all.[108] The Udyoga takes *dharmārtha* to mean "*dharma* and *artha*" twenty-four times, and uses it adjectivally to describe people or speech a total of twenty-eight times—far more instances of each usage than in any other book, including the Śānti. As the data clearly demonstrates, it is in the Udyogaparvan that the Mahābhārata argues for the importance of *dharma* in political life most emphatically.[109]

Immediately after Nārada concludes the Gālavacarita, Kṛṣṇa himself lectures Duryodhana on why war with the Pāṇḍavas would be foolish. Here, Kṛṣṇa speaks directly on the concept of *dharmārtha*, using the compound four times—the most occurrences in any single chapter of the Udyoga. "The conduct of good people in this world is endowed with *dharma* and *artha*," he

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108   Compare this with the Śānti, where these are fifteen and twelve, respectively, or the Anuśāsana, where *dharmārtha* is used in the sense of "for the sake of *dharma*" a total of thirteen times.

109   Van Buitenen makes a similar suggestion in noting that the Udyoga reflects upon "the knowledge of the futility of this war, and an endeavor—it is there now in prospect; later when the war is over, in retrospect—to deal with it as a moral lesson. "Van Buitenen, Introduction [to Book 5. The Book of the Effort]," in *The Mahābhārata: 4. The Book of Virāṭa; 5. The Book of the Effort* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 181.

explains, "while that of the wicked appears as the opposite."[110] He urges the prince to eschew immorality and failure (*adharma* and *anartha*) by following a certain set of moral principles that he then proceeds to outline. It is a passage that breaks out of the epic frame and appears to speak directly to the epic's realworld audiences.

Kṛṣṇa's monologue argues for a hierarchy within the three aims of life (*puruṣārthas*). "The undertakings of the enlightened," he explains, "are filled with the three aims of life. But when it is impossible to have all three, then men (should) adhere to *dharma* and *artha*."[111] Not only is *dharma* the supreme life-aim (Mahābhārata 5.122.33), the other two should be pursued only in subordination to it:

> A man who, carried away by his senses, abandons *dharma* due to his desires and begins to strive for *kāma* and *artha* through illicit means—he is ruined. One should still strive for *kāma* and *artha*, but one should first pursue *dharma*—for *artha* or *kāma* never take precedence over *dharma*. They say that *dharma* itself is the means for getting the three aims of life, King, and anyone who pursues it therefore grows stronger, like a fire in dry forest.[112]

This is to say that all aspirations towards pleasure or power (*kāma* or *artha*) must be tempered by moral responsibilities. As we might glean from the Arthaśāstra and Buddhist sources, politics in Mauryan and pre-Mauryan North India was driven by a mandate to achieve and preserve power by any means necessary.[113] While the edicts of Aśoka do indicate a public policy based on universalized Buddhist ethics, there is little indication that Aśoka's strict regulations on interpersonal relations had sustained effect on inter-state politics after the disintegration of the Mauryan imperial formation. We may therefore historicize the Mahābhārata's Brahmanical discourse on *dharmārtha* as speaking to the subsequent period of social and political flux in North India.

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110   dharmārthayuktā loke 'smin pravṛttir lakṣyate satām |
         asatāṃ viparītā tu lakṣyate bharatarṣabha || (Mahābhārata 5.122.9)
111   trivargayuktā prājñānām ārambhā bharatarṣabha |
         dharmārthāv anurudhyante trivargāsaṃbhave narāḥ || (Mahābhārata 5.122.32)
112   indriyaiḥ prasṛto lobhād dharmaṃ viprajahāti yaḥ |
         kāmārthāv anupāyena lipsamāno vinaśyati ||
         kāmārthau lipsamānas tu dharmam evāditaś caret |
         na hi dharmād apaity arthaḥ kāmo vāpi kadā cana || (Mahābhārata 5.122.35–36)
113   See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 179.

Having established the primacy of *dharma* over *artha*, Kṛṣṇa critiques Duryodhana on two grounds that address both the Gālavacarita and the immediate historical context of the epic's composition. First, he tells him, "Dear fellow, you are striving for this great, brilliant, and prestigious overlordship (*ādhirājya*) over all other kings—but it is by illicit means, mighty Bharata."[114] It will only lead to self-defeat, Kṛṣṇa explains, since he would be mistreating towards those (Pāṇḍavas) who treat him kindly. Duryodhana ought therefore to ally with the Pāṇḍavas rather than unvirtuous characters like Duḥśāsana, Karṇa, or Śakuni, who are not only inferior in combat, "they are also not your equals in expertise on *dharma* and *artha*."[115] This point resonates with Gālava's problematic alliance with Garuḍa, and also with a discourse of kindness or "non-cruelty" (*ānṛśaṃsya*) that runs throughout the epic.[116] Furthermore, if peace is achieved, Kṛṣṇa promises to install Duryodhana in the position of heir apparent (*yauvarājya*), while retaining his father as overlord (*mahārājya*) (Mahābhārata 5.122.59). "Being shown affection by your friends," Kṛṣṇa concludes, "you will gain lasting happiness."[117] This is quite similar to the alliance between Yayāti's grandsons, who share power translocally and work together to ensure their grandfather's restoration to heaven. It perhaps also echoes the role of genealogy in the legitimation of power in early Indian polities.[118]

Conclusions: Museological Musings on the Mahābhārata's Meaning

In concluding this essay, it is useful to return to the larger questions of analytic method with which we had begun. What can an analogical approach to the Gālavacarita ultimately reveal about its historical significance? And how is it different from just reading the text closely? As stated at the outset, analogy is no more than a heuristic device, while historical investigation still demands close reading and inference to assess how the text would have impacted the lives of its composers and audiences. Analogy allows a monumental text like the Mahābhārata, which carefully shrouds the historical context of its own

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114   sa tvaṃ tātānupāyena lipsase bharatarṣabha |
       ādhirājyaṃ mahad dīptaṃ prathitaṃ sarvarājasu || (Mahābhārata 5.122.37)

115   na caite tava paryāptā jñāne dharmārthayos tathā | (Mahābhārata 5.122.45a)

116   Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 177-214; cf. Mukund Lath, "The Concept of *Ānṛśaṃsya* in the *Mahābhārata*," in *The Mahābhārata Revisited*, ed. R.N. Dandekar (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990), 113–19.

117   saṃprīyamāṇo mitraiś ca ciraṃ bhadrāṇy avāpsyasi || (Mahābhārata 5.122.61cd)

118   Romila Thapar, "Genealogical Patterns as Perceptions of the Past," *Studies in History* 7 (1991): 1–36.

textual production, to be read with sensitivity towards the regulative strategies involved in its creation. And so, analogy can sharpen our understanding not merely of *what* the epic was saying, but *how* it was being said.

This essay has analyzed how museological devices allowed the epic's composers to shape the audience's experience of one narrative "relic" presented within it. Narrative sequencing lessened the shock value of Mādhavī's prostitution in this old, pre-Indian story about the matrilocal distribution of royal power. References to Vedic culture and north Indian geography were used to make the Gālavacarita doubly relevant for its audiences: the story supported both the nostalgic revival of old Vedic culture and the construction of a new political imaginary. Finally, the opening and closing frame dialogues to this narrative-exhibit facilitated the fusion of moral and political discourse (*dharmārtha*), as found in numerous places throughout the Udyogaparvan. The Gālavacarita put the perils of pride and obstinacy on display and advocated dharmārtha as a means for overcoming them. And most of all, it highlighted the value of having noble allies. Gālava was the misguided upstart, Garuḍa, the unvirtuous friend, while Yayāti was the prideful sovereign whose downfall was remedied through his grandsons' selfless ritual actions.

These themes, we may speculate, would have been addressing key political anxieties in North India at the time of the epic's composition. Hiltebeitel argues that despotism was "the underlying moral problematic" within the post-Mauryan milieu, against which, he suggests, the Mahābhārata produced "an imagined history as a charter for a better future."[119] This essay has raised two points that supplement and sharpen our understanding of this charter: First, this imagined history was presented museologically—as a flexible but nonetheless fixed assembly of narrative relics from the significant past, whose interpretation was regulated through their installation. Second, this "charter for a better future" seems centrally to involve the concept of dharmārtha. After the collapse of the Mauryan polity, the first major imperial formation in South Asia, ruthless conquest no longer appears to have been a practical option for securing translocal power. Other means were needed to ensure success and prosperity, and it was in such a world that the Mahābhārata's curators argued that a fusion of moral and political discourse would allow kings to rule effectively, to work together for common ends, and ultimately to consolidate power *without* conquest.

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119   Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 178.

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The Divine Androgyne: Crossing Gender and Breaking Hegemonies in the Ambā-Upākhyāna of the Mahābhārata[1]

Vishwa Adluri

Introduction

The Ambā-Upākhyāna, which occurs in the fifth major book of the epic, the Udyogaparvan,[2] throws some light on the intellectual poverty of upholding the process of "interpolation" over and above compositional genius. Although superficially this subtale appears to be a circumscribed insertion, its semantic roots, in fact, hold together the overall architecture of the epic. Standing in opposition to the patriarch Bhīṣma *pitāmaha*, Ambā is ultimately instrumental in bringing him down, and with this, decisively resolving the fratricidal conflict that climaxes in war.

Ambā is mentioned briefly in the Ādiparvan in connection with her abduction by Bhīṣma along with her two sisters Ambikā and Ambālikā. Ambā reveals to Bhīṣma that she loves king Śālva and Bhīṣma permits her to go. Surprisingly, Ambā is not referred to again until the epic's fifth book when Bhīṣma narrates how, thirsting for revenge,[3] she obtained a boon from Śiva that she shall be reborn a man and kill him. Scholars have hitherto considered Ambā's story an etiological narrative (explaining how the invincible warrior could have been

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1 This chapter draws on two papers on the Ambā-Upākhyāna, presented on different occasions: Vishwa Adluri, "Inscribing the Ineffable: The Ambā Narrative in the Mahābhārata," paper presented at The Third Australasian Sanskrit Conference, Sydney, Australia, July 22, 2012 and Vishwa Adluri, "Bringing it All to a Close: The Ambā Upākhyāna of the *Mahābhārata*," paper presented at The Forty-First Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 13, 2012. Wherever references are found to those articles, they should be understood as referring to this chapter, as most of their materials have been absorbed into it.

2 Mahābhārata 5.170–193, preceded by a brief reference at 5.169.16–21.

3 We learn in the fifth book that Ambā, after returning to Śālva, was rejected by him as she had been another man's. Ambā therefore regards Bhīṣma as the cause of her ruin.

defeated[4]), but there is more to this story than meets the eye. Ambā, whose name means "mother,"[5] specifically evokes the Goddess, while the story of her transgendering recalls not only Śiva's own gender ambiguity, but also the Puruṣa-Prakṛti dyad. Her evolution shows a marked affinity to Umā: she evolves from a bridesmaid to a stigmatized outsider, transforming herself through *tapas* and becoming first a half-woman (paralleling *ardhanārīśvara*) and ultimately and explicitly the androgyne Śikhaṇḍin.[6] Her full manifestation unleashes the power of Śiva, who, going ahead of Arjuna, destroys the Kurus (yas tu te so 'grato yāti yuddhe saṁpraty upasthite | taṁ viddhi rudraṁ kaunteya devadevaṁ kapardinam ||; Mahābhārata 12.330.69), and by presenting weapons to both Arjuna (*paśupata*; 3.41.13) and to Aśvatthāman (*khaḍgam uttamam*; 10.7.64), brings the *yuga* to a close. "By protecting the Pāñcālas, I have honored him [Viṣṇu]," says Śiva to Aśvatthāman in the Sauptikaparvan (*kṛtas tasyaiṣa saṁmānaḥ pāñcālān rakṣatā mayā*; 10.7.63), highlighting both their complementarity at the level of continuity and Śiva's ultimate role in closing out the cosmic and textual cycle.

In this chapter, I show how the Ambā narrative——by evoking a constellation of themes central to the theology of the Goddess such as the divine androgyne, the Puruṣa-Prakṛti dyad, and natality and mortality——is a vital element of the epic's philosophical architecture. The theology of the Mahābhārata, it thus seems, is less concerned with sectarian glorifications and more concerned with the textual project of a very specific kind of ontology: one that takes both the cycles of Becoming and the unity of Being seriously. This ontological aspect has mainly been identified with the male deity, either Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, or Śiva,

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4   For a discussion of some of these theories (and some wider issues pertaining to Mahābhārata scholarship) see Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 284–88 and see especially 288, n. 584.

5   Apte, s. v. "*ambā*."

6   When Ambā embarks upon severe austerities to propitiate Śiva, the goddess Gaṅgā appears and attempts to dissuade her. But when she refuses to be swayed, the goddess curses her to become a crooked river (*nadī bhaviṣyasi śubhe kuṭilā*; Mahābhārata 5.187.34) and the maiden indeed becomes a river with half her body, while with the other half remaining a woman (cf. Mahābhārata 5.187.40: sā kanyā tapasā tena bhāgārdhena vyajāyata | nadī ca rājan vatseṣu kanyā caivābhavat tadā ||). But the word for "half a river" is *ardhanadī*, which recalls *ardhanāri*, half-woman, and thus Śiva as the divine androgyne Ardhanārīśvara. Further, ultimately it is the full power of the Rudra-Goddess pair that is required to bring down Bhīṣma: Arjuna, as both Scheuer and Hiltebeitel have shown, is a Rudra figure. Like Ambā, he too features a complex gendering, as Biardeau and Hiltebeitel have noted. Finally, it is not only Arjuna as Rudra/Nara behind Śikhaṇḍin, but also Śiva as Kapardin ahead of the pair, who is required to bring down the patriarch. The entire episode is thus couched in terms of *pralaya* motifs.

or Brahmā.[7] But the Goddess plays a significant role in this philosophical literary edifice as well, whether as Draupadī,[8] or, as I argue here, as Ambā.

All about Ambā

In her book *Splitting the Difference*,[9] Wendy Doniger provides an analysis of the story of Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin, focusing on the theme of gender enantiomorphism. Ambā, a princess of Kāśi rejected by the Kuru patriarch Bhīṣma, is forced to change gender (and be reborn as Śikhaṇḍin) before she can exact vengeance on the man who humiliated her. Doniger explores a number of other gendered reversals that mark her narrative:

> [S]he is reborn as the child of Drupada, which makes her the sister of the polyandrous Draupadi, whose hypersexuality stands in dramatic contrast with the reborn Amba's ambiguous sexuality. The liminal Shikhandin/ Shikhandini rejects her bride, who is humiliated as Amba has been, and unsexes (and humiliates) a helpful goblin. His/her sexual ambivalence is itself ambivalent, or at least doubled: s/he is a female first masquerading as a male and then transformed into a male.[10]

Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin's problematic sexuality, and her ability to transform, indeed, topple the settled gendered dichotomies of an otherwise male-centric epic,[11] make her one of the most fascinating characters in the epic. But in this chapter, my starting point is not so much Ambā's sexuality, but her relation to Indian

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7   See V.S. Sukthankar, *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata* (Bombay: Asiatic Society, 1957), focusing on Kṛṣṇa; Jacques Scheuer has written about the roles of Śiva and the Goddess in the epic (see his *Śiva dans le Mahābhārata* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982]) and Bruce M. Sullivan has done the same for Brahmā (Bruce M. Sullivan, *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and the Mahābhārata: a New Interpretation* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990] and "The Religious Authority of the *Mahābhārata*: Vyāsa and Brahmā in the Hindu Scriptural Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 2 [1994]: 377–401).

8   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Śiva, the Goddess, and the Disguises of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī," *History of Religions* 20 (1980): 147–74.

9   Wendy Doniger, *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

10   Ibid., 285.

11   This seems to be refuted by the fact of other strong feminine roles such as Draupadī, Kuntī, and Gāndhārī. But none of these women take part in the combat, which remains essentially the preserve of male heroes.

notions of divinity, especially the ambiguous power of the Goddess. Two points from Doniger's analysis are crucial to my argument. First, "Goddesses, always dangerous, become even more dangerous when they become male."[12] Second, that "Shikhandin does not seem to remember that s/he was Amba, even though Shiva expressly promises her that she will remember ... Shikhandin knows he was Shikhandini, but apparently not that he was Amba."[13] These two points show that Śiva's promise does not contain a simple promise of memory of her former identity as a woman, that is, ontic memory, but rather, ultimately of memory of her *true* identity, that is, of her role in the Creation as the Goddess. This is ontological memory in contrast to ontic memory: that she will "remember" to bring down the Brahmā figure Bhīṣma. From Ambā's perspective, she will remember that she is not a hapless princess but the divine androgyne; from Śikhaṇḍin's perspective, she will remember to become the divine androgyne; from Bhīṣma's perspective, *he* will remember that the play of Vasus is finished when the *avatāra* Vāsudeva himself drives the double androgynes of Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin and Arjuna/Bṛhannaḍā (with Kapardin in the front) on the divine chariot[14] that Śiva himself used in the destruction of Tripura.[15] Raised in Brahmaloka, educated by sage Paraśurāma and knowing the true identities of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as Nara and Nārāyaṇa,[16] Bhīṣma knows better than to take on Śikhaṇḍin. The *raṇa-yajña* is now ready to consume not only the *vaṁśa*s of all characters, but also *śṛṣṭi* itself.[17]

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12   Ibid., 286.

13   Ibid., 284.

14   On the origins of this chariot, see Hiltebeitel's account in "The Two Kṛṣṇas on One Chariot: Upaniṣadic Imagery and Epic Mythology," *History of Religions* 24, no. 1 (1984): 1–26.

15   See Madeleine Biardeau (*Études de mythologie hindoue I. Cosmogonies purāṇiques* [Paris: École Française d'Extrême Orient, 1981] and *Études de mythologie hindoue II. Bhakti et avatāra* [Paris: École Française d'Extrême Orient, 1994]) on the intersection of the myths of *pralaya* and *avatāra*.

16   See Mahābhārata 5.48.1–28.

17   As I have argued elsewhere (see Vishwa Adluri, "Authenticity and the Problem of the Beginning in the Mahābhārata" [PhD diss., Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2013]), the presentation of Becoming or *bhavābhavau* in the epic is articulated according to the four paradigms of sacrifice, cosmology, genealogy, and war. Here the conflagration is complete and the epic re-begins only with the inceptive gesture of Rudra turning to the Goddess in the Umā-Maheśvara-Saṁvāda. This takes place in Book 13, after both the destructive and the salvific paths are mapped out in Books 10–11 and Book 12.

What's Super in Subtales

In his article "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics,"[18] Hiltebeitel provides a list of sixty-seven upākhāyanas in the Mahābhārata.[19] Of the narrators of these subtales, Bhīṣma narrates the most upākhyānas (twenty-three)[20] and Yudhiṣṭhira is the auditor of most of them (forty-nine).[21]

18   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.

19   Hiltebeitel arrives at this count as follows: "This number is reached by including all units that are mentioned to be *upākhyānas* either in passing in the text, cited as *upākhyānas* in the PS [Parvasaṃgraha], or called *upākhyānas* in the colophons and/or the running heads for units in the Pune Critical Edition. In assessing instances mentioned only in the colophons, I err toward generosity and count anything as an *upākhyāna* that appears to be called such as the prominent title in either the Northern (N) or Southern (S) Recension. In treating this number for special attention, it should thus be clear it is not a boundaried group without overlap with other 'ancillary story' material (see Gombach, 2000). Rather, I wish to take the 67 and the reverberations between them as a kind of sonar with which to plumb the epic's depths." Ibid., 469–70.

20   Hiltebeitel writes: "As to *upākhyāna* narrators, Vaiśampāyana addresses ten to Janamejaya (1–4, 11, 32, 39–40, 66–67); Bhīṣma narrates twenty-three: 21 (44–52, 54–65) to Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas and two (35–36) to Duryodhana; Lomaśa Ṛṣi tells eight of nine (from numbers 14–22) to the Pāṇḍavas, Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi also tells them eight (23–28 and 30–31), and Kṛṣṇa four (12, 41–42); Citraratha narrates three (6–8) to Arjuna and the Pāṇḍavas; Śalya tells two: one (33) to Yudhiṣṭhira, the other (38) to Karṇa and Duryodhana; Vyāsa tells one to Draupadī's father Drupada (9) and another to the Pāṇḍavas (29); and six are told by single-time speakers: Kuntī to Pāṇḍu (5, the only *upākhyāna* spoken by a woman), Nārada to the Pāṇḍavas (10); Bṛhadaśva to the Pāṇḍavas (13); Akṛtavraṇa to the Pāṇḍavas (15, interrupting Lomaśa's skein); Rāma Jāmadagnya to the Kauravas (34); and Duryodhana to Karṇa and Śalya (47)." Ibid., 472.

21   Hiltebeitel, again, writes: "As to auditors, of the 56 that are addressed to main characters, 49 are told primarily to Yudhiṣṭhira, 48 of these to him and his Pāṇḍava brothers, and 44 of these also to their wife Draupadī (all of these told once the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī are in the forest). On the Kaurava side, three are addressed to Duryodhana and two to Karṇa. Adding the 10 told to Janamejaya and one narrated to Pāṇḍu by Kuntī, one finds that 65 of the 67 *upākhyānas* are addressed directly to members of the larger Kaurava household to which all these listeners belong, and of which Yudhiṣṭhira is clearly the chief listener. Not irrelevant to this pattern is the one in which King Drupada hears *upākhyāna* 9 as an explanation of how his daughter can marry into that household. And likewise not irrelevant would be the last *upākhyāna* in this tally, the anomalous number 53 known in S colophons ... as the *Nārāyaṇīye Hayaśira-Upākhyāna*. Here the primary narrator is Ugraśravas, who answers a question by Śaunaka (speaking for the Naimiṣa Forest Ṛṣis) about the Horse's Head, a form of Viṣṇu, by quoting what Vyāsa told Janamejaya about that subject." Ibid., 472.

In a way, one is tempted to see Bhīṣma and the upākhyānas as parallels on the genealogical and textual levels of the text. This is especially so if we see what functions these two serve in relation to the "main" Kuru narrative. Bhīṣma stands in a complex relation to the Kuru family. He is both the wise patriarch and cut away from the kingly business of succession and actual rule. For all his insuperable military prowess and heroism, he remains primarily a resource of wise narratives[22] and, as Hiltebeitel has shown, puzzles about dharma.[23] So also the upākhyānas: they appear somewhat extraneous to the Kuru narrative, which is mistakenly taken to be the "main" narrative, characterized by a straightforward tale of heroes. The upākhyānas function as powers function in mathematics: K^u. They so completely change the text that it would be hasty to think they can be nothing more than random interpolations. The main narrative depends on these texts to multiply its meanings. Hiltebeitel focuses mainly on what these subtales do with questions of dharma[24]; I agree with him on this point, but argue that the significance of the upākhyānas extends beyond even dharma to the basic problem of the epic: the tension between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* and, ultimately, the relation of time to eternity.[25]

If we look at Bhīṣma's role in the upākhyānas in the context of the significant role he plays in the philosophical and pedagogic tracts of the Mahābhārata,

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22   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Bhīṣma's Sources," in *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honor of Asko Parpola*, ed. Klaus Karttunen and Petteri Koskikallio (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), 261–78.

23   See Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

24   "Clearly this beginning of a thematic analysis of the underlying values or messages of the *Mahābhārata's upākhyānas* takes us beyond our earlier classification of their content by their primary protagonists. Although a fuller discussion of such values is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is possible, at least as regards that chief and raptest of *upākhyāna* aficionados, Yudhiṣṭhira, to make the following observation. *Ānṛśaṃsya*, non-cruelty, is a value that he hears a good deal about in the *upākhyānas* of Book 3, but not in the *upākhyānas* of Books 12 and 13 until Bhīṣma mentions it to him again in the *Sudarśana Upākhyāna* (13.2.16) at the beginning of Book 13. There, where it is related through one of Dharma's disguises to the values of hospitality and the angerless generosity of the pure gift, I would propose that we have a tying together of an important value nexus from which we could consider such other important *upākhyāna* themes as friendship, hospitality, and ingratitude (no. 49) that this chapter has largely left aside, and further, begin to explore the question of how this nexus might relate to bhakti in ways that would help us to differentiate the *Mahābhārata* from the *Rāmāyaṇa* in, among other things, the ways they use subtales." Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 492–93.

25   For the contrast between time and eternity as the epic's basic theme, see Mahābhārata 1.1.187–90 and 1.1.191, 193–95.

we see that he is the dharma teacher par excellence. Yudhiṣṭhira is always eager to learn from everyone, and there are many *ṛṣis* and other divine and semi-divine beings that narrate much to the just king. But Bhīṣma stands out with his teachings which range from the Śāntiparvan to the Anuśāsanaparvan. This lengthy tract, in effect, educates the dharma king even as Kṛṣṇa's Bhagavadgītā educates Arjuna not to seek renunciation out of confusion of dharma. The Mokṣadharma and Uñchavṛtti portions of the text combine *nivṛtti* goals with the *pravṛtti* goals of kingship as enunciated in the Rājadharma and Āpaddharma tracts. Indeed, if we add to this comprehensive knowledge of Bhīṣma his own pedagogy in Brahmaloka, he is indeed the surrogate Brahmā within the textual universe of the Mahābhārata.[26] If we now complete the hermeneutic circle by returning to the upākhyānas, then Bhīṣma's role imbues these subtales with "Archimedean points" for musings about narrated events with the "detachment" implicit in wisdom. We begin to understand why the upākhyānas are special "intensive" segments of meaning that *constitute*—not *change* the epic. And this meaningful, pedagogical, and complex narrative is the epic as we have it: the epic as it is preserved in the textual tradition and in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this text in its Indian cultural context. It is therefore essential to map out the relationship between Bhīṣma and the upākhyānas carefully. As I will argue, a good way of achieving this is through an analysis of the Ambā-Upākhyāna.

One, Two, Three ...

The Ambā-Upākhyāna occurs in the fifth major book of the epic, the Udyogaparvan. It recounts the story of Ambā, the princess of Kāśi abducted by Bhīṣma and rejected by Śālva. But already in the Ādiparvan (1.96), we hear of how Bhīṣma, seeing his half-brother Vicitravīrya attain manhood, sets off for the king of Kāśi's daughters' bridegroom choice. Bhīṣma abducts the princesses Ambā, Ambikā, and Ambālikā,[27] and returns to Hāstinapura. However, it

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26   See Sullivan, *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and the Mahābhārata* and see also his "The Religious Authority of the *Mahābhārata*," both cited in earlier in note 7.

27   The names of the three princesses links them with Rudra, addressed in Vedic literature as "Tryambaka" (Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 3.58, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.6.29, and a possible reference at Ṛgveda 7.59). Macdonell derives the epithet from "one who has three mothers" (Ambikā = "mother"), which he takes as an allusion to the threefold division of the universe (GRV 1.555). He also notes that "Ambikā, a post-Vedic name of Śiva's wife, is mentioned for the first time in vs. 3,5" (although it is used here not for his wife, but for his sister), and that the more common names of Śiva's wife Umā and Pārvati, "seem first to

transpires that Ambā, the eldest, was promised to King Śālva and Bhīṣma grants her permission to return to her lover.[28] Ambikā and Ambālikā are married off to Vicitravīrya. This "prince of colorful virility,"[29] however, dies before producing any children. Anxious that her line should not die out, the dowager queen Satyavatī urges Bhīṣma to beget offspring on the pair. When Bhīṣma, citing his vow of celibacy, refuses, she turns to another son, begotten before her marriage to king Śaṁtanu with the sage Parāśara: the seer Vyāsa. With Bhīṣma stepping aside for Satyavatī's doomed sons and Satyavatī replacing Śaṁtanu's dead sons with her own, the true origins of the Kuru genealogy now lie outside Kṣatriya paternity. Thus, supplemented by Gaṅgā and Draupadī, the Kṣatriya core seems more infected with feminist inversions than Brahmanic interpolations. On the one hand, Satyavatī displaces Gaṅgā as Śaṁtanu's wife and the legitimate heir Bhīṣma with her own sons. On the other, she also effectively ends Śaṁtanu's blood line: the line of the Kurus is now fully constituted by her son Vyāsa and the princesses of Kāśi. The narrative of the descent of the heaven-sent and heaven-linked Gaṅgā, with her engendering and liberating the Vasus (see Mahābhārata 1.96), thus comes to an abrupt end, leaving behind only Bhīṣma. The cosmological narrative that began in Brahmaloka with the

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occur in the ta [Taittirīya Āraṇyaka] and the Keṇa Upaniṣad." A.A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002 [Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1897]), 74 (all references are to 2002 edition).

28   The further story of Ambā, which is not recounted here, is as follows: in Book 5, Bhīṣma tells Duryodhana that he will kill all of the warriors of the Pāṇḍavas, except Śikhaṇḍin, whom he will *not* fight. Duryodhana asks him why he will not fight with Śikhaṇḍin and Bhīṣma explains that he has sworn never to fight any woman or any man who was formerly a woman. Then he explains that in a former life Śikhaṇḍin was Ambā. Rejected by her lover Śālva for having belonged to another man and thirsting for revenge, Ambā sought refuge with sage Rāma Jāmādagnya. The sage battled Bhīṣma but was unable to defeat him. Learning that no hero capable of defeating Bhīṣma existed, Ambā herself undertook terrible austerities, ultimately winning Śiva's grace. Śiva promised her that in her next life she would be reborn a man and would defeat Bhīṣma. Ambā was reborn as the girl-child Śikhaṇḍinī but true to Śiva's word, she became a man after exchanging her sex with a Yakṣa named Sthūṇākarṇa. For this reason, because of his vow that he will "shoot no arrows at a woman, a former woman, one with the name of a woman, and an apparent woman" (striyāṁ strīpūrvake cāpi strīnāmni strīsvarūpiṇi | na muñceyam ahaṁ bāṇān iti kauravanandana ||; Mahābhārata 5.193.63), Bhīṣma says he will not kill Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin when ambushed in battle.

29   See J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata: I. The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), xviii. Monier-Williams translates "of marvellous heroism" which is linguistically possible, but false in context: the epic does not mention any heroic deeds by Vicitravīrya in contrast to his brother Citrāṅgada. However, his sexual exploits are mentioned (see Mahābhārata 1.96.53–56).

cursing of Mahābhiṣa is now interrupted and substituted by the Yamunā-linked Satyavatī and her author-son Vyāsa (who, as Dvaipāyana Vyāsa or "the Island-born Vyāsa," remains nominally forever bound with an island in this river). Equally fictional and mortal, the genealogical narrative is significantly, if problematically, a continuation of the cosmological one. The cosmological motif lies dormant in the narrative, but comes to the fore fully in the "battle" narrative, especially Book 6. By producing offspring, Ambikā and Ambālika, hearken back to Vinatā and Kadru in the Garuḍa narrative of the Ādiparvan,[30] and thus oversee the *sṛṣṭi* aspect of the *pravṛtti* cycle. In contrast, Ambā by absorbing gender within herself becomes a *laya* symbol.

To say that Ambikā and Ambālikā stand at the inception of the genealogical cycle is one thing; to imbue it with the greater significance of a *pravṛtti* cycle is another. This point, which I assert here, requires some proof. The relation of the *niyoga* ritual, in which these two queens participate, to the *aśvamedha* ritual, provides the necessary evidential moorage.[31]

Like the Vedic rite in which the names "Ambā, Ambālī, and Ambikā" (*ambe ambāly ambike*; Taittirīya Saṃhitā 7.4.19.1ab; two other texts, Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 23.18 and Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 3.12.20, have *ámbe ámbike 'mbālike*) feature as the queens are ushered into the ritual enclosure,[32] the epic introduces the three princesses as Ambā, Ambikā, and Ambālika. Hiltebeitel suggests that the impregnation of the king's wives by Vyāsa is a concealed reference to an *aśvamedha*, and that Vyāsa himself takes on the role of the Vedic sacrificial

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30 These parallels are spread throughout the narrative, not only at the level of the first generation. Karṇa's untimely birth recalls Vinatā's breaking open of Aruṇi's egg (Mahābhārata 1.14.15–20), whereas the birth of the five Pāṇḍavas recalls Garuḍa's birth in great splendor (1.20.4–15). The supernumerary Kauravas, further, recall the countless snakes, all but a remnant of which perish in Janamejaya's snake sacrifice. Finally, just as Garuḍa becomes the vehicle of Nārāyaṇa (1.29.16), so also Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva becomes the refuge of the Pāṇḍavas and the charioteer of Arjuna's vehicle.

31 Sacrifice is an organizing principle in the epic for understanding *pravṛtti*. It is co-original with the creation of the universe (cf. Bhagavadgītā 3.10: sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ | anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭakāmadhuk ||). It is also co-constitutive of reality (Bhagavadgītā 3.14: annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyād annasaṃbhavaḥ | yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ). Thus, to show that the two princesses are embedded in a sacrificial ritual suffices to tie them to *pravṛtti*.

32 See Stephanie W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 243. This sacrificial meaning does not oppose the theological meaning discussed earlier, because Jamison also notes that the three vocatives "taken together" are "variants on affectionate words for mother"; "together[,] they add up to the 'three Ambikās' of Rudra Tryambaka and its vṛddhi derivative, the Traiyambakahoma." Ibid.

horse.[33] "The year-long vow [Vyāsa asks the two queens to obey] replicates the Aśvamedha requirement that the queen remain abstinent during the year the horse wanders"[34]; "the pair Mitra and Varuṇa [in whose likeness Vyāsa promises to beget sons on the queens] ... has a Vedic ring. Vedavyāsa could be alluding to ways that the Aśvamedha identifies the king with *dharma*, and also that the Rājasūya invokes Mitra as 'lord of truth' and Varuṇa as 'lord of *dharma*' in announcing the newly consecrated Bharata king (*MS* 2.6.6; *TS* 1.8.10.1-2)."[35] Hiltebeitel also notes that the epic refers (via Satyavatī) to Ambikā and Ambālikā as "the two *mahiṣīs*" (*mahiṣyau*; Mahābhārata 1.97.9a). This incongruous usage (the only time the dual is used in "either epic") may be intended to emphasize Ambā's "unavailability as a Mother" (itself a "complement" to "Bhīṣma's [unavailability] as a Father"[36]), and to point out that, though unusual, each of the two *mahiṣīs* now has an "equal chance to become the mother of the one desired heir."[37]

However, the greatest evidence for an epic "*aśvamedha*" comes from Vyāsa himself, specifically from his parallels with the horse of the Vedic sacrifice: in the Nārāyaṇīya, Vyāsa reveals to Janamejaya the existence of a form of Nārāyaṇa called Harimedhas, who bears the head of a horse (hence, also "Hayaśiras"). This form is identified in two ways with the Vedas: when at the dawn of the eon the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha steal the Vedas and conceal them in the great ocean (i.e., the Milky Ocean), Nārāyaṇa assumes the horse-headed form, "repository of the Vedas" (*vedānām ālayaṁ*; 12.335.44) to recover the Veda. Seizing them from their resting place and returning them to Brahmā, Nārāyaṇīya establishes the horse's head in the northeast of the great ocean as the "repository of the Vedas" (*vedānām ālayas*; 12.335.54) and returns to his sleeping Aniruddha form. Now the Mahābhārata tells us that Nārāyaṇa is Vyāsa and Vyāsa is Nārāyaṇa (*kṛṣṇadvaipāyanaṁ vyāsaṁ viddhi nārāyaṇaṁ prabhum*; 12.334.9), and Vyāsa himself reveals that he was originally born of Harimedhas (the "sacrificial sap [*medhas*] of Hari"; cf. 12.337.54). Further, Vyāsa is referred to as the "receptacle of the Veda" (*kṛṣṇadvaipāyanaṁ vyāsamṛṣiṁ vedanidhiṁ*; App. 1, 32.14).[38] As Hiltebeitel has noted, all this strengthens Vyāsa's claim to

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33   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Epic Aśvamedhas," in *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata*, Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel, vol. 1, ed. Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 259–78.

34   Ibid., 271.

35   Ibid., 271–72.

36   Ibid., 273.

37   Ibid., 274.

38   This line is moved in the Critical Edition text to an appendix by the editor S. K. Belvalkar, following the reading of the minority Malayālam manuscripts which exclude it here.

being identified with the "cosmic Veda-chanting Aśvamedha Horse's Head"[39]; indeed, the seer would seem to be explicitly "encrypting *himself* as a sacrificial horse."[40]

If the story of Ambā's abduction (and the subsequent *niyoga* insemination of her two sisters) is a coded *aśvamedha* reference, we also have reason to take a closer look at Ambā herself. No mere princess abducted by a ruthless and self-serving Kṣatriya hero,[41] Ambā must hold the key to this cosmological-sacrificial drama. Three points stand out that hold promising leads for further analysis. First, as Hiltebeitel has noted, neither of her sisters would be *mahīṣi*, if Ambā were still around.[42] Thus, Ambā's stepping aside is itself a significant motif, which makes way for the *niyoga*-driven *pravṛtti* narrative of the Mahābhārata. Second, again as noted by Hiltebeitel, Ambikā "should ... be the single *mahiṣī*, empowered like Durga in the *Devī-Mahātmyā* .... hers is the main name in Rudra's epithet Traiyambaka, the one 'possessing the three Ambikās,'"[43] but matters are not so simple. The theme of two *mahiṣīs* introduces the potential for conflict into the narrative, which carries forward through the narrative and seems to increase with each successive generation.[44] The *pravṛtti* narrative of the Mahābhārata is thus already and essentially a narrative of conflict, even before Ambā reenters the narrative in Book 5 of the epic. Third, Ambā reappears as the androgyne Śikhaṇḍin. Bearing explicit connections to the theology

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39   Ibid., 272.

40   Ibid., 272 (emphasis in original).

41   See Uma Chakravarti, *Of Meta-Narratives and 'Master' Paradigms: Sexuality and the Reification of Women in Early India* (New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies, 2009).

42   After she is rejected by king Śālva, Ambā makes her way to the hermitage of sage Jāmadagnya. Rāma urges Bhīṣma to take the maiden back, since no man will want her after she has been abducted. Bhīṣma refuses, citing *kṣatradharma* (Mahābhārata 5.178.11c), and Jāmadagnya fights him. If Bhīṣma had followed his preceptor's orders and obtained offspring (albeit in violation of his promise to Satyavatī, though note that Satyavatī herself is later willing to revoke this stipulation), his offspring would have been the legitimate heir to the throne, avoiding the paternity and precessional conflicts that lead to the Kuru war. The textual universe of the Mahābhārata thus in a sense hangs from the rejection of Ambā's desire for union: her expulsion creates the space within which the epic drama unfolds and this space rapidly folds in on itself, once she returns in the fifth and sixth books. Ambā is therefore the ultimate cipher for the *laya* motif of the epic.

43   Hiltebeitel, "Epic Aśvamedhas," 272.

44   Note also that when Satyavatī, acting on Vyāsa's advice, chooses exile to the forest to practice austerities, she places blame unambiguously on Ambikā's side. "Ambikā, the misguided policies of your son, so we hear," she says, "will destroy the Bhāratas and their followers and their grandsons" (Mahābhārata 1.119.9).

of Śiva (as Ardhanārīśvara), this return initiates the *laya* cycle of the Mahā-
bhārata.[45] Two of the three mothers in the narrative initiate the *pravṛtti* cycle
that includes the Kuru narrative; the third, Ambā, by bringing down Bhīṣma,
terminates it.

Becoming One and Many in All Sorts of Ways

Along with the Drupada-Droṇa rivalry, the opposition between Bhīṣma and
Ambā is one of the central conflicts in the Kuru narrative. The patriarch of the
Kuru dynasty and the most important warrior on the Kaurava side is a polyva-
lent figure, whose multiple identities refer to various levels of meaning of the
narrative. Here I will focus on two of his identities: as the grandfather, and as a
Vasu. Sullivan notes the significance of the term "*pitāmaha*" or "grandfather,"
an appellation given to two characters in the Mahābhārata: Vyāsa and Bhīṣma.[46]
Sullivan argues that "Vyāsa represents Grandfather Brahmā much more effec-
tively and often than does Bhīṣma."[47] Sullivan's overall thesis is to show that
"The *MBh*, presenting itself as the 'fifth *Veda*' was created by *pitāmaha* Vyāsa as
the quintessence and completion of the four *Vedas* created by the *pitāmaha*
Brahmā. In many subtly suggestive expressions, the *MBh* reveals continuities
between Vyāsa and Brahmā."[48] While this thesis is essentially correct, I argue
that there are important ways in which Bhīṣma functions as Brahmā. Sullivan
himself notes that the "brahmin Vyāsa and the Kṣatriya Bhīṣma are comple-
mentary figures, who in certain respects are mirror images of each other. Both
remained unmarried and became the Bhārata family's elders, vigilant guard-
ians of their family's fortunes."[49]

To throw light on Bhīṣma's role as a patriarch, we need to look closely at the
qualifiers of the Kurukṣetra battle. The earthly battle is a foil for another battle:
the battle of gods and demons.[50] Sullivan claims that,

45   On the Mahābhārata as a myth of *laya*, see Biardeau, *Études de mythologie hindoue I* and
      II.

46   Bruce M. Sullivan, "The Epic's Two Grandfathers, Bhīṣma and Vyāsa," in *Essays on the
      Mahābhārata,* ed. Arvind Sharma (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 204–11.

47   Ibid., 207.

48   Ibid., 211.

49   Ibid., 205.

50   "The war between the Bhārata cousins is seen as another battle in the eternal struggle
      between the gods and demons, this time fought on earth … as in III.92.; VI.20.5.; XII.34.13–
      21.; and in the descriptions of the conflict as a 'sacrifice of battle' (e.g., V. 139.) taking place
      on the altar of Brahmā (III.81.177–78 and III.129.22.)." Ibid., 207. Sullivan rightly notes the

Looking at the epic's explicit citations of a divine identity for Bhīṣma, one sees that he is depicted as an incarnation of Dyaus, or Dyaus Pitṛ, the Sky Father of the *Ṛg Veda.* Certainly this is the deity who has appropriately fatherly attributes to be the divine alter ego of Bhīṣma. Beyond this, however, the connection between Bhīṣma and Dyaus is tenuous and not particularly meaningful. There is little mythology about Dyaus the Vasu with which the character of Bhīṣma might interact, and the fact that the motif remains undeveloped in the text indicates that the epic poets were uninterested in it. The identification of Bhīṣma with this superseded, retired god Dyaus Pitṛ seems to be an afterthought, as if Bhīṣma were thought to need a divine figure with which to be associated because each of the other important epic characters already was associated with a *deva* or *asura.*[51]

Some comments are in order here. The idea of *prādurbhāva, avatāra* meaning descent, incarnation, or *aṃśa* meaning a ray or particle of a god as the origin of the characters of the epic is as important as the specific god who serves as this original.[52] Thus, not only Bhīṣma, but also many of the principal characters have more than one "source" and some gods such as Dharma have more than one "effect." Mahābhārata 1.189 tells us that the five Pāṇḍavas are, in fact, five Indras, while we know that Indra specifically sires only Arjuna (1.114.20–35), the other four Pāṇḍavas being sired by other gods (e.g., Yudhiṣṭhira by the god

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significance of this conflict for Indian literature in general, and for his analysis of Brahmā in particular. Gonda calls this myth of the struggle between gods and demons for sovereignty "the central myth of Indian civilization." Jan Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1954).

51   Sullivan, "The Epic's Two Grandfathers, Bhīṣma and Vyāsa," 207–8.

52   See André Couture, "From Viṣṇu's Deeds to Viṣṇu's Play, or Observations on the Word *avatāra* as a Designation for the Manifestations of Viṣṇu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29, no. 3–4 (2001): 313–26. Couture's analysis suffers from his reliance upon Hacker (Paul Hacker, "Zur Entwicklung der Avatāralehre," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 4 [1960]: 47–70), whose analysis is motivated in a theological anxiety over *avatāra* offering a real rival to Christ's incarnation. I cannot agree with Couture that "Hacker is right when he says that the word *avatāra* gradually replaced *prādurbhāva* as the designation for Viṣṇu's manifestations." Couture, "From Viṣṇu's Deeds to Viṣṇu's Play," 313. Hacker's analysis is dependent upon assigning dates to different parts of the Mahābhārata, something that I do not believe can be done. Couture also overlooks the fact that Hacker is concerned to demonstrate the lateness of *avatāra*, which he interprets, in contrast to *bhārāvataraṇa*, to mean a *salvific* incarnation, a notion that threatens his sense of Christian exclusivism. Thus, his analysis is based on the a priori assignation of terms to layers and layers to dates, based on the presumed lateness of certain terms (i.e., it is circular).

Dharma). The ideas of *prādurbhāva* and paternity seem to overlap. At Mahā-bhārata 1.61.84 we are told that Yudhiṣṭhira was a particle of Dharma (*dharmasyāṁśaṁ tu rājānaṁ viddhi rājan yudhiṣṭhiram*). The case of Arjuna complicates this: he is also the ancient *ṛṣi* Nara, (cf. Mahābhārata 5.48.20–21). In the case of Karṇa also, there are two secret identities: in 1.61.89, he "issued as the matchless particle of the Sun" (*divākarasya taṁ viddhi devasyāṁśam anut-tamam*), but he is also said to be a *rākṣasa*. The same god can also have more than one manifestation, as in the case of Dharma who is born also as Vidura.[53] Thus, while we are asked to take seriously the idea that things are not what they appear to be—that is, human actions are divine role-play, we are cau-tioned against taking this human–divine correspondence too literally. The divine doppelgängers of the hero are, in addition to the obvious causal expla-nations, also literary and artistic ways of reenacting the sacred cosmos textually.[54] And thus, they are one of the hermeneutic ciphers for understand-ing the *nature* of the *character*, that is, one of the several ways to depict and develop the character of the character. In the case of Bhīṣma, his emergence from Dyaus Pitṛ or a Vasu is only *one* way to understand him, and it does not preclude him from appearing in a close functional relationship to Brahmā within the textual universe. Sullivan goes to great lengths to explain Vyāsa as the Brahmā figure, setting aside explicit references to Vyāsa as Nārāyaṇa in the Mahābhārata.[55] Vyāsa surely bears an indubitable relationship to the functions of Brahmā, as Sullivan argues. But the epic also makes space for more: a com-plex Vyāsa who is related not only to Nārāyaṇa and Brahmā[56] but also many

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53   dharmo vidurarūpeṇa śāpāt tasya mahātmanaḥ |
       māṇḍavyasyārthatattvajñaḥ kāmakrodhavivarjitaḥ || (Mahābhārata 1.100.28)

54   See Couture, "From Viṣṇu's Deeds to Viṣṇu's Play."

55   Cf. Sullivan "The Epic's Two Grandfathers, Bhīṣma and Vyāsa," 208: "Rather than empha-sizing the two references which associate Vyāsa with Nārāyaṇa, I see many ways in which Vyāsa evokes the memory of Brahmā." Sullivan footnotes this comment thus: "The first reference is a one verse statement (XII.334.9) which I translate as follows: 'Know that Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana is Nārāyaṇa the Lord, for who other than the Lord could be the author of the *Mahābhārata*, O tiger among men, and who other than the Lord could enunciate truly the manifold *dharmas*?' A few chapters later, (XII.337.), Vyāsa describes himself as 'born a portion of Nārāyaṇa' and as Nārāyaṇa's son, born to divide the *Veda* and to par-ticipate in the Bhārata war. These are the only two such references in the critical edition, though three manuscripts have inserted the lines of XII.334.9 into the epic's first book as well; see Appendix 1, Nos. 2 and 3 of the *Ādi Parvan* volume."

56   Hiltebeitel points out that "Brahmā himself is a 'portion of Nārāyaṇa', born from the lotus that emerges from Viṣṇu's navel. For, Vyāsa, as a 'portion of Nārāyaṇa', to fulfill the Brahmā-like role of 'grandfather' (*pitāmaha*) of the main epic heroes and progenitor of the forces that usher in the 'dark' *kali* age is not incongruous, especially when one

other characters, themes, and literary projects within and outside the epic narration.[57] More to our point here, Bhīṣma *too* recalls Brahmā in many ways, and we should not easily set aside enquiry along this line. I will return to the significant way in which Bhīṣma recalls Brahmā in a later section, but here I would like to point out three ways in which Bhīṣma functions as Brahmā:

1. As the epithet *pitāmaha* suggests, he is not only the ancestor (in some way) of the Kuru heroes, equally disposed to both sets of cousins, but he is exactly so as Brahmā is to the *devas* and *asuras*. In this Bhīṣma represents a certain ancestral point: not *quite* the origin, but closely related to it. Brahmā too is a *pitāmaha* only through the functions of Prajāpati and other intervening and complicating factors.

2. Brahmā is *given* the Veda by Nārāyaṇa, of which the *pitāmaha* is the student and custodian. Likewise, in Brahmaloka, Bhīṣma is the student of the diverse modes of knowledge,[58] and thus of Veda in a metaphorical sense.[59] Not only in the Śānti and Anuśāsana parvans, but elsewhere as well, he is a repository of wisdom ordinarily hidden from the eyes of mortals.[60]

3. Finally, even as Brahmā can create human kind through some device other than procreation, so also Bhīṣma, although he wins the brides in the bride contest, hands over procreation to his brother Vicitravīrya first and then ultimately to the Nārāyaṇa figure, Vyāsa. In these ways, then, Bhīṣma is a Brahmā figure.

What enrichments does the Dyaus connection bring? I have previously argued that the epic is extremely aware of the *matutinal* character of the beginning of the epic cycle, populated by the figures of dawn such as Saramā (Mahābhārata 1.3), the Aśvins (1.3.55–70), etc., and such themes as awakening (Āruṇi; 1.2.25–30), opening of eyes (Upamanyu; 1.3.55–60), and the tale of fire

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examines how he works these things out in collaboration with the other 'dark' figures: not only Kṛṣṇa, Draupadī, and Arjuna, but his mother Kālī [another word for 'Black'] Satyavatī." Alf Hiltebeitel, "Two Kṛṣṇas, Three Kṛṣṇas, Four Kṛṣṇas, More Kṛṣṇas: Dark Interactions in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata,* ed. Arvind Sharma (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 101–2.

57   On Vyāsa's literary functions, see Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

58   Like Brahmā, Bhīṣma is a student of Viṣṇu's, though of his Paraśurāma form rather than Hāyaśiras.

59   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Bhīṣma's Sources," 261–78.

60   Bhīṣma is the one who discloses the identity of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa as Nara-Nārāyaṇa in the Udyogaparvan (see Mahābhārata 5.48.1–29).

in 1.4.[61] Numerous beginnings such as the double beginning of the narrative and cosmology and genealogy coincide with the opening of the narrative itself, and thus feed into the *matutinal* aspect of this opening. Etymologically, Dyaus is related to shining out, and in Vedic sources, related to the head or the source of divinity. Bhīṣma stands as the earliest of the Kurus who are present throughout the conflict; with him dawns the war cycle of the epic. In these ways, Dyaus connections solidify our understanding of Bhīṣma's appearance and role in the epic. This does not contradict the Brahmā *pitāmaha* connection, as Bhīṣma, although childless, paradoxically is the guardian of *pravṛtti* and stands at its inception in the textual-genealogical cycle of the epic.

Bhīṣma's relation to Vasu further strengthens the tie to *pravṛtti* as the Vasus are primordial constituting elements of *pravṛtti*.[62] Let us investigate the divine beings called the Vasus. If we look to previous scholarship, this question remains deferred to marginalia. Hillebrandt writes: "the concept of the Vasus is vague in the ʀᴠ. The word is applied sometimes to the gods in general or to those who have been just invoked and sometimes it is connected as an adjective to single groups like the Ādityas and Maruts." He suggests that the idea of "a specific class of gods as the later literature knows them was only in the process of formation and is rarely encountered in the Ṛgveda."[63] Macdonell gives us a bit more. He shows that the Vasus are referred to as a group of gods alongside other groups such as the Rudras, the Maruts, and the Ādityas. They are specially connected with Indra, as is shown by two passages "in which Varuṇa or Aditi with the Ādityas, Rudra with the Rudras, and Indra with the Vasus, are invoked (7, 10. 35)." In later Vedic texts, their leader is Agni. In the Aitareya and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas, they are eight in number, but their number increases to 333 in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā. Macdonell also notes, "the three groups of the Ādityas, Rudras and Vasus are invoked together in a few passages of the ʀᴠ. (2, 31; 10, 66 cp. 7, 10.35). The Brāhmaṇas distinguish, as three kinds of gods, the Vasus of the earth, the Rudras of air, and the Ādityas of heaven (śв. 1, 3, 4; 4, 3, 5). In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (3, 6–10) five groups are mentioned, the Vasus

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61   See Vishwa Adluri, "The Perils of Textual Transmission: Decapitation and Recapitulation," *Seminar* 608, *The Enduring Epic: A Symposium on Some Concerns Raised in the Mahābhārata* (April 2010): 48–54.

62   See Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.1.2.6, 10 and 6.5.2.3. In the Mahābhārata, the Vasus are listed as Āpa, Dhruva, Soma, Dhara or Dhava, Anila, Anala, Pratyuṣa, Prabhāsa (dharo dhruvaś ca somaś ca ahaś caivānilo 'nalaḥ | pratyūṣaś ca prabhāsaś ca vasavo 'ṣṭāv iti smṛtāḥ ||; Mahābhārata 1.60.17), that is, Water, the Pole-Star, the Moon, Earth, Wind, Fire, the Dawn, and Light.

63   A. Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, vol. 2, trans. S.R. Sarma (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 413, n. 294.

being connected with Agni, the Rudras with Indra, the Ādityas with Varuṇa, the Maruts with Soma, and the Sādhyas with Brahmā (cp. RV. 10, 9)."[64] In the Ṛg Veda, the Vasus appear with some frequency. The occurrences divide into two types of uses: (1) "Vasu" in the sense of a good, kind, Good Lord occurs about twenty-eight times and (2) "Vasus" as a class of Gods, occurs nearly sixty times. In the Upaniṣads, the Vasus are most significant in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:

> Yājñvalkya said, 'These are but the manifestations of them, but there are only thirty-three gods.' 'Which are those thirty-three?' 'The eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras and the twelve Ādityas—these are thirty-one, and Indra and Prajāpati make up the thirty-three.' (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 3.9.2; Mādhavānanda trans.)

> 'Which are the Vasus?' 'Fire, the earth, air, the sky, the sun, heaven, the moon and the stars—these are the Vasus, for in these all this is placed; therefore they are called the Vasus.' (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 3.9.3; Mādhavānanda trans.)

Śaṅkara comments on these verses as follows:

> *Yājñvalkya said, 'These*, the three hundred and three etc., *are but the manifestations of them*, the thirty-three gods. *But* really *there are only thirty-three gods.' 'Which are those thirty-three?'* The reply is being given: *'The eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras and the twelve Ādityas—these are thirty-one, and Indra and Prajāpati make up the thirty-three.'* (Commentary on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 3.9.2; Gambhīrānanda trans.)

> *'Which are the Vasus?'* The identity of each group of the gods is being asked. *Fire, the earth,* etc.,—from fire up to the stars are the Vasus. Transforming themselves into the bodies and organs of all beings, which serve as the support for their work and its fruition, as also into their dwelling-places, these gods help every being to live, and they themselves live too. Because they help others to live (Vas), *therefore they are called Vasus.'* (Commentary on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 3.9.3; Gambhīrānanda trans.)

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64   Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, 130.

I have included Śaṅkara's comments to show the etymological, ontological, and philosophical use to which the Vasus lend themselves. Śaṅkara's etymology may appear to be merely of grammatical interest, but there is also a deeper philosophical point we should note. Among the meanings Monier-Williams notes for "Vasu" is "dwelling or dweller" and Whitney lists the meaning of root *vas* as "clothe." The morphology of the Sanskrit *vas* parallels the morphology of the Indo-European root –*wes*:

> To live, dwell, pass the night, with derivatives meaning "to be." (Oldest form **ə2wes-*.) 1. O-grade (perfect tense) form **wos-*. WAS, from Old English *wæs*, WAS, from Germanic **was-*. 2. Lengthened-grade form **wēs-*. were, from Old English *wǣre* (subjunctive), *wǣron* (plural), WERE, from Germanic **wēz-*. 3. WASSAIL, from Old Norse *vesa*, *vera*, to be, from Germanic **wesan*. 4. Perhaps suffixed form **wes-tā-*. VESTA, from Latin *Vesta*, household goddess. 5. Possibly suffixed variant form **was-tu-*. ASTUTE, from Latin *astus*, skill, craft (practiced in a town), from Greek *astu*, town (< "place where one dwells"). 6. Suffixed form **wes-eno-*. DIVAN, from Old Persian *vahanam*, house. [Pokorny 1. *u̯es-* 1170.]
> To clothe. Extension of **eu-**. 1. Suffixed o-grade (causative) form **wos-eyo-*. WEAR, from Old English *werian*, to wear, carry, from Germanic **wazjan*. 2. Suffixed form **wes-ti-*. VEST; DEVEST, INVEST, REVET, TRAVESTY, from Latin *vestis*, garment. 3. Suffixed form **wes-nu-*. HIMATION, from Greek *hennunai*, to clothe, with nominal derivative *heima*, *hīma* (< **wes-mn̥*), garment. [Pokorny 5. *u̯es-* 1172.][65]

Śaṅkara is therefore correct to link the notion of "Vasu" to embodiment (being concealed or contained or clothed in a body), dwelling, and existence, and Bhīṣma's identity as a Vasu must be seen in the context of his role as the first god in the epic whose embodiment narrative is recounted in explicit detail. Thus, although mythology about Vasus may be relatively sparse in pre-Mahābhārata texts, their appearance in the Ambā-Upākhyāna is quite significant. In the battle between Bhīṣma and Rāma Jāmadagnya, the sage's ancestors appear and urge him to withdraw from the battle. They say: "Bhīṣma is one of the Vasus: it is fortunate that you are still alive, little son. The son of Śaṃtanu and the Ganges is a famous Vasu: how can he be defeated by you, Rāma? Withdraw! Arjuna, first of the Pāṇḍavas, the mighty son of the Sacker of Cities, the heroic Nara Prajāpati, the ancient primeval God, full of puissance, renowned in the

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65   Calvert Watkins, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 101.

three worlds as the Left-handed Archer, has been ordained to be the death of Bhīṣma in due time."[66] Bhīṣma's connections to the Vasus, at any rate, should not be dismissed as an insignificant detail, especially when considering his relationship to Ambā. In the Nārāyaṇīya, the text refers to the seven Citra-śikhaṇḍins, who compose the seven *prakṛti*s (Mahābhārata 12.322.26–28). Now the names of these "colorful sages" recalls the name of Ambā upon her rebirth as a man, and in Sāṃkhya cosmology animating *Prakṛti* is the name for the female principle, the complement of Puruṣa. Further, in later theistic traditions, the Goddess is identified precisely with animating *prakṛti*. Thus, not only as a Brahmā figure, but also as a Vasu, Bhīṣma stands in a complex and never quite stable relationship to the Goddess. This relationship operates at several levels, of which their personal antagonism is perhaps the least significant. Thus, not only genealogically, but in terms of their dharma, *kāma*, *svarga*, the two figures mark out two very different terrains, ones we may identify as the terrains of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* respectively. I discuss in greater detail how these two terrains relate to each other in the next but one section, but before I turn to this section, I would like to note one further point. In the Bhīṣmaparvan, at the precise moment of the fateful encounter between these two opposed forces, Bhīṣma says to Ambā: "You are still that Śikhaṇḍin that the Ordainer made you, therefore I will not fight. Knowing this, do what you will" (kāmam abhyasa vā mā vā na tvāṃ yotsye kathaṃ cana | yaiva hi tvaṃ kṛtā dhātrā saiva hi tvaṃ śikhaṇḍinī ||; Mahābhārata 6.104.41). These are the last words he utters to her, and they are significant because they clearly demonstrate that it is upon the *pravṛtti* perspective that Bhīṣma ultimately stands, and falls.

The One Differing from Itself

We have seen Bhīṣma's relationship, in the previous section, to Brahmā, the ultimate *pravṛtti* symbol.[67] But matters are not so simple. Through the Nārā-yaṇīya narrative and his staunch devotion he is also related to Viṣṇu, and after his fall, he embodies in his narratives not only *pravṛtti dharma*, but also *nivṛtti*

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66   bhīṣmo vasūnām anyatamo diṣṭyā jīvasi putraka ||
      gāṅgeyaḥ śaṃtanoḥ putro vasur eṣa mahāyaśāḥ |
      kathaṃ tvayā raṇe jetuṃ rāma śakyo nivarta vaiv ||
      arjunaḥ pāṇḍavaśreṣṭhaḥ puraṃdarasuto balī |
      naraḥ prajāpatir vīraḥ pūrvadevaḥ sanātanaḥ ||
      savyasācīti vikhyātas triṣu lokeṣu vīryavān |
      bhīṣmamṛtyur yathākālaṃ vihito vai svayaṃbhuvā || (Mahābhārata 5.186. 17c–20)

67   See Greg Bailey, *The Mythology of Brahmā* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

dharma. But the beginning is never simple, and inception is always a struggle for emergence. Thus to understand Bhīṣma's role as a *pravṛtti* figure, we also need to understand the resistance he will undergo. Here we must relate Bhīṣma to that anti-*pravṛtti* force, Rudra. It is my argument that the Ambā-Upākhyāna is a coded commentary on what Stella Kramrisch calls the "primordial drama" of existence:[68] the opposition of Brahmā and Rudra. I will do this in two stages: (1) a rough sketch of the Rudra-Brahmā or Rudra-Nārāyaṇa conflict in the Nārāyaṇīya; (2) a detailed interpretation of the story of Ambā as the story of Rudra-Śiva's counterpoint to Bhīṣma-Brahmā in the epic (in the next section "This Sex Which is Not One").

Rudra is mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya at 322.36–38, 327.7–10, 327.30–32, 327.69–70, 328.11–12, 328.16–28, 328.32, 329.14d–15, 329.49, 330.42–49, 330.51–66, 330.68–71, 336.15–17, 337.61–64, and 338.11–25. The largest group of these references concerns the birth of Rudra from Nārāyaṇa.[69] The birth of Rudra is almost always mentioned in the same context as the birth of Brahmā,[70] with a smaller group referring to the birth of Rudra from Brahmā.[71] A fourth group refers to the conflict between Nārāyaṇa and Rudra,[72] while another emphasizes the complementarity of the gods Nārāyaṇa and Rudra.[73] Finally, a reference (Mahābhārata 12.338.11–25) recounts the story of how Rudra received instruction from Brahmā on Nārāyaṇa. I first present the relevant passages:

> 3.22.36–38: Nārāyaṇa praises the scripture of the Citraśikhaṇḍins, and refers to the birth of Rudra and Brahmā from him.[74]
>
> 327.7–10: Nārāyaṇa speaks of the cessation of temporal existence; all the gods, including Rudra and Brahmā, being unaware of the defects of temporal existence, are given over to works.
>
> 327.30–32: Brahmā's role in creation, including the Vedas, the sacrifice, and ritual texts, is emphasized; Rudra emerges from wrath.

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68   Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 58 and passim.

69   E.g., Mahābhārata 12.322.36–38, 12.327.30–32, 12.327.69–70, 12.328.11–12, 12.328.16–28, 12.330.51–66, 12.330.68–71.

70   E.g., Mahābhārata 12.322.36–38, 12.328.11–12, 12.330.51–66.

71   E.g., Mahābhārata 12.327.30–32, 12.327.69–70, 12.328.16–28.

72   E.g., Mahābhārata 12.329.14d–15, 12.330.42–49, 12.330.51–66.

73   See Mahābhārata 12.328.16-28 and 12.330.51–66.

74   Note the close proximity of the textual universe to the creative and destructive functions. Creation of the text is cited alongside emergence of Rudra and Brahmā (cf. Ṛgveda 10.129.4: desire as the first seed of the mind)

327.69–70: Brahmā is the creator and Lord of the universe; he is the mother, father, and also the Grandfather. Rudra issues from Brahmā's brow.

328.11–12: Brahmā and Rudra are born respectively from Nārāyaṇa's grace and wrath; Nārāyaṇa himself is the ultimate soul, the world, and without attributes.

328.16–28: At the end of the cosmic cycle Rudra appears from Brahmā's forehead, born of his anger. Brahmā and Rudra follow the ordained paths of creation and destruction. Rudra is also known as Kapardin. He is eulogized as the destroyer of the triple cities, of Dakṣa's sacrifice, and of Bhaga's eyes. He is to be known as Nārāyaṇa's own self; Nārāyaṇa himself worships Rudra. He who knows Nārāyaṇa knows Rudra; they are one being manifesting as two.

328.32: Brahmā and Rudra are forms of Nārāyaṇa, who is transcendent Being.

329.14d–15: Reference to the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice by Rudra. Rudra gains a blue throat when Uśana plucks a lock of hair from his head and releases snakes. In a previous age, Rudra's blue throat was due to being gripped by Nārāyaṇa's hand.

329.49: Story of ṛṣi Bhṛgu's desire for Umā, who is promised to Rudra; since he is spurned by Umā's father, he curses Himavat to be without gems.

330.42–49: Story of Dakṣa's sacrifice; since Rudra does not receive his share, he carries off the sacrifice. The spear he launches reduces the sacrifice to ashes and speeds on to Badari āśrama, where it strikes Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa absorbs its blow, but his hair turns blond. Purified by the sacred syllable, it returns to Rudra's hand in accordance with Nārāyaṇa's wish. Rudra approaches Badari and does battle with Nārāyaṇa. The seer grasps his throat with his hand, turning it blue. He takes up a reed and transforms it into an axe (paraśu), which he hurls at Rudra. The axe breaks, earning Nārāyaṇa the epithet "Khaṇḍaparaśu."

330.51–66: The battle between the gods terrifies the creatures; the Vedas do not illuminate; chaos threatens, and Brahmā falls from his throne. At this, Brahmā surrounded by the gods and ṛṣis approaches the two, and asks Rudra to make peace with Nārāyaṇa. He is the Indestructible and the Unmanifest. Having become manifest in his singular form (as one of the pair Nara-Nārāyaṇa), he did battle with Rudra. Brahmā is born of his grace and Rudra of his anger. Rudra gets rid of his anger and takes refuge in Nārāyaṇa, who embraces him. There is no difference between the two of them; he who knows Nārāyaṇa knows Rudra. Having established

friendship and equality with Rudra, Nara and Nārāyaṇa continue their austerities.

330.68–71: Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna that the figure that proceeded before his chariot was Rudra/Kapardin. He is Time, born of Kṛṣṇa's wrath, and had already slain the enemies slain by Arjuna. He is to be worshipped as Umāpati and as Hara.

This brief summary of the theology of the Trimūrti as it occurs in this one compact section of the Mahābhārata thus provides us with rich perspectives to study the Ambā narrative. I focus here on the most important points:

1. Rudra and Nārāyaṇa are identical in essence, but differ at the level of function.
2. Rudra and Brahmā both emerge from Nārāyaṇa and represent different aspects of the God.
3. Rudra and Brahmā are respectively associated with temporal functions of *laya* and *śṛṣṭi*.
4. Rudra is Time; he is born of Nārāyaṇa's wrath; his function is to end the cosmic cycle.
5. This end takes the form of the destruction of the sacrifice (Dakṣa's sacrifice), but the energy of the destruction cannot be contained and it speeds on to Badari āśrama.
6. Nārāyaṇa transcends both *laya* and *śṛṣṭi*; as immutable and unmanifest Being, he does not participate in cosmology.
7. Nārāyaṇa in his form as one half of the Nara-Nārāyaṇa pair must oppose Rudra and bring destruction back into a balance with the creative force of Brahmā.
8. All three gods, that is, Brahmā, Rudra, and Nārāyaṇa of the Nara-Nārāyaṇa pair, cooperate to maintain this balance; Rudra must be restrained for *śṛṣṭi* to occur,[75] but ultimately his is the force that brings Brahmā's cycle of creation to an end.

To this theological overview, I add two other points of significance:

9. Creation of the text and creation of Rudra/Brahmā overlap; hence, I speak of a "textual universe."
10. Besides a compact and self-contained theology working out the details of the creative, sustaining or protective, and destructive force, the

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75 As the diremptive force, Rudra is coeval with the universe's inception. Although this force is checked in the beginning of the cycle, the diremption slowly rises as an undertow and ends the universe.

> Nārāyaṇīya also contains veiled references to the Kuru narrative (e.g.,
> Nārāyaṇa's identity as Khaṇḍaparaśu, to Rudra's role as Kapardin in
> enabling the Kuru destruction, etc.).

Thus, the narrative of Rudra in this section of the epic is closely woven together with the narrative of not only Brahmā but also Nārāyaṇa. Further, the text underscores the antagonism between the two in all the passages where it refers to their birth: Rudra is born of Nārāyaṇa's wrath, Brahmā of his grace or, alternatively where the text refers to Rudra's birth from Brahmā, he is born of Brahmā's wrath. This antagonism between the two comes to the fore in the three references to conflict with Rudra, although, paradoxically, it is always Nārāyaṇa whom Rudra battles. However, in the longest group of lines referring to this conflict (Mahābhārata 12.330.42–49, continued in 330.51–66) the origins of the conflict are placed at Dakṣa's sacrifice, with the conflict with Nārāyaṇa presented as the aftermath or aftershock of Rudra's destruction of the sacrifice.

The interweaving of all three major gods of the Hindu trinity, especially in the context of a narrative of conflict, has led many scholars to assume that the Nārāyaṇīya is a sectarian text.[76] Thus, scholars have sought to explain the different versions of Rudra's birth (and hence variation in his hierarchy relative to Brahmā) as evidence of a re-working of the narrative. Further, scholars argue that the reconciliation with Nārāyaṇa and the eulogization of Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Being demonstrate that a Rudra theology was in the process of being integrated and subsumed into a Nārāyaṇa theology.[77] However, once we look at

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76   Peter Schreiner, ed., *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996).

77   Schreiner, for instance, writes: "Since Arjuna is urged to worship Hara, one must either allow for an insertion in the form of the text on the part of Śivaite groups as well or assume Viṣṇuite redactors, who were interested in making concessions vis-à-vis Śivaites. — According to the model of 'inclusivism' (regarding the inclusivism discussion see Oberhammer 1983) it must have been the Nārāyaṇa worshippers, who through identification of Śiva with Nārāyaṇa assigned the gods of the Śivaites a place in their own, more comprehensive system. And if inclusivism is an attitude of 'weakness' (because one can only attain or postulate that superiority, which was socially or religion-historically not permitted or not possible for one's own group, through theoretical bracketing [of the other group]), then we are confronted by a Nārāyaṇa faith, which had to assert itself in a dominant Śivaite environment." Ibid., 168, n. 40. Schreiner's analysis, however, is based on the assumption of the duality of Śiva and Viṣṇu, something the text explicitly rejects, and, moreover, views the gods as persons or projections (of individual "sectarian" groups) rather than seeing them as ontological functions in their textual complementarity. It also does not explain how or why these two gods had to have these *particular* characteristics, except perhaps as an accident of their "sectarian" proponents' ideas of divinity. In all, the

the text itself and understand its project, these views prove to be naïve, ill-considered, and pointless. For example, the text not only introduces other gods such as Rudra, Brahmā, and Indra but also relates Nārāyaṇa himself to four hypostases: Vāsudeva, Aniruddha, Pradyumna, and Saṃkarṣaṇa. Further, the text itself contains explicit warnings against reading the epic as a sectarian work. Thus, at Mahābhārata 12.328.19 we are told that Rudra is to be known as Nārāyaṇa's own self; he who worships Rudra worships Nārāyaṇa also. At 12.330.64 we are told that he who knows the one knows the other; there is no difference between Nārāyaṇa and Rudra. Not only this, but at 12.329.15d we are also told that Rudra obtained his blue throat when gripped by Nārāyaṇa. In case one takes this conflict too literally, as two different and separate gods fighting it out, then one is disappointed, because at 15c, we are told he obtained his blue throat from the bite of a snake. The blue throat is a cipher. So is the conflict. The unity and separation of Nārāyaṇa and Rudra are ways of speaking about the process(es), the indivisible dyad, that holds together both singular Being and plural Becoming.

Once we set aside the sectarian interpretation, light can also be shed on the Rudra-Brahmā antagonism. Although it is true that this antagonism is less pronounced than the Rudra-Nārāyaṇa antagonism, one must note that Nārāyaṇa only intervenes as a restraining force on Rudra. The destructive force of Rudra is initially directed against Dakṣa's sacrifice, that is, the creation of Brahmā. Nonetheless, because Dakṣa cannot defend himself and Rudra's resorptive force threatens to spin out of control and absorb even the hermitage of Badari, Nārāyaṇa must battle Rudra. In this conflict, note that it is Brahmā who eventually brings about peace between the two, by revealing to Rudra the secret of Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa is none other than Rudra's self; both he (Brahmā) and Rudra have emerged from Nārāyaṇa as opposed and opposing aspects of his being. Note also that in absorbing the force of Rudra's spear, which had reduced Dakṣa's sacrifice to ashes, Nārāyaṇa creates the conditions for Brahmā's renewed creation. Rudra's destructive force thus represents a check on the creative, inceptive power of Brahmā. Now the word for "check" is *nirodha*, and one of Nārāyaṇa's names is Aniruddha or "one who removes [the source of]

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model, which derives from Paul Hacker's influential notion of "inclusivism," is not a viable model for thinking about either the epics or the Purāṇas, in spite of the immense productivity (in creating religious and textual "histories") it has encouraged. For the historical issues informing Hacker's work, see Joydeep Bagchee and Vishwa Adluri, "The Passion of Paul Hacker: Indology, Orientalism, and Evangelism," in *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Joanne Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander, and Douglas McGetchin (New York: Routledge, 2013), 215–29.

obstruction." Brahmā is the only one who knows this form of Nārāyaṇa, and thus it is appropriate that *he* is the one who reveals to Rudra the secret of his origin from Nārāyaṇa.

Thus, one can see that what is being worked out in the Nārāyaṇīya is not the story of a conflict between two sectarian gods, but fundamental ontological processes. "Rudra" and "Nārāyaṇa" are ways of talking about the impulses and inertias operative in the emanations and recoils of the cycles of the phenomenal universe. Thus, neither a theory of sectarianism[78] nor one of syncretism[79] will be able to do justice to the text: at stake is not the combination of different or contradictory beliefs into a more or less cohesive system, but the articulation of a dynamic conception of ontological processes. As such, the text is not just cohesive or coherent, but has to be *cogent*. *Śṛṣṭi* and *pralaya* are both events, but the conditions for them are ever present. We may call these the traits of natality and mortality, whose interaction is responsible for the phenomenal presencing of all things. Thus *śṛṣṭi* must address the undertow of *laya* and vice versa. Rudra-Śiva and Brahmā represent these forces. Hence in *śṛṣṭi* Rudra-Śiva must be appeased or restrained as part of Aniruddha's removal of *nirodhana*. Thus in the Nārāyaṇīya one sees Nārāyaṇa fighting Rudra. But Rudra remains an undertow and dominates in *laya* scenes, once again making it possible for Nārāyaṇa to destroy the universe as we see in the Mārkaṇḍeya episode (Mahābhārata 3.186–87). The Nārāyaṇīya, which maps out a cosmogony of the relation of the One to the many, shows—or rather ends with—Rudra "asking" Brahmā how many *puruṣas* there are, that is, allowing Brahmā to determine and guide plural existence, or rather allowing him to create (12.338.22–23).

The narrative of Rudra and Nārāyaṇa's conflict itself occurs in a chapter on the secret import of *nirukti*. Brahmā himself, that is, the Creator or (by association) the creation, is described as *niruktagaḥ*, "one who is grasped by *nirukti*" or, if we expand on the implicit meaning, "one whose secret is grasped (or penetrated) by (grasping) *nirukti*." Thus, the text itself is giving us a clue: to understand the universe is to understand the secret identities (simultaneously concealed and disclosed in the names) of its agents, and this means, ultimately, to understand the agents: (1) In their trifunctionality as creator, preserver,

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78   Here one can cite almost any German Mahābhārata scholar writing in the last two centuries. For a criticism of the "sectarian" hypothesis, especially as applied to the Nārāyaṇīya in the work of Oberlies, Schreiner, and Malinar, see Vishwa Adluri, "Philosophical Aspects of Bhakti in the Nārāyaṇīya," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the Fifteenth World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, and Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 127–54.

79   This term is used by Nicholas Sutton, *Religious Doctrines in the Mahābhārata* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

destroyer[80]; (2) In their dyadic essence, as mortal-immortal (Nara-Nārāyaṇa), Being–Becoming (*Brahman–kāla* or *Brahman–jagat*); and (3) In their gendered duality, that is, as Puruṣa–Prakṛti. The Ambā-Upākhyāna, which opposes the ultimate androgyne (Śikhaṇḍin) to the ultimate masculine figure,[81] the ultimate mortal (Nara) to the ultimate immortal (Bhīṣma Vasu),[82] and weaves together the three aspects of creation, preservation, and destruction, thus provides the best avenue from which to study the epic's linking of the theological and war narratives.[83]

This Sex Which is Not One

Let us summarize the results of our investigation thus far:

1. The name "Ambā" means "Mother" and relates to the Goddess.
2. Especially in the form of the triple nomenclature Ambā, Ambikā, and Ambālikā, the term suggests a complex theology centering on the Goddess and drawing on Vedic associations with Rudra Traiyambaka.
3. Ambā stands apart from the *pravṛtti* narrative, and, indeed, is opposed to Bhīṣma, the central figure of the *pravṛtti* narrative.
4. The *pravṛtti* narrative is driven by sacrifice (Vyāsa's *niyoga* rite, *aśvamedha*, etc.); at its head is Brahmā.
5. The Ambā narrative, in contrast, invokes another god: Rudra.
6. "Brahmā" and "Rudra" are not simply names of gods, but designate two fundamental (and opposed) ontological forces, ones we called "the phenomenological traits of natality and mortality."

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80 I use the words "preserver" and "preservation" because they have become popular; actually, however, the function is not so much "preservation" but a kind of temporal deferral and a bringing into balance of the Brahmā/Raudra aspects of Being (Nārāyaṇa) itself.

81 Bhīṣma remains celibate; he is a renowned warrior; he is the authority on dharma.

82 Recall that all the other Pāṇḍavas are *aṁśas* of gods; Bhīṣma is the only Kaurava figure who is a living god, self-conscious of his status, able to choose his hour of death, and raised in heaven.

83 Of course, by this I do not mean there was some core "war narrative" independent of the theological narrative: as the Nārāyaṇīya passages should have made clear by now, the theology makes use of conflict as an essential *topos* or, to put it another way, cosmology unfolds via strife. War is the literary figure the epic poets exploit in order to work out this theology.

7.   Ambā is closely associated with Rudra but, unlike Aśvatthāman, she is never identified with him.[84]

8.   She is marked by strong gender ambiguity, and this gender ambiguity also plays a role in her relationship to Śiva.

9.   Finally, although Ambā in a sense initiates the *laya* cycle of the Mahābhārata (by bringing down Bhīṣma), she defers to other agents (Arjuna, Aśvatthāman, etc.) when it comes to bringing the destruction full circle.

With these points in mind, let us now return to the story of the abduction of Ambā as related in the Ādiparvan and the Udyogaparvan. Van Buitenen considers this episode to be based on a historical event (and hence part of the "original" epic).[85] A closer look, however, shows that the episode is itself

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84   Both commit irrevocable self-sacrifice, both become empty and thus receptacles for Śiva. But when Ambā commits immolation, she has already reduced herself through *tapas*; moreover, Gaṅgā's curse has already taken over half her body. When Śiva appears, she asks to be able to kill Bhīṣma, but there is no evidence Śiva enters her as he does with Aśvatthāman. So while Aśvatthāman is more completely Śiva; Ambā retains her femininity and thus her distinction from the masculine aspects of Śiva. She goes as far as *ardhanārī* (in Śikhaṇḍin). But her masculinity will revert back to the Yakṣa, and her femininity remains intact after her death. Bhīṣma, who is a Brahmā figure, remains in the role of a son to Ambā. Thus, when Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin is able to be penetrated, it is through Śiva's sword and through the complete possession of Aśvatthāman. If we do not see these distinctions between Aśvatthāman and Śikhaṇḍin we will miss these interactions between Śiva and the Devī.

85   Van Buitenen's views are spelled out clearly in his introduction to the translation of the Udyogaparvan. In the context of a critique of Madeleine Biardeau's views of the epic as the restatement, in mythic form, of the purāṇic cosmogony undergirded by the yogic self-reabsorbtion, he defends a long period of compositional history for the Mahābhārata. Since his views of the Ambā-Upākhyāna are characteristic of his understanding of the epic's history (and simultaneously also serve as a good summary of the historical approach to decoding myth), they are restated here. After rejecting, mainly through caricature, Biardeau's view that one must resist any "hypothèses d'ordre historique" and that one must understand the elements of its symbolism "dans les structures idéologiques d'ensemble," Van Buitenen lists four ways in which the expansion of the Mahābhārata from an "epic" to a "purāṇa" might have taken place (these are "An Old Myth and Its Sequel"; "New Myth"; "An Old Legend and Its Sequel"; and "New Legend—A Sequel"), with the Ambā-Upākhyāna being an example of the last (i.e., a new legend, created as a sequel to an old one). J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction [to Book 5. The Book of the Effort]," in *The Mahābhārata: 4. The Book of Virāṭa; 5. The Book of the Effort* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 142–73. He writes that the legend of Ambā, up to the story of Ambā's self-sacrifice and immolation, is "fairly straightforward." Thereafter, however, "the story … gets bogged down in talk" with the introduction of Rāma Jāmadagnya and the reference to his "brother-Vasus" and it gets "positively droll" with the reference to the childless king

rich in theological details. As Scheuer notes, the name "*jyeṣṭhā*" used of Ambā, which van Buitenen translates simply as "eldest" or "oldest," is a name of the Goddess.[86] Further, in a passage from the Udyogaparvan, where Bhīṣma clarifies why he could not take on the *niyoga* obligation, he refers to his vow of celibacy as follows: ity uktaḥ prāñjalir bhūtvā duḥkhito bhṛśam āturaḥ | tebhyo nyavedayaṁ putra pratijñāṁ pitṛgauravāt | ūrdhvaretā hy arājā ca kulasyārthe

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Drupada and his sexually ambiguous son/daughter Śikhaṇḍin. Ibid., 175. After presenting his "*monologue intérieur*" of what might have taken place inside the ingenious storyteller's mind (basically a conversation in which Van Buitenen makes up adventitious and unconvincing reasons why a storyteller, especially one without literary genius or creative intent, might have chosen to identify the ambiguously gendered warrior Śikhaṇḍin with Ambā), he concludes: "The point I wish to make with this *monologue intérieur* of a storyteller trying to tie up one loose end of the *Mahābhārata* is that within the half millenium of the composition of the text, a minor element ... could create a new legend, an instant tradition .... If we were to take this story seriously as simultaneous to the epic portions of the *Mahābhārata*, we would ultimately have to lay the death of Bhīṣma at the fragrant door of the Yakṣa Sthūṇakarṇa's mansion in a wood off Kāmpilya. I, among the trees of different ages find this view absurd." Ibid., 177–78. The problem with this explanation is that it explains nothing: it does not tell us why Śikhaṇḍin has to be invulnerable to Bhīṣma, nor why this invulnerability could not be explained by other means (say, superior armor or a boon from a god), nor why Ambā had to return at *this* juncture in the text. Nor does it tell us why Rāma had to fail and Bhīṣma's brothers, the eight Vasus, had to reappear at just this juncture (Van Buitenen merely comments: "it all sounds epigonic"; ibid., 175). Van Buitenen's explanation only appears probable to him: it is neither undergirded historically nor based on philological investigations, and reflects more his lack of comprehension of—indeed, discomfort with—"Purāṇic Hinduism" than anything else (see ibid., 152 for his statement that "not all scholars are interested in Purāṇic Hinduism" and 144 for the observation that "no doubt, Hindu symbolification of the epic started quite early and has become an overlying part of the text itself. This process went on in the *Purāṇas*, and this specious "continuity" between "epic" and the *Purāṇas* can easily lead one to lay a Purāṇa-Hindū interpretation upon the *Bhārata*, if one resists all 'hypothèses d'ordre historique'"). But we must wonder: is it Biardeau who is laying a "Purāṇa-Hindū interpretation upon the *Bhārata*" in the name of myth or is it Van Buitenen who is laying a "European/Indo-European" interpretation upon the Mahābhārata in the name of another myth—the heroic, bardic oral epic—now raised to the level of "history"? At the very least, we should not overlook the role of supersessionism in Van Buitenen's interest in postulating a specious discontinuity between epic and the Purāṇas, a discontinuity that makes it possible to argue that it is Western "critical" scholarship and not Purāṇic Hinduism that is the true fulfillment of and has correctly grasped the meaning of the original epic.

86 "Les textes précisent bien qu'Ambā est l'aînée des trois princesses de Kāśī; elle est '*jyeṣṭhā*' (1.96.47, 51/102.60, 64). Or '*jyeṣṭhā*' est une épithète de Durgā (voir *Harivaṃśa* no. 8.4/2.3.4) considérée comme soeur aînée de Yama (*jyeṣṭhā Yamasya bhaginī*) ..." Jacques Scheuer, "Śiva dans le Mahābhārata: l'histoire d'Ambā/Śikhaṇḍin," *Puruṣārtha* 2 (1975): 82.

punaḥ punaḥ ||.[87] Now the word Van Buitenen translates as "celibate" is in fact *ūrdhvaretā*, and this is a very unusual word for "celibacy." Apte lists the following words as much more common terms for "celibacy": *anudvāhaḥ*, *adārparigraha*, *avivāhaḥ*. In contrast, Monier-Williams and the Petersburg dictionary both clarify *ūrdhvaretas* as "retaining the semen above," and the term is a frequent epithet of sages or ascetics. Although the term occurs as early as Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (10.12), it is especially associated with Śiva.[88] Commenting on Śiva's status as the ithyphallic deity, Doniger notes:

> Śiva is described as ithyphallic, particularly in the Pine Forest, and this condition is often equated with a state of chastity: 'He is called *ūrdhvaliṅga* because the lowered *liṅga* sheds its seed, but not the raised *liṅga*.' The basic Sanskrit expression for the practice of chastity is the drawing up of the seed (*ūrdhvaretas*), but, by synecdoche, the seed is often confused with the *liṅga* itself, which is 'raised' in chastity. The raised seed is a natural image of chastity; only Pārvatī can transform Śiva from one whose seed is always drawn up into one whose seed has fallen.[89]

In the longer passage from which this verse is excerpted, Bhīṣma attempts to convince his mother Satyavatī not to force him into this obligation. Again, his words are significant: tato 'haṃ prāñjalir bhūtvā mātaraṃ saṃprasādayam | nāmba śaṃtanunā jātaḥ kauravaṃ vaṃśam udvahan | pratijñāṃ vitathāṃ kuryām iti rājan punaḥ punaḥ || viśeṣatas tvadarthaṃ ca dhuri mā māṃ niyojaya | ahaṃ preṣyaś ca dāsaś ca tavāmba sutavatsale || (Mahābhārata 5.145.32–33). The use of the word *amba* (for *ambā*) for his mother twice in this passage is significant, especially since he has just called her "Kālī" twice in the preceding verses in his narration of the incident to Duryodhana (5.145.18, 29). "Ambā" is of course his mother Satyavatī, but it also plays on the name of the

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87   Mahābhārata 5.145.31; cf. also Ādiparvan, App. 1, no. 55, lines 12–13: aham apy ūrdhvaretā vai nivṛtto dārakarmaṇi | na saṃbandhas tad āvābhyaṃ bhavitā vai kathaṃ cana ||. I owe this citation to Scheuer.

88   See Mahābhārata 13.83.41–47 for the story of how Śiva acquired this name.

89   Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 9–10. The reference is to the birth of Skanda, recounted at Mahābhārata 3.213–14 and 9.43. Note, however, that the word for "seed" here is *tejas* and not *retas* (the only time *retas* is used, 3.214.15b, the reference is to *Agni*). In 13.83, the gods, concerned that the offspring of Rudra and Umā will burn down the universe, beg him not to procreate. Śiva draws up his semen, earning him the epithet *ūrdhvaretāḥ* (13.83.47c). Doniger misunderstands Śiva's ability, as the primordial uncreated Being, to remain within himself, while also lending his energy to the creation (cf. 13.83.52: a portion of Rudra's *tejas* falls to the ground).

princess of Kāśī, and, ultimately, on the Goddess. In the Udyogaparvan, when the Pāṇḍavas are deliberating on their choice of marshal, Bhīma argues for appointing Śikhaṇḍin as follows: "My choice is Śikhaṇḍin, Drupada's son, who, as the Siddhas and gathered seers say, was born for the killing of Bhīṣma, O Indra among kings, upon whose shape, as he deploys his celestial missile in the center of every battle, the men will gaze as though it were the great-spirited Rāma's. I do not see the man who could pierce Śikhaṇḍin in battle with his weapon, king, when he stands girt on his chariot. No one can withstand Bhīṣma of the great vow but Śikhaṇḍin the hero. I think he is our marshal."[90] Although Van Buitenen translates "pierce," the verb is from root *bhid* with the meanings "break, cleave, split, cut asunder, rend, pierce, break through or down."[91] There is thus good reason for taking Śikhaṇḍin as the embodiment of the indeterminate dyad. Moreover, Śikhaṇḍin can only be killed once Aśvatthāman runs him through with the sword he has obtained from Śiva.

Although overlooked by Scheuer, one of the most significant clues to Ambā's identity comes in the passage cited by Scheuer where she is addressed as "*jyeṣṭhā.*" The passage reads: vivāhaṁ kārayiṣyantaṁ bhīṣmaṁ kāśipateḥ sutā | jyeṣṭhā tāsām idaṁ vākyam abravīd dha satī tadā || (Mahābhārata 1.96.47). Van Buitenen translates "a strict girl," but the word is in fact: *satī*. Likewise, he translates *satī kanyā* in the Udyogaparvan as "a proper maiden"[92]; and *purā satī* as "who in a previous life was the daughter,"[93] completely missing the theological resonances of both passages. But in fact, what the text is saying is that Śikhaṇḍin was formerly Satī, which would fit well with her penances to Śiva and her self-immolation.

The epics do not feature the story of Satī. Although a Dākṣāyani, several daughters of Dakṣa and Dakṣa's curse of Somā who shows favoritism among

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90   bhīma uvāca |
      vadhārthaṁ yaḥ samutpannaḥ śikhaṇḍī drupadātmajaḥ |
      vadanti siddhā rājendra ṛṣayaś ca samāgatāḥ ||
      yasya saṁgrāmamadhyeṣu divyam astraṁ vikurvataḥ |
      rūpaṁ drakṣyanti puruṣā rāmasyeva mahātmanaḥ ||
      na taṁ yuddheṣu paśyāmi yo vibhindyāc chikhaṇḍinam |
      śastreṇa samare rājan saṁnaddhaṁ syandane sthitam ||
      dvairathe viṣahen nānyo bhīṣmaṁ rājan mahāvratam |
      śikhaṇḍinam ṛte vīraṁ sa me senāpatir mataḥ || (Mahābhārata 5.149.29–32)

91   Apte, *sv* "*bhid.*"

92   duryodhana uvāca |
      kathaṁ śikhaṇḍī gāṅgeya kanyā bhūtvā satī tadā |
      puruṣo 'bhavad yudhi śreṣṭha tan me brūhi pitāmaha || (Mahābhārata 5.189.1)

93   tapaś cacāra yā ghoraṁ kāśikanyā purā satī |
      bhīṣmasya vadham icchantī pretyāpi bharatarṣabha || (Mahābhārata 5.49.31)

his wives (Dakṣa's daughters) are all mentioned,[94] there are no references to Rudra-Śiva as Dakṣa's son-in-law. According to Annemarie Mertens, the story first appears in the Brahmāṇḍa and Vāyu Purāṇas, while the Bhāgavatam is the first to merge the death of Satī into the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice.[95] The longest

94 See Mahābhārata 7.173, 10.18, 12.274, and 13.145–146. Śiva is also frequently addressed with epithets referring to his role in the destruction of the sacrifice (so, for instance, at 1.103.9c, where he is called "the one who took Bhaga's eyes," *bhaganetraharaṁ*; see also 3.40.57a [*bhaganetranipātana*] and 3.41.12a [*bhaganetrahan*]). In spite of the variations between the versions, I do not think a chronological development such as that Mertens posits (Annemarie Mertens, *Der Dakṣamythus in der episch-purāṇischen Literatur: Beobachtungen zur religionsgeschichtlichen Entwicklung des Gottes Rudra-Śiva im Hinduismus* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998]) can be justified. Mertens argues for a four-stage chronological development, beginning with the "earliest Mahābhārata version of the Dakṣa myth" (Mahābhārata 7.173 and 13.145–46, the latter a "copy" of ch. 173 "albeit in abridged form") through the "expanded version" (10.18) and "two developed Śaiva versions" (12.274 and App. 1, no. 28, the latter "the latest version of the myth within the Mahābhārata"). Ibid., 16, 21, 25, 30, and 53. Mertens also posits an internal development within each version, according to which each version was "redacted" more than once, sometimes in a "Śivaite interest," sometimes as the result of a "Viṣṇuite revision" (the latter again in two ways, i.e., either as the result of an "intensive" or a "superficial" Viṣṇuitization [*Viṣṇuitisierung*]). But although Mertens speaks of a "Śivaite interest," it turns out that these putative "Śivaite" redactors were following different and sometimes competing interests. At one time it is "a small or a young following of the rising outsider-god Rudra [that] struggles against the 'orthodox' Brahmandom and for the [its? his?] recognition in cult and society (ibid., 21; apparently, this development, which Mertens detects in the text, "reflects the historical situation"); at another, it is "to degrade the competing Viṣṇuism" (ibid., 24); at yet others, it is either to "highlight a milder character [of Rudra] propagated (by the followers in later texts)" (ibid., 27) or to "legitimate Rudra's sacrilegious action and his new status in the gods' sacrifice resulting therefrom" (ibid., 28). Then again, it is not clear how these putative "interests" or "motivations" permit Mertens to "bring the multiple versions of the Dakṣa myth ... into a chronological sequence," since surely she has to presume the sequence in order to identify the motivation? That is, whether we think version *x* was revised in interest *y* or vice versa will depend on whether we think version *x* preceded version *y* or the other way around. Mertens's analysis suffers from an extremely simplistic understanding of the way texts are composed. Even if it was a valid procedure to explain the text *only* in terms of the social realities governing its production, Mertens's work illustrates the exhaustion and destitution of historical criticism.

95 I quote the "scholarly" opinion, though I am skeptical of Mertens's attempt to date the Purāṇas; often, the dates ascribed to the texts rest on no more than her perception of which version came "earlier" or "later," the more developed form always being presumed to have come later. Mertens follows in the tradition of Hacker's "text-historical" scholarship; she gratefully acknowledges his influence in her introduction with the words "With what difficulties a text-historical [textgeschichtliche] investigation within the anonymous, composite [gewachsen] Purāṇa literature is associated Paul Hacker has formulated

treatment of the Dakṣa myth comes in the Śiva Purāṇa. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, thought to be one of the earliest, contains some elements of the story as well. And yet, the Ambā story contains many of these elements, albeit in incipient form. Ambā's career begins at an *aśvamedha* sacrifice (Vyāsa's *niyoga* ritual) and ends in the apocalyptic *raṇa yajña*. This is a direct textual parallel to the later Satī's career, which begins with her being insulted at Dakṣa's sacrifice and ends in the cataclysmic destruction of that sacrifice, run over by the martial aspect of a wrathful Śiva. The Mahābhārata knows that Umā was upset and Śiva destroyed the sacrifice; the Mahābhārata also knows that Śiva oversaw both the Kurukṣetra *raṇa yajña* and the Sauptika massacre.[96] It is only in the attempt

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in his introduction to *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*: 'Whoever penetrate into the fantastic maze of the purāṇic myths in order to recognize something of the development of Hinduism cannot straightaway disentangle all the hundredfold entanglements through which almost every detail is somehow linked with every other.' The Purāṇa research owes a method for historical research into purāṇic texts and for the identification of their individual layers to Willibald Kirfel and Paul Hacker." Ibid., xv. But like Hacker, her analysis cannot stand without an ideological superstructure (i.e., not only that the texts cannot be read in their literary context but also that there is no coherent theology and no unified pantheon in the Hindu canon). See preceding note.

96   Apparently, the reference to Umā in the putatively "late" versions of the myth (Mahābhārata 12.274 and App. 1, no. 28) were motivated by the desire to "transfer the responsibility for Rudra's horrific deed … to a new person additionally manifesting in the occurrence." Ibid., 47. "With Umā's role is associated a *displacement of the motivation* [*Motivationsverlagerung*], which affects the intention of the entire myth. Thus, as the reason for the destruction of the sacrifice is mentioned not the achievement of a share for Rudra, but rather, repeatedly, the elimination of Umā's fury." Ibid., 67–68. This "shift" is explained as "correspond[ing] to the new status of Rudra: he *is* already the god, to whom all sacrificial activities are addressed (*61–42*), he no longer has to demand his place among the others." Ibid., 68 (Mertens's italics). But the epic already knows that the recipient of all sacrifices is ultimately the one Being and that the individual recipients of sacrifice receive offerings in the measure appropriate to them. Thus in the Nārāyaṇīya, Nārāyaṇa declares that he is the recipient of all offerings (Mahābhārata 12.32.53), but he also says, "in whatever way one offers to me a share in this great sacrifice, in a reciprocal manner, by Me he is made a claimant of a sacrificial share according to Vedic text" (yo me yathā kalpitavān bhāgam asmin mahākratau | sa tathā yajñabhāgārho vedasūtre mayā kṛtaḥ ||; 12.327.55). Mertens ignores these theological niceties. Not only are they problematic for her thesis of a simplistic development in the status of a god (from outsider to privileged recipient, a change that reflects the putative political advances of his adherents) but they also require her to broaden the scope of her investigations from beyond just those passages that contain Dakṣa references to actually reading the Mahābhārata. Further, why just Umā? Why not displace the motivation on to any other random being? Why not displace it on to Kṛṣṇa himself? Is it just a question of the sort of comment a female deity, that also a consort, might make? Umā's involvement is both more serious and more playful than Mertens

to graft the Ambā narrative onto this Umā narrative in the Mahābhārata that the Satī narrative becomes necessary in the Purāṇas. Thus, the goddess cycle in the Mahābhārata is composed of the trio Ambā-ardhanārī-Umā. Elsewhere it is Satī-Pārvati.

I make this point to show how wrongheaded it is to do a textual history where we keep assuming interpolations into the Mahābhārata from the empirical prejudices based on later textual traditions. Any proper reading of the epic must make room for not only its originality but also its originary power. Consequences derive from such prejudiced, unscientific ways of reading these texts that are disastrous. If one grants the Mahābhārata its true power as a *strī-śūdra-veda* as it purports to be, clearly the practice of Satī may at best be based on Mādrī's choice to join king Pāṇḍu on the pyre rather than on the Goddess who lends her name to the practice. Because in the case of the Goddess, it is a virginal form of the Goddess as Ambā who complicates and throws out of joint the very institutions of gender and marriage, and works with Śiva to restore the breach of creation through absorbtion or *laya*. But even so, she represents *pravṛtti's* mortal power. As a river filled with crocodiles she represents the epic story itself, where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma appear as dead crocodiles to Arjuna towards the end of the epic (Mahābhārata 16.6.10).

The theology of the Mahābhārata, which has carefully cast Bhīṣma as a *pitāmaha* or a Brahmā figure, is working with all of these elements. Indeed, as we discover in the Nārāyaṇīya, Brahmā is the only one to have seen the Aniruddha form of Nārāyaṇa[97] and thus Bhīṣma provides a proper link between the *pravṛtti* Kuru narrative by serving as the *pitāmaha* and the *nivṛtti* narrative, which he provides to Yudhiṣṭhira in the form of an instruction. I have shown

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grasps. Moreover, the thesis that Umā's role in Mahābhārata 12.274 and App. 1, no. 28 represents necessary changes induced by the fact that "their desecration [i.e., the desecration of the Brahmanic rituals] is a sacrilege that, on the one hand, expresses the protest of Rudra's following, [and,] on the other, cannot be carried out by the god who is [in the process of] establishing himself" (ibid., 50) is dependent upon accepting the sequence of versions she posits. Unfortunately, the Critical Edition provides support for only *one* of her claims, namely, that the version in the Śāntiparvan, App. 1, no. 28, is late. Other than this it does not support the kind of internal historical sequence she posits. And finally, some of her claims are simply bizarre, as when she claims that "in this place [i.e., preceding 7.173.42] the reading of the northern recensions [which mention Dakṣa "as a sacrificer who sacrifices according to the prescription"] is to be preferred since the Mahābhārata 13 version, which is almost word-for-word identical with 7.173 and is dependent on it (see below), names Dakṣa in all recensions and he is the sacrificer in all following versions." Ibid., 19.

97 Brahmā is thus the only one who knows the secret of Nārāyaṇa's and Rudra's identity. He knows that Rudra is none other than the resorbtive force, whose other face is he himself, the inceptive or creative force. Both he and Rudra have emerged from Nārāyaṇa as opposed and opposing aspects of his being.

that Ambā is an incarnation of a Rudra force, and by linking it to the rudraic doctrine of the Trimūrti in the Nārāyaṇīya, I have shown that there is no antagonism between Brahmā and Nārāyaṇa, but rather, between Brahmā and Rudrā. Ambā, whose narrative is the prototype of Satī, is a Rudra force. Thus, the Ambā narrative must make room for Nārāyaṇa as Paraśurāma to exempt himself from bringing down Bhīṣma *pitāmaha* and allow Rudra as Śikhaṇḍin, the divine androgyne, as well as Kapardin who precedes the chariot to bring down Bhīṣma and close out the cosmological, genealogical, and textual cycle.

The introduction of Paraśurāma further serves to create matching bookends in the Udyogaparvan to the Bhagavadgītā. The Ambā-Upākhyāna and the Bhagavadgītā are in the form of two dialogues taking place before the war in the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava sides, respectively. Both dialogues have to do with the inability of the primary warrior to fight. In the Ambā-Upākhyāna, it is Bhīṣma who will not fight Śikhaṇḍin. In the Bhagavadgītā, it is Arjuna who will not fight Bhīṣma. In both cases, although the superficial reasons appear to be Bhīṣma's notion of *kṣatriyadharma*, Śikhaṇḍin's androgyny, and Arjuna's fear of miscegenation and loss of *jāti* and *kula* dharmas (Bhagavadgītā 1.40–43), the real reason in the Bhagavadgītā is *guru hatya* (Bhagavadgītā 2.5). By pitting Bhīṣma against Paraśurāma, the Udyogaparvan already comments on the Bhagavadgītā which is about to come. Bhīṣma does not hestitate to use lethal force on Paraśurāma, who is his guru. Arjuna will be asked to do the same. Why do I say that the real qualm on Arjuna's part is *guru hatya*? Because Kṛṣṇa after hearing Arjuna's lengthy encomium of *varṇadharma* merely mocks him as a eunuch. But once Arjuna confesses *gurūn ahatvā*, etc. Kṛṣṇa begins his instruction. In both cases, the crux of the matter turns out to be cosmological and theological. With Bhīṣma being protected on all sides by the Vasus, who are the primordial elements that constitute *prakṛti*, and Kṛṣṇa's theophany as the *viśvarūpa*, the Ambā-Upākhyāna and the Bhagavadgītā bookend the two extremes of the cosmological spectrum: Being and Becoming.

No further progress can be made in interpreting the Ambā-Upākhyāna, if our approach is to explain this on a political plane, that is, as a war narrative.[98]

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98   Angelika Malinar seeks to demonstrate continuity between the Udyogaparvan and the Gītā by focusing on the debates concerning kingship as enunciated by Duryodhana in that book. I have discussed the problems with her argument elsewhere (see Vishwa Adluri, Review of *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, by Angelika Malinar, *History of Religions* 50, no. 1 [2010]: 102–7). But even with her problematic interpretation of the Gītā as a text on proper kingship, which requires various distortions, she cannot explain the *nivṛtti* elements either in the Udyogaparvan, chiefly the Sanatsujātīya, as well as such

I have therefore turned to issues of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* as an interpretive tool to understand these texts.

Let us now tie all these things together. The upākhyānas are not extraneous to the "war narrative" or the "straightforward narration of a story." They are, in fact, essential *signifying topoi* that allow the text to address the reader on not only a narrative level but also alert her to the philosophical issues that are to be considered. The upākhyānas are thus as integral to the text as "text-boxes" are to contemporary text-books. The architecture of the epic is more sophisticated than previously imagined, and more organically unified than previous models such as "free-fall" and "Brahmanic interpolations" models can account for. Culturally, Ambā-Upākhyāna allows us to see that the superlative symbol of patriarchy—Bhīṣma—is not only raised by a female goddess but also brought down by a warrior who is born female. Thus the epic constitutes a rigorous critique of the *kṣatra* from the point of view of women. In the words of Hiltebeitel, in this text, "no one, whether male or female, warrior or Brahmin, even the incarnations of Viṣṇu such as Paraśurāma are allowed to run amuck."[99] Philosophically, the Ambā-Upākhyāna underscores in the remaining narrative the processes of *pravṛtti* and its limitations, be they temporal (death) or existential (suffering). This limit is presented as the power of Śiva and the Goddess, acting together as the divine androgyne. The overcoming of gender ultimately becomes a symbol for overcoming the duality of spatio-temporal existence. Thus upākhyānas add a cognitive dimension to the epic.

Feminist intrepretations have thus missed the theological point of the abduction of Ambā. The text itself charges her with the task of destroying that which was instituted in the *niyoga* sacrifice, and hence she ought not be seen as a mere victim. The text demonstrates this amply when she takes refuge as a victim with Paraśurāma: it comes to no avail. Rather, the abduction is polyvalent and sophisticated: in a sense, Satī was "abducted" by Śiva, whom Dakṣa did not invite to the *svayaṁvara*. While Śiva can juggle chastity and domesticity, Bhīṣma cannot, so he is not the lover, abducting a beloved either like Śiva or even like Arjuna abducting Subhadrā. In any event, as a Vasu and guardian of the *pravṛtti* cycle that unfolds as the Kuru narrative, he stands antagonistic to Rudra. This is clearly seen in the *svayaṁvara* abduction where he carries off a woman whom he does not love (and moreover not for himself), and who does not love him either. The *pralaya* undertow of the *pravṛtti* cycle which is simul-

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elements in the Gītā. She thus resorts to analyzing "layers" in these texts, which allow her to choose those elements in the texts that match her argument.

99   Personal communication.

taneously being instituted in the *niyoga* ritual with the other two mothers begins here. It grows slowly by problematizing not merely marriage but eventually gender itself. This progressive involution reaches its zenith when the androgyne Śikhaṇḍin helps the androgyne Arjuna-Bṛhannaḍā bring down Bhīṣma.[100] Then the failure of Paraśurāma demonstrates that she is genuinely under the protection of Śiva and, in a sense, Śiva alone is her savior and benefactor. Her *askesis* is an important motif. Two points need to be made about the vignette about Gaṅgā's curse that Ambā becomes half a river, but also half a woman: *ardhanārī*. As a river, she is possibly also the daughter of a mountain. Her full apotheosis occurs as *ardhanārī* on the chariot of Arjuna—an image, as Hiltebeitel has shown, of the chariot of the *tripurāntaka* Rudra.

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100   I will not elaborate the Arjuna–Rudra identification, because Hiltebeitel has clearly brought it out elsewhere. Let me provide the following quotes, which ought to suffice: "With Uttara at the reins, Arjuna defeats the Kauravas first singly and then collectively in a battle that prefigures his triumph at Kurukṣetra. It is here that the symbolism of the dance first moves from the seraglio to the battlefield: says the poet, 'it was as if Arjuna was dancing in battle [*pranṛtyadiva saṃgrāme*]' (4.57.9) This would seem a reminder of the destructive dance of Rudra-Śiva, a suggestion reinforced by more direct allusions: 'Thus having caused [the Kauravas] to see his *raudra* self, he of the might of Rudra, held in check for thirteen years, Pārtha, the son of Pāṇḍu, roamed about releasing the terrible fire of his wrath on the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.' Arjuna's *raudra* ("Rudra-like") fire, held in check for the microcycle of twelve plus one years, can only evoke Kālāgnirudra, Rudra-Śiva as the Fire of Time, lord of the *pralaya* or 'dissolution of the universe.' One must also wonder at the following: 'While Pārtha was releasing his arrows, shooting with the right and left hands, [his bow] Gāṇḍīva became, O king, like a whirling wheel of fire [*agnicakramiva*]' (4.59.12) .... Then, on return to Indra's abode, Arjuna and Mātali see another asura city called Hiraṇyapura, identical in name with one of the three cities which Śiva destroys in his conquest of Tripura. Endangered by this enemy, Arjuna bows to 'the god of gods Rudra' (170.38) and fixes the Raudra weapon on his bow. He perceives the weapon as a 'three-headed, nine-eyed man [*puruṣa*] with three mouths and six arms, hair alight with blazing flames, his head surrounded by serpents darting their tongues' (170.39). Before releasing it, he bows again to the 'three-eyed Śarva' (170.41)—a name evoking Rudra-Śiva as hunter (from *śaru*, "arrow"), and finally bows a third time 'to the god who destroyed Tripura' (170.50). There can be no doubt that this pair of battles reinforces the dual identification of Arjuna with Indra and Śiva." Hiltebeitel, "Śiva, the Goddess, and the Disguises of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī," 157, 158–59. Arjuna as Nara, Arjuna as the androgyne, and Arjuna the hypermasculine hero maps out an ontology of gender that is not the thesis of this paper. Moreover, this paper is restricted to Ambā and thus I am interested here only in tracing this one character's development. However, matters are more complicated and exciting than I have shown here, for there seems to be a Raudra development in Arjuna as well. These two paths cross precisely on the chariot when Bhīṣma is brought down by Arjuna/Śikhaṇḍin.

The Turning of the God

I have argued in an earlier work that the ontological program of the Mahā-
bhārata drives its architecture, beginning with the first books of the Ādiparvan
which are "initiatory" in nature and finally reaching a full manifestation of it
towards the end of the Mokṣadharmaparvan. The beginnings of this program
are beset with a certain set of difficulties; chief among them is the problem of
how to read the epic as it wishes to be read. This problem is overcome by inte-
grating into the Ādiparvan a set of hermeneutic, mnemonic, and pedagogical
tools.[101] The end of this program in Book 12 generates a different set of prob-
lems; chief among them is the problem of how to bring the narrative back
down from the soteriological event. This event is the liberation of Śuka, son of
the "author," Vyāsa. I have also argued that the Nārāyaṇīya inaugurates a
descent in the form of Nārāyaṇa's four *vyūhas*, his several incarnations, and
the cosmological function which he delegates to Brahmā.[102] Many sophisti-
cated literary strategies seal the rupture between Śuka's one-way and upward
nivṛtti path and the epic's need to continue on *pravṛtti's* circular path:

1. Vyāsa must remain here, in the domain of *pravṛtti* to keep engendering
    the ongoing text.
2. Yudhiṣṭhira's question which launches the "descent" of Being in the
    Nārāyaṇīya.
3. Śaunaka's question which returns the narrative to the Naimiṣa frame.[103]
4. *Uñchavṛtti*, the "crossing" of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* paths; thus it lies
    "outside" the main narrative of the Mokṣadharmaparvan, which begins
    and ends with a repeating *śloka*.

Note also that we are told that the Mahābhārata is *pañcama veda*, that it is an
exhaustive text that deals with both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, and that it is an "Āstīka"

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101   See Vishwa Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the *Ādipar-
       van*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 143–210 and see also Vishwa Adluri,
       "Hermeneutics and Narrative Architecture in the Mahābhārata," in *Ways and Reasons for
       Thinking about the Mahābhārata as a Whole*, ed. Vishwa Adluri (Pune: Bhandarkar Orien-
       tal Institute, 2013), 1–27.
102   Vishwa Adluri, "Plotinus and the Orient: *Aoristos Dyas*," in *The Routledge Handbook of
       Neoplatonism*, ed. Pauliina Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2014),
       77–99, see especially 94, n. 13.
103   This is not found in the Critical Edition, because of S. K. Belvalkar's decision to retain the
       narration at the Vaiśaṁpāyana–Janamejaya dialogical level. However, the majority of
       manuscripts do feature it, and it is surely significant.

ontological text, that is, an Upaniṣad (see Mahābhārata 1.1.191). The text, fur-
ther, is all encompassing (nothing that is not here exists; 1.56.33cd and 18.5.
38cd), and presents reality as a mimetic cycle: the main characters descend
from a more true and more enduring dimension to act out the "reality" on the
ground. This is the *devarahasya*, the secret of the epic.[104] Vyāsa holds this
secret by simultaneously engendering the text and its characters. Nature, as
presented in the text, is essentially fictional—and not just in the superficial
sense that Vyāsa is the author of this fiction. Rather the world of phenomena is
itself "fictional" in that phenomena lack any permanent or enduring being.
Thus Vyāsa, in the fifth Veda, describes all that the four Vedas do, but beyond
that, engenders the fifth: *mokṣadharma śāstra* and Śuka, the "fifth" disciple.
Both are Vyāsa's creations. One gets only half of the Mahābhārata's meaning
(and only the trivial half) if one neglects that Vyāsa is also the father of Śuka,
and that Śuka is engendered through sacrifice, without a mother. Begetting the
Kuru descendants on the widows of Satyavatī's son is not Vyāsa's only (pro)-
creative act. Fifth Veda, fifth son, also has a *pravṛtti* significance. On the way
"down" from the one to the many, Nārāyaṇa explicitly stops at the fourth *vyūha*,
Aniruddha. Henceforth, it is Brahmā, who has both four and five heads, who
continues the cosmological, descending, function. In Sāṁkhya terms, it is the
arising of the five "evolutes," which become the five *mahatattvas*, and later, the
five "elements."

   With this background of "five" as a numerically significant cipher, let us
return to the architecture of the Mahābhārata. I have argued elsewhere that
the epic suffers a sudden interruption in the Mokṣadharmaparvan. The Anuśā-
sanaparvan, Book 13, must thus "return" to the circular narrative, working
towards the beginning in the Ādiparvan. The circular narrative of eighteen
books is thus divided into three segments of six books each. The first seg-
ment leads to the fall of the Kuru *pitāmaha* Bhīṣma, the symbol of *pravṛtti*,
incarnation of a Vasu. The Vasus, I have argued, are the elemental forces of

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104   This *rahasya* is itself twofold. The basic problem the epic is concerned with is "how
        does the One become the many?" and gender is one of the most fundamental ways of
        understanding this duality. Rudra works through a language of gender. As Hiltebeitel
        has correctly divined, there are Śaiva motifs in Arjuna's becoming the hermaphrodite
        Bṛhannaḍā and in the fact that he becomes a dance teacher (Śiva is Naṭarāja, Lord of
        Dance). He has also correctly seen that Arjuna is to Kṛṣṇa on the chariot as Rudra is to
        Brahmā in the myth of the destruction of Tripura. Śiva is one-half of the composite divin-
        ity Ardhanārīśvara, and this motif is always in the background of the Kuru war. By the
        time Śikhaṇḍin stands next to Arjuna on the chariot, Rudra is standing next to Kṛṣṇa
        as Nara. Thus, the Mahābhārata is going even beyond the *devarahasya*, the secret of the
        double identity of all beings as simultaneously mortal and immortal, to an even higher
        rahasya—this is the Nārāyaṇa *rahasya* or the ontological *rahasya* that the many is also
        simultaneously, in essence and always, the One.

pravṛtti. The Bhagavadgītā marks the destination of the first segment. The second segment leads to the opposite (i.e., not the fall of a *pravṛtti* figure) but the ascent of a *nivṛtti* figure: Śuka. The Nārāyaṇīya marks the destination of the second segment. Vyāsa, Yudhiṣṭhira, and Śaunaka lead the narrative back from the one Being, Nārāyaṇa to the many, from Being to Becoming, from the war front (where Bhīṣma lays) back to the kingdom, where a new rule is being instituted, and from death to the genealogical remainder: Arjuna's grandson and Janamejaya's father. But the "turn of the text" to the universe is stunningly described in Vyāsa's turn to the lovely nymphs in the Mandākinī valley, who cover themselves, blushing, at the sight of Vyāsa. Further Vyāsa cries. What are we to make of his tears? Are they simply the tears of a father's dejection? Vyāsa, whose narrative as a whole is a repudiation of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's paternal attachment to progeny, surely knows better than to weep for his son, who has not merely gone to *svarga*, having fallen in battle, but to *mokṣa*! The answer is given by the lord of tears, Rudra. He appears to pacify Vyāsa. But how? By turning Vyāsa's gaze to an image, a representation, a shadow of his son (Mahābhārata 12.32.37–38). From the argument above, it follows that both the son and the text are images, and that Śuka now stands with Rudra, and Vyāsa ought to stand by the other representation: the Mahābhārata. Thus the text continues along its circular path.

Yudhiṣṭhira also contributes to the circular narrative's rejuvenation. Not only is he the new king but also his questions lead the narrative: questions, especially, of how the One becomes the many (Nārāyaṇīya) and his brilliantly pregnant question that holds the secret of desire being the cosmological-genealogical-sacrificial-conflictual force (whether it is the man or woman who derives greater pleasure from sexual intercourse; see Mahābhārata 13.12.1). The Anuśāsanaparvan is thus the beginning of the last segment of six books, and it will thus repeat, symbolically, certain central motifs such as the story of Nahuṣa, which is the story of both a fall, as well as of a genealogical beginning. Here I am concerned with *one* role Rudra plays in it. The Nārāyaṇīya contains explicit warnings against reading the epic as a sectarian work. In it, Nārāyaṇa says that he is Rudra, and Rudra is his own self. Not only this, but within the Nārāyaṇiya there is also the story of a conflict between Rudra and Nārāyaṇa whereby Rudra obtains his blue throat from the grip of Nārāyaṇa. In case one takes this conflict too literally, as two different and separate gods fighting it out, then one is disappointed. Rudra, in the same text, achieves his blue throat from the bites of a snake. The blue throat is a cipher. So is the conflict. The unity and separation of Nārāyaṇa and Rudra are ways of speaking about the process(es), the indivisible dyad, that holds together both singular Being and plural Becoming. Biardeau and Hiltebeitel more recently have been arguing for understanding this process: the creative cosmological process, in its inception,

as "the god turning towards the goddess." This is twofold. It is Nārāyaṇa turning first to Rudra. And/or, Rudra turning to Umā. Only after this first, high turning does Brahmā appear as the first of beings. And only after Brahmā does Indra's function as the "renewer" appear. Thus Brahmā's time contains many renewals, that is, Indras. Thus towards the end of the Anuśāsanaparvan, Vāsudeva turns to Rudra, narrating the deeds and the plural deeds of Rudra. Rudra in turn becomes the very exposition of nativity.

Let me tie all the above elements together now. In the fifth Veda, after the fifth son achieves *mokṣa*, the five elements are to be recreated and the fifth Veda's circular integrity must be maintained. This juncture betrays a "turning" and not a break. The turning is disclosed as the turning of the god. This turning is the symbol of the power of nativity, which is crucial. Unlike life-denying philosophies, the Mahābhārata pays homage to not one, but two phenomenological traits: mortality *and* nativity. Rudra is the cipher not only of mortality: Kapardin, but also of nativity. He is the infant in the lap of Umā as the Pañcaśikha Śisya. Indra is "jealous" of the boy, and attempts to strike him with his thunderbolt. Jealousy (*asūya*, a term that occurs quite frequently in the latter half of Book 13), implies a common desire. Indra wishes to be the "renewer." Is he, after all, not the one who slays Vala and lets the cows of dawn free? Is he not the slayer of Vṛtra? Is he not the smasher of Uśa's chariot? Is he not the god who renews the cycle of the Mahābhārata by plotting the fall of Nahuṣa and installing Vasu as the regent on earth? Is he not the god of renewal who gives Vasu the pole of yearly renewal? This "ignorance" of Indra, a king among the many beings, is ontological ignorance. It is useful to read the Kena Upaniṣad here, where Umā appears as Brahma-Vidyā to dispel Indra Māghavan's ontological ignorance. There he is "humiliated" by almost being shown that even a blade of grass, ontologically, is superior to the gods' ontic power (Kena Up. 3.4–11). Umā proceeds to teach him about Brahman (Kena Up. 4.1).

But that is the Kena Upaniṣad. In the Upaniṣad of Vyāsa, which is the text we are discussing, in the Anuśāsanaparvan, Indra's arm is paralyzed when he attempts to throw his thunderbolt at the boy in Umā's lap. Brahmā must intervene, as it is only to Brahmā that the Aniruddha form of Nārāyaṇa and the truth of Rudra are revealed. It is this revelation that enables Brahmā to create. Indra must await for the universe to unfold, before he can take up his function. What could that knowledge be, that comes from Rudra to Brahmā? For this, one must look at the Pañcaśikha *brāhmaṇa* who defeats the *nāstikas* in the court of Janaka (see the Pañcaśikha-Janaka-Saṁvāda, Mahābhārata 12.307). Janaka learns from him, and teaches the secret link between the one Being and the many to Śuka. But that was the way up. In the Anuśāsanaparvan, we are talking about the way down, and we are thus introduced to the Pañcaśikha

wisdom as the boy Rudra, in its trait of nativity, not the trait of dissolution. Let us read the relevant text from Book 13 now:

> Vāsudeva said: O Bhārata, the *asuras* with their (triple) cities were burnt by Rudra with that arrow which had solar effulgence and whose energy resembled that fire which appears at the end of the cycle (to consume all beings).
>
> Seeing that child with five locks of hair lying in her lap, Umā, desiring to know, said: "who is this?"
>
> Overcome by jealousy, when Śakra was about to strike (the child) with his thunderbolt, however, his stout arm was paralyzed with the thunderbolt in it.
>
> All the gods along with the Prajāpati became confounded regarding who that mighty one was. They did not recognize that that one was the Lord of the universe.
>
> Then, having reflected, the effulgent lord Brahmā, having understood that (the child) of immeasurable prowess is the Supreme One, paid obeisance to the Lord of Umā.
>
> Then the gods appeased Umā and Rudra. The arm of the slayer of Vala then became as it was before. That powerful one (i.e., Rudra) became the Brāhmaṇa by the name Durvāsas. He lived for a long time in my house in Dvāravatī.[105]

After recounting the names of Rudra, Vāsudeva concludes:

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105   śareṇādityavarṇena kālāgnisamatejasā |
       te 'surāḥ sapurās tatra dagdhā rudreṇa bhārata ||
       taṁ caivāṅkagataṁ dṛṣṭvā bālaṁ pañcaśikhaṁ punaḥ |
       umā jijñāsamānā vai ko 'yam ity abravīt tadā ||
       asūyataś ca śakrasya vajreṇa prahariṣyataḥ |
       savajraṁ stambhayām āsa taṁ bāhuṁ parighopamam ||
       na saṁbubudhire cainaṁ devās taṁ bhuvaneśvaram |
       saprajāpatayaḥ sarve tasmin mumuhur īśvare ||
       tato dhyātvātha bhagavān brahmā tam amitaujasam |
       ayaṁ śreṣṭha iti jñātvā vavande tam umāpatim ||
       tataḥ prasādayām āsur umāṁ rudraṁ ca te surāḥ |
       babhūva sa tadā bāhur balahantur yathā purā ||
       sa cāpi brāhmaṇo bhūtvā durvāsā nāma vīryavān |
       dvāravatyāṁ mama gṛhe ciraṁ kālam upāvasat || (Mahābhārata 13.145.29–35; my translation)

He sometimes shows himself singly, sometimes divides himself into two. Sometimes he shows himself in a hundred, thousand, and a hundred thousand forms.[106]

And thus Vāsudeva turns to Rudra, or Rudra turns to Umā. The turning of the God is the cosmological event, it is the secret of its inexhaustible nativity. What is gained by the "turning" metaphor? Why not simply create? Why have Brahmā as the creator and reserve for the one Being merely the metaphor of "turning"? Those who know the secret of the One and the many know that the One can never "become" many. To such readers, no explanation is necessary. To those who do not understand these matters, no explanation is possible.

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[106]   ekadhā ca dvidhā caiva bahudhā ca sa eva ca |
         śatadhā sahasradhā caiva tathā śatasahasradhā || (Mahābhārata 13.145.50)

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Reflections on the Upākhyānas in the Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata

Adam Bowles

Introduction

This chapter will consider some thematic and functional aspects of the relationships three upākhyānas ("sub-tales" or "episodes") of the Āpaddharmaparvan (Ādhp) of the Mahābhārata share with the immediate textual environs of the *upaparvan* and *parvan* of which they form a part, as well as with the broader Mahābhārata itself. In terms of modern scholarship on the Mahābhārata, this exercise therefore presents a double challenge, since not merely is it concerned with textual elements (i.e., upākhyānas) oft-times seen as peripheral to the concerns and overall design of the putative "core" of the Mahābhārata,[1] but it is doing so in the context of a section of the Mahābhārata that has—at least until a number of notable recent exceptions[2]—been dismissed as secondary to the epic ever since Hopkins' famous designation of the so-called "didactic" books (of which the Ādhp is one) as "pseudo-epic."[3] In addition, unlike some upākhyānas found elsewhere in the Mahābhārata (e.g., the Śakuntalopākhyā-nam), those in the Ādhp do not in any ordinary sense narrate back-stories to the lives of the Mahābhārata's heroes or their ancestors.

The Āpaddharmaparvan, "The Book on Laws for Times of Distress," is the second of the three sub-sections (*upaparvan*s) within the longest book of the

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1 See, e.g., Moriz Winternitz, 'The Mahabharata,' *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* 1 (1924): 344; J.A.B. van Buitenen, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 1. *1. The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), xiii–xxviii. No more evident than in attempts to establish a prior shorter version of the Mahābhārata on the basis of Mahābhārata 1.1.61; see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 457.

2 See James L. Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7. *11. The Book of Women. 12. The Book of Peace, Part 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Adam Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India: The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007).

3 Edward W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 381.

Mahābhārata, the Śāntiparvan ("Book of the Peace"). It broadly continues the general thematic terrain of the upaparvan that precedes it, the Rājadharma-parvan ("The Book on the Laws for Kings"), in delineating the ways in which kings ought to act in order to ensure the health of their realms, and the ways in which kings ought to behave towards their subjects, especially brahmans. It is followed in the Śāntiparvan by another upaparvan, the Mokṣadharmaparvan, "The Book on Laws for Liberation."

In the constituted text of the Critical Edition (CE), the Ādhp contains thirty-nine chapters (adhyāyas) stretching from chapter 129 to 167. These chapters can be further parsed into twenty-seven "texts." Most of these texts are single chapters of varying length and genre; however, four of them consist of multiple chapters, the longest being six *adhyāya*s (the Kṛtaghnopākhyānam). As a col-lection, these texts can be understood to respond to their contexts in various ways and with different emphases. Most of them address the theme of *āpad* (crisis, calamity, or distress) in one way or another, even if on some occasions the word itself does not appear; in addition a number address the thematic space of the textual units contiguous with the Ādhp (i.e., the Rājadharma and Mokṣadharma parvans), often in a manner that reflects a concern for the shape of the Śāntiparvan corpus as a unit, as (to gloss Fitzgerald[4]) a "functioning part of the Mahābhārata."[5]

The three textual units that I will consider more closely here are the "Tale of the Fish" (Śākulopākhyānam; Mahābhārata 12.135), the "Tale of the Dove" (Kapotopākhyānam; 12.141–45) and the "Tale of the Ungrateful Man" (Kṛtaghno-pākhyānam; 12.162–67). Of these three texts, only the latter two were included in Hiltebeitel's upākhyāna list found in his 2005 paper that functions as a pro-logomenon to this volume.[6] The former, the "Tale of the Fish," has a somewhat uncertain title. The "Topical Register" compiled in vol. 13 of the CE of the

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4   See Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, 80.

5   See for example Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India* and "Framing Bhīṣma's Royal Instructions: The *Mahābhārata* and the Problem of its "Design", in *Parallels and Comparisons: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, September 2005*, ed. P. Koskikallio (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2009), 121–35.

6   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 468, and see pp. 23–24 of this volume. On p. 469 Hiltebeitel indicates how this list was compiled: "This number is reached by including all units that are mentioned to be *upākhyāna*s either in passing in the text, cited as *upākhyāna*s in the PS [*parvasaṃgraha*], or called *upākhyāna*s in the colophons and/or the running heads for units in the Pune Critical Edition. In assessing instances mentioned only in the colophons, I err toward generosity and count anything as an *upākhyāna* that appears to be called such as the prominent title in either the Northern (N) or Southern (S) Recension."

Śāntiparvan,[7] which presumably (since it is not explained) presents some kind of summation of the manuscript colophons, gives *śākulopākhyānam* as the name of this chapter twice, once under the alphabetically arranged adhyāya list (p. clix) and once under the *upākhyānāni* list (p. clxiii). However, this name is not found in the summary of the manuscript colophons at the end of chapter 135 of the CE. Rather, it contains names such as the non-genre specific *dīrghadarśīyaḥ/ṃ* (Ś1 K1.2.4 D1; also found in the Topical Register pp. clii and clix) and *śākulaṃ* (D4), the "laud" *anāgatavidhānastutiḥ* (M1.3) or *anāgatastutiḥ* (M2),[8] and, oddly, a series of names that appear out of place, *śākuṃtalaṃ* (*sic*) (K3.5 Dn3), *śākunikaṃ* (Bo. 2-5 Da D5) and *śākunaṃ* (D2.3), since they would appear to relate to birds or fowling. It is possible in regard to these latter terms that the compilation of the colophons is in error; only a check of the manuscripts could confirm this one way or the other.[9] A similar, if less variable, situation pertains in the case of the second upākhyāna, the "Tale of the Dove." In this case, the colophons of the five adhyāyas over which the tale spans alternate between a number of similar options, among which *kapotopākhyānam* is reasonably common, but perhaps not so much as *kapotalubdhakasaṃvādaḥ* ("The Dialogue between the Dove and the Hunter"). Not surprisingly, the Topical Register lists it under both *upākhyānāni* and *saṃvādāḥ*. It is also common that individual adhyāyas receive their own titles in the colophons, though within a fairly small band of variation. In such cases, it is interesting to note the

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7 In the 1961 edition of the Śāntiparvan CE that I own, this Register is found on pp. cxlv–clxiv. These pages somewhat oddly begin immediately after some other forematter that ends on p. vii. This anomalous situation is to be explained by the pages of the Register numerically following the Concordance of the Śāntiparvan in vol. 14 of the CE (which contains the text of the Ādhp). Hiltebeitel (Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 424 n. 29) indicates that the Topical Register in vol. 13 was compiled by V.M. Bedekar, rather than the Śāntiparvan's editor S.K. Belvalkar.

8 "A laud to preparing for the future"; *anāgatavidhānastutiḥ* is also found on p. clxiv of the Topical Register under the '*stavaḥ, stutiḥ,* or *stotram*' list.

9 Recently I had the opportunity to attempt an inspection of the manuscripts K3, Da1, Da2, Dn3, which the Critical Edition indicates were housed at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune. Of these, K3, from the 'Kamat Collection of the BORI' was not available (it had reportedly been "returned"). Da1 and Da2 could not, unfortunately, be located in the archive (though the Rājadharmaparvan equivalents could be). Dn3 was located, and its colophon, it turns out, is more expansive than indicated in the Critical Edition, its text being *śākuṃtalaṃ mīnasaṃbaṃdhi upākhyānaṃ* (*sic*). Leaving aside the still problematic *śākuṃtalaṃ* and the defective grammar, the remainder would seem to mean simply "the *upākhyāna* associated with fish."

recurrence of other terms marking genres, such as *caritam* and *ākhyānam*.[10] The case of the third upākhyāna, the "Tale of the Ungrateful Man" is more straightforward, since *kṛtaghnopākhyānam* predominates in the colophons of its six adhyāyas by some margin (consequently, it is this title that is found in the Topical Register).

All of this goes to illustrate a number of related points, some of which have been made already by Hilteibeitel. First, Hiletbeitel's figure of sixty-seven upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata serves only as a guide; it is not, in Hiltebeitel's words, a "closed" or "boundaried" group.[11] Second, following on from this point, many other sub-genres in the Mahābhārata may yield to analyses similar to those applied to upākhyānas; therefore, much of what I say here in relation to the three tales under discussion might also be said *mutatis mutandis* in relation to other textual units, in particular the numerous *saṃvāda*s (Dialogues) of the Ādhp. Third, there is not necessarily a hard and fast distinction between different narrative genres in the Mahābhārata. Nevertheless, while technical terms for genres are used interchangeably where appropriate, their application is not *ad hoc*. That the *kapotopākhyānam* is titled in some manuscripts as the *kapotalubdhakasaṃvādaḥ* (the "Dialogue between the Dove and the Hunter") can be explained by its accurate reflection of a significant proportion of the narrative texture of this tale.[12] On the other hand, one could surmise that the term *saṃvāda* is not used in relation to the *śākulopākhyānam* or the *kṛtaghnopākhyānam* because the dialogic texture of these narratives is quite shallow in comparison. In other words, despite the apparent fact that genre terms cross over to a substantial degree, some are clearly preferred in many

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10   Kullūkabhaṭṭa in commenting on *Manusmṛti* 11.240 (see J.L. Shastri, ed. *Manusmṛti: With the Sanskrit Commentary Manvartha-Muktāvalī of Kullūka Bhaṭṭa* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1983], 469; verse 241 in Patrick Olivelle, ed. and trans. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006]) calls it the *kapotopākhyānam*, while the *Mitākṣarā* on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.86 (S.S. Setlur, ed., *The Mitākshara with Visvarūpa and Commentaries of Subōdhini and Bālambhatti* [Madras: Brahmavadin Press, 1912], 59), refers to it as the *kapotikākhyānam*.

11   Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 424; "Not Without Subtales," 469. Hiltebeitel notes (*Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 424 n. 29) that V.M. Bedekar's "looser list" of upākhyānas in the Topical Register discussed above contains thirty Śāntiparvan upākhyānas (CE vol. 13 p. clxviii) compared to Hiltebeitel's fourteen. It is not entirely clear what the term "looser" designates here, but perhaps that Bedekar's list did not strictly follow the terminological suggestions of the colophons.

12   Cf. Alf Hiltebeitel, "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 111–12.

instances over others because of their sufficiency in describing the qualities of the narratives so called.

Theoretical Issues

Before discussing each of the narratives that are the focus of this paper, I shall first outline some of the aspects of the interpretative agenda informing my approach. This paper takes as its primary task considerations of how to make sense of the three Ādhp upākhyānas introduced above within the context of their narration in the Mahābhārata. It therefore follows that some time ought to be spent reflecting on what might be meant by "context." One might start with the observation that the texts analysed here have multiple contexts, and that, depending on the textual parameters one chooses, one might come to different conclusions regarding each text's contextual integration. At its simplest, this could mean a choice between considering each text within the context of its surrounding adhyāyas, or the upaparvan of which it forms a part (in this case the Ādhp), or the parvan of which it forms a part (in this case the Śāntiparvan), or of the entire Mahābhārata. In addition, it could be asked in such cases whether the contextual significance is one of thematic congruence or of syntactic function. Of course, none of these contexts are mutually exclusive, and any one text may yield to more than one contextual analysis.

The contrast between contextual readings involving either thematic or syntactic relations might profitably be viewed from the perspective of Ferdinand de Saussure's famous distinction between syntagmatic and associative relations,[13] later refined by Roman Jakobson,[14] who substituted (and in the process more strictly defined) the term "paradigmatic" for Saussure's "associative." An analysis of this type, which became characteristic of the developing field of semiotics, though its influence has been much broader than that, involves distinguishing between the horizontal (or combinatorial) axis of the syntagm, which accounts for the combination of elements that constitute the unit of analysis, from the vertical (or substitutional) axis of the paradigm, which accounts for the items selected for each slot available in the syntagm. In the case of the Ādhp (and the Mahābhārata), the obvious candidates for items constituting the vertical paradigmatic axis would be the various textual units

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13   Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1974), 122–27.

14   See, e.g., Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* II. *Word and Language* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971), 243–44, 298, 524, 719.

such as upākhyānas, *saṃvāda*s, *praśaṃsana*s, *stuti*s, *carita*s and so on that are combined into a larger corpus (such as, e.g., the Ādhp, Śāntiparvan, or Mahābhārata), together with the rhetorical "formulas" that frame these units across the interlocutory weft of the upaparvans and parvans. Such an analysis was pursued by Greg Bailey in respect to the genre of *purāṇa*,[15] which influenced my own deployment of a similar approach to the Ādhp.[16] However, in this paper I propose to deploy an analysis of a slightly different type, where the vertical paradigmatic axis is identified by the ways in which particular thematic concerns of the upākhyāna align with those identified elsewhere in the Mahābhārata.

It could at this point be argued that the thematic concern of an upākhyāna accounts for its position in the Ādhp, since it is surely because it is in some way about *āpad* or *āpaddharma* that it is located in the Ādhp. This is certainly often (though not always) the case, and it is precisely such thematic contiguity that goes someway towards fashioning the texts of the Ādhp into a coherent syntagm, which simultaneously is a paradigmatic unit forming a significant axis as a textual corpus (an upaparvan) with a theme that warps through the Mahābhārata. In the latter case, this can be established, for example, by the constitutive roles that "crises"—typically framed in the explicit terms of well known cases of *āpaddharma*[17]—play in provoking events that themselves lead to further crises that eventually must be (even if inadequately or insufficiently) resolved in the war and its didactic aftermath. Yet, in considering the paradigmatic role that these texts play in their contexts, the themes that I will be highlighting will not precisely be those of *āpad* or *āpaddharma*. It goes almost

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15   Greg Bailey, *Gaṇeśapurāṇa. Part 1: Upāsanākhaṇḍa* (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz Verlag, 1995), 1–167. In developing a semiotic theory of *purāṇa* that accounts for Purāṇas as the work of culture rather than being merely the product of discrete isolatable historical moments, Bailey's approach has the merit of developing a descriptive theory of *purāṇa* that eludes a strict textual historicism, which for all its merits turns on the questionable presupposition that a Purāṇa can give up the secrets of its historical layers, and that, in addition, the isolation of these layers explains the distinct cultural significance of *purāṇa* (see also Ludo Rocher, "Reflections on One Hundred and Fifty Years of Purāṇa Studies," *Purāṇa* 25, no. 1 [1983]: 64–76). For one, the text-historical approach fails to account for what Bailey rightly recognizes are constitutive features of the Purāṇas, their eclecticism and atemporality.

16   Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 163–89.

17   Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the sequence of dynastic crises that are imperfectly resolved through the institution of *niyoga*—an *āpaddharma* for a specific form of *āpad*. In such cases Bhīṣma shows himself to be an expert in *āpaddharma*, an expertise he again demonstrates as he narrates to Yudhiṣṭhira the texts of the Ādhp. See Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 1–2.

without saying that texts may yield to more than one thematic analysis and, in addition, themes in themselves are not discrete entities, but regularly overlap with and share in the concerns of other themes.

It remains now to briefly comment on two other matters related to the contexts of the texts being discussed here. First, at the most obvious level, each of the texts of a collection like the Ādhp are integrated into their immediate contexts by the interlocutory framing system that provides the weft establishing the surface structure of the corpus considered as a syntagm. There are many points that could be made in relation to the work done by the interlocutory framing system to fashion a coherent narration of sometimes-diverse subject matter. For example, one could point to the ways in which the interlocutory framing system implicates itself in the interpretation of the texts the framing system embeds;[18] or one could isolate the rhetorical elements that constitute the frame and analyse their paradigmatic functions in creating coherent syntagms.[19] Here, however, I shall especially reflect on the implications of the characters engaged as interlocutors in the frame, in particular in respect to the *praśnin* (and his colleagues), the "neophyte[s]" for whose benefit the texts of the Ādhp are narrated by Bhīṣma within the unfolding narration of the Mahābhārata. I take my lead in this instance from Biardeau[20] whose contribution on this point was brought to my attention by Hiltebeitel.[21] Biardeau deploys the term "récit-miroir," "mirror story," when discussing three upākhyānas in the Vanaparvan, the Nalopākhyānam (Mahābhārata 3.50–78), Rāmopākhyānam (3.257–76), and Sāvitryupākhyānam (3.277–83).[22] Accordingly, each of these tales mirrors the current concerns of the audience "in the poem," that is to say, the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī. Both the Nalopākhyānam and Rāmopākhyānam are recounted after Yudhiṣṭhira asks—first the sage Bṛhadaśva following his failure at dicing in the *sabhā* and then Mārkaṇḍeya following Draupadī's kidnapping by Jayadratha and her subsequent rescue—if there is a man as unfortunate as he.[23]

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18   I have explored this aspect in relation to "frame theory" in Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 159–63 (see also in relation to individual units of the Ādhp, ibid., 190ff.).

19   See, e.g., Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 172–89.

20   See Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 412–13.

21   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 476, 483; "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," 112, 115f., 117.

22   For further discussion, see Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 497–502; 700–701 and 723–26; 727 and 737–42.

23   Mahābhārata 3.49.34 and 3.257.10. The wording in each instance is almost the same. Hiltebeitel, "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," 115 connects the telling

The Sāvitryupākhyānam, on the other hand, is told by Mārkaṇḍeya in response to Yudhiṣṭhira's query as to whether there was a woman as devoted to her husband as Draupadī when reflecting on his and his brothers' failures to protect her despite her unfailing devotion to them.[24]

Biardeau chooses the term *récit-miroir* because the upākhyānas so designated reflect the proximate narrative circumstances of the princes and princess to whom they are recited, and therefore invite further reflection on the Mahābhārata's narrative in light of them.[25] The upākhyānas of the Ādhp being discussed here are also recited to the Pāṇḍava princes and (it can probably be surmised) princess.[26] Yet Biardeau does not seem to have explicitly extended her use of the term *récit-miroir* into tales recited elsewhere, far less into the territory of the post-war didactic narrations of Bhīṣma. This is perhaps not surprising given, on the one hand, Biardeau's sometime indifference to the Mahābhārata's "didactic" corpora,[27] and, on the other, that the "sub-narratives" of the didactic corpora frequently steer into the genre of animal fable.

Yet, with this shift in narrative sensibility, the very idea of the "narrative mirror" evokes another, perhaps slightly distinct, connotation of "mirror." In this respect we need to recognize that many of the fables of the Mahābhārata (and, indeed, the manner of presentation of these fables therein[28]) bear a relationship to the genre of *nītiśāstra*, "the science of governance," which itself is

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of the Nalopākhyānam to Draupadī missing Arjuna while the latter visits Śiva and Indra (the parallel being Damayantī's lamenting for the absent Nala). While this could be inferred from the broader context (perhaps especially in light of Draupadī's lament at 3.79.11–15 after the Nalopākhyānam), the immediate frame of the Nalopākhyānam focuses on Yudhiṣṭhira.

24   Mahābhārata 3.277.1–3. The wording of 3.277.3 reflects that of 3.49.34 and 3.257.10.

25   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 412 suggests that as a narrative mirror the Nalopākhyānam refers to "the entirety of the Mbh and helps to place stress on what truly counts." In an earlier study of Nala (Madeleine Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī, Héros Épiques. Part 2," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 28, no. 1 [1985]: 32), she makes the general observation: "The 'sub-narrative' [sous-récit] is one of the preferred means that the authors have given themselves to thereby wink to their audience."

26   As Hiltebeitel, "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," 117 has noted, Mahābhārata 13.57.42–44 "jolts us with the one confirmation" that Draupadī has been "silently listening all along to Bhīṣma's battlefield oration ... ." See also Bowles, "Framing Bhīṣma's Royal Instructions," 130 n. 22. On Draupadī's listening in the Mahābhārata, see also Brian Black, "Eavesdropping on the Epic: Female Listeners in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–34.

27   Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 23 n. 48.

28   Ibid., 304–5.

comparable to the genre of Perso-Arabic literature popularly known as "Mirrors for Princes"; indeed, the most famous representative of the *nītiśāstra* tradition of fable literature, the Pañcatantra, was an important precursor and influence on the medieval Mirrors for Princes literature as it marched towards the West via a now-lost Pahlavi translation, which itself was subsequently translated into Arabic as the famous *Kalila wa Dimna*.[29] The genre had the ostensible task, of course, of instructing "princes" in the art of sensible governance; and, therefore, such texts are typically framed as a conversation between a politically adept counselor offering wise bons mots with attendant explanatory fables to a novice prince (or princes).[30] Not unlike, that is to say, Bhīṣma's post-war counsels to the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī. Indeed, in the Mahābhārata, this discursive structure is doubled, since in the narrative frame embedding Bhīṣma's counsels, King Janamejaya is receiving precisely the same (or almost the same) wise counsel from the brahman Vaiśaṃpāyana. (And we might ask in a manner that poses the problem of the context of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata's composition and reception, who were the homological parities of these royal listeners?) The point, however, is to simply note that the stories told in the Ādhp, which in many cases are animal fables, are "mirrors" being held up to potentates "in" the narrative, and most likely "outside" of the narrative, too. And, if their narratives are not so closely tied to the "narrative" of the Mahābhārata, they still invite readings against their varied Mahābhārata contexts together with reflections on the art of governance.

This brings us to my final point regarding "context." In evoking the similarities shared between the Mahābhārata and the formalised fable-deploying genre of *nītiśāstra*, particularly in the way in which fables are utilised in the Mahābhārata's didactic narrations, I am alluding to the well-known fact that the Mahābhārata's fables have "other" contexts, since its "minor narratives" often have parallel versions in other texts. In the case of the Mahābhārata's

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29   For a nice overview of the global spread of the Pañcatantra, see McComas Taylor, *The Fall of the Indigo Jackal: The Discourse of Division and Pūrṇabhadra's Pañcatantra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 1–6. Perhaps ironically, the genre in a sense "returns" to South Asia with the development of a significant body of Indo-Arabic "Mirrors for Princes" literature in the medieval period from the earlier Perso-Arabic tradition stemming from the "exported" Pañcatantra; of course, with the enduring popularity of the Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa, Kathāsaritsagara, and Bṛhatkathā (not to mention the Mahābhārata), as well as other non-Sanskrit *nītiśāstra*s (V. Narayana Rao and S. Subrahmanyam "Notes on Political Thought in Medieval and Early Modern South India," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 [2009]: 175–210), the genre never really left.

30   For the truth claims inherent in this auto-presentation, see Taylor, *The Fall of the Indigo Jackal*, 132–34.

fables, these contexts are typically found in the *nītiśāstras* and the Buddhist Jātakas. Indeed, two of the upākhyānas discussed here are found in versions of the Pañcatantra (and the later derivative of the Pañcatantra, the Hitopadeśa), and one of these two is further found in the Jātakas. These parallel versions have tended to provoke inquiries of the nature of "source-criticism,"[31] which attempts to uncover the earliest version from which the others, it is then argued, derive. Yet, this is not the only approach that one might adopt having discovered parallel iterations of a fable. One could ask, for example, what is unique about each narration of such a tale. This would attend not merely to the context of its framing—who recites it? For whom? And why?—but, also, to what variations it has that might be explained by its narrative context. In short, this poses the question of how a particular iteration of a narrative has been optimised for the particular context in which it has been found.

It remains now to investigate the three upākhyānas that are the focus of this paper in light of the interpretative agenda outlined above. The procedure will be to first provide a summary of the upākhyāna in question before proceeding in each case to an analysis of the pertinent elements of each textual unit.

Śākulopākhyānam, "The Tale of the Three Fish"

> Three fish lived in a lake, the one "Knowing the time has come" (*Prāpta-kālajña*), one who was "Far-seeing" (*Dīrghadarśin*) and the "Procrastinator" (*Dīrghasūtra*). One day some fisherman began to drain the lake in order to catch the fish. Dīrghadarśin, seeing the danger, suggested to his friends that they quickly leave. But Dīrghasūtra thought they should not be so hasty, while Prāptakālajña said that they should wait for the proper time before deciding what to do. The wise Dīrghadarśin escaped immediately. The fisherman drained the lake and captured the other two. Prāptakālajña, knowing the right time to act, feigned being bound and then escaped while the other fish were being cleaned. But stupid Dīrghasūtra was killed.

As is often the case with fables, the moral of this story is reflected in the names of the story's protagonists. In this case this moral is self-evident: if a crisis presents itself, do something about it before it is too late. The general thematic

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31   Harry Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1978); for cautionary remarks see Patrick Olivelle, trans. *The Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xxxii–xxxiii.

terrain of the upākhyāna is clearly a good fit for the Ādhp. In this respect, three things are worthy of initial note. First, the *prima facie* appositeness of the tale for the Ādhp is reinforced by the occurrence of the word *āpad* in 135.6, when Dīrghadarśin ("Far-seeing") appeals to his companions, "This danger has arisen for all those living in the water" (*iyam āpat samutpannā sarveṣāṃ salilaukasām*). This is noteworthy simply for the fact that the term *āpad* does not occur in other versions of the story that I have consulted.[32] Secondly, the occurrence of the fable in the Ādhp reflects its *nīti* orientation, since as a collection it is often especially concerned with what a king ought to do in a time of crisis. In this respect, the Ādhp often bears a close relationship to the concerns of the *Arthaśāstra*, rather than the *dharmaśāstra*s in which the earliest conceptualizations of *āpaddharma* are found. And third, the upākhyāna's frame and its syntagmatic position would seem to point especially to the concept of *dīrghasūtra* (being long-winded, dithering, procrastinating) as the focal point of this story in the Ādhp.

The last of these points requires further explication in order to appreciate the peculiar contextual significance of this fable in the Mahābhārata. That the consequences of being *dīrghasūtra* is the focal point of the tale in the Ādhp is emphasized in both the opening stanza (Mahābhārata 135.1) of the chapter in which it is embedded, which has Bhīṣma announcing that Yudhiṣṭhira "must listen to this unsurpassed tale having resorted to procrastinating in regard to what should and shouldn't be done" (*śṛṇvākhyānam anuttamaṃ dīrghasūtraṃ samāśritya kāryākāryaviniścaye*), and the opening stanza of the next chapter (136.1), in which Yudhiṣṭhira acknowledges the moral of the fable in terms of "what hasn't [yet] happened, what has happened, and destructive dithering" (*anāgatā tathotpannā dīrghasūtrā vināśinī*). (We will have reason to return to Yudhiṣṭhira's wording shortly.) *Dīrghasūtra* is also prominent in Yudhiṣṭhira's *praśna* located at the very beginning of the Ādhp (129.1), which functions like an *anukramaṇikā* for the Ādhp,[33] and which lists conditions that entail crises for kings. Considered syntagmatically, therefore, the *Śākulopākhyānam* fulfills an expectation engendered by one element of the opening gambit of the collection in addressing the problem of the king prone to *dīrghasūtra*.

If a horizontal syntagmatic analysis reveals that the *Śākulopākhyānam* has been rhetorically and thematically well-grounded in the context of the Ādhp,

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32   However, the word is found in the Hitopadeśa, but only in a stanza that introduces an additional story embedded in the tale of the three fish; see Hitopadeśa 4.6; Judith Törzsök, ed. and trans. *"Friendly Advice" by Nārāyaṇa & "King Vikrama's Adventures"*, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and the JJC Foundation, 2007), 447–48.

33   Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 211–12.

especially through the theme of *dīrghasūtra*, a paradigmatic or vertical analysis suggests that it is not without significance as a theme more broadly in the Mahābhārata as well, especially in association with assertions of the qualities of good kings that the Mahābhārata's potentates are expected to manifest. In Mahābhārata 2.5.96, Nārada asks Yudhiṣṭhira if he avoids a list of royal vices that includes *dīrghasūtra*. Vidura offers Dhṛtarāṣṭra similar advice at 5.33.58 and 66 in the so-called Viduranīti.[34] More interestingly, after the failed cattle expedition in the Vanaparvan, Śakuni advises a humiliated Duryodhana, who wants to starve himself to death, that royal prosperity (*śrī*) does not come to the king who dithers (*dīrghasūtra*; 3.239.4). Later, in 5.122.21, in attempting to convince Duryodhana not to go to war, Kṛṣṇa demands that he not procrastinate in following the best advice. Given Yudhiṣṭhira's reputation for hesitating in the face of moral dilemmas, it is perhaps not surprising that on occasions he has been charged with being *dīrghasūtra* too, first by Bhīma in 3.49.19 when he chides his older brother for accepting the terms of the thirteen years of exile instead of attacking Duryodhana, and then by Arjuna in 12.8.5 who scolds him for wanting to renounce the kingdom after the war. Such advice, which in the Mahābhārata seems to be reserved for royal figures, dovetails nicely with the description of a good king in the *Arthaśāstra*, which lists *adīrghasūtra*, "not procrastinating," among his desirable qualities.[35] In this light, Bhīṣma's introducing of the fable in 12.135.1 (see above) by referring to Yudhiṣṭhira's habitual procrastination makes good sense in the context of the general characterization of Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata, and the general argument regarding kingship that the Mahābhārata typically prosecutes.

The significance of the emphasis on *dīrghasūtra* in the Ādhp's version of the Śākulopākhyānam becomes clearer when it is compared to other versions. As noted already, this is a tale common to most if not all versions of the Pañcatantra.[36] It also appears in the Buddhist Jātakas as the Mitacintijātakam.[37] Having already noted in passing that term *āpad* appears only in the Ādhp

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34 In the Bhagavadgītā (Mahābhārata 6.40.28), being a procrastinator (*dīrghasūtrin*) is listed as one of the qualities identifying an actor (*kartṛ*) as full of *tamas*.

35 *Arthaśāstra* 6.1.3. See also Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 246 n. 178 on the close thematic association between aspects of *Arthaśāstra* 6.1, Mahābhārata 12.135 and 12.136.

36 Taylor, *The Fall of the Indigo Jackal*, 7, 195.

37 Jātaka no. 114 in V. Fausbøll, ed., *The Jātaka, together with its commentary, being tales of the anterior births of Gotama Buddha, for the first time critically edited in the original Pāli* (London, Luzac for the Pali Text Society, 1962–64), 428ff. (translation in E.B. Cowell, ed. *The Jātaka or Stories from the Buddha's former births, translated from the Pāli by various hands* [London: Luzac for the Pali Text Society, 1957], 256ff.).

version, we shall now consider the names of the three protagonists across the versions, since it is these that carry the rhetorical force of the fable in each case.

	First fish	Second fish	Third fish
Mitacintijātakam	*Mitacintin* "Measured thought"	*Bahucintin* "Too thoughtful"	*Appacintin* "Little thought"
Pañcatantra/ Hitopadeśa	*Anāgatavidhātṛ* "Future-planner"	*Pratyutpannamati* "Ready-minded"	*Yadbhaviṣya* "Whatever happens"
Ādhp	*Dīrghadarśin* "Far-seeing"	*Prāptakālajña/* (*Saṃ-*)*Pratipattimat* "Knowing the time has come/ having right knowledge"	*Dīrghasūtra* "Procrastinator"

Since it represents a markedly distinct set of names from the other two we can quickly pass over the Jātaka example, apart from noting that these choices indicate that the fables were evidently configured for specific cultural and narrative contexts.[38] The use of *cintin* perhaps reflects the Buddhist focus on the volitional mind; in addition, no one dies in the Mitacintijātakam, with the first fish managing to save the other two. However, the distinctions between the Ādhp and Pañcatantra tradition are of greater interest. One may note at the outset that it is the Ādhp version that stands distinct from the other iterations.[39] In addition, if we consider the language used to convey the underlying morals for which each fish is a cipher, the Ādhp is very consistent in deploying the word *dīrghasūtra*. On the other hand, the vocabulary (including the use of its names) deployed to convey the moral imparted through *Prāptakālajña* varies the most, with (*Saṃ-*)*pratipattimat* or (*Saṃ-*)*pratipattijña* substituting on every occasion bar the first (Mahābhārata 135.9, 13, 15, 18). A more interesting case is *Dīrghadarśin*, since, when explaining the moral conveyed by this fish,

38   Cf. Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra*, 162–64.

39   Having checked Franklin Edgerton, ed. *The Panchatantra Reconstructed: An Attempt to Establish the Lost Original Sanskrit Text of the Most Famous of Indian Story-Collections on the Basis of the Principal Extant Versions*, 2 vols., American Oriental Series vols. 2–3 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1924); Johannes Hertel, ed. *The Panchatantra: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Tales in the Recension, Called Panchakhyanaka, and Dates 1199 A.D., of the Jaina Monk Purnabhadra*, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 11 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1908); M.R. Kale, ed. *The Hitopadesa of Narayana* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967).

the Ādhp occasionally deploys a language that is clearly cognate with the name of the fish in the Pañcatantra iterations of the fable. Thus in 135.7, *Dīrghadarśin* tries to convince the other two fish to depart by arguing that disaster (*anartha*) is averted "before it happens" (*anāgata*) through good planning. Even more overtly, in 135.19:

> *anāgatavidhānaṃ tu yo naraḥ kurute kṣamam |*
> *śreyaḥ prāpnoti so 'tyarthaṃ dīrghadarśī yathā hy asau ||*
> The man who prepares appropriately for a fate not yet arrived attains immense prosperity, just like that *Dīrghadarśin.*

The first word of this stanza is clearly cognate with the name of the first fish in the Pañcatantra versions.[40] Furthermore, the opening stanza of the following chapter referred to above, in which Yudhiṣṭhira acknowledges the basic tenets of the Śākulopākhyānam in terms of "what hasn't [yet] happened, what has happened, and destructive dithering" (*anāgatā tathotpannā dīrghasūtrā vināśinī*), reflects the fundamental point being made here. The terms *anāgatā* and *utpannā* (in the feminine here because they modify *buddhi* in 136.1a) are cognate with the names of the fish in the Pañcatantra, while the term *dīrghasūtrā*, of course, maintains a consistency with the central import of the story in the Mahābhārata.[41] While Falk argues that such evidence suggests that the Mahābhārata version of this fable is prior to (and indeed the model for) the Pañcatantra version, it seems equally possible that the redactors of the Mahābhārata responsible for its inclusion (and/or composition) had before them other versions of the fable to consult; indeed, perhaps there were versions of the fable prior to its appearance in both the Mahābhārata and Pañcatantra of which each is derivative in some way.[42] We shall probably never really know. Whatever the case, the pertinent point here is that the Mahābhārata version consistently reiterates the central moral of the fable through the term *dīrghasūtra*. This is even the case in a stanza excised from the constituted text of the Critical Edition that appears as *307 in the critical notes:[43]

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40   In keeping with his general argument that the Mahābhārata version of the fable is the model for that in the Pañcatantra, Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra*, 158–59 suggests that this stanza inspired the shift from the Mahābhārata's *Dīrghadarśin* to the Pañcatantra's *Anāgatavidhātṛ.*

41   Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra* does not discuss this stanza.

42   Olivelle, *The Pañcatantra*, xi, xxxii–xxxiii.

43   This occurs in the following manuscripts: K3–5 V1 B Da Dn1.n3 D2.3.5.8 G1.5 (Dn3 D2.3 repeat it after 135.19).

anāgatavidhātā ca pratyutpannamatiś ca yaḥ |
dvāv eva sukham edhete dīrghasūtrī vinaśyati ||
Future-planner and Ready-minded, these two certainly live happily;
Procrastinator dies.

This stanza appears in almost precisely the same form in the Pañcatantra ver-
sions, where (like here) it provides an epitome of the fable prior to its full
narration, with the only significant variation being that the Mahābhārata ver-
sion has substituted *dīrghasūtrin* for *yadbhaviṣya*, the usual name for the third
fish in the Pañcatantra tradition.[44] Falk argues, I think probably correctly, that
this indicates the influence of the Pañcatantra on later Mahābhārata copyists.[45]
But what is notable here is that the only name cognate with those in the
Mahābhārata version is in fact *dīrghasūtrin* ("unkorrect," according to Falk[46]),
suggesting again the conceptual primacy of this term in the Mahābhārata's
iteration of the fable and the awareness of its primacy among the Mahābhārata's
redactors.[47] Accordingly, the emphasis placed on *dīrghasūtra* reflects both the
syntagmatic context of the fable in the Ādhp, and, more broadly, a theme asso-
ciated with discussions of royal behavior threaded through the Mahābhārata.
This takes on added significance in light of the fable being recited to the "dith-
ering" king Yudhiṣṭhira, and therefore being a "mirror" to his own behavior
through the epic.

Kapotopākhyānam, "The Tale of the Dove"

A savage bird hunter wandered the earth killing and selling birds, oblivi-
ous to his evil conduct. One day, a massive storm hit the forest in which
he was hunting. Unable to find shelter, the hunter became terribly dis-
tressed by the cold, wind, and rain. Seeing a large tree, he sought shelter

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44   Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed*, 130 (stanza 127); Hertel, *The Panchatantra,* 86
      (stanza 326); Kale, *The Hitopadesa of Narayana*, 87 (Hitopadeśa 4.5).

45   Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra,* 162. Note that the wording of *pāda* d in *307 reflects the
      wording of Mahābhārata 12.135.17c, which contains the Ādhp's summation of the moral
      for which *Dīrghasūtra* is a cipher.

46   Though manuscripts K3.4 D2.3.3 have *dīrghasūtra*.

47   Falk, *Quellen des Pañcatantra,* 162 argues that *Dīrghasūtrin* is the only name that could be
      easily replaced on account of syllable number (*Silbenzahl*) in the case of *Dīrghadarśin*,
      and metrical difficulties (*metrischen Schwierigkeiten*) in the case of *Pratyutpannamati*.
      However, one wonders if these would have been insurmountable problems for the
      Mahābhārata's redactors.

beneath its branches, and resolved to remain there until the storm cleared.

A dove lived in a branch of that tree. It had been his home for a long time. His wife had gone out in the morning and had not returned by day's end. Thinking of the storm, the dove worried about her absence.

His wife was, in fact, nearby, captured in one of the hunter's cages. Hearing him moan, she became concerned that she was neglecting her husband. She encouraged him to receive the hunter as his guest as duty demanded.

At the sound of his wife's voice, the dove was reduced to tears, and immediately did as she bid, properly honoring the hunter as his guest. When the hunter begged for relief from the cold, the dove kindled a fire with some dried leaves. But when asked for food, the dove had none to offer, since, being a forest dweller, he lived day-to-day. Cursing his lifestyle for leaving him without food to offer guests, the dove wondered how to satisfy the hunter's hunger. Kindling the fire's flames, the dove circumambulated it three times and entered it.

The bird hunter, overwhelmed at seeing the dove enter the fire and offer his flesh as food, was stunned into reevaluating his way of life. He resolved to renounce his occupation and depart for a final great journey (*mahāprasthāna*).

The female dove grieved at the loss of her husband, remembering how good he was to her and how much she loved him. Despairing at the prospect of a widow's life, she followed her husband into the blazing fire. In the flame's midst she saw him on a celestial vehicle and joined him to live happily together.

The hunter, seeing those two standing on the divine vehicle, resolved upon his "great journey." Walking slowly and fasting, he became very emaciated, even ignoring an inviting pond of cold water. Entering a forest, thorns ripped his skin. A wind blew, and with the rubbing of the trees a fire started. It burnt ferociously and the hunter, desiring freedom from his body, entered the flames. Consumed by the fire, he joined the doves in heaven.

This is a complex fable that lends itself to multiple readings, especially through its shifts in narrative perspective between the hunter, female dove, and male dove. Indeed, in his summation of the fable in Mahābhārata 12.145.14–16, Bhīṣma acknowledges its distinct moral concerns through each of the fable's three characters. As we shortly explore further, this fable has often been cited in the Sanskrit tradition in discussions concerning the merits of a wife

"following" her husband, in which the virtuous wife (*satī*) follows her husband
on to the funeral pyre (see, for example, Bhīṣma's summation in 12.145.15[48]).
Fitzgerald, on the other hand, focuses especially on the hunter's redemption
and how this reinforces the point, made elsewhere in the Ādhp, that even "bar-
barians can expiate their wicked way of life."[49] Accordingly, he considers this
fable to shift from the point of view of the king (which is common in earlier
Ādhp sections), though this is not necessarily the point of view of some ele-
ments of the Sanskrit tradition. Here, however, we shall again consider the
fable as a mirror text, first, for its "vocal" interlocutor the king Yudhiṣṭhira (and
therefore questioning Fitzgerald's ready discarding of it reflecting a "king's
point of view"), and, second, for its "silent" interlocutor Draupadī, who, as
already indicated, we can assume to be listening together with the Pāṇḍavas
(see above n. 26). In the latter case, emphasis will be placed not merely on the
fable's implications for the practice of *sahagamana* ("going with" the husband
on to the funeral pyre), but also on the role of women in relation to dharma
and women's roles in ensuring that men (or husbands) pursue their proper
dharma (articulated in this instance in relation to hospitality).

   This fable's position in the syntagm of the Ādhp can evidently be explained
by it being broadly about "distress" in a number of ways: the female dove's cap-
ture by the hunter; the hunter's being caught in a storm, leading him to seek
shelter; the consequences of the male bird's onerous obligations towards his
"guest."[50] One could further add, too, Fitzgerald's point regarding its intersec-
tion with a number of stories in the Ādhp that indicate that barbarians can
productively engage with dharma. Nevertheless, this text is arguably one of a
sequence that has looser ties to the thematic terrain of the Ādhp in compari-
son to earlier texts of the same collection.[51] Yet, if the syntagmatic relations of
this text are relatively under-determined, its paradigmatic relations with

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48   At Mahābhārata 12.144.8, the grieving female dove laments: "There's no purpose for me,
      lord, without you living. What good woman, bereft of a husband, could bear to remain
      alive?" (*na kāryam iha me nātha jīvitena tvayā vinā | patihīnāpi kā nārī satī jīvitum utsa-
      het ||*).

49   Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, 161.

50   Of course, most stories deal with crises of one kind or another.

51   It is notable that the word *āpad* does not occur in this text, or in those that immediately
      follow. In Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 296–333 I include
      this text together with Mahābhārata 12.146–48 (*Indrotapārikṣitasaṃvādaḥ*), 12.149
      (*Gṛdhragomāyusaṃvādaḥ*) and 12.150–51 (*Pavanaśālmalisaṃvādaḥ*) in a section titled
      "Diversions on a Theme" to reflect their looser thematic integration in the Ādhp. Despite
      their looser thematic ties, that these texts are a sequence helps to lend a sense of "shape"
      to the collection.

broader themes in the Mahābhārata promise a richer yield. In particular we shall frame these relations through two notions brought together in this text—those of *atithipūjana* (the obligations of "guest worship") and *śaraṇāgata* (the obligations to provide for someone who has "come for shelter")—and then reflecting in light of these on our interlocutors Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī, and their respective ideological terrains of king and wife.

In some respects the Kapotopākhyānam represents a novel approach in its integration of the themes of *atithipūjana* and *śaraṇāgata* into a single conceptual space, since, despite what might appear to be their natural affinities, these two ideas are ordinarily found in distinct discursive contexts. This integration is clearly articulated in Mahābhārata 12.142.25, where the male dove explains to the hunter:

> *śaraṇāgatasya kartavyam ātithyam iha yatnataḥ |*
> *pañcayajñapravṛttena gṛhasthena viśeṣataḥ ||*
> Hospitality should be assiduously extended to one who has come for refuge here, especially by a householder devoted to the five sacrifices.

Jamison has shown that the rites of hospitality, which typically involved a prescribed set of protocols, were granted an important place in the early Indian tradition.[52] The *dharmaśāstra*s regard these rites to be among the central duties of the householder (*gṛhastha*). Manu, for example, in describing *atithipūjana* as a "sacrifice to humans" (*nṛyajña*), considers it (like our male dove) one of the five "great sacrifices" (*mahāyajña*) a householder is obliged to carry out daily.[53] He therefore describes these rites in a broader account of the householder's duties. The idea of the *śaraṇāgata*, on the other hand, is typically encountered in the same literature in sections describing sins and their penances, with the general points being that either associating with a murderer of someone seeking refuge, or not looking after someone who has come for refuge, are sins requiring absolution.[54]

In introducing this text to Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīṣma offers the following epitome of the fable in Mahābhārata 141.4:

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52   Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 153–61.

53   *Manusmṛti* 3.70 (cf. *Viṣṇusmṛti* 59.25, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.102). For Manu's full description of guest worship, see 3.99–114. Cf. Friedrich Wilhelm, "Hospitality and the Caste System," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 20 (1996): 523–29.

54   *Manusmṛti* 11.191 and 199; *Viṣṇusmṛti* 36.1, 7 and 54.32; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3.288, 298. Cf. Mahābhārata 5.36.64, 5.37.12, 7.16.30, 8.66.62, 10.5.10, 12.35.11.

> *śrūyate hi kapotena śatruḥ śaraṇam āgataḥ |*
> *pūjitaś ca yathānyāyaṃ svaiś ca māṃsair nimantritaḥ ||*
> For it's said that a dove honored according to rule an enemy who'd come
> for refuge, and invited him to feast on his own flesh.

Though this epitome would also seem to suggest the integration of these two
themes, this is not always how it has been used in other literary texts that cite
this stanza, where it has typically been deployed to emphasise the sanctity of
the *śaraṇāgata* and the obligations of (especially) kings to provide the shelter
(*śaraṇa*), even if the *śaraṇāgata* is an enemy. Typically this occurs in contexts
in which a king's hawkish allies attempt to convince him to not observe his
obligations to a *śaraṇāgata*. This is evident, for example, where this epitome is
used in both the Rāmāyaṇa and Pañcatantra. Thus in the Rāmāyaṇa, this
stanza (6.12.11) is one of a number cited by Rāma in support of his decision to
offer shelter to Ravaṇa's brother Vibhīṣaṇa, against the advice of some of his
attendants (though not Hanuman's, and that of an initially skeptical Sugrīva).
Similarly, in the Pañcatantra it is cited by Ciraṃjīvin, the minister of the king
of crows Meghavarṇa, in his attempts to persuade the king of owls Arimardana
("crusher of foes"), Meghavarṇa's enemy, to provide shelter to his king.[55]
Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma, too, frame the text in terms of *śaraṇāgata* and royal
virtues. Yudhiṣṭhira's opening question (141.1) asks Bhīṣma about the "*dharma*
of one maintaining a refuge" (*śaraṇaṃ pālayānasya ... dharmas ...*), to which
Bhīṣma responds (141.2), "Great is the *dharma* in respect to protecting some-
one who's come for refuge" (*mahān dharmo ... śaraṇāgatapālane*). Bhīṣma
subsequently evokes royal legacy to support this claim:

> *nṛgaprabhṛtayo rājan rājānaḥ śaraṇāgatān |*
> *paripālya mahārāja saṃsiddhiṃ paramāṃ gatāḥ ||*
> Ever since King Nṛga, king, kings who have protected those who've come
> for shelter have obtained the highest perfection.

The deployment of the fable's epitome in the Rāmāyaṇa and Pañcatantra, and
the particular ways in which Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira frame this story in the
Ādhp, would therefore suggest that the point of view of the king cannot be

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55   The later Pūrṇabhadra Pañcatantra incorporates the entire fable, not just the epitome.
     While it shares much in common with the Ādhp version, there are also significant diver-
     sions. Hertel (*The Panchatantra-Text of Purnabhadra: Critical Introduction and List of Vari-
     ants*, Harvard Oriental Series vol. 12 [Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1912], 52)
     regards the Mahābhārata to have been Pūrṇabhadra's source.

readily dispensed with in an analysis of the Kapotopākhyānam. This is confirmed elsewhere in the Mahābhārata, where opprobriums related to the mistreatment of *śaraṇāgata*s frequently occur in discourses to kings or between high-ranking warriors.[56] Of particular interest is the number of these that involve Yudhiṣṭhira. Already in the Ādhp, Bhīṣma has related to Yudhiṣṭhira the *Pūjanībrahmadattasaṃvāda*, in which the bird Pūjanī censures King Brahmadatta (in Mahābhārata 12.137.16) for failing to protect her son who was killed by the king's son while he was under the king's protection (*śaraṇāgata*). And, earlier in the Rājadharmaparvan, Bhīṣma explains to Yudhiṣṭhira that the rescuing of *śaraṇāgata*s is a duty of a royal householder (12.66.15). Vyāsa, too, includes lessons regarding the *śaraṇāgata* in his early Śāntiparvan counsel to Yudhiṣṭhira (12.35.11). More interestingly, when Bhīma laughs at the fate of the survivors who seek refuge with the Pāṇḍavas during the Dhārtarāṣṭras' ill-fated cattle expedition (3.224–43), Yudhiṣṭhira chides him that any royal (*rājanya*) should protect someone who approaches him for refuge with all his might, even if he be an enemy (3.232.10–11). Similarly, once Arjuna has defeated the *gandharva* Citraratha, Yudhiṣṭhira restrains Arjuna from killing his defeated foe (1.158.28–33). Subsequently in 1.158.39, a chastened yet grateful Citraratha, extols the virtues of one who spares the life of an enemy who seeks refuge (*śaraṇāgata*). Yudhiṣṭhira's compassion for those seeking refuge even figures in Draupadī's advice to her kidnapper Jayadratha, who she suggests should approach Yudhiṣṭhira in supplication to avoid his vengeance, for Yudhiṣṭhira "would give up his life to one who has approached him for refuge, even should he be an enemy" (*apy eṣa śatroḥ śaraṇāgatasya dadyāt prāṇān*; 3.254.8). On their pilgrimage tour through the sacred *tīrtha*s, the seer Lomaśa relates to Yudhiṣṭhira in 3.131 the famous tale of King Śibi, in which a dove takes refuge from a hawk on the king's knee, and the king, despite the Hawk's protestations, refuses to give the dove up, because the dove had sought shelter with him (3.131.20). Such is his sense of obligation that the king offers the weight of his own flesh equivalent to that of the dove, a trade to which the Hawk agrees (it is a test: the Hawk is Indra and the dove Agni). And, finally, in what is perhaps Yudhiṣṭhira's first lesson on the royal virtue of showing compassion to a

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56   Thus, for example, in Mahābhārata 1.169.18, in the story Aurva told to Arjuna by the *gandharva* Citraratha; Vidura to Dhṛtarāṣṭra in 5.36.64 and 5.37.12; the Trigartas to Duryodhana when swearing vengeance on Arjuna (and thereby becoming *saṃśaptaka*s, "oath-bound warriors") in 7.16.30; Karṇa to Arjuna in 8.66.62 when the former seeks the latter's forbearance on the battle field, Kṛpa to Aśvatthāman in 10.5.10 when the former seeks to stop the latter slaying the Pāṇḍavas and Pañcālas in their sleep, and the bird Pūjanī to King Brahmadatta in 12.137.16.

śaraṇāgata, in reassuring Yudhiṣṭhira that her sending Bhīma to the *rākṣasa* Baka in place of their devout brahman host was just, Kuntī sings the merits of protecting members of each of the *varṇa*s. Thus in 1.150.24 a "king who sets free a *śūdra* who arrives seeking shelter" (*śūdraṃ tu mokṣayan rājā śaraṇārthinam āgatam*) is reborn in a wealthy family venerated by kings.[57]

The treatment of *śaraṇāgata* in the Kapotopākhyānam, therefore, contributes to and builds upon a paradigm of particular royal virtues often associated with Yudhiṣṭhira, whether he advocates for them or they are advocated to him. In this the ideal of providing shelter to someone in need evokes a similar ethical terrain for kings to that of protection (*rakṣaṇa*, *pālana*), and to which can readily be added the ideal of generosity (*dāna*), as clearly demonstrated in both the Kapotopākhyānam and the tale of King Śibi, to the extent that the generous protagonist in each case jeopardises his own welfare.[58] In stipulating that forbearance and generosity be shown to those in need, even if they be enemies, an ethic that is especially associated with Yudhiṣṭhira, this paradigm reflects an ideal of kingship which privileges moderation; or, as Mukund Lath has argued, one based on a principal such as *ānṛśaṃsya* (gentility, kindness).[59] Yudhiṣṭhira, it seems, remains associated with such a paradigm of royal behavior right to the end, for in his refusal to abandon the dog that accompanies him in the final stages of his *mahāprasthāna* up Mount Himavat in Mahābhārata 17.3.15, despite its lowly stature, Yudhiṣṭhira equates the abandoning of someone who is loyal (*bhaktatyāga*) with the betrayal of a friend or ally (*mitradroha*), the theft of a brahman's wealth (*brāhmaṇasvāpahāra*), the killing of a woman, and the rejecting of one who comes for refuge (*pratipradānaṃ śaraṇāgatasya*).

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57   In the preceding chapter the brahman expresses horror at the prospect of a brahman (since the Pāṇḍavas are disguised as ascetics) and a guest (*atithi*) losing his life on his behalf. In imploring Kuntī to not send Bhīma, he pleas (Mahābhārata 1.149.10): the "abandoning of someone seeking refuge who's come in to your house, and the slaying of a supplicant, is reckoned the greatest depravity" (*āgatasya gṛhe tyāgas tathaiva śaraṇārthinaḥ | yācamānasya ca vadho nṛśaṃsaṃ paramaṃ matam*).

58   In the case of the Kapotopākhyānam, the hunter (*lubdhaka*, which means "greedy") is the counterpoint of the generous householder/king. Cf. Wilhelm, "Hospitality and the Caste System."

59   Mukund Lath, "The Concept of *ānṛśaṃsya* in the *Mahābhārata*," in *The Mahābhārata Revisited*, ed. R.N. Dandekar (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990), 113–19; cf. Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 202–9; Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 356–58; Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 450–52.

We shall now explore the role of the female dove (*kapotī*) in relation to her husband, his reception of the hunter and aspects of dharma. In turn, we shall also consider what reflections this leads to in respect to Draupadī. In regards to the dharma of women, this tale has drawn attention because of its depiction of a wife devoted to her husband, a *pativratā*, and its apparent sanction for the practice of a wife following a husband into death by mounting his funeral pyre (it therefore often being called *sahagamana* "going with," *anugamana* "going after," or *anumaraṇa* "dying after"). In the early eighteenth century *Strīdharmapaddhati*, for example, the Tanjore court minister Tryambakayajvan gives an account of the story as part of his argument that a woman's primary duty is to obediently serve her husband, even to the extent of "disregarding her own life" (*prāṇānām aviganaṇayā*).[60] Curiously, though in this context he does mention the female dove's throwing herself on the fire that consumed her husband, he does not refer to it in his earlier strong advocacy for *sahagamana*.[61] Others, however, do cite it when evaluating its merits.[62] For example, in the *Mitākṣarā*, Vijñāneśvara (late eleventh century) quotes Mahābhārata 12.144.9cd, 10ab and 12 in support of the practice when commenting on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.86,[63] though Vijñāneśvara's ambivalence towards *sahagamana* would seem to be reflected in his advocacy of it only for women seeking heaven (*svarga*) rather than *mokṣa*[64]; those seeking *mokṣa* should choose a widow's other option, ascetic celibacy (*brahmacaryā*). The late fourteenth-century *Madanapārijāta* by Madanapāla also cites the story when opposing the position that *sahagamana* is mandatory for a *pativratā*.[65] In this respect, Madanapāla notes that the female dove in our story is actually a *patrivratā* before she enters the fire, and does not become so because she entered the fire. Consequently *sahagamana* should be viewed as strictly

60   Julia Leslie, *The Perfect Wife: The Orthodox Hindu Woman according to the Strīdharma-paddhati of Tryambakayajvan* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 305–7.

61   Ibid., 291–98.

62   As David Brick ("The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 2 [2010]: 203–23) has shown, attitudes towards *sahagamana* in the *dharmaśāstra* tradition varied, and arguments were prosecuted over its legitimacy, whether it was for brahmans or only other classes, whether it ought to compulsory or optional, and whether it should be on the same fire of the husband or another.

63   Setlur, ed., *The Mitākshara with Visvarūpa*, 59; J.R. Gharpure, trans., *Yājñavalkya Smṛti with the Commentaries of The Mitākṣarā by Vijñāneśvara Bhikṣu and the Vīramitrodaya by Mitramiśra. Ācārādhyāya Chapters I-VII* (Bombay: J.R. Gharpure, 1936), 227–28.

64   Cf. Brick, "The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning," 213.

65   Ibid., 218–19.

optional.[66] Hertel has shown how the alterations of one copyist of a manu-script identified as part of the Pūrṇabhadra recension of the Pañcatantra reflect a wholesale rejection of *sahagamana*, in which case the fire (*agni*) is identified metaphorically as *tapas*.[67] It is for the focus on *tapas*, too, that this tale attracted the attention of Kullūkabhaṭṭa. In commenting on Manusmṛti 11.240,[68] which upholds the merits of *tapas* by suggesting that it enables all manner of living creatures and inanimate things to go to heaven, Kullūkabhaṭṭa refers to this story since it demonstrates that "even birds perform *tapas*, such as entering into the fire."[69]

If the *dharmaśāstra*s are drawn to the story largely for its apparent advocacy for *sahagamana* (or, less commonly, when arguing the merits of *tapas*), other aspects of it are deserving of notice, too. Preeminent among these must be the female dove's expertise in dharma and, concomitantly, her role in ensuring that her husband follows his dharma by offering shelter to the hunter and perform-ing the hospitality rites. We have already seen in the above-cited Mahābhārata 12.142.25 that the male dove keenly expresses an awareness of a householder's obligations regarding hospitality. However, the male dove does this only after his wife has reminded of these obligations, even while she remains captive in the hunter's cage. In so doing, the female dove demonstrates a point already raised by her husband in the course of his *bhāryāstuti* ("Laud to the Wife") expressed in lamenting the absence of his wife: "in this world there is no com-panion equal to a wife as a means for accomplishing *dharma*."[70]

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66   Brick (ibid., 205 n. 6) also indicates that Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa cites this story in his *Nirṇaya-sindhu*. I have been unable to consult this work.

67   Hertel, *The Panchatantra-Text of Purnabhadra*, 46, 51. Hertel also appears to suggest (ibid., 52) that the copyist of the manuscript (referred to as A²) was Jain (Pūrṇabhadra, of course, was known to be a Jain). However, of two other stanzas interpolated by the copyist (found in column 2 of Hertel, *The Panchatantra-Text of Purnabhadra*, 48–49), one asserts that a woman who offers her own body in a fire goes to a terrible hell, and the other supports this position by referring to a rule forbidding suicide in the "*smṛti*, *veda* and *śāstra*s" (*smṛtavedādiśāstreṣu* (*sic*; one of the "copyist's blunders" [Hertel, *The Panchatantra-Text of Purnabhadra*, 51]). Apart from this indicating that the copyist was attempting to argue from Vedic orthodoxy, Brick, "The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning" has shown that similar arguments were also evoked in the *dharmaśāstra*s. In addition, the same copyist's focus on the benefits of *tapas* reflects Kullūkabhaṭṭa's interest in the story. Reli-gious identity here is perhaps not a transparent matter.

68   11.241 in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*.

69   Shastri, *Manusmṛti*, 469: *itihāsādau kapotopākhyānādiṣu pakṣiṇo 'py agnipraveśādikaṃ tapas tapantīti śrūyate |.*

70   Mahābhārata 12.142.10: *nāsti bhāryāsamo loke sahāyo dharmasādhanaḥ ||.*

The female dove's exhortations to her husband are worth a closer look. In succession, she reminds him that he must protect someone who has come for refuge (*śaraṇāgata*; Mahābhārata 12.142.14), that he should perform *pūjā* to the hunter who is afflicted with cold and hunger (142.15), that a dove's livelihood (*vṛttiḥ kāpotī*) has been prescribed for them according to *jātidharma* (the law of species) (142.17), that a householder who follows dharma according to his ability (*yathāśakti*) obtains imperishable worlds once he dies (142.18), and that (142.19):

> *sa tvaṃ saṃtānavān adya putravān api ca dvija* |
> *tat svadehe dayāṃ tyaktvā dharmārthau parigṛhya vai* |
> *pūjām asmai prayuṅkṣva tvaṃ prīyetāsya mano yathā* ||
> Now that you have sons you have a lineage, bird. Giving up compassion for your own body and, embracing law and profit, display reverence to him so that his mind shall be gratified.

That the female dove demonstrates knowledge of the importance of honoring guests is perhaps no surprise given, as Jamison has illustrated,[71] the centrality of the wife to hospitality rituals and stories. Yet, the female dove's role here is more significant than this. In showing an understanding of the binding nature of species-specific (i.e., class-specific) behavioral codes and reminding her husband of his obligations, she ensures his pursuance of them and secures for her husband (and herself) the rewards of following dharma. She does this despite what would seem to be clear indications that she is aware of their this-worldly (*laukika*) consequences. Thus her reference to the dove's livelihood, prescribed for them according to *jātidharma*, hints that as birds they can expect to be the food of fowlers, a hint subsequently confirmed by her reassurances that he has completed his householder obligations (by having sons and ensuring his succession) and can prepare now to relinquish his body. Her husband does not immediately absorb the import of all of her words, for he initially despairs at being able to provide the hunter with his requested food since, like sages, they live by whatever "turns up" (*utpanna*; Mahābhārata 12.142.34–35).[72] After initially reproaching his own livelihood (142.36), a solution suddenly occurs to him and he kindles a fire. Before self-immolating to provide the fowler with a meal, he asserts:

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71   Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*; cf. Leslie, *The Perfect Wife*, 198–205.

72   Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, 153–69, citing this tale among others, has especially drawn attention to the dangerous obligations of hospitality.

devānāṃ ca munīnāṃ ca pitṝṇāṃ ca mahātmanām |
śrutapūrvo mayā dharmo mahān atithipūjane ||

In the past I learned about the great dharma of the great gods, seers and ancestors for honouring guests.

Though "the past" here is not specified and therefore cannot be determined, one is tempted to surmise that it is the very recent past, in which his wife has been instructor and he the instructee. Whatever the case, the dove's wife has ably demonstrated a firm knowledge of her husband's dharma, and successfully urged him to follow it. One suspects that without such urging her husband would have continued to dither, crippled by grief for his absent wife.

Considered paradigmatically within the Mahābhārata, and as a mirror to Draupadī, who we presume to be one of its auditors, what thematic resonances might be detected between this story and the Mahābhārata's heroines, Draupadī in particular? Both the bird and Draupadī are praised as *pativratā*s, and each extols the virtues of husbands and devoted wifeliness (for Draupadī, see e.g., her dialogue with Satyabhāmā in Mahābhārata 3.222–23). And, like the female dove, Draupadī too shows herself to be a capable host to a surprise guest who then places her in a situation of danger, when, with her husbands away hunting, she receives Jayadratha as a guest in 3.250–51, showing towards him the proper observances (3.251.10–11),[73] only to be subsequently kidnapped.

However, there are rather more interesting parallels to be drawn with the two contrasting aspects of the Kapotopākhyānam discussed above. On the one hand, attention was drawn to the lot of the widow, who, despairing at what lies ahead (Mahābhārata 12.144.2–8), decides to enter the fire after her husband (12.144.9); Bhīṣma, in recapping the central points of the story, refers to the rewards due a wife who "follows" (*anu+vṛt*) her husband. On the other hand, focus was placed on the female dove's taking control of a situation while her husband dithers,[74] and her guiding him towards the proper fulfillment of his dharma in performing *atithipūjana*, but also fulfilling the expectations of his *jātidharma*. We ought to note the dubious choices the female dove faces; nevertheless, within the constraints of the cultural context drawn by the fable, the female dove is a strong and decisive actor, who, by force of personality and argument, manages to convince her husband to follow the dharma allotted

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73   Cf. Leslie, *The Perfect Wife*, 202–3; see also above on page 339.

74   Cf. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, 15: "In story after story women see what needs to be done, take command, and order the bewildered, hand-wringing male participants into their supporting roles—and the enterprise fails only when one of these ninnies messes up his part of the woman's plan."

him. In both instances, the female dove proves herself a *pativratā*, a wife upholding her vows to her husband.

It might seem surprising to mention Draupadī in the context of *sahagamana*, since she does not mount a funeral pyre at the end of her life, but rather dies in the course of the "great journey" (*mahāprasthāna*) undertaken by the Pāṇḍavas in the Mahāprasthānikaparvan. Nevertheless, this perspective presents itself on the basis of a highly stimulating and suggestive article by Sally Sutherland.[75] Sutherland argues two things of relevance here. First, that the practice of *sahagamana* is rather more common in the epics than some scholars have suggested. She notes, for example, that in the Mahābhārata Mādrī and Kṛṣṇa's chief wives climb funeral pyres after the deaths of their husbands. Further, Kuntī, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Gāndhārī, once the war has passed and their familial duties are over, retire to the forest and are consumed in a forest fire in a manner comparable to *sahagamana*.[76] Even Draupadī, in fact, has a close encounter with *sahagamana*, when, in the guise of the servant girl Sairandhrī in Virāṭa's court, she attracts the eye of Virāṭa's general Kīcaka.[77] After rebuffing his advances, Bhīma lies in wait disguised as Draupadī (disguised as Sairandhrī!) and brutally kills Kīcaka. Kīcaka's family, outraged at his death, approach Virāṭa and request that the *asatī* (woman "without virtue") be burnt with her lover (*kāmin*) (Mahābhārata 4.22.5–10).[78] Kīcaka's family takes her to the burning-ground. But, unbeknownst to them, Draupadī is in fact a virtuous woman having husbands (*nāthavatī satī*; 4.22.11) and, calling out to her *nātha*, she alerts Bhīma, who saves her in typically brutish fashion.

The second point to draw from Sutherland is more intriguing and, I believe, an innovative approach to understanding the cultural background of *sahagamana*. Sutherland argues that a widow's self-immolation (*sahagamana*, *anugamana*, or *anumaraṇa*) is merely one particular way of managing the (perhaps overwhelming) challenges of widowhood, or a situation of being bereft of a husband, within a general cultural context in which "following" a loved one, a friend or a husband is a common expression of grief, love or

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75   Sally Sutherland, "Suttee, Sati, and Sahagamana: An Epic Misunderstanding?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 26 (1994): 1595–605.

76   Mahābhārata 15.45.19–28; Sutherland, "Suttee, Sati, and Sahagamana: An Epic Misunderstanding?" 1599. Sutherland suggests they were consumed in a sacrificial fire (cf. also p. 1598, where she attributes this scene to the Āśvamedhikaparvan, though it occurs in the Āśramavāsikaparvan); however, the text of the CE only refers to it being a forest fire.

77   Sutherland, "Suttee, Sati, and Sahagamana: An Epic Misunderstanding?" 1599–1600.

78   Sutherland suggests ("Suttee, Sati, and Sahagamana: An Epic Misunderstanding?" 1599) that this implies the fire shall turn her from a state of *asatī* to *satī*.

loyalty.[79] From this broader perspective Sutherland notes that instances of wives following their husbands into death do not always involve fire, pointing in particular to the entering into the waters of the Ganges of the wives of many of the Mahābhārata's deceased heroes (15.41.17–18). This proposition opens up a somewhat new perspective on Draupadī's death (though this link is not drawn by Sutherland) that invites comparison with the female dove. Thus, Draupadī's following of Yudhiṣṭhira on the "great journey" (*mahāprasthāna*) to their deaths (Draupadī dies at 17.2.3) can be viewed within the broader context of wives following their husbands of which *sahagamana* is merely one exemplar.[80] Therefore, the deaths of both the female dove and Draupadī can be understood as variant instances of a prominent ideological thread regarding gender roles that has been woven through the Mahābhārata.[81]

If the female dove's "following" of her husband into death presents a potential mirror text for Draupadī, then arguably this is even more so in the case of the dove's cajoling of her husband into performing the duties pertaining to his class and station. A comparison between the female dove and Draupadī suggests a number of points of contact, but also an outstanding point of contrast. Both Draupadī and the female dove have in common that they experience considerable abuse from which their husbands fail to protect them. While the female dove appears resigned to her circumstances, Draupadī could scarcely

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79   "This action of accompanying one's husband, either as a token gesture or in actuality, can be seen to be a variation of the action of following a friend or relative on a journey … the practice of 'following' one's husband is a manifestation of a larger non-gender specific behavioural pattern articulated by the traditional literature. However, when this pattern is associated with wives/women who are separated from their husbands/lords, for whatever reason, the behaviour pattern not only becomes gender-specific but becomes real rather than symbolic in nature." Sutherland, "Suttee, Sati, and Sahagamana: An Epic Misunderstanding?" 1598.

80   That Yudhiṣṭhira's death actually follows Draupadī's is beside the point, since it is clearly Yudhiṣṭhira who leads them on the "great journey" to death. Of course, that the brothers of Yudhiṣṭhira follow him too substantiates Sutherland's argument that there are non-gender specific dimensions to this general cultural attitude.

81   The prominence in the epics of *sahagamana* and related examples of widows' following their husbands into death, and the simultaneous absence of similar discussions in the early *dharmasūtra*s and *dharmaśāstra*s (Brick, "The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning," 203–4), supports Kane's argument that brahmans appropriated a practice originally associated with "royal families and great warriors." P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra: Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India*, vol. II, part I (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974), 626–27; cf. Brick, "The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning," 206, Julia Leslie, "Suttee or Satī: Victim or Victor?" in *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*, ed. Julia Leslie (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 188.

be more strident in asserting that her plight is unjust and the result of husbandly neglect. As Draupadī's abuses compound—by Karṇa and Duḥśāsana in the *sabhā*, by Jayadratha in the forest, by Kīcaka in King Virāṭa's court—her irascibility and frustration with her husbands, especially Yudhiṣṭhira, multiplies. But if Draupadī and the female dove have quite different emotional responses to their abuse, their verbal rejoinders are driven by a similar concern: to compel their husbands to pursue the dharma appropriate to them. This may explain the female dove's calm response, since, as discussed already, she seemingly suggests that it is the lot of birds according to their *jātidharma* to be the food of fowlers. Draupadī, on the other hand, is famous for accusing her eldest husband of being too much like a brahman, and therefore failing to acquit himself as husband, warrior, and king. In both cases, the women demonstrate a proficiency in dharma. But more is meant in this respect than their respective knowledge of submissive wifely duties that a *pativratā* ought to demonstrate; indeed, as others have noted,[82] Draupadī's explanation of the qualities of a *pativratā* to Satyabhāmā in Mahābhārata 3.222–23 stand in ironic juxtaposition to her behavior elsewhere, where she does, nevertheless, frequently demonstrate a sound knowledge of dharma. Notoriously, this occurs in the very scene in the *sabhā* that sets in train the events of the war, when, after Yudhiṣṭhira has lost Draupadī in the first dicing match, she queries whether he had the right to put her up as a stake in the first place, since having already lost himself he was no longer her lord (2.59.4). The question, posed before a court of experts in dharma, goes unanswered.[83] Draupadī's victimization in the *sabhā* and her husbands' inaction, and most especially that of the excessively benign Yudhiṣṭhira, becomes an endless source of rancor, and she is frequently wont to remind her eldest husband of his duties as warrior and king. In such instances, Draupadī (like the female dove) shows herself to be (in contradistinction to texts pursuing a stricter *śāstric* register, as Draupadī herself does in her dialogue with Satyabhāmā) capable of acting independently, confidently arguing over courses of action, and, yet, in doing so, demonstrating a key characteristic of the *pativratā*, that in the epic's construction of gender, it is women who are especially responsible for urging men to maintain their dharmas.[84]

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82 E.g., Sally Sutherland "Sītā and Draupadī: Aggressive Behaviour and Female Role-Models in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 1: 68.

83 Falk, "Draupadī and the Dharma," in *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion*, ed. R.M. Gross (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1977) 95; Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 240–77.

84 Falk, "Draupadī and the Dharma," 98; Angelika Malinar, "Arguments of a Queen: Draupadī's Views on Kingship," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 85, 90.

Kṛtaghnopākhyānam

A brahman from the "middle region" who neglected his proper duties went to the north. Entering a village to beg for a livelihood, a wealthy barbarian (*dasyu*) gave him clothes, a house, and a *śūdra* woman. The brahman, who was from the Gautama *gotra*, lived there with the *dasyu*s, learning hunting and killing to the point that he became just like them. A pious brahman, a friend of Gautama's from their student days, visited the village and went straight to his house. Shocked to see the way he lived, he chastised Gautama for failing in his brāhmaṇic duties and insisted that he leave the village. Admitting his error, Gautama promised to do so.

Gautama headed for the ocean, joining a company of merchants along the way. A ruttish elephant attacked them, but Gautama managed to escape and headed north seeking a means to live. He came across a beautiful forest full of wonderful birds. He took shelter beneath a great Banyan tree and fell asleep as the sun set. The tree was the home of Nāḍījaṅgha, the king of the cranes. Returning from a visit to Brahmā's world, the crane discovered the brahman beneath his tree-home. Gautama looked in amazement at the crane, who was also known as Rājadharman, and, hungry and thirsty, contemplated killing him. Rājadharman, however, greeted him as an honored guest.

Gautama was surprised by Rājadharman's sweet voice. Rājadharman prepared a seat of Śāla flowers, and gave him some fish and a fire; then he fanned Gautama with his wings. When asked about his *gotra*, the brahman said nothing more than that he was a Gautama. Presented with a bed, the Gautama brahman lay down. Rājadharman asked him why he had come, and Gautama explained that he was headed to the ocean to obtain wealth. Rājadharman was delighted to help him, and told him about his friend, the demon-lord Virūpākṣa, who would provide for Gautama at Rājadharman's behest. Gautama left the next day for Virūpākṣa's city, Meruvraja.

The lord of demons received Gautama with honor, and asked him about his family and daily practices, and about his home and his wife's family. Gautama admitted that, though born in the middle country, he was now living with barbarians and married to a *śūdra* widow. As a favor to Rājadharman, the king resolved to feed Gautama and give him gifts on the night of the full moon of the month of Kārttika, when Virūpākṣa honored all brahmans. At the appointed time Virūpākṣa gave all the brahmans gifts and rich food. He then sent them home with the assurance that for one day they would be safe from the demons. Gautama returned to the

tree exhausted from carrying all his gold. He was properly welcomed again by Rājadharman. But, worrying about sustaining himself on his trip home, Gautama resolved to kill the crane for food.

While he was sleeping, Gautama killed Rājadharman. He cooked him and left. Noticing that the crane hadn't visited him as usual, Virūpākṣa worried for Rājadharman's safety, remembering how barbarian-like the Gautama brahman had seemed. He ordered his son to go to the crane's tree-home. Finding Rājadharman's skeleton, he chased Gautama and took him and the crane's remains back to his father. The grieving king ordered that Gautama be killed and eaten by the demons. However, the demons didn't want the taint of his sin, and suggested he be given to the *dasyu*s. But the *dasyu*s did not want to eat him either. (Bhīṣma explains that an ungrateful betrayer of friends is the one person for whom there is no expiation.) His sin is so bad that not even carrion eaters would eat him.

Virūpākṣa performed Rājadharman's obsequial rites. His mother, the cow Surabhi, Dakṣa's daughter, arrived and dripped milk from her mouth onto the funeral pyre, returning Rājadharman to life. Indra explained why the crane had died: Brahmā had cursed Rājadharman to die, for he hadn't been to see him, as was his habit. At Rājadharman's request, Indra revived Gautama, and Rājadharman lovingly embraced him. Rājadharman then went home, and subsequently visited Brahmā who properly honored him with hospitality. Gautama returned to the *dasyu*s' village, and had two sons with his *śūdra* wife, and the sons became evil-doers. The gods cursed him to go to hell.

The last of the upākhyānas considered here is also the closing narrative of the Ādhp, constituting chapters 12.162–67 of the Critical Edition. There is some internal evidence that suggests this textual unit was a relatively late addition to the Ādhp.[85] However, since in this instance we are concerned with how this text functions within its varied contexts, we shall be pursuing an analysis founded upon its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, together with considerations of it as a mirror text for Yudhiṣṭhira.

The Kṛtaghnopākhyānam invites a number of syntagmatic considerations. The first and perhaps most startling involves the slaying of the "king

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85   See, e.g., Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, 778, note to 161.48, and Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 392. This view is critiqued by Hiltebeitel in Alf Hiltebeitel, "On Reading Fitzgerald's Vyāsa," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 2 (2005), 246 n. 20.

of cranes" by the brahman Gautama. The crane is given the name Nāḍījaṅgha ("Hollow-Shanks") in Mahābhārata 12.163.18,[86] but this is only used this one time. The subsequent verse (12.163.19) informs us that he became renowned as Rājadharman ("King Dharma"), and it is this title he bears for the remainder of the story. Clearly, therefore, it is a designation of some import. Some observations in this respect shall be made shortly in relation to Yudhiṣṭhira (the "Dharmarāja"); for the moment we shall note that this tale draws to a close the "royal" instructions (*rājadharma*) represented by the Rājadharmaparvan and Ādhp in combination (the Ādhp continuing the royal orientation of the earlier Rājadharmaparvan—see above pp. 320–21). The slaying of Rājadharman, therefore, symbolically represents the closing of Bhīṣma's discourse in its orientation towards advice for royal conduct (*rājadharma*). In this respect, the Kṛtaghnopākhyānam is one of a number of "transitional" texts that draw to a close the Rājadharmaparvan and Ādhp sequence and, in some cases, foreshadow the following collection of the Mokṣadharmaparvan.[87]

In other aspects, this fable revisits some key themes developed elsewhere in the Ādhp, and to some degree offers a reorientation towards these themes for its primary auditor, King Yudhiṣṭhira. We should perhaps begin by observing in general terms that this tale involves: (1) a brahman engaging in behavior not normally approved; (2) culturally marginal actors (*dasyu*s,[88] hunters, *śūdra*s, *mleccha*s, *śabara*s, and *rākṣasa*s); (3) the transubstantiation of the brahman into a *dasyu*; (4) the juxtaposition of an "*abrahmaṇya*" brahman with a "*brahmaṇya*" *dasyu* and *rākṣasa*; and (5) the juxtaposition of the "*abrahmaṇya*" brahman who "destroys" what's been done (*kṛtaghna*) with the honorable "guest worshipping" king of cranes who is emblematic (together with his "friend" the *rākṣasa* king Virūpākṣa) of the virtue of *kṛtajña* ("knowing what has been done").

In addition to these points, Bhīṣma frames the fable in terms of ascertaining who should be allied with (*saṃdheya*), and who not (*asaṃdheya*) (see, e.g., Mahābhārata 12.162.5). This is typical of the way in which fables are deployed in the Ādhp, as also in *nītiśāstra* "mirror of princes" literature, in as much as the dramatization of relationships between archetypical "beings" illustrates potential difficulties in relationships between archetypal stakeholders in political contexts. Thus the vulnerable yet eager-to-please bird is opposed to

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86   Nāḍījaṅgha also appears briefly at Mahābhārata 3.191.10–11.

87   See Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 334–404; and "Framing Bhīṣma's Royal Instructions."

88   On the *dasyu*, see Adam Bowles, "The Dasyu in the Mahābhārata," in *Churning the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel and Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 155–72.

his endemic enemy the bird-hunter (a situation not unlike the fable already discussed), who in this case retains a veneer of his former brahman self, which serves to lure the bird into over-extending hospitality despite the inevitable dangers that he is evidently blind to. Kings, in other words, ought to be always reserving their judgment, if simultaneously acting with propriety. Problems of this nature become especially crucial when kings encounter crises, for in such circumstances alliances are of particular significance—it is for this reason that the Ādhp (like the *Arthaśāstra*, which in this respect it often resembles) frequently explores the problems of the "weaker" (king) in the face of the "stronger" (king). Alliances can often come from surprising sources, since the ruthless "robber-baron" and the noble "foreigner" may each have their use for the king in crisis; recognizing "types" and judging "characters," therefore, are crucial tools of the royal trade.

A brahman engaging in behavior not normally approved is a typical exemplar of situations of *āpaddharma* in both the Ādhp and the *dharmaśāstra*s. Yet, while much of the discourse surrounding *āpaddharma* concerns the brahman's legitimate pursuance of a livelihood not normally permitted him, there are nevertheless two problems that accompany this commonsense provision: first, it invites the question of when such provisions are legitimately invoked; and, second, it poses the problem of how a king, who is responsible for ensuring that *varṇasaṃkara* ("the intermixing of *varṇa*s") and *dharmasaṃkara* ("the intermixing of *dharma*s") are avoided, may recognize when a brahman is legitimately engaged in an occupation not normally his to pursue. Therefore, while this fable serves to illustrate the considerations a king ought to make in contemplating alliances, it also serves to highlight a general problem that the idea of *āpaddharma* poses. This is evident in the manner in which the story presents the brahman Gautama's justifications for his behavior—he arrives at the pious *dasyu* king's village to beg and seek shelter for the rainy season (Mahābhārata 12.163.31), he claims to have done so merely for a "livelihood" (*vṛttyartha*; 12.162.48), he travels north seeking a "living" (*jīvitārthin*; 12.163.4), he explains to Rājadharman that he is a "beggar" (*daridra*; 12.164.10) and wonders what he can do sustain his life (*prāṇasaṃdhāraṇa*; 12.165.29) on the road (which leads him to kill Rājadharman for a supply of meat). Such language, which typically arises in the context of *āpaddharma*, is encountered elsewhere in the Ādhp[89] and reflects the way in which *āpaddharma* conceptually developed in the *dharma* literature.[90] But it is apparent quite early that the brahman does not intend to return to the conventions demanded by the orthopraxy

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89   Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 397.

90   Ibid., 36–54.

expected of him. He stays on in the village for years, living in a house with a *śūdra* woman given to him by the *dasyu* king, learning how to hunt birds, the way of life of the *dasyu*s (12.162.32–35), until, eventually, he became the same as them (*dasyubhiḥ samatām iyāt*; 12.162.36). It takes another brahman, an old friend evidently more pious than Gautama, to point out Gautama's slide. "How did you become a *dasyu*?" (*dasyubhāvaṃ gataḥ katham*, 12.162.44) he asks, while reminding him of his brahman roots in a respectable family and encouraging him to leave the village. As we know, the brahman did leave, but too late for him to deny the impulses that had become second nature—when the opportunity presents itself, he kills the crane. This story, therefore, expresses a common anxiety associated with *āpaddharma* that is part and parcel of the dogmas expressed through the brahmanic social pathologies of *varṇasaṃkara* and *dharmasaṃkara*: if people do not follow their designated orthopraxies, but pursue the livelihoods associated with classes other than their own, then they risk transubstantiation into a member of the class for whom the occupation he follows is figured as the orthopraxy.[91] Considered as the closing narrative of the syntagm of the Ādhp, therefore, the tale serves as a cautionary reminder of the dangers—societal as well as individual (the brahman, it must be recalled, is cursed to go to hell)—that lurk behind the relaxing or ignoring of the orthopraxies underpinning brahmanic social theories. In other words, it serves to emphasise that *āpaddharma*s are only legitimate when certain conditions are met.

If these lessons—the seeking of appropriate alliances, the distinguishing of betrayers from the trustworthy, and the ensuring that orthopraxies are observed—are rather useful for Yudhiṣṭhira to be apprised of as he prepares to assume royal office, other factors also evoke paradigmatic associations with Yudhiṣṭhira and his characterization in the Mahābhārata. The very name of the *bakarāja* ("king of cranes"), Rājadharman, suggests the association, since it

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91   Such concerns are expressed in respect to *dasyu*s in the Ādhp at Mahābhārata 12.139.1 and 6, elsewhere in the Mahābhārata at 12.68.20, 74.10 and 329.12, and in respect to *mleccha*s at 3.188.29 and 45. See also Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 46 on Manu 10.92–93, which express a similar concern in respect to a brahman transforming into a *śūdra* or *vaiśya* due to pursuing their occupations (cf. the very graphic Manu 12.70–72). Further Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 217–18 and Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 178 (the latter discusses similar concerns in respect to speaking *mleccha* languages).

is a (near[92]) metathesis of the words constituting Yudhiṣṭhira's common epi-
thet Dharmarāja (which, of course, is also a common epithet of Yama, the god
of death). There is already precedence for connecting Yudhiṣṭhira with long-
legged, long-necked, carnivorous if not carrion-eating birds, as has been noted
by others.[93] Yudhiṣṭhira's divine father Dharma assumes the double-disguise of
a *yakṣa* pretending to be a *baka* (crane) in the *Yakṣapraśna*, in which the *yakṣa*
kills Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers before later reviving them after Yudhiṣṭhira suc-
cessfully responds to the *yakṣa-baka*'s riddles.[94] When Yudhiṣṭhira encounters
the disembodied voice of the *yakṣa* on the lake, the *yakṣa* announces that he is
"a crane that feeds on duckweed and fish" (*ahaṃ bakaḥ śaivalamatsyabhakṣo*;
Mahābhārata 3.297.11). Later Yudhiṣṭhira will take on the name Kaṅka, which
Fitzgerald has argued is a carrion-eating stork, when he lives in the court of
Virāṭa disguised as a brahman expert at dicing.[95] Biardeau has drawn out the
link between these stories, since, in being granted three boons in return for his
successful riddling, Yudhiṣṭhira chooses as his second that the Pāṇḍavas not be
recognized in their thirteenth year of exile. Thus the *yakṣa-baka* "eater of fish"
guarantees that the brothers will live undetected in the city of Virāṭa in the
land of the Matsyas ("Fish[er-folk]"), thereby sending Yudhiṣṭhira bearing the
name of a carrion-eating stork (though Biardeau takes Kaṅka to mean "heron")
among the "Fish" (3.198.16–19).[96] Biardeau argues that the connotations of
death carried by such carrion-eating birds prefigure the destruction that will
soon ensue in the Mahābhārata's great battle. The Ādhp's Kṛtaghnopākhyānam,
on the other hand, does not readily lend itself to such a reading, since it falls
after the battle has been won and lost, and the harbinger of death is not the
(*dvija*) *baka* Rājadharman, but the (*dvija*) brahman Gautama. Once order is
reconstituted, threats to this order derive not so much from warring rival

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92   "Near," since there is a slight morphological variation between *dharma* (in Dharmarāja)
      and *dharman* (in Rājadharman). See further Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in
      Ancient India*, 401.

93   Madeleine Biardeau, *Études de mythologie hindoue II—bhakti et avatāra* (Pondichéry:
      Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994), 157–61; Alf Hiltebeitel, "Śiva,
      the Goddess and the Disguises of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī," *History of Religions* 20
      (1980): 169–70.

94   On the Yakṣapraśna, see also David Shulman, "The Yakṣa's Questions," in *Untying the Knot:
      On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*, ed. G. Hasan-Rokem and D. Shulman (New York:
      Oxford University Press, 1996), 151–67.

95   James L. Fitzgerald, "Some Storks and Eagles Eat Carrion; Herons and Ospreys Do Not:
      Kaṅkas and Kuraras (And Baḍas) in the *Mahābhārata*," *Journal of the American Oriental
      Society* 118, no. 2 (1998): 257–61.

96   Biardeau, *Études de mythologie hindoue II*, 158.

potentates, but from a social lassitude in which social actors become complicit in the projection of disorder through their abnegation of orthopraxis. Needless to say, it is for the king to ensure that such things do not occur.

The *bakarāja* and the Gautama brahman, therefore, represent a slightly different thematic thread to the trope of carrion-eating bird as omen. If the Gautama brahman is a device for Bhīṣma to delineate aspects of the *nṛśaṃsa*, the "cruel man," we would also do well to recall Yudhiṣṭhira's identification with the values evoked through a derivative of its antonym, *ānṛśaṃsya* (see above p. 340). Indeed, Yudhiṣṭhira has already foregrounded his interest in these terms in the Ādhp when, in Mahābhārata 12.158.1, he tells Bhīṣma that he understands *ānṛśaṃsya*, but not the *nṛśaṃsa*.[97] The subsequent brief text, an exercise in *Listenwissenschaft*,[98] stands in an apposite relationship to the Kṛtaghnopākhyānam, which also has its own two-part *Listenwissenschaft* section (12.162.6–25[99]). In the Yakṣapraśna, Dharma in the guise of the *yakṣa* is so thoroughly impressed with Yudhiṣṭhira's appeal to *ānṛśaṃsya* (the "highest *dharma*"; 3.297.71; cf. 3.297.54–55) as the reason for him choosing to have Nakula revived so that both Mādrī and Kuntī would then have a surviving son, that he revives all his brothers, and then, "pleased with his benevolence" (12.298.10; *ānṛśaṃsyena tuṣṭo 'smi*), offers Yudhiṣṭhira three further boons. Much later, as Yudhiṣṭhira refuses to abandon the dog on his final *mahāprasthāna* into the Himālaya despite Indra's protestations, it is precisely to *ānṛśaṃsya* that he appeals (17.3.17; cf. 17.3.30).[100] The dog, of course, turns out to yet again be Dharma in disguise. Rājadharman also becomes an exemplar of benevolence and friendship, though the word *ānṛśaṃsya* is not used in connection with him. After Rājadharman as been returned to life, he appeals to Indra to return the *nṛśaṃsa* Gautama to life, too. Indra complies, and the *kṛtajña* Rājadharman embraces his *sakhi*, the *kṛtaghna nṛśaṃsa* Gautama (12.167.11–13). These associations between *dharma* (Dharma), *ānṛśaṃsya*, Yudhiṣṭhira the Dharmarāja, and Rājadharman the *bakarāja*, are perhaps more suggestive than concrete. Nevertheless, they serve again to remind us of the moral and existential plight of the tale's principal auditor, King Yudhiṣṭhira, at the junctures of the discourse on royal conduct and the following discourses on soteriologies (in the

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97   Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 356–58.

98   J.Z. Smith, *Imagining religion: from Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 44–48.

99   See Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India*, 393.

100   Further on Yudhiṣṭhira's sometimes vacillating, but generally strong advocacy for *ānṛśaṃsya*, see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 209–10.

Mokṣadharmaparvan), as he juggles questions of governing, with questions of moral order, and questions of salvation, especially, perhaps, his own.

In the above I have offered interpretations of three selected Āpaddharma-parvan upākhyānas with a sensitivity to their syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations within the Āpaddharmaparvan, the Śāntiparvan, and the Mahāb-hārata. Like all readings, these are in some sense experimental, and it would be pointless to dogmatically assert their priority over other interpretative approaches. In attempting to show that it is possible to read texts often implic-itly viewed as peripheral to the Mahābhārata as participating in some of its narrative and ideological objectives, I am deeply indebted to the ongoing work of Alf Hiltebeitel, to whom this paper and this volume are dedicated. Few if any scholars of the Mahābhārata, and certainly none in the last forty years (a period of remarkable activity and productivity), has opened up as many pos-sibilities for reading the great epic as has Alf.

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The Status of Upākhyānas in Madeleine Biardeau's Reflections on the Mahābhārata

Nicolas Dejenne

Introduction

Let me first state that I am very glad and honoured to contribute to the present volume devoted to the Mahābhārata and its upākhyānas, designed as a tribute to Alf Hiltebeitel's essential analyses of the Mahābhārata in the last forty years. My aim here is neither to provide a new reading of a specific upākhyāna nor to propose general considerations about upākhyānas but to present Madeleine Biardeau's (1922–2010) understanding and study of the upākhyānas. This chapter can thus be seen as a reflexive paper on how this important epic textual material was dealt with by one of the most insightful scholars of the Mahābhārata and a crucial source of inspiration for Hiltebeitel, who translated into English what is arguably Biardeau's most original book, *Histoires de poteaux* (*Stories about Posts*). Considering the massiveness of Biardeau's work on the Mahābhārata which spanned some four decades, I have tried to distinguish phases in her writing on the upākhyānas and I have tentatively identified four of them, which account for the four-part frame of this contribution:

1. First phase: late 1960s–early 1970s, characterized by a comparison of epic and purāṇic versions of myths in the framework of debates on critical editions of such texts.
2. Second phase: 1970s, mainly teaching and supervising research on upākhyānas, while continuing in parallel the publication of her series of major articles under the title "Études de mythologie hindoue."
3. Third phase: late 1970s–early 1980s, the period when Biardeau publishes her main case studies on epic upākhyānas.
4. Fourth phase: 1985–2002, a period that sees the completion of the enquiry and the overall presentation of the Mahābhārata to a wider audience.

Before presenting those four phases in their succession, one point must be stressed: once the essential overall coherence of the Mahābhārata as a unitary

work of mythical nature is accepted—and all Mahābhārata students know that this claim was continuously and untiringly advocated, emphasized and strengthened by Biardeau—the upākhyānas do not present a peculiar theoretical or conceptual problem. As was the case with all other portions of the epic text (tales of mythical origins, frame stories and dialogues, main narrative, didactic passages—even the longest ones in parvans 12 and 13), the upākhyānas are looked upon by Biardeau as integral to the Mahābhārata, not as later interpolations or gratuitous digressions, and thus they must be read and studied with the same seriousness and earnest and inquisitive mindset as any other portion and in a constant *va-et-vient* between the whole and the part. She stated it very clearly in accordance with her structuralist stand at the beginning of her 1978 article "Mythe épique et hindouisme d'aujourd'hui": "In a structural perspective, it is normal to consider that the interpretation of the MBh as a whole goes hand in hand with the interpretation of partial episodes, and that both of these aspects must throw light on each other in a continuous movement of going back and through."[1] In this passage as well as other analogous ones, Biardeau has suggested the hermeneutic or exegetic role that can be played by the upākhyānas in helping the reader to understand in a more refined and complete way the overall meaning of the Mahābhārata. The imprint of Biardeau's deep philosophical formation is unmistakable here in this search for the unity and coherence of the Mahābhārata, her proneness towards synthesis, and a unified reading and global understanding of the epics.

First Phase: Late 1960s–Early 1970s

Biardeau devoted the first fifteen years of her work in the field of classical Indology to an exacting and extensive study in Indian *darśana*s and philosophy of language, which culminated with the publication in 1964 of her book *Théorie de la connaissance et philosophie de la parole dans le brāhmanisme classique*.[2] In the mid-1960s, her interest gradually shifted from Brahmanical

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1   Madeleine Biardeau, "Mythe épique et hindouisme d'aujourd'hui," *Indologica Taurinensia* 5 (1977): 43. In the original, the text reads: "Dans une perspective structurale, il est normal de considérer que l'interprétation du MBh comme totalité va de pair avec l'interprétation d'épisodes partiels, et que les deux aspects doivent s'éclairer l'un par l'autre dans un mouvement de va-et-vient incessant."

2   Madeleine Biardeau, *Théorie de la connaissance et philosophie de la parole dans le brāhmanisme classique* (Paris: Mouton et Cie, 1964).

philosophical treatises and commentaries towards epic and Purāṇic Sanskrit literature[3]; a short time thereafter, she was appointed *directeur d'études* at the Religious Sciences section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris—a position she occupied from 1961 till her retirement in 1990. Those years at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s constitute the first phase of her writing and publishing about upākhyānas. Biardeau's initial papers in this area, which are based on her teaching at the EPHE,[4] are—quite remarkably and in contrast to most of her other work—mostly written in English. The papers appeared in three issues of the Indian journal *Purāṇa*[5]; they represent Biardeau's contribution to the debate about the relevance and even possibility of preparing critical editions of epic and Purāṇic texts at the time the critical editions of both *itihāsa*s were nearing their completion. Biardeau appears as a faithful heir to her great French predecessor, the Indologist Sylvain Lévi who expressed

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3   Biardeau's intellectual and academic biography was richly evoked in a one-day seminar—*Du texte au terrain, du terrain au texte: Dialogues disciplinaires autour de l'œuvre de Madeleine Biardeau*—organized in Paris in April 2011 by the Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud. For a remarkable reflection about these "critical years," we refer the reader to Gérard Colas's communication delivered at this occasion "Histoire, oralité, structure: à propos d'un tournant dans l'œuvre de Madeleine Biardeau," *Journal Asiatique* 300, no. 1 (2012): 17–32. In one of her last publications, a book review, Biardeau herself summarized the main stages of her "journey" in studying Indian civilization: "Peut-être aussi dois-je faire une part à la formation philosophique que j'ai reçue pendant mes études, avant de me tourner vers l'Inde et de passer après quelques années de la philosophie indienne aux mythes brahmaniques qui ne se sont jamais, du moins c'est ainsi que je les vois, complètement séparés de leurs origines védiques. Peut-être aussi devrais-je avouer que j'ai cru bon d'acquérir quelques connaissances en ethnologie et que je me suis donné par de longs séjours en Inde la possibilité d'explorer le «terrain» correspondant de près ou de loin à ce que je trouvais dans les textes mythologiques." Madeleine Biardeau, Review of *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas, India's Great Epic Poem and the Hindu System of World Ages*, by L. González-Reimann, *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 90–91 (2003–4): 511.

4   The EPHE publishes every year a summary of the conferences given by the professors in the *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences religieuses*. M. Biardeau was careful to provide rather detailed summaries of her teaching, complementing her articles and books. She regularly refers to these accounts of her teaching in her publications. This material is now freely available online on the French bibliographical website for humanities and social sciences called PERSEE: <http://www.persee.fr/web/ouvrages/home/prescript/fond/ephe>.

5   Madeleine Biardeau, "Some More Considerations About Textual Criticism," *Purāṇa* 10, no. 2 (1968): 115–23; "Letter to the Editors [January 21st 1970]," *Purāṇa* 12, no. 1 (1970): 180–81; "The Story of Arjuna Kārtavīrya without Reconstruction," *Purāṇa* 12, no. 2 (1970): 286–303.

as early as 1929 and 1934[6] his doubts about the project of a critical edition of the Mahābhārata launched by Pune's Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

The 1968–70 papers deal with what we can call upākhyānas, mostly Jāmadagnya's story (the very first epic and Purāṇic subject she chose for study at the EPHE in 1963), but at that time these sub-stories were studied neither because they were upākhyānas nor because of their relationship with the epic's main narrative. During this phase Biardeau focused on variants of different myths from the epics as well as from very late Purāṇic sources (for instance, in her 1969 article, "La décapitation de Reṇukā dans le mythe de Paraśurāma," where she referred to the Reṇukā-māhātmya, a text most likely composed in the modern period, to shed light on the epic episode of Reṇukā's beheading); but she later abandoned the comparison of texts separated by such a huge temporal gap, once she began in 1968 her continuous and systematic study of the Mahābhārata in her EPHE teaching.

Second Phase: 1970s

At that time, Biardeau published in French long and authoritative articles in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*—three on Purāṇic cosmogonies, then two on *bhakti* and *avatāra*. The importance of these articles later led to their re-publication in the form of two volumes of studies in Hindu mythology (*Études de mythologie hindoue*).[7] In this work, there is still no declared interest for upākhyānas as such and—by relying on a lexical search in the electronic versions of her texts—the words upākhyāna, sub-stories, or subtales do not appear at all. However, the study of the Rāma Jāmadagnya/Paraśurāma myth proved important and enlightening in Biardeau's explanation of the basic structure of the *avatāra* myths. If her interest in upākhyānas in this phase is not evident in books or articles, they form part of the subjects of her teaching at the EPHE that provide the material for later publications. She also supervised three PhD students whose dissertations dealt with major epic sub-stories: Herbert Hänggi on Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra (1971, unpublished), Michel

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6 Lévi is cited by Biardeau for the last time in Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 19.

7 The temporal distance between the dates of the first publication of these five studies as articles and their dates of publication in book-form justify their being mentioned in the bibliography of the present article concerned with the chronology and evolution of Biardeau's work. The original BEFEO articles are now freely available online on the same PERSEE electronic database.

Defourny on Yayāti,[8] and Jacques Scheuer on the *Ambopākhyāna* as part of his overall study of the role of Śiva in the Mahābhārata.[9] As these three students—all of them, incidentally, from Belgium—developed analyses deeply impregnated by Biardeau's approach, it does not seem out of place to consider them as participating in, and hence relevant to an investigation of, Biardeau's engagement with the epic's upākhyānas.

Third Phase: Late 1970s–Early 1980s

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, Biardeau published two articles in French (one of them in two parts) that meticulously investigated two of the most famous upākhyānas whose epic grounding, or maybe even epic origin,[10] is most often downplayed or ignored: the stories of Śakuntalā and of Nala and Damayantī.[11] Biardeau insisted on the epic context of those stories in the title of both articles, "Śakuntalā dans l'épopée" ("Śakuntalā in the Epic") and Nala et Damayantī. Héros épiques" ("Nala and Damayantī as Epic Heroes"). The long two-part article on the Nalopākhyāna published in the *Indo-Iranian Journal*[12] undoubtedly represents Biardeau's strongest and most detailed analysis of an upākhyāna and of its intimate connection with the main narrative of the Mahābhārata: this article presents the notion of upākhyāna as mirror-story ("récit-miroir") of the epic's central plot. This notion, which is defined for the first time with such clarity by Biardeau, remained till the end of her work on the Mahābhārata and proved her main instrument to articulate upākhyānas and the rest of the epics. The English abstract provided by Biardeau at the beginning of her article deserves to be quoted in its totality:

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8   Michel Defourny, *Le Mythe de Yayāti dans la Littérature Épique et Purānique*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, 221 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978).

9   Jacques Scheuer, *Śiva dans le Mahābhārata* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982).

10   "As far as Śakuntalā is concerned […], her personal story […] may very well be an Epic creation […] because all the obsessive themes in the MBh are present therein and provide the narrative with its frame, as can be shown by disclosing its logical articulations." Madeleine Biardeau, "Śakuntalā dans l'épopée," *Indologica Taurinensia* 7, *Dr. Ludwig Sternbach Felicitation Volume*, *Part I* (1979): 119.

11   Madeleine Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī: Héros épiques. Part 1," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 27 (1984): 247–74 and "Nala et Damayantī: Héros épiques. Part 2," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 28 (1985): 1–34 (for the Śakuntalā article, see the preceding note).

12   See preceding note.

When regarded separately, the story of Nala and Damayantī does not amount to much more than a tale. Therefore it has been inserted in book III of the *Mahābhārata* as a "sub-story," according to the usual practice of the Epic. The aim of this article is to show that this insertion is not without importance for an understanding of the story itself. The Epic provides a context for it and thereby helps in distinguishing the levels of significance which would otherwise pass unnoticed. Reciprocally, the "sub-story" brings to the Epic an outlook which is in part new and more profound by taking up the Epic plot in its own way and at its proper level. In this way, the role of the *Avatāra* in the *Nalopākhyāna* is taken up by the wife of the exiled king. This leads one to ask oneself about the link connecting the *Avatāra* Kṛṣṇa and the princess Kṛṣṇā Draupadī, wife of the five Pāṇḍava kings, in the Epic ideology. At the background of all of this, there are an active concept of the entire Epic, and also the aspects of the method which results from this.[13]

A summary of this two-part article, including quotations, is given in Appendix I as a case in point of Biardeau's method and of the various means she mobilized to uncover the often cryptic connection between the upākhyāna stories and the main epic one, mainly her careful lexical analyses, especially in the field of characters' names, and her subdivision of the upākhyānas in narrative units echoing the structure of the Mahābhārata.

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13   Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī: Héros épiques. Part 1," 247. The French summary, also provided by Biardeau herself, is more apposite: "Prise en elle-même, l'histoire de Nala et Damayantī n'est guère plus qu'un conte. Cependant elle est donnée comme un «sous-récit» à l'intérieur du livre III du *Mahābhārata*, selon un procédé courant de l'épopée. Le propos du présent article est de montrer que cette insertion n'est pas sans importance pour une compréhension de l'histoire. L'épopée lui sert de contexte et aide à en dégager des niveaux de signification qui passeraient inaperçus sans cela. Réciproquement le «sous-récit», en reprenant l'intrigue épique à sa manière et dans son registre, renvoie de l'épopée une image en partie renouvelée et approfondie. C'est ainsi que le *Nalopākhyāna* fait presque totalement disparaître le rôle de l'*avatāra* et donne le rôle principal à l'épouse du roi exilé. On est amené à s'interroger sur le lien qu'entretiennent dans l'idéologie épique l'*avatāra* Kṛṣṇa et la princesse Kṛṣṇā Draupadī, épouse des rois Pāṇḍava. A l'arrière-plan c'est toute une conception de l'ensemble de l'épopée qui est en jeu et les aspects de la méthode qui en découlent." Ibid.

Fourth Phase: 1985–2002

Barring a few articles—notably the 1991 one on Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the 1997 article on the Kīcaka episode, and the 1997 contribution to Gerhard Oberhammer's edited volume *Studies in Hinduism*[14]—the last phase of Biardeau's publication on the epic can be broadly characterized as a period of popularization[15] of a decade-long work on the Mahābhārata towards a cultured French-speaking audience.[16] She first recapitulated in 1985–86 her previous findings in a two-volume pocket book, in a collection of classics of world literature, where selected passages (translated into French by Jean-Michel Peterfalvi), were accompanied by her copious comments. In 2002, she presented her "final word" on the Mahābhārata in a huge two-volume book of nearly 2000 pages; this volume does not bring anything really new for her understanding of the articulation and of the close and incredibly refined imbrication between the overall meaning of the Mahābhārata and its "mirror-stories." The innovation in the book consists in her strong, but not very convincing, assertion of the Mahābhārata as an ideological and narrative weapon to retaliate against Buddhist progress and prevalence in Indian political, religious, and social mores at the time of the Mahābhārata composition. It must be noted here that the presentation and the analysis of the upākhyānas are not altered or modified in any way by this new more historical outlook on the epic and that their interpretation remains grounded in her previous essentially structuralist reading: in keeping with her earlier study, Biardeau still reads the epic's main narrative and the upākhyānas as constituting parts of a single textual corpus.

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14   Madeleine Biardeau, "Nara et Nārāyaṇa," *Wiener Zeitschrift für the Kunde Südasiens* 35 (1991): 75–108; "Un certain Kīcaka," in *Lex et Litterae: Studies in Honour of Professor Oscar Botto*, ed. Siegfried Lienhard and Irma Piovano (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1997), 35–52; "Some Remarks on the Links between the Epics, the Purāṇas and their Vedic Sources," in *Studies in Hinduism: Vedism and Hinduism*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 77–119.

15   In order to attract a wide range of readers, Biardeau had a little earlier contributed more than ten popular articles in an encyclopaedia on world religions and mythologies (Yves Bonnefoy, ed. *Dictionnaire des mythologies et des religions des sociétés traditionnelles et du monde antique*, 2 vols. [Paris: Flammarion, 1981]). We have mentioned in the bibliography only the entries directly linked with upākhyāna topics.

16   We must also classify under this rubric a new complete annotated French translation of the Rāmāyaṇa that she supervised, in collaboration with Marie-Claude Porcher, in the most prestigious French collection of classics, la Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Rāmāyaṇa de Vālmīki* [Paris: Gallimard, 1999]).

If we set aside the new "anti-Buddhist" dimension[17] perceived by Biardeau in the Mahābhārata, and the difference in the size of both publications, her recapitulative volumes of 1985–86 and 2002 display a strong *air de famille*, especially in the method that she followed—a method that is summed up in the very title of her 2002 book: *The Mahābhārata. A Foundational Narrative for Brahmanism and Its Interpretation*. Thus for each selected passage of the Mahābhārata, Biardeau first provided a detailed summary, rarely a full translation,[18] of the passage; then she gave its interpretation. This method had been successfully tested, used, and displayed in several academic articles, especially the Śakuntalā and "Nala and Damayantī" ones.

Coming more precisely to the place given to the upākhyānas in both reca-pitulative volumes, the difference in format and pagination accounts for the bigger share of attention they receive in 2002: while in the 1985–86 book only the Ambā-Upākhyāna (because of its direct link with Bhīṣma's death in the main epic action) had been partially translated, in the 2002 publication not only the Ambā-Upākhyāna but also the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, the Yayāti-Upākhyāna, the Nalopākhyāna, the Kārtavīrya-Jāmadagnya-Upākhyāna, Mār-kaṇḍeya's cosmic vision, the Dhundhumāra-Upākhyāna, the Rāmopākhyāna, the Dambhodbhava-Upākhyāna, and the Nakula-Upākhyāna are summarized and then interpreted in a more or less detailed way.[19] However, does this far greater space given to upākhyānas in Biardeau's final book reveal a change in Biardeau's conception of their role in the general economy of the Mahābhārata? It seems unlikely because, on the one hand, Biardeau has mostly gathered, in this last book of hers, previous analyses of individual upākhyānas, and, on the other hand, she obviously sticks to the notion of "mirror-story" that she had developed in the "third phase" mentioned earlier. We can even say that only the upākhyānas that can qualify as "mirror-stories" of the main plot find their way for detailed analysis in this book. We refer the reader to Appendix

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17   This "anti-Buddhist" dimension is not totally new in Biardeau's work but there had only been hints of it before the 2002 book.

18   As a difference with the 1985–86 publication, Biardeau is not accompanied in 2002 by a collaborator in charge of the translation and the volume, so that the text as well as the interpretation is thus totally her own.

19   Biardeau sometimes preferred to give only the gist of previous analyses published in sci-entific journals and collections to which she referred the reader (in spite of this book being intended for a non-specialist readership). We can mention for instance the treat-ment of Kārtavīrya-Jāmadagnya-Upākhyāna in its Vanaparvan version: "The myth of Rāma-with-the-axe [...] was specifically studied in [Biardeau 1994: p. 73 *sq*.], particularly in this Epic version. We thus try here to shorten the narrative as much as possible." Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 517, n. 20.

11 for the list of words (mainly names of characters) directly connected with upākhyānas in Biardeau's rather extensive glossary[20] to have an indication of the sub-stories she thus seemed to find indispensable for a general knowledge or understanding of the Mahābhārata—Biardeau seems in a few cases to have used this glossary to provide extremely short summaries of upākhyānas she did not want to include in the body of her narrative and interpretation but that deserved to be mentioned at some point as significant cases of stories of kings and brahmans.[21]

Biardeau's concern with upākhyānas as "mirror-stories" is almost exclusive: it accounts for her detailed analysis of the upākhyānas appearing only in the first parvans of the Mahābhārata, crucially the Vanaparvan which concentrates a number of "mirror-stories" providing the reader—and the Pāṇḍavas themselves—with clues to understand and decode the meaning of the cosmic and dynastic crisis of the main plot. This concern also explains why the upākhyānas of Books 12 and 13, the two other main storehouses of upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata, which have a broader ideological and didactic intent, are not studied or even alluded to in 2002 as well as in 1985–86—in spite of the far greater size of the 2002 book as was already mentioned. If Biardeau focuses on upākhyānas that "mirror" the whole epic, there is no complete equivalence and synonymity between the terms *upākhyāna* and *mirror-story*: many upākhyānas cannot be deemed mirror stories and, reciprocally, some stories labeled "mirror-stories" by Biardeau involve the main characters of the Mahābhārata and, as such, are not upākhyānas *stricto sensu*—this is especially the case in the Virāṭaparvan with the story of Kīcaka: "We can see that the *Virāṭaparavan* reproduces like a mirror part of the epic plot and that the distribution of characters alludes to a well-known [epic] opposition: in the Matsya kingdom, the *Sūta*s group led by Kīcaka is opposed to the legitimate king and to the kingdom he rules."[22]

On the whole, in her last and huge statement on the Mahābhārata, Biardeau has managed to make sense of all the portions of the epic, even the upākhyānas

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20   Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 789–895.

21   It is the case for the Uśīnara-, Aṣṭavakra- and Yavakrīta-Upākhyānas occupying Mahābhārata 3.130–39: "For those various narratives of kings and Brahmins, see the Glossary at their respective names." Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 525, n. 24. However, the name *Uśīnara* seems to have been forgotten in the glossary.

22   Biardeau, "Un certain Kīcaka," 44. French original: "l'on voit déjà que le Virāṭaparvan reproduit en miroir une partie de l'intrigue épique et que la distribution des personnages renvoie à un clivage déjà connu: dans le royaume des Matsya, le groupe des Sūta conduit par Kīcaka s'oppose au roi légitime et au royaume qu'il gouverne." Ibid.

or other types of secondary narratives or secondary passages, in relation to the "central myth" of the Mahābhārata; the only exceptions she candidly admits are the Nārāyaṇīyaparvan and the Anugītā.[23]

Conclusion

Coming to the conclusion, and as I mentioned at the outset of this paper, upākhyānas, as fully integral to the Mahābhārata, did not pose any conceptual difficulty for Madeleine Biardeau who proposed neither a general "theory of the epic upākhyānas" nor any typology of them. She nevertheless provided, especially from the mid-1970s onwards, in-depth studies of individual upākhyānas that she judged to be the most relevant and useful for her understanding of the whole *itihāsa*. In this respect, her articles on Śakuntalā and, more crucially, on Nala and Damayantī can be viewed as models of her method and bear testimony to the fruitfulness and fecundity of her fully asserted structural approach. The study of the Nalopākhyāna led Biardeau to develop the notion of mirror-stories or mirror-narratives ("récits-miroirs") of the main plot of the Mahābhārata, a notion that she also applied to a few other upākhyānas appearing more peculiarly in the Vanaparvan, namely, the upākhyānas of Sāvitrī, Rāma Dāśarathi, and Rāma Jāmadagnya. Among all epic upākhyānas, those mirror-stories are certainly the most enlightening to understand key-aspects of the Mahābhārata which would otherwise have remained out of sight or little noticed, for instance, the relationship between the fate of Draupadī as the queen and an image of the suffering Earth, on the one hand, and the *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa, on the other.

If Biardeau's analysis of selected upākhyānas has in this way greatly deepened her understanding of the overall narrative and ideological coherence of the Mahābhārata, it is also remarkable that this better grasp on the whole epic reciprocally enabled her to discover and highlight aspects of stories as famous as "Nala and Damayantī" which had been beforehand neglected or ignored. In this regard, we can eventually assume that Biardeau's study of Mahābhārata mirror-stories represents a significant and invaluable contribution to the understanding of their place and resonance not only in the epic and Purāṇic corpus but also in Sanskrit literature as a whole, including *kāvya* texts.

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23   Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 565–66.

Appendix 1.   Presentation of Biardeau's Analysis of the Nalopākhyāna in "Nala et Damayantī. Héros épiques," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984): 247–74 and 28, no. 1 (1985): 1–34.

As was indicated above, Biardeau's lengthy two-part *Indo-Iranian Journal* article, totally devoted to the well-known story of Nala and Damayantī, probably provides her most detailed analysis of an upākhyāna. It is obviously here out of question to follow the intricacies and subtleties of this sixty-page study but we would like to stress the main points of her method.

In her very short introduction to the article, Biardeau makes general statements about the connection between the upākhyānas and the main epic narrative: the story of Nala and Damayantī is

> one of those "sub-stories" [sous-récits]—upākhyānas—which considerably lengthen the epic, especially its Book III, "of the Forest," but that [the Indian editors of the epic] would never consider as more or less recent inserts [pièces rapportées]. Those upākhyānas are meant to illustrate an answer given by a sage to a question or complaint of one of epic heroes, most often Yudhiṣṭhira, which indicates at least a certain relationship [un certain rapport] between the illustration and the main plot. It is thus not at first glance artificial to see in them narratives in the narrative [des récits dans le récit], with all it entails of mirror-effects between the reflection and its model [jeux de miroirs entre le reflet et son modèle], even in the absence of a common character at the most superficial level.[24]

Biardeau's analysis of the Nalopākhyāna is divided into three elements:

1. "The narrative" ("Le récit") offers a summary and preliminary analysis of the Nalopākhyāna proper and covers the whole of part 1 (pp. 247–74);
2. "The epic context" ("Le contexte épique"; part 2, pp. 1–17) highlights the major narrative and thematic correspondences, the structural ones so to say, between the Nalopākhyāna and the main plot of the Mahābhārata;
3. "Mirror-effects" ("Effets de miroirs"; part 2, pp. 17–32) comes back to the analysis of the Nalopākhyāna to qualify it and to deepen it and try to draw conclusions for the epic—"Conclusions" that are summarized in part 2 (pp. 32–33). Elements that had been left aside or remained cryptic in the first two sections now receive new light.

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24   Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī: Héros épiques. Part 1," 247–48.

Let us now look at these in more detail:

1. At the outset of her analysis of the Nalopākhyāna, Biardeau clearly stresses the necessity of the first phase of her undertaking:

> At first, we have to present the narrative by dividing it into segments. [The Nalopākhyāna] lends itself very conveniently to this kind of treatment because it is strongly articulated and does not leave any room for the arbitrariness [of the researcher]. For the sake of convenience, each segment will be followed by a preliminary strictly internal analysis, so that we can come up with a picture presenting the totality arrived at. It is only on the basis of this clear picture that we will propose a correspondence with the whole of the epic plot, taking into account analogies as well as transformations.[25]

Biardeau identifies five segments: "the wedding" (part 1; pp. 248–51; the part of the story from Damayantī's miraculous birth to her *svayaṃvara* and subsequent conjugal life with reigning Nala), "the game of dice" (pp. 251–54), "the exile" (pp. 254–63), "the hidden life and the recognition" (pp. 263–71), and "the final game of dice" (pp. 271–72). At the end of this first section of the article, the complex narrative of the Nalopākhyāna is very aptly and conveniently summarized by Biardeau in two pages (pp. 272–74) displaying the five segments and their various sub-segments (up to five sub-segments for the fourth segment, "the hidden life and the recognition").

2. The beginning of the second section of the article—"The epic context"—highlights, through a well-designed summary of the Mahābhārata, how the Nalopākhyāna "appears in its main articulations as an approximate imitation of the first books of the Mahābhārata [le récit apparaît dans ses grandes articulations comme un décalque approximatif des premiers livres du MBh]."[26] Once we acknowledge "the change in scale and in register" between the story of Nala and the epic, an "overall correspondence [correspondance d'ensemble]" can be formulated: "the sufferings of the Niṣadha king take place between two games of dice while the sufferings of the Pāṇḍavas are bounded by a double initial game of dice and by a war."[27]

This rough comparison, which can look somewhat bold considering "the disproportion between both texts," is enlightening because "the oppositions, the inversions in motives and the unavoidable simplifications […] are at least as fruitful [for the analyst] as the immediate correspondences. [Those correspondences] are necessary to catch the comparison [accrocher la comparaison] and to show its relevance but we have to

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25   Ibid., 248.

26   Biardeau, "Nala et Damayantī: Héros épiques. Part 2," 1.

27   Ibid., 2.

go beyond them."[28] Much of the analysis in this "epic context" section aims at identifying and delineating the analogies between the main characters of the Nalopākhyāna and those of the Mahābhārata: Nala reminds the reader of Yudhiṣṭhira, because of his being the legitimate king and of some aspects of his personality, notably his patience and his magnanimity, and at the same time of Arjuna, especially for onomastic reasons (Nala can be read as a slight variation of Nara, the name of the ṛṣi whose Arjuna is the incarnation). As far as she is concerned Damayantī obviously appears as a reflection of Draupadī as the image of the Earth-wife of the king and as the suffering and active queen of kingly husband(s) under duress: the supernatural conditions of their birth, their *śyāma* complexion, their *svayaṃvara*s, their forceful but only partially successful interventions during their husband's game of dice, the power of their complaints and curses, the sameness of the name—*sairandhrī*—adopted during their phases of hiding in a foreign court ... are as many elements strengthening the analogy between both queens.

Next to those analogies between characters, the Nalopākhyāna as a whole may be read as "an optimistic version of the crisis of *dharma* at the attention of Yudhiṣṭhira [...], which contributes to its aspect of tale"[29] and accounts for the "major omissions" in the summary of the Mahābhārata at the beginning of this section: the "obsessional" theme of the "disturbed relationship between the two highest *varṇa*s" (in the Nalopākhyāna, "*kṣatriya*s and Brahmins are complementary as they must be in a harmonious society"[30]); the second major omission, "intimately connected with the first one, concerns the key-character of the cosmic crisis, the *avatāra*" as the Nalopākhyāna does not present on Nala's side a character who would be an alter ego of Kṛṣṇa in his role next to Arjuna (in the Nalopākhyāna a faint but very significant reminder of Kṛṣṇa, born among the Vṛṣṇis, consists in the very name of Nala's own charioteer, Vārṣṇeya, to whom Damayantī entrusts on the eve of the exile in the forest Nala's chariot, weapons as well as their children). As a consequence of the much downplayed aspect of the crisis of *dharma* in the Nalopākhyāna and of the absence of the *avatāra*, part of the latter's functional role seems to be taken by Damayantī herself who "dominates the action"[31]—even if she remains almost totally unaware during the whole Nalopākhyāna of her being "at the centre of the action" and the main stake in Nala's rivalry with the gods, Kali and Dvāpara, his brother Puṣkara or his host-king Ṛtuparṇa. Nala himself is credited with other aspects of the *avatāra* as the salvation-giver divinity of the *bhakti* ideology (as when he grants *abhaya* to some characters, including his enemies Kali and Puṣkara).

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28   Ibid., 3.
29   Ibid., 4.
30   Ibid., 5.
31   Ibid., 6.

At the end of this second section of her analysis, Biardeau recapitulates:

> In a global comparison of the Mahābhārata and of the *Nalopākhyāna*, various parameters must be taken into account together. On the one hand a cosmic crisis illustrated on the earthly level by a crisis of *dharma* resulting in a deadly war, which is conceived of as total sacrifice and even as the sacrifice of the older disturbed sacrificial order [...]. On the other hand a crisis of dharmic kingship, recognizable in the presence of Kali and Dvāpara and in their roles in the Mahābhārata, [but] where the war is replaced by a final game of dice.[32]

She then summarizes a set of four oppositions "functioning inside a same whole and being as much reference points as the constant features are [les oppositions ... servent tout autant de points de repère que les traits constants]"[33]:

> war-sacrifice vs game of dice
> *avatāra* vs princess
> warrior king vs magnanimous king
> blood vs dust.[34]

> The term of an opposition never fully obliterates its opposite so that the meaning is never lost sight of, even if the register war-*avatāra*-warior king-blood is more "readable" as a socio-cosmic crisis necessary for the salvation of the world than the opposite register game of dice-princess-magnanimous king-dust. The terms of the second register are indeed implied by the terms of the first one: the game of dice heralds the war, the *avatāra* appears in the Mahābhārata when the Pāṇḍavas wed Draupadī, Nala is the Yudhiṣṭhira aspect of the Pāṇḍava kingship while Arjuna is the central actor in the epic [...]. Maybe the conversion of the first set of terms into the second one was needed to highlight so clearly the role of the princess.[35]

3. The third and final section of the article, devoted to the study of "mirror effects" or "mirroring effects," is more eclectic than the first two as it investigates some puzzling episodes happening during the eventful segment of the exile in the forest of Nala and Damayantī, first together then separated from each other. Biardeau's interpretations may seem more tentative here but the extreme attention devoted to names of

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32 Ibid., 16.
33 Ibid., 17.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.

characters or of places helps once more to shed light on an episode as bizarre as the destruction of the merchants' caravan which had rescued Damayantī, through a parallel drawn between the roaming of Bhīma on the Gandhamādana mountain and his killing of the *rākṣasa* Maṇimat (guardian of this mountain and of Kubera's treasures), on the one hand, and the protective role of the merchants supposedly played by the *yakṣa* Maṇibhadra, on the other.[36] The main result of this section is indeed most likely the underlining of the rather unexpected analogy between some functions of Bhīma in the Mahābhārata and the ones of Damayantī in the Nalopākhyāna. This analogy, expressed in a concise phrase at the end of the second section of the article ("the Bhīma component of kingship is transferred onto the princess in the *Nalopākhyāna*"[37]), is elaborated mainly thanks to the connection, explored beforehand in the analysis, between Damayantī and Draupadī, to whom Bhīma is blindly obedient; a more direct comparison can be made between the grasping of Damayantī by a python just after being forsaken by Nala and the episode where Bhīma is also imprisoned by a python which appears to be the cursed wicked king Nahuṣa.[38] The violence Damayantī efficiently but blindly displays in her cursing of the lustful hunter and of the unknown creature responsible for Nala's sufferings reminds Biardeau of major features of Bhīma's personality and destructive action. In the final part of this third section, Biardeau re-examines once more the respective periods of life incognito of the heroes in the Mahābhārata and of the Nalopākhyāna because both shed light on one another; she here draws the attention on the strange relationship between "eater" and "eaten" that can be observed in both contexts. The Brahman Parṇāda ("eater of leaves"), sent by Damayantī to find Nala and who succeeds in his mission, is in the same relationship with king Bhāṅgāsuri Ṛtuparṇa ("who gives leaves at the right period"?) as Yudhiṣṭhira disguised as the Brahman Kaṅka (seemingly the name of a fish-eating bird in Sanskrit) is with the Mastya ("fish") king Vīrāṭa. This homology is not a gratuitous one as "the kingdom of fishes is mythically ruled by the law of the strongest [la loi du plus fort] which the war must replace by the dharmic kingship […] but the passage from the carnivorous register to the vegetarian metaphor is justified by the fact that there will be nothing more than a game of dice, there will be neither war nor any kind of execution even after Nala's final victory over his brother."[39] In the Nalopākhyāna story, sacrificial and most blatantly warrior elements are downplayed not to say overlooked by the center-stage place granted to the game of dice and to the heroine.

In her conclusions, for Biardeau, "the ramification of the main plot in well-built 'sub-narratives' [sous-récits], or else in secondary narratives aimed at 'explaining' an

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36   Ibid., 27–30.

37   Ibid., 17.

38   Ibid., 19–22.

39   Ibid., 31.

abnormal situation, satisfies other demands"[40] than the mere enjoyment of the reader. She continues:

> The narration intends to be cryptic: one of the charms of the narrative consists in this display of various levels of meaning [...] but this charm requires at some point for one of these levels to become suddenly dominant, thanks to the insistent repetititon of a word or to a totally unlikely situation or to the highlighting of a detail, which results in an opening toward a new meaning. The "sub-narrative" [sous-récit] is a most favored device used by the [epic] authors to give a wink at their audience. Not only does the *Nalopākhyāna* require the epic context to be fully understood but we must not omit to return the mirror and to look at the epic plot under the light of the *Nalopākhyāna*. We are thus surprised to see Damayantī take so much importance in the action without any alteration of her femininity [sans que sa personnalité féminine en soit altérée]. Above all [we are] surprised to see her almost take in the narrative the place of the *avatāra* [...]. It obliges the auditor of the epic to connect the princess with the *avatāra*, Kṛṣṇā [i.e., Draupadī] with Kṛṣṇa: a whole new understanding makes its way.[41]

More precisely the Nalopākhyāna helps the reader or auditor of the epic to understand "the close link of the *avatāra* not only with the king but with the [princess and] queen" who, as the king's wife and the incarnation of Earth, is "most interested in the final success of the avataric and kingly action." As such the queen evokes the Goddess and, in the power-granting asceticism which forms a common thread in the Nalopākhyāna and during the twelve-year exile of the Pāṇḍavas, and which is illustrated in the queen's estrangement from her king-husband, "we are at the source of the difficulties that we have to conceive of the Goddess both as a virgin and as Śiva's wife, both being a spouse and staying alone in her shrine. [...] The Nalopākhyāna, by putting forward a heroine, helps at the same time to deepen the main feminine character of the epic."[42]

Appendix 11. List of Words Connected with Upākhyānas in Biardeau's Glossary[43]

Agastya; Akṛtavraṇa; Arjuna [Kārtavīrya]; *aśokavanikā* ("the term only occurs in the *Rāmopākhyāna*, one of the mirror-stories of the Book III of the Mbh"); Avindhya;

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40   Ibid., 32.

41   Ibid.

42   Ibid., 33.

43   See Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, 789–895 ("Glossaire").

Bāhuka; Bhagīratha; Bhaṅgāsura; Bhārgava (designating mainly Śukra or Jāmadagnya); Bhīmasena (as "Vidarbha king and Damayantī's father, in the mirror-story of the Nalopākhyāna (MBh, III)"); Bhaimī; Damayantī; Dambhodbhava; Daśagrīva; Dattātreya; Devayānī; Dhundhumāra; Durvāsas; *eḍūka* (this Buddhist Sanskrit term "appears only twice in the same passage (MBh III. 190, 65 and 67)," i.e., Mārkaṇḍeya's cosmic vision); Hanumān; Ikṣvāku; Jamadagni; Kaca; Kadrū; Kuvalāśva; Mainda; Mālinī; Māndhātar; Mantharā; Mārkaṇḍeya; Nala (but he is surprisingly only referred to here as the monkey of the *Rāmopākhyāna* who built the bridge to Laṅkā, and not as the character of the *Nalopākhyāna*); Nara; Nārāyaṇa; Nīla; Parṇāda; *pativratā* ("the model given by the MBh is Sāvitrī in a mirror-story narrated by Mārkaṇḍeya and which Draupadī seems to attend"); Pūru; Puṣpoṭkaṭā; Rākā; Rāma (designating Dāśarathi or Jāmadagnya); Rāvaṇa; Ruru; Śarmiṣṭhā; Satyavān; Satyavatī; Sāvitrī; Sītā; Subāhu; Sudeva; Śukra; Śūrpaṇakhā; Suṣeṇa; Trijaṭā; Vajravega; Vinatā; Viśvāvasu; Vṛṣaparvan; *vyādha*; Yadu; Yavakrīta; Yayāti.

The reader will notice that some names, which may have been expected, are conspicuous by their absence: Cyavana; Duḥṣyanta; Kaṇva; Śakuntalā; Vasiṣṭha; Viśvāmitra …

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Toward a Geography of the Mahābhārata's Uñchavṛtti Brahman

Thennilapuram Mahadevan

The Mudgala Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 3.246–247) occupies a special niche in Alf Hiltebeitel's map of the upākhyānas of the Mahābhārata: it provides him with a possible, a plausible agency behind the appearance of the first written text of our epic. Mudgala, the hero of the upākhyāna is the "Gleaner Brahman" (*uñchavṛtti*). He forages like a bird in the fields after harvest and not only subsists on the grains gleaned thus but also provides inexhaustible feasts to his guests. He is cast in the epic as a figure in a state of extreme Dharma, devoted to exacting adherence to the *śrauta* ritualism. His name possesses an independent resonance outside the epic: a distinct school of hautram rises in his name, the praxis of the Ṛgveda (ṚV) in *śrauta* ritual, based on its Śākala *śākhā* and thus in east Pāñcāla, south-eastern Pāñcāla, and Kosala (see below for discussion).[1] Hiltebeitel sees them as a special group of Brahmans,[2] attached to small Brahmanical kingdoms like the Śuṅga (ca. second century BCE)—perhaps "out of sorts"[3] in the larger society, but in a sort of interface with Vyāsa and bringing out "at most through a couple of generations"[4] the epic in its first written form. Can Mudgala be delineated further?

I attempt this, following another lead from Hiltebeitel, by envisioning him in the geography of the upākhyānas of the Mahābhārata, its various denizens, its different flora and fauna. His extreme dharma to *śrauta* ritualism already places him in a precise ecology. He might have been part of the exuberance of the hyper rituals[5] of the period following the dissemination of the Kuru

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1 Max Müller, *A History of Sanskrit Literature So Far as it Illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans*, rev. 2nd ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1860), 368, note 6. Mudgala is named as one of the five adherents of the Śākala Saṃhitā in the commentary to its *prātiśākhya* text.

2 Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.

3 Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 19.

4 Ibid., 20.

5 During and after the development of the classical scheme of the *soma* rituals, starting with the Agniṣṭoma and ending with the Āptoryāma, Vedic ritualism seems to go into a high gear,

Pāñcāla orthodoxy-orthopraxy complex from a core Kuru center to the radially adjacent areas, especially in the Pāñcāla area and its east, toward Kosala and Videha and the emerging Magadha imperium (ca. sixth century BCE). Mudgala's most immediate niche in this ecology is as a member of a patrilineal genetic group, bound twice by the well-known exogamy-endogamy regulations of the *gotra* institution, exogamy forbidding marriage to another Mudgala and endogamy, mandating marriage to only another *gotra* affiliate, as is ratified in the *pravara* list of the Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra (BŚS), ca. sixth century BCE.[6] This makes Mudgala a "real" person, with what may be called a *gotra* narrative about a distinct identity, a human group defined in time—with a "before" into the Vedic past at its founding through the "present" of the epic to a future, as manifested in distinct historical Brahman groups.

The Vedic Origins of Mudgala

In continuing studies, I have shown that we can envisage the formation of a global Vedic oral agency from some forty-nine separate individual oral agencies, some of them the size of families, others comprising single individuals.[7] The ten maṇḍala Ṛgveda captures a global collection of hymns, edited out of the individual family and personal collections, with a very precise index of the names of the *ṛṣis* or singers of the hymns, the Anukramaṇī list. Mudgala (Bhārmyśva) is an example of an individual singer, with a sole hymn in the corpus, at 10.102, engendering what becomes in time a *gotra* lineage—his hymn in fact making, even celebrating this point, in Brereton's reading of the hymn.[8] Brereton shows that "the hymn was composed to accompany a rite of *niyoga*," a common way out of male infertility in marriages, so that the real race portrayed in the hymn is for "virility and fertility and the real prize is the offspring" engendering a new "race," as Brereton puns on "race." A new *gotra* label honors the "new" race, the line of the progeny that results from the *niyoga*, often a branch off the parental *gotra* lineage. As Brereton glosses "*bahave janāya*"

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with the year-long *gavamāyana* and the years-long *sattra* rituals. Indeed the Mahābhārata presents itself to the world twice with the *sattra*-type rituals as the setting, first from Vaiśaṃpāyana in Kurukṣetra and then by Śaunaka in Naimiṣa Forest.

6   See Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "The Institution of Gotra, Ṛgveda, and the Brahmans," paper presented at the Fourth Vedic Workshop, Austin, TX, 2007.

7   Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "The Three Rails of the *Mahābhārata* Textual Tradition," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 23–69.

8   Joel Brereton, "The Race of Mudgala and Mudgalānī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122, no. 2 (2002): 224–34.

(at ṚV 10.102.8c) "many people": "[T]he 'many people' would be the many descendants that the impotent husband will win through the *niyoga*,"[9] thus establishing a patrilineal lineage of the Maudgalyas, with the *pravara* formula, later, in BŚS, of Āṅgirasa-Bhārmyśva-Maudgalya, the prefix *bhār-* ("many"[10]) in the immediate progenitor of Mudgala, perhaps alluding to "*bahave*" in the *ṛk*: "he of the many horses."

We can flesh out this figure further. Mudgala is one of Kuiper's three hundred-odd non-Vedic items,[11] the *–gala* suffix signifying an unknown Panjab substrate.[12] There are others like him in the ṚV, most notably the Kaṇvas, with the second largest collection of hymns in the corpus. Witzel suggests a Dravidian origin for the Kaṇvas,[13] but we don't know of a similar origin for the term *mudgala*. Placed at ṚV 10.102, part of the appendix of the corpus, it is a late composition, probably composed in eastern Panjab toward the Kuru realm and Kurukṣetra.

The lineage he establishes possesses, as noted above, in the *pravara* list of the BŚS (sixth century BCE), the genetic formula of Āṅgirasa-Bhārmyaśva-Maudgalya: the mythical Aṅgirasa, often a metonym for Agni Himself; an intermediate Bhārmyaśva, one of many horse-linked names in the Vedic period; and Mudgala the last figure after whom we have a lineage, a group of Vedic oral agents, many descendants from a male Mudgala marrying only from other such similar *gotra* lineages and not in his own. The whole scheme is pregnant with the import of the Mudgala hymn of the ṚV 10.102, Mudgala-Mudgalānī engendering a race of Maudgalyas.

The BŚS *pravara* list designates the line as a "Kevala" Āṅgirasa, (a rubric occurring outside the Aṅgirasas only for the Bhṛgus in the Pravara Lists[14]). Mudgala shares this prefix with six other such groupings: Kutsa, Kaṇva, Virūpa, Pourugutsa, Gaurivita, Āmahīyava. Several of these groupings, as noted with

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9   Ibid., 231.

10   Macdonell, s.v. "*bhār*."

11   F.B.J. Kuiper, "Ṛgvedic Loan Words," *Studia Indologica* 51, no. 3 (1955): 137–85 and F.B.J. Kuiper, *Aryans in the Ṛgveda* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1991).

12   Michael Witzel, "Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan (Rgvedic, Middle and Late Vedic)," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 5, no. 1 (1999): 13.

13   Ibid., 24.
      Witzel, citing Kuiper (*Aryans in the Ṛgveda*, 7) suggests that the Kaṇvas may be Dravidian immigrants into the Panjab in the later phases of the ṚV formations. Witzel, "Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan," 24.

14   See Mahadevan, "The Three Rails of the *Mahābhārata* Textual Tradition," 66–73.

the Kaṇvas, are outside the "main"[15]—and unambiguously Vedic—Āṅgirasa groups, namely, the Bharadvājas and Gautamas, composers of the sixth and fourth Family books of the ṚV respectively. In other words, a lineage like the possibly non-Vedic Mudgala is made part of the global Vedic oral agency—perhaps even welcomed, as I have suggested elsewhere[16]—through the arch of "*kevala*," "exlusively proper, true"[17] into the Vedic milieu, riveted from this point onward through the twin regulations of exogamy and endogamy as a unit of the *gotra* society. This is already evidenced in BŚS *pravara* lists and confirmed in practice among the historical Brahman groups.

Further, the BŚS lists ten names, starting with Mudgala,[18] as making up the Mudgala group. I have shown elsewhere that these numbers can be taken as a measure of the numerical strength of individual groups, with fair correlation with historical data (the latter derived from epigraphy and fieldwork in the peninsula[19]). The BŚS Bharadvāja number is eighty-eight, most in the *pravara* list, and the Bharadvājas always rank most in historical data. At ten, the Mudgala group is smaller in comparison and the count roughly applies to the other Kevala Āṅgirasa groups as well. This suggests a smaller nucleus, one that was perhaps originally outside the Vedic mainstream, but, by the time of the BŚS *pravara* lists (sixth to fourth century BCE), has been riveted into the Brahman group at large.

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15   By the Brāhmaṇa period, the "main" *ṛsis*, forming the Great Bear in the Milky Way, are cited as "*madhyama ṛsis*," Middle Ṛsis, the composers of the middle books, the Family Books, of the Ṛgveda. The Anukramaṇī index lists seven such figures as the composers of two different hymns (ṚV 9. 67.1–21 and 10. 137.1–7), in each the list being Bharadvāja, Kaśyapa, Gotama, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, and Vasiṣṭha and the Bhāradvāja-Āṅgirasas leading the list in both with the Gotama-Āṅgirasas placed third.

16   Mahadevan, "The Three Rails of the *Mahābhārata* Textual Tradition."

17   Macdonnell, s.v. "*kevala*."

18   The other nine names are Hiraṇākṣa, Ṛṣabhā, Mitākṣa, Ṛśya, Ṛśyāyana, Dīrghjanghaḥ, Pralambajanghās, Taruṇā, Bhindavā. See John Brough, *The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara: A Translation of the Gotra-Pravara-Mañjarī of Puruṣottama-Paṇḍita. With an Introduction by John Brough* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 123.

19   See Mahadevan, "The Institution of Gotra, Ṛgveda, and the Brahmans," Appendix I; Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "On the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata*, Brahman Migrations, and Brāhmī Paleography," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2008): 183–85.

The Epic Mudgala

Although we cannot arrive at a precise number for the Mudgalas as a whole from their вśs number of ten, we can arrive at useful surmises. Bhāradvājas come first with 88, usually 20% of the Brahman populations in the peninsula in my census, derived from Copper Plate epigraphy, giving us close to 200,000 individuals. The Mudgala number of ten would give us perhaps a tenth of the Bharadvāja number, thus 20,000 today. Thus it is reasonable to suppose there were enough Mudgalas—indeed other *gotra* affiliates as well, as required by the exogamy-endogamy regulations of the *gotra* system when the Brahmans begin to migrate eastward from Kurukṣetra and radially in other directions as well. The Pāñcāla area is of special interest for us: Vaiśaṃpāyana, himself a Naidhruva-Kāśyapa[20]and the primary singer of the epic, is also the traditional redactor of the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, localized in the Pāñcāla realm in Witzel's scheme,[21] the liturgical compilation in which the great hyper rituals like the seven-cycle Soma rituals, the yearlong *gavamāyana*, and the *sattras* develop in the Pāñcāla realm. The epic first presents itself in one of these *sattras* to an internal milieu and then in another to the outer world, the Brahmans like Mudgala and other Gleaner Brahmans plausibly playing a role in the process. Vyāsa's two other disciples are also important figures in the ritual world: Jaimini is the redactor of the Jaiminīya Sāmaveda (JS), while Paila is the redactor of the ṚV. Both are attested in the вśs and Śrauta Sūtra *pravara* lists of other Vedic schools.[22] The trivedic *śrauta* axis—the ṚV-*hautram*, the TS-*ādhvaryavam*, the JS-*audgātram*—needed for the performance of the hyper rituals is thus in place for the Pāñcāla realm at the rise of the epoch of the hyper rituals.

All of this is relevant for the epic Mudgala. He is presented as an ideal ritualist and it is possible, as noted above, that a school of ṚV-*hautram* rose in his name, possibly in the eastern part of Pāñcāla around the time of the Śākāla Saṃhitā: the commentary on the Śākala-prātiśākhya names Mudgala, Gokhula, Vātsya, Śaiśira, and Śisira as the adherents of the Śākala Saṃhitā,[23] which has

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20   Brough, *The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara*, 150; Item 64.

21   Michael Witzel, "The Development of the Vedic Canon and Its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu," in *Inside the Texts—Beyond texts: New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas*, ed. Michael Witzel, Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 1997), 305.

22   Paila is a Jāmadagnya-Bhṛgu (Brough, *The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara*, 79; Item 15) and Jaimini, not listed in вśs, appears in the Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra Pravara List as a Yāska-Bhārgava, a Kevala Bhṛgu genus, with the Pravara formula Bhārgava-Vaitahavya-Sāvetasa (ibid., 94; Item 10).

23   Müller 1860: 386.

been localized in the east, specifically in eastern Pāñcāla and Kosala.[24] We must envision this Mudgala to be a descendant of the Vedic Mudgala, the *ṛṣi* mentioned in ṚV 10.102, descending in a direct lineage from his original Kurukṣetra attestation to his epic present, now in the east: his Kurukṣetra origin (Mahābhārata 3.246.2) is specifically noted in the epic. It is also pertinent to note that spread of the human agency of Vedism is irreducibly multi-gotraic after the institutionalization of *gotra* exogamy. It is unlikely that an exact cross-section of the *gotra* distribution moved in tandem at migration; it is even possible that a certain *gotra* lineage was sometimes over-represented in certain migrations.[25] A sine qua non is that a departing Brahman group possessed enough *gotra* distribution to guarantee its biological survival. The epic Mudgalas must be seen in this light, part of what can now be called Brahman migrations, one *gotra* lineage in consonance with other *gotra* lineages.

Vyāsa himself appears in the epic to narrate Mudgala's story; he specifically emphasizes his ritualism (Mahābhārata 3.246-247): Mudgala has performed the Iṣṭikṛta ritual (246.5), possibly a *sattra* session. He distributes food inexhaustibly to Brahmans after every *darśapūrṇamāsa*, on his fortnightly gleanings from the harvest fields. Durvāsas himself tests him and, satisfied, offers to send him bodily to heaven. When informed of the virtues and faults of the heavens, Mudgala opts to stay back on earth and practice total serenity attaining "eternal release"[26] or "supreme perfection that is marked by Extinction."[27] The Gleaner Brahman re-appears in the Mokṣadharmaparvan (12.349) as part of Bhīṣma's discourse to Yudhiṣṭhira on what constitutes the highest dharma.

What we can definitively say about the Mudgala-Brahmans in the epic period is that they contained among them steadfast adherents of *ṛṣidharma* (the dharma of *ṛṣis*) so much as to become subjects in the epic on the highest dharma. However, as Hiltebeitel notes,[28] the epic also cautions against excess, humanizing the Gleaner Brahman. Naturally they were part of further

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24   See Witzel, "The Development of the Vedic Canon and Its Schools," 315 and passim.

25   Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "The Ṛṣi Index of the Vedic Anukramaṇī System and the Pravara Lists: Toward a Pre-History of the Brahmans," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 18, no. 2 (2011): 91–93.

26   John D. Smith, trans. *The Mahābhārata: An Abridged Translation* (Delhi: Penguin, 2009), 209.

27   J.A.B. Buitenen, trans. *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2. 2. *The Book of the Assembly Hall; 3. The Book of the Forest*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 705.
      Hiltebeitel's use of "*nirvāṇa*" for the final release (Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 54) is interesting; in the original it reads: *jagāma śāśvatīṁ siddhiṁ parāṁ nirvāṇalakṣaṇām* (3.247.43 cd).

28   Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 20 n. 78.

Brahman movements, for instance, to the Magadha area and the rise of the
Śukla Yajurveda traditions, centering around the Vājanaseyi Saṃhitā. Likewise,
some of them were part of the Brahman migration to the peninsula comprised
of the Pūrvaśikhā and Aparaśikhā Brahmans.[29] The first of these groups, the
Pūrvaśikhās, arrived in the peninsula with the epic ca. 150 BCE and are attested
in the Sangam poetry (50 BCE–300 CE). The second group, the Aparaśikhā,
arrived half a millennium afterward from sixth through the seventeenth centu-
ries CE and also brought with them the Mahābhārata. The latter group has left
behind enough historical evidence in the form of epigraphy and corroborative
field work for us to reconstruct their migration.

The Historical Mudgalas

The Mudgala *gotra* is attested among both the Pūrvaśikhā and Aparaśikhā
Brahmans and thus provides us a compelling picture of the later history of the
Maudgalya group. Their numbers range around 2–3% in the Aparaśikhā data
available from epigraphy and fieldwork, about the same as of the other Kevala
Āṅgirsas.[30]

An early Mudgala in the Tamil country was Viṣṇucitta or Periyāḻvār, a Cōḻiya
Pūrvaśikhā. He is one of the three Brahman Āḻvārs, besides being the father
of the foundling daughter, Āṇḍāḷ the only woman Āḻvār. Periyāḻvār is also the
composer of the *Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻī* that comprises the first 473 *pāsurams* of
the *Nālāyiradivyaprabhandam* (NVP). The Uttamaṇaṃbi family of Śrī Raṅgam,
the administrators of the great temple in the middle ages, is descended
directly from him.[31] He plays a decisive role in the rise of the Āḻvār phase of
Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the Tamil country, generating a *bhakti* discourse from the
Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa.[32]

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29   Mahadevan, "On the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata*," 183–85 (Appendices I and
      II).

30   For instance, the Pourugutsas and Rahtitaras. But the Kaṇvas are rare in the peninsular
      samples; see Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "Toward a Gotra Census from Peninsular Data,"
      paper presented at the 223rd Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Portland,
      OR, 2013

31   Interview with Singapperumal Uttamanambi, the ninty-fifth descendant of Periyāḻvār
      (interview conducted August 6, 2012 at Śrī Raṅgam).

32   Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "The Southern Recension of the Mahābhārata, the Hari-
      vaṃśa, and Āḻvār Vaiṣṇavism," in *Ways and Reasons for Thinking about the Mahābhā-
      rata as a Whole*, ed. Vishwa Adluri (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2013),
      63–117.

The history of the Mudgalas among the Aparaśikhā Brahmans is even more dramatic. The first attested Aparaśikhā Mudgala in the peninsula is possibly Deva Śarman (son of Droṇa Śarman and grandson of Svāmy Śarman). He is described as an "expert in the teachings of Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Itihāsa, [and] Purāṇa" in the Vunnuguruvapālem Plates of the Pallava king Parameśvaravarman (Regnal Year 19 [= 687 CE]),[33] the archaeological sites where where the plates were discovered still in Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh but abutting into the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam region of the Tamil country. There are seven Mudgalas (out of 215 donees) mentioned in the Taṇḍantottam Plates of Nandi Varman exactly a hundred years later (Regnal Year 58 [= 789 CE]), these archaeological sites now deep in the Kaveri delta with the Pallava expansion southward and in present-day Kumbakonam district. As we know, these plates also set aside land for a "reader" of the Mahābhārata. The Mudgala number reaches seventeen (out of 1083) in the Karandai Plates of Rajendra Cōḷa (Regnal Year 8 [= 1929–31 CE]); many of them are referred to in these deeds with the last name Daśapuriyan or originating from Daśapuri, the fabled city of Malva along the Chambal river. These epigraphic data have been amply confirmed by field data available about the Aparaśikhā Brahmans: a fairly reliable Gotra census of this group places the Maudgalya numbers regularly around 3% of the total.[34]

Is there continued evidence of the twin confluence of ritualism and the epic among the historical Maudgalyas in Tamil country? I have already noted the significant role Periyāḻvār plays in generating the *bhakti* discourse of the Āḻvār phase of the Śrīvaiṣṇavism of the Tamil country from the epic and the Harivaṃśa, both of which would have arrived in the Tamil country around the fourth century CE. His descendants, the extant Uttamanambi family of Śrī Raṅgam, were masters of the Śrī Raṅgam temple in the middle ages. Perhaps the historical family where both *śrauta* Vedism and epic erudition combine most graphically is an Aparaśikhā Brahman family on the Kaveri river in the village of Śēṅkhālipuram just west of Kumbakonam: that of the late Anantarāma Dīkṣitar.[35] The family has been performing the Agniṣṭoma-Agnicayana-Vājapeya complex of the *soma* rituals for the past sixty genera-

33   T.V. Mahalingam, *Inscriptions of the Pallavas* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1988), 148–51; Item No. 45.

34   Mahadevan, "The Institution of Gotra, Ṛgveda, and the Brahmans" (Appendix); Mahadevan, "The Ṛṣi Index of the Vedic Anukramaṇī System and the Pravara Lists," 137–39 (Appendix II).

35   As it happens, Frits Staal contacted Anantarāma Dīkṣitar in the 1950's for permission to witness and study a *soma* ritual that was unfolding in the nearby Nannilam agrahāram on the Kaveri, but had no success. Staal then approached the Nambudiri Pūrvaśikhās of Malabar—with dramatic success.

tions[36] and they have also been the leading exponents of the *kathā-kālakṣepa* tradition in the Tamil country, narrating, among other stories, the Mahābhārata to great acclaim and regional distinction. The tradition is continued by the thirty-three-year old Kesava Dīkṣitar of Śrī Raṅgam, a third-generation descendant of Anantarama Dīkṣitar. Kesava Dīkṣitar has mastered the Taittirīya Saṃhitā upto the *krama* recitation; he performed the Agniṣṭoma at age twenty-four in 2003 and the Agnicayana at age thirty-three in 2012. He is set on performing the Vājapeya. His *kathā-kālakṣepa* repertory includes, since the age of eighteen, the Śankaravijayam, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Bhāgavatam, the Nārāyaṇī-yam, and the Mahābhārata.

It is seen thus that, using *gotra* markers, the Mudgala of the Mudgala Upākhyāna can be fully delineated backward from the epic period to his Vedic origins and milieu and forward through the historical period to the present. It constitutes a remarkable case history spanning almost 3000 years. It also reinforces my call for a radical revision of our understanding of the Brahman migrations. The migrations were not haphazard and they are always organized along and within a multi-*gotra* group—at least four *gotra* affiliates from extant epigraphy and fieldwork.[37] There is nothing like it in human history.

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36   Interview with Śrī Kesava Dikshitar (interview conducted August 6, 2012 at Śrī Raṅgam).

37   Such is the case where historical reconstruction is possible. For instance a Brahman migration from around the fourteenth century CE brought a group of Jaiminīya Sāmavedis from the Śrī Raṅgam area in Tamil Nadu to the Koḻunthirapuḻḻi *agrahāram* in Palghat, made up of four *gotra* affiliations: Kautsa-Āṅgirasa, Jāmadagni-Bhṛgus, Vaiśvāmitra-Aghamarṣaṇa, and Vāsiṣṭha-Kauṇḍinyas.

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Upākhyānas and the Harivaṃśa

Simon Brodbeck

Hiltebeitel and the Poona Text

Alf Hiltebeitel's writings are luminous and voluminous, and indispensible to anyone interested in the Mahābhārata. I was delighted to make Alf's acquaintance on my first visit to the USA, at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society in Nashville in 2003, when Jim Fitzgerald organized a panel on the Mahābhārata and was kind enough to invite me to speak on it. Since then I have spent time in Alf's company at several conferences in several countries. He is a charming fellow, and I feel very lucky to be able to contribute to this volume in his honour.[1]

There has been a literary turn in Mahābhārata studies with Alf Hiltebeitel. In terms of the analytic and synthetic divide, Hiltebeitel is a synthetist; he views the text as a whole. He has championed the Poona reconstituted Mahābhārata[2] as a text worth taking on its own terms; and he has argued against attempting to make chronological stratifications within it.

There are several old assumptions about the Mahābhārata's diachronic development that the critical edition provides no evidence for. Hiltebeitel encourages us to do without those assumptions. There are then many aspects of the text better to appreciate and newly to understand and integrate, aspects which previously had been sidelined as supposedly late. For example:

- Kṛṣṇa's divinity and the divine plan to rescue the earth;[3]
- the many substories with which the Mahābhārata is peppered;[4]

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2   *The Mahābhārata Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, gen. ed. Ramchandra N. Dandekar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1971–76).

3   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Kṛṣṇa and the *Mahābhārata*: A Bibliographical Essay," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 60 (1979): 99; Alf Hiltebeitel, "Between History and Divine Plan: The *Mahābhārata*'s Royal Patriline in Context," *Religions of South Asia* 5 (2012): 103–25.

4   Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.

- the role of Vyāsa as the author within the text;[5]
- the story of Janamejaya and the snake sacrifice, at which the Pāṇḍava story is told;[6]
- the telling to Śaunaka in Naimiṣa Forest;[7]
- the first three chapters with the tables of contents;[8] and
- the Harivaṃśa, including the end of the story of Janamejaya.[9]

In this book we are focusing on the substories, the upākhyānas. Hiltebeitel has called the Mahābhārata's inclusion of upākhyānas "the last frontier in theorizing an integral *Mahābhārata*,"[10] although the above list would imply several comparable "frontiers," and the word "last" is probably premature. In this paper I begin with some theoretical remarks about upākhyānas and the upākhyāna project as Hiltebeitel has launched it, and I go on to discuss the Harivaṃśa in that connection. The main purpose of the paper is to give a descriptive overview of the Mahābhārata upākhyānas that are presented in the Harivaṃśa, with particular attention to their effects upon their listeners.

Upākhyānas, Substories, and the Harivaṃśa

The immediate implication of the label upākhyāna—the *upa*-stories—is that these are the lesser stories.[11] But it is all relative. The Mahābhārata text

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5   Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 132–91.

6   Simon Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline: Gender, Culture, and the Royal Hereditary* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 217–66; Simon Brodbeck, "Janamejaya's Big Brother: New Light on the *Mahābhārata*'s Frame Story," *Religions of South Asia* 2, no. 2 (2009): 161–76.

7   Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 92–176; Laurie L. Patton, "Traces of Śaunaka: A Literary Assessment," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2011): 113–35.

8   Vishwa Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the Ādiparvan," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 143–210; Vishwa Adluri, "Hermeneutics and Narrative Architecture in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Ways and Reasons for Thinking about the Mahābhārata as a Whole*, ed. Vishwa Adluri (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2013), 1–27.

9   Simon Brodbeck, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches in Light of the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 223–50.

10 Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Geography of the *Mahābhārata*'s *Upākhyānas*," paper presented at the Sixth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (Dubrovnik, August 2011), 1.

11 I use the word "stories" rather than "tales," as I think it has fewer incidental connotations; see, e.g., Adheesh Sathaye, "Magic Cows and Cannibal Kings: The Textual Performance of

presents us with multiple levels of narrative encompassment, so that at each level there are characters in the story who tell and/or hear stories. Most of the upākhyānas are stories told and heard within the story of the Pāṇḍavas; that is, within the story told to Janamejaya about his ancestors.[12] In this context, those upākhyānas can be explicated most obviously in terms of how they relate to the circumstances of their telling. So, for example, we easily read the Nala, Rāma, and Sāvitrī upākhyānas in terms of the events affecting Yudhiṣṭhira. In each case we think, in realistic terms, of what the story, as told, could mean to him, and we think that those meanings might be partly why the character telling it is telling it to him, at that dramatic juncture in his life.[13] And in thinking of this kind of narrative operation we can also think about the stories told to ourselves by others and to others by ourselves, and the differences those stories might make in our own lives and in those of the people we tell stories to; and so we would hope to become better tellers and better hearers. And this is a nice way of understanding upākhyānas. It is especially nice because the long story of the Pāṇḍavas allows a number of upākhyānas to comment together, on the same narrative level, and overwhelmingly to the same person. They have a cumulative effect, which allows a good, long, dramatic, and existential focus: in Hiltebeitel's list of 67 upākhyānas, "49 are told primarily to Yudhiṣṭhira."[14]

So we can imagine what those stories mean to Yudhiṣṭhira, and in doing so we notice that there is a story about what those stories might mean to him, and we may then think that that is a story told to us as receivers—particularly if we are male receivers, like Yudhiṣṭhira. Our personal predicament with this text means that we can think about it for ourselves individually: the Mahābhārata and me. It is a powerful effect. The text says: here's this man, and various things keep happening to him, and he keeps hearing stories. The switch is simple, to "I'm a man, and various things keep happening to me, and I keep hearing stories." But it is a dangerous effect, because, quite apart from anything else, it normalizes the Pāṇḍava story as the basic level of the Mahābhārata's narrative presence.

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the Viśvāmitra Legends in the *Mahābhārata*," in *Battle, Bards, and Brāhmins*, ed. John Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012), 198 n. 9.

12   See Hiltebeitel's list of the upākhyānas (Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 467–69). The criteria for inclusion in this list are detailed immediately after the list, and will be discussed later.

13   For examples of this kind of explication in my own work, see Simon Brodbeck, "Gendered Soteriology: Marriage and the *Karmayoga*," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 150–62; Simon Brodbeck, "The Story of Sāvitrī in the *Mahābhārata*: A Lineal Interpretation," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (third series) 23, no. 4 (2013): 538–43.

14   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 472.

Forty-nine out of sixty-seven upākhyānas are told primarily to Yudhiṣṭhira. Why? For Janamejaya's benefit, not ours. And he's a character in a story. But here we hit upon a possible block. Because in our own lives we can only see backwards and we only live a short time, we don't see the future stories that are told that involve us as characters. And we certainly don't feel like characters in a story told to someone else. We feel real! So if ever we get existentially involved in being told about Yudhiṣṭhira and his life and the stories he is told, we will tend to bracket out Janamejaya and his story, in order to insert ourselves at that place.[15] But who knows what price we will pay for that indulgence? For it encourages us to think of the so-called frame stories as unintelligible, or about something else, or secondary, or later. This effect goes hand in hand with the idea that the Pāṇḍava story told to Janamejaya might have existed, more or less as we have it, before being told to Janamejaya—an idea that is present within the text's fiction, but that has rapidly diminishing mileage outside it, and, as mentioned above, draws no support from the critical edition.

The label "frame story" performs a similar function to "substory" in this respect: that it helps to construct and normalize the intermediate narrative level containing the Pāṇḍava story. The term "frame story" implies, by analogy with a work of art, that the frame is subsidiary and subservient to that which it frames; and the word "substory" does something similar through the use of the prefix "sub." But both terms are ours; and where we might seem to have an approximate Sanskrit equivalent for "substory" in *upākhyāna* (about which more below), I know of no Sanskrit word for "frame story."[16] Moreover, the implications of the word "frame" depend on the contingencies of the art industry in history, and in this regard it is instructive to consider some of Howard Hodgkin's paintings (see Figures 13.1 and 13.2), where paint is placed also on the

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15   When detailing the audiences of his listed upākhyānas, Hiltebeitel states that "Vaiśaṃ-pāyana addresses ten to Janamejaya" (ibid.); but these are only the ones that Vaiśaṃpāyana addresses *directly* to Janamejaya—that is, the ones that are not addressed to a character within a story told to Janamejaya. In fact Janamejaya hears all of Vyāsa's upākhyānas, one from the horse's mouth (the Hayaśira-Upākhyāna at Mahābhārata 12.335; see Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 472–73; Alf Hiltebeitel, "The *Nārāyaṇīya* and the Early Reading Communities of the *Mahābhārata*," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 245–49), and the rest from Vaiśaṃpāyana.

16   The word *paryākhyāna* is found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (ad Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.4.54), but apparently not with this meaning; Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 607; *The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, vol. 1, ed. Franz Kielhorn, rev. Kashinath V. Abhyankar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1985), 487.
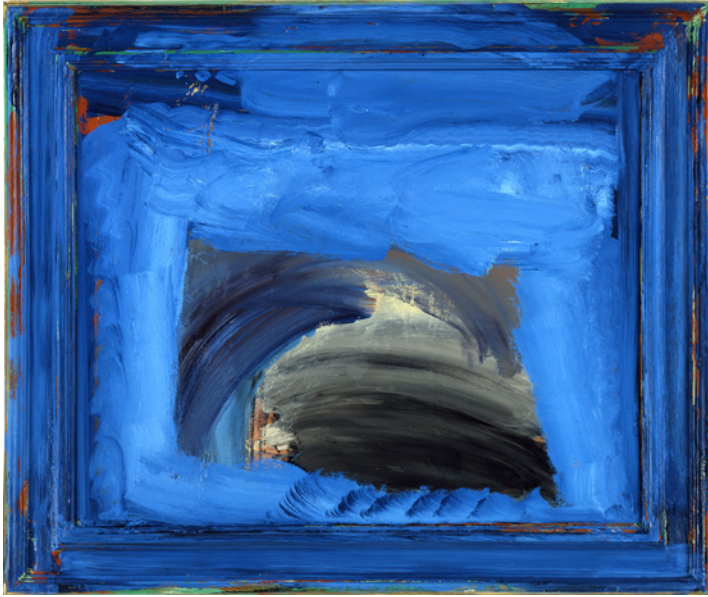
FIGURE 13.1 Howard Hodgkin, *Thunder*, 1999–2002; oil on wood, 45 ⅝ × 53 ⅜
               inches. © HOWARD HODGKIN.

frame; although the physical frame is sometimes painted over *as* a frame (i.e.,
a rectangle is painted approximately around the outside), it is clear that the
frame is thus an integral part of the artwork as the artist conceives it.

Although the Pāṇḍava story at the intermediate level usually passes for the
Mahābhārata's "main story," since it is all relative and there are not just three
levels of narration, one might just as well normalize the story of Janamejaya
and the *sarpasatra*, and see the story of the Pāṇḍavas as a substory, even though
it is never called an upākhyāna in the text (and even though it would still be a
frame story for its own substories). And if one does so, the tools to use for expli-
cating that substory *as* a substory are those already applied to Yudhiṣṭhira's 49
upākhyānas on the lower level; that is, the substory can be understood in terms
of the context in which it is told.[17] But as soon as one de-normalizes the

17   For example, in past work I have assumed that the Pāṇḍava story told to Janamejaya
      relates to Janamejaya's situation, and I have tried to think about how it does so, and to use
      it as supporting evidence for inferences made about that situation (Brodbeck, *The
      Mahābhārata Patriline*, 217–66; Brodbeck, "Janamejaya's Big Brother"). This follows up the
      work of Minkowski, who identified the thematic congruence between the story of the
      sarpasatra and the story of the Pāṇḍavas. Christopher Z. Minkowski, "Janamejaya's *Sattra*
      and Ritual Structure," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 3 (1989): 403–4;
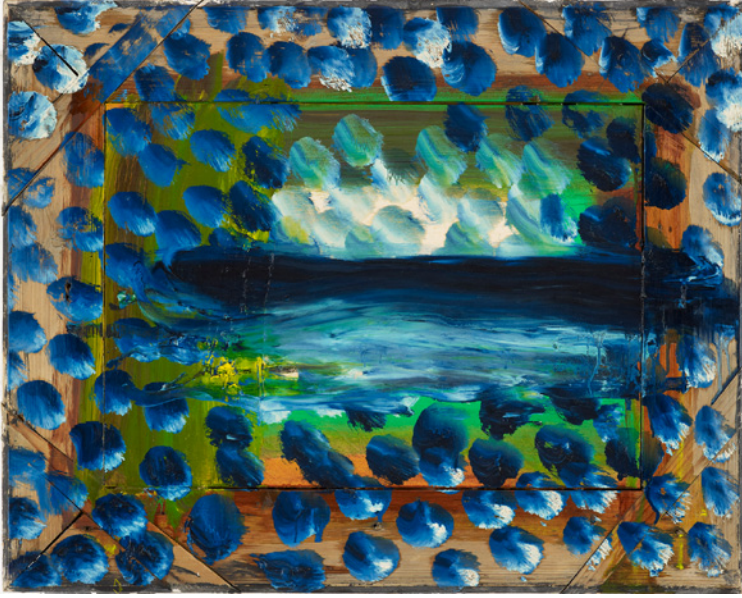
FIGURE 13.2 Howard Hodgkin, *Dark Evening*, 2011; oil on wood, 20 ¾ × 26 × 2 inches.
© HOWARD HODGKIN. COURTESY GAGOSIAN GALLERY.

Pāṇḍava story and steps up to the higher dialogue level, the Harivaṃśa comes into play.

I have written elsewhere of the Harivaṃśa's integral status within the Mahābhārata as the Mahābhārata presents itself.[18] I summarize my findings briefly here. The Mahābhārata's tables of contents include the khila parvans among the hundred parvans (listed at Mahābhārata 1.2.34–69), and also include them in the listed contents of the text even after the Mahābhārata's allegedly later division into eighteen parvans, which they stand outside of (Mahābhārata 1.2.72–234). In both cases I have argued[19] that all three parvans of our Harivaṃśa are mentioned, although the second of those parvans—called Viṣṇuparvan and Āścaryaparvan in the colophons[20]—is mentioned out

Christopher Z. Minkowski, "Snakes, *Sattra*s, and the *Mahābhārata*," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 384–400; cf. now Vishwa Adluri, "Literary Violence and Literal Salvation: Śaunaka Interprets the *Mahābhārata*," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 50.

18   Brodbeck, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches," 228–31.

19   Ibid., 241–42 nn. 20, 22.

20   The other two are the Harivaṃśaparvan and the Bhaviṣyatparvan. There is some discrepancy over where the Viṣṇuparvan/Āścaryaparvan begins: at chapter 46 as per the critical edition (*The Harivaṃśa, Being the Khila or Supplement to the Mahābhārata, for the First*

of sequence in order to stand as the transcendental one-hundred-and-first, and is called *adbhutaṃ mahat* (Mahābhārata 1.2.69d) and *prakīrtitam* (Mahābhārata 1.2.233d).[21]

I spoke to Alf of the Harivaṃśa's integral status within the Mahābhārata over a few glasses of Jura in Delhi in January 2010, since when he has mentioned it in print himself:

> the *Mahābhārata* represents itself as including the *Harivaṃśa*…[22]

> the *Bhaviṣya Parvan* (*HV* 114–18) ends the Pune Critical edition of the *Harivaṃśa*, which completed the Pune Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*.[23]

> [The episode of Indra's trick at Janamejaya's *aśvamedha*] closes both the *Harivaṃśa* and, in one of its most capacious self-definitions, the *Mahābhārata*.[24]

> It is beginning to look like we must consider the *Harivaṃśa* as something not as far removed in time from the *Mahābhārata* as has been for a long time thought, and as part of the *Mahābhārata* project *and* plan from at least the time it was reaching completion.[25]

There is some hedging and/or fudging here, as the final quotation requires the Harivaṃśa not to be part of the Mahābhārata in order that there be some (reduced) temporal remove between the two texts, and the previous quotation

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     Time Critically Edited, ed. Parashuram L. Vaidya, vol. 1 [Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969]), or at chapter 30ish as per the colophons; see Horst Brinkhaus, "The Division into Parvans and the Bhaviṣyaparvan of the *Harivaṃśa*," in *Stages and Transitions: Temporal and Historical Frameworks in Epic and Purāṇic Literature,* ed. Mary Brockington (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002), 164–69.

21   This view is to be differentiated from the idea that "the two [parvans of the Harivaṃśa] that the *Mahābhārata* refers to as *upaparvan*s may be meant to encompass all three," which Hiltebeitel traces to personal communication from myself (Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 577), but is a view I have never knowingly expressed (though it may well have some mileage).

22   Ibid., 571.

23   Ibid., 578.

24   Ibid., 581.

25   Ibid., 584.

implies that the Mahābhārata would have multiple identities. Hiltebeitel's view on this matter stands in need of clarification. For my part, I do not see what is gained by positing an ur-Mahābhārata that excludes the Harivaṃśa. Such a view is hardly distinguishable from any number of other unhelpful views that speak of ill-defined and unreconstructable ur-Mahābhāratas. It cannot be a case of simply removing the Harivaṃśa, since one must also remove the verses in Mahābhārata 1.2 that mention it. And then, why stop there? It is clear that we cannot speak of a Mahābhārata without the Harivaṃśa unless we are to lose much of the ground gained in our field in recent years. That ground was gained by trying only to talk about an available text—in order, if nothing else, to avoid the charge of not knowing what we are talking about.

However, the acknowledgement of the Harivaṃśa's integral status within the Mahābhārata is an acknowledgement with deep implications; for Alf, myself, and many others have published studies on the Mahābhārata which—like Smith's Penguin version[26]—take that label to exclude the Harivaṃśa, and which are therefore now potentially compromised and complicated to use. For example, Hiltebeitel's list of Mahābhārata upākhyānas[27] excludes those that are to be found in the Harivaṃśa; and it is that circumstance that provides an entry for the present paper. But apart from that, and specifically in relation to the idea of substories, the inclusion of the Harivaṃśa means that the Pāṇḍava substory has another large substory alongside it: the substory of Kṛṣṇa and the Yādava-Vṛṣṇis told in the Viṣṇuparvan. This substory, like the Pāṇḍava substory, is not called an upākhyāna in the text. But if we were to sublimate their subsidiary stories and take these two as substories told to Janamejaya, they would sit alongside shorter stories at the same dialogue level, such as those of Śakuntalā and Yayāti, and several within the Harivaṃśa.

On "Upākhyānas"

The foregoing discussion, in suggesting that the Pāṇḍava story be seen as a substory, has divorced the word "substory" from the word *upākhyāna*. So what exactly is an upākhyāna? In his paper "Not Without Subtales," Hiltebeitel gives no precise answer to this question, for although he presents a list of the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas, thus giving the impression that he can tell what is and is not an upākhyāna, and although he does his best to distinguish *ākhyāna*s

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26   John D. Smith, trans. *The Mahābhārata: An Abridged Translation* (Delhi: Penguin, 2009).

27   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 467–69.

from *upākhyāna*s (the former may be interrupted, the latter may not[28]), nonetheless he admits that his list of upākhyānas "is not a boundaried group without overlap with other 'ancillary story' material."[29]

That the list appears as a boundaried group is due to the manner of its compilation:

> This number [i.e., 67] is reached by including all units that are mentioned to be *upākhyāna*s either in passing in the text,[30] cited as *upākhyāna*s in the *PS* [the Parvasaṃgraha of Mahābhārata 1.2], or called *upākhyāna*s in the colophons and/or the running heads for units in the Pune Critical Edition.[31]

Nonetheless, since the different manuscripts used by the critical editors vary in their labelling of specific chapters and units, Hiltebeitel has sometimes used his judgement in order to decide whether an upākhyāna labelled as such by only some manuscript colophons deserves a place in the list. And such variety does not just tell against our ability to compile a trustworthy list; it also tells against the idea that an upākhyāna is an identifiable thing. If our only way of determining what is an upākhyāna is to see whether the label is applied, then how did the labellers determine when to apply the label? On the basis of criteria both unknown and various, it would seem. My sense is that such terms may often be used impressionistically, and that it is risky to press them into service as technical genre terms.[32]

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28 Ibid., 471–72.

29 Ibid., 469. The term "ancillary story" is taken from Barbara Gombach.

30 Here Hiltebeitel is not telling the whole truth, since he has not included, in the list of 67 upākhyānas, the Mahābhārata itself as a whole, which is said to be an upākhyāna at Mahābhārata 1.2.236 (with no variants). See Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 465, 471, in the first instance noting his surprise at this appellation, and in the second instance asking "the *Mahābhārata* would be a subtale to what?"—and thus perhaps drawing attention to the inadequacy of such a translation of the word *upākhyāna*.

31 Ibid., 469. Regarding the colophon titles, cf. Fitzgerald's comment: "My general practice in translating and writing about the texts collected in the Mokṣadharmaparvan is to use and translate the name most commonly found in the colophons of the manuscripts used for S.K. Belvalkar's Critical Edition of the Śāntiparvan." James L. Fitzgerald, "The Sāṃkhya-Yoga 'Manifesto' at Mahābhārata 12.289–290," in *Battle, Bards and Brāhmins*, ed. John Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012), 260 n. 3.

32 This remark would apply also to terms such as *itihāsa* and *kāvya*. On the face of it, *itihāsa* could be any past-tense narration, and *kāvya* could be any of the output of a *kavi*.

There is also the difficulty of using, on the one hand, mentions of upākhyā-nas as such within the text (this covers the first two of Hiltebeitel's criteria for inclusion in the list), and, on the other, mentions of upākhyānas within the paratextual apparatus (this covers his third criterion). For although the recon-stituted Mahābhārata is intended to approximate an ancient text as precisely as possible,[33] the colophon details are merely part of its eventual filing and storage system, and Brockington notes that "these manuscript colophons are undoubtedly later than anything included in the text by a considerable period."[34] In other words, the colophons might label as an upākhyāna something that the Mahābhārata's authors would have thought not to be an upākhyāna. Thus when Hiltebeitel states that "there does not seem to be anything to discourage the view that traditional unit titles would have been part of the text's earliest self-conception,"[35] we can agree and yet still admit that it is guesswork to sug-gest that a colophon title preserves an aspect of that "earliest self-conception" in a case where that title is not also used in the text.

Taken together, the foregoing caveats may seem to suggest, at limit, either that there is no such specific thing as an upākhyāna, or that there is, but we cannot tell which textual units are upākhyānas and which are not. It is worth noting that even if such a sceptical position is adopted, Hiltebeitel's 2005 paper successfully achieves its brief as set out by the title—that is, to argue that view-ing the substories of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa as later additions is not only historically indefensible (since there is no evidence of a streamlined ur-text in either case), but also risks beggaring the texts as works of literature, since so much of what they do is done through and with the aid of substories. Beyond that general assessment of the paper, however, I think it remains to be seen how far one can press the idea that some substories are upākhyānas and some are not. Nonetheless, the question is an open one, and so, whilst making no attempt to answer that question on the basis of the meagre evidence pre-sented here, I will try, for what it is worth, to fill out Hiltebeitel's data to include the Harivaṃśa. What might he additionally have said in his paper if, at the time of writing it, he had been including the Harivaṃśa within the Mahābhārata?

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33   "Our objective can only be to reconstruct *the oldest form of the text which it is possible to reach, on the basis of the manuscript material available*." Vishnu S. Sukthankar, "Prolegom-ena," in *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1. *The Ādiparvan* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), lxxxvi (italics original).

34   John L. Brockington, "The Spitzer Manuscript and the Mahābhārata," in *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Eli Franco and Monika Zin (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010), 77; cf. 75, 86.

35   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 470.

Upākhyānas in the Harivaṃśa

In terms of Hiltebeitel's first criterion—the mention of upākhyānas in passing
in the text—there is reference to an upākhyāna at Harivaṃśa 19.32, within a
śravaṇaphala passage at the end of a substory. The verse does not name this
upākhyāna, but it certainly seems to identify it. This is the only time the word
upākhyāna occurs in the critically reconstructed Harivaṃśa.

In terms of Hiltebeitel's second criterion—the mention of upākhyānas in
the Parvasaṃgraha—we can observe immediately that although sections of
the Harivaṃśa are marked out within the Parvasaṃgraha of Mahābhārata
1.2 (as mentioned above), none of them are there labelled upākhyānas. This
is the case also for the parvan-by-parvan summary of the Mahābhārata—
including the Harivaṃśa—presented within Harivaṃśa appx 40.[36] A more
detailed summary of the Harivaṃśa's contents at Harivaṃśa appx 44 mentions
a *dhanyopākhyānam*, on which more anon (appx 44.55); but this summary
of contents is in fewer than half of Vaidya's Harivaṃśa manuscripts,[37] and
the word *upākhyāna* occurs nowhere else in the Harivaṃśa's apparatus pas-
sages.

In terms of Hiltebeitel's third criterion, the following upākhyānas are men-
tioned in the Harivaṃśa colophons (in each case I give the chapter number,
the label, and the manuscripts in which the label appears):[38]

Hv 4	*pṛthūpākhyānam*	K1.2.4 Ñ3.3 [sic] V B1.2 Dn Ds D1–5
Hv 5	*pṛthūpākhyānam*	V3 B Ds D2.5
Hv 6	*pṛthūpākhyānam*	K4 Ñ2 V2.3 B D1.2.4 T3 M3; D5 Ñ3 V1
Hv 6	*vainyopākhyānam*	Ś1

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36   On which see Brockington, "The Spitzer Manuscript and the Mahābhārata," 76.

37   Parashuram L. Vaidya, "Introduction," in *The Harivaṃśa, Being the Khila or Supplement to
      the Mahābhārata, for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental
      Research Institute, 1969), xxxi.

38   These are mentioned in the colophons of the critically reconstructed Harivaṃśa. The
      colophons within the critical apparatus mention additionally a *haṃsaḍibhakopākhyānam*
      (or *haṃsaḍibakopākhyānam*, or *haṃsaḍimbhakopākhyānam*) in appx 31 (*The Harivaṃśa,
      Being the Khila or Supplement to the Mahābhārata, for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol.
      2, ed. Parashuram L. Vaidya [Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1971], 437–
      77), which I do not discuss here. Three upākhyānas mentioned in Vaidya's "Table of Con-
      tents"—the *urvaśyupākhyānam* (appx 6), the *ṣaṭpuravadhopākhyānam* (appx 29B), and
      the *andhakavadhopākhyānam* (appx 29C; ibid., 5–6)—are not known as upākhyānas in
      the colophons.

Hv 7	*caturdaśamanvataropākhyānam* [sic][39]	V3
Hv 15	*pūjanīyopākhyānam*	Ñ2 B1.3 Ds; V3 B2
Hv 15	*caṭakopākhyānam*	V1; V2
Hv 15	*śakuntikopākhyānam*	D1.2
Hv 16	*saptavyādhopākhyānam*	G3
Hv 28	*syamantakopākhyānam*	B1 D1–3.6 T2 G2.3 M2
Hv 29	*syamantakopākhyānam*	K4 D1.2.6
Hv 100	*dhanyopākhyānam*	K Ñ V B Dn Ds D1.2.4–6
Hv 100	*dhanyāścaryopākhyānam*	D3
Hv 100	*āścaryopākhyānam*	T2 G1.4 M4

As mentioned above, Hiltebeitel's third criterion is not stated particularly precisely; but he says

> I err toward generosity and count anything as an *upākhyāna* that appears to be called such as the prominent [colophon] title in either the Northern (N) or Southern (S) Recension.[40]

On that basis I would say that we have significant clusterings of upākhyāna labels at Harivaṃśa 4–6, 28–29, 100, and perhaps also at Harivaṃśa 15.

Taking into account the occurrence of the word *upākhyāna* at Harivaṃśa 19.32 and deeming it to cover the several previous chapters, I thus suggest that the following four upākhyānas ought to be added to Hiltebeitel's list (after 67. Nakula-Upākhyāna, Mahābhārata 14.92–96):

68. Pṛthu-Upākhyāna, Harivaṃśa 4–6
69. Sapta-Upākhyāna, Harivaṃśa 14–19
70. Syamantaka-Upākhyāna, Harivaṃśa 28–29
71. Dhanya-Upākhyāna, Harivaṃśa 100

In what follows, I will summarize and briefly discuss each of these four.

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39 Presumably an "n" is missing. The same manuscript V3 uses the label *manvantaropākhyānam* in the additional colophon that fifteen mansucripts have after Harivaṃśa 7.47.

40 Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 469.

Pṛthu-Upākhyāna

This upākhyāna is narrated by Vaiśaṃpāyana to Janamejaya near the beginning of the Harivaṃśa, in connection with an account of the creation and constitution of the cosmos. A shorter version of the narrative is presented nearby in advance, at Harivaṃśa 2.19–26:

> By Aṅga, Sunīthā gave birth to a son: one Vena, whose bad conduct caused severe fury. The seers, seeking offspring, drilled Vena's right hand, and a great seer sprang from his drilled hand. On seeing him, the sages said: "This splendid man will certainly bring joy to the people, and will attain great fame." Born with bow and armor, and blazing with splendor, Pṛthu Vainya, the first *kṣatriya*, looked after this lady; he was the ruler of the jewel-bearing earth, and the first to be anointed at a *rājasūya*; and the skilful storytellers and praise-singers sprang into being because of him. Bhārata, your majesty! Seeking livelihoods for his subjects he milked this cow, and she yielded grains. And the gods and the companies of seers milked her too, as did the ancestors, the Dānavas, the *gandharva*s together with the companies of *apsaras*es, the snakes, the *puṇyajana*s, the plants, and the mountains. As she was milked into this bucket and that bucket the jewel-bearing earth provided whatever milk was desired, and they kept themselves alive with it.[41]

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41 aṅgāt sunīthāpatyaṃ vai venam ekaṃ vyajāyata |
      apacāreṇa venasya prakopaḥ sumahān abhūt || Harivaṃśa 2.19 ||
      prajārtham ṛṣayo 'thāsya mamanthur dakṣiṇaṃ karam |
      venasya pāṇau mathite saṃbabhūva mahān ṛṣiḥ || 20 ||
      taṃ dṛṣṭvā munayaḥ prāhur eṣa vai muditāḥ prajāḥ |
      kariṣyati mahātejā yaśaś ca prāpsyate mahat || 21 ||
      sa dhanvī kavacī jātas tejasā nirdahann iva |
      pṛthur vainyas tadā cemāṃ rarakṣa kṣatrapūrvajaḥ || 22 ||
      rājasūyābhiṣiktānām ādyaḥ sa vasudhādhipaḥ |
      tasmāc caiva samutpannau nipuṇau sūtamāgadhau || 23 ||
      teneyaṃ gaur mahārāja dugdhā sasyāni bhārata |
      prajānāṃ vṛttikāmena devaiḥ sarṣigaṇaiḥ saha || 24 ||
      pitṛbhir dānavaiś caiva gandharvaiḥ sāpsaroganaiḥ |
      sarpaiḥ puṇyajanaiś caiva vīrudbhiḥ parvatais tathā || 25 ||
      teṣu teṣu ca pātreṣu duhyamānā vasuṃdharā |
      prādād yathepsitaṃ kṣīraṃ tena prāṇān adhārayan || 26 ||.

The story of Pṛthu has also already been mentioned at Mahābhārata 12.29.129–36 in the Ṣoḍaśarājika-Upākhyāna, and narrated at Mahābhārata 12.59.93–130 in response to Yudhiṣṭhira's question about the origin of kingship. The summary at Harivaṃśa appx 44 calls the Pṛthu story an *ākhyāna* (appx 44.3), and some of the manuscript colophons call it a *carita*. I summarize the upākhyāna here chapter by chapter, giving the colophon details each time:[42]

Harivaṃśa 4 (*pṛthūpākhyānam*, K1.2.4 Ñ3.3 [sic] V B1.2 Dn Ds D1–5; *somā-bhiṣekaḥ*, T2; *caturthasargaḥ*, T3; *somādyabhiṣekaḥ*, G1 M4; *somādyabhiṣeke dikpālasthāpanam*, G2.3.5). Vaiśaṃpāyana narrates. Brahmā appointed sovereigns for every type of being, and also appointed the guardians of the directions (1–17). Vaiśaṃpāyana offers to tell about Manu Vaivasvata (18), but Janamejaya asks instead to hear about the birth (*janman*) of Pṛthu, and details of the milking of the earth, and the reason why the *ṛṣi*s drilled Vena's hand (19–22). Vaiśaṃpāyana praises and prepares to narrate "The Birth (*saṃbhava*) of Pṛthu Vainya" (23–26).

Harivaṃśa 5 (*pṛthivīvākyam*, V2; *pṛthūpākhyānam*, V3 B Ds D2.5; *pṛthuca-ritam*, D3 T2 G1; *vainyotpattau vasudhāvākyam*, D6 G2.3.5 M4; *vainyotpatti*, T4). Vena's family and rule are described; he outlaws offering to the gods, elevating himself in their place (1–7). The seers try to reason with him, but are rejected (8–13). They grab him; from his left thigh they drill the ancestor of the *niṣāda*s (14–19), and from his right hand they drill Pṛthu, who immediately takes up weapons (20–22). Because he now has a good son, Vena is saved from hell (23–24). Pṛthu is anointed king, to the joy of all, and is praised (25–31). The storyteller and the praise-singer are created and told to praise Pṛthu; they say they don't know about him; they are told to praise him according to his future deeds; they do so and are rewarded (32–39). The other subjects ask Pṛthu for livelihoods; he turns upon the earth, and she flees in the form of a cow, but she cannot escape, so she pleads with him, explaining how necessary she is (40–52). He calms down (53).

Harivaṃśa 6 (*vainyopākhyānam*, Ś1; *pṛthivīdohaḥ*, K1–3 Dn; *pṛthūpākhyānam*, K4 Ñ2 V2.3 B D1.2.4 T3 M3; *pṛthor upākhyānam*, Ñ3 V1; *pṛthucaritam*, D3; *pārijāte pṛthūpākhyānam*, D5; *vasuṃdharādohaḥ*, D6 T2 G1; *pṛthumāhātmye vasuṃdha-rādohaḥ*, G2.3.5; *pṛthuvaṃśacaritam*, M4). Pṛthu says he will spare the earth if she will be his daughter and nourish all the subjects (1–6). She tells him to give her a calf so she can lactate, and to make her level so the milk will go

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everywhere (7–8). Pṛthu levels and de-boulders the earth with the tip of his bow (9–11); then, for the good of his subjects, he makes Manu the calf and milks grains from the earth (12–15). The earth is then milked successively by seers, gods, ancestors, snakes, *asura*s, *yakṣa*s, *rākṣasa*s and *piśāca*s, *gandharva*s and *apsaras*es, mountains, and trees and plants, using a different bucket and calf each time; to each group she yields a different power (16–37). Praise of the earth (38–41). Praise of King Pṛthu Vainya; the rewards of his veneration (42–48). Vaiśaṃpāyana asks what else Janamejaya wants to hear (49).

The upākhyāna is thus very much as summarized in the preparatory trailer at Harivaṃśa 2.19–26. It is also well summarized by its colophons, although the inclusion of Harivaṃśa 4 as part of the upākhyāna may seem slightly awry, as the story proper is restricted to Harivaṃśa 5 and 6.

Since the time of Huntington's ambitious essay in terms of the individuation process,[43] the story of Pṛthu has been studied by Doniger, Bailey, Miller, and Fitzgerald,[44] and it was also discussed by Tamar Reich in a paper presented recently.[45] Here I would like to comment on the circumstances of its introduction at this textual juncture, and on its connection with an earlier upākhyāna.

After mentioning the establishment of the direction-guardians, Vaiśaṃpāyana says:

> And these protectors of the people anointed Pṛthu at a *rājasūya*, for sovereignty over the kings—as did the kings themselves, according to the ordinance found in the Veda. Then, when the boundlessly brilliant period of Manu Cākṣuṣa had passed, he [i.e., the Grandfather] appointed Manu Vaivasvata to the sovereignty of the earth. If you would like to hear the detailed account of Manu Vaivasvata, I will narrate it as a favor for you,

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43   Ronald M. Huntington, "The Legend of Pṛithu: A Study in the Process of Individuation," *Purāṇa* 2 (1960): 188–210.

44   Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 321–69; Gregory M. Bailey, "Brahmā, Pṛthu and the Theme of the Earth-Milker in Hindu Mythology," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 23, no. 2 (1981): 105–16; Jeanine Miller, "Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth: An Inquiry into the Symbolism of the Vena-Pṛthu Legend," in *Symbols in Art and Religion: The Indian and the Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Karel Werner (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 103–28; James L. Fitzgerald, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7. *11. The Book of the Women. 12. The Book of Peace, Part One* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 130–35. Several of these scholars mention the story of the milking of Virāj at Atharvaveda 8.10.

45   Tamar C. Reich, "The Ṣoḍaśarājakīya Revisited," paper presented at the Forty-First Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, Wisconsin, October 2012).

supreme and impeccable king. For it is the basic foundation that is established in the old lore.[46]

But Janamejaya says he wants to hear details about Pṛthu instead. This positioning is interesting because *both* of those characters, Pṛthu and Manu, are said to be the first king. Manu has been described in this way at Mahābhārata 12.67.20–31 and 12.160.66–71.[47] The mechanism for allowing both Pṛthu and Manu to play this role without contradiction is, at this point, the notion of the various Manu periods. Manu Vaivasvata has his own period, and Pṛthu was the first king in the period of Cākṣuṣa, the previous Manu.[48] The full details of the various Manu periods are given in Harivaṃśa 7, straight after the Pṛthu narrative has finished. Janamejaya requests them, as well he might—perhaps he is bemused by the overlap between Pṛthu and Manu. But if Manu's thunder has been stolen slightly here, he makes up for it not just through his role in the solar lineage shortly to be described in chapters 8–10, but also in his role as *śrāddhadeva*, the god of ancestral rites. Curiously, and perhaps appropriately, this latter role is also seemingly shared with someone else, this time Manu's father: Manu is identified as *śrāddhadeva* at Mahābhārata 12.122.39 and at Harivaṃśa 8.7 and 13.65, and Vivasvat is identified as *śrāddhadeva* at

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46 rājasūyābhiṣiktaś ca pṛthur ebhir narādhipaiḥ |
   vedadṛṣṭena vidhinā rājarājyena rājabhiḥ || Harivaṃśa 4.16 ||
   tato manvantare 'tīte cākṣuṣe 'mitatejasi |
   vaivasvatāya manave pṛthivīrājyam ādiśat || 17 ||
   tasya vistaram ākhyāsye manor vaivasvatasya ha |
   tavānukūlyād rājendra yadi śuśrūṣase 'nagha |
   mahad dhy etad adhiṣṭhānaṃ purāṇe pariniṣṭhitam || 18 ||.

47 For Rāmāyaṇa references to Manu as the first king, see Simon Brodbeck, "Solar and Lunar Lines in the *Mahābhārata*," *Religions of South Asia* 5 (2012): 148.

48 In the Mahābhārata's first eighteen books, Manu Cākṣuṣa is mentioned only once, at Mahābhārata 13.18.16, where he is said to have been Vasiṣṭha's father (which is not confirmed at Harivaṃśa 2.15–17 or 7.29). But the name Cākṣuṣa also occurs when Mahābhārata 12.335.36–39 and 12.336.13–48 describe Brahmā's successive births from Nārāyaṇa's mind (*mānasa*), eyes (*cākṣuṣa*), speech (*vācika*), hearing (*śravaṇaja*), nose (*nāsikya*), egg (*aṇḍaja*), and the seventh and most recent birth, from Nārāyaṇa's lotus (*padmaja*). Brahmā's successive births bear some similarity to the successive Manus, but Cākṣuṣa is the only name in both lists (as the second Brahmā and the sixth Manu; see Harivaṃśa 7.4). Manu Svārociṣa, the second Manu, overlaps temporally with Brahmā Śravaṇaja, the fourth Brahmā (Mahābhārata 12.336.33–34); and Manu Vaivasvata, the seventh and current Manu, overlaps with Brahmā Padmaja, the seventh and current Brahmā (Mahābhārata 12.336.47).

Mahābhārata 12.329.44 and at Harivaṃśa 10.80 and 11.1.[49] This dual identity is highlighted soon after the dual identity of the first king, but there is no attempt to explain it with reference to different Manu periods.

It is notable that only one manuscript uses the label *vainyopākhyānam* in connection with the Pṛthu story (Ś1, at Harivaṃśa 16), because the Vainya-Upākhyāna has already been presented: it is mentioned in the Parvasaṃgraha (at Mahābhārata 1.2.126) and occurs at Mahābhārata 3.183, where it is labelled as such by the colophon in more than a dozen manuscripts.[50] Here is Smith's summary:

> [183] Next Mārkaṇḍeya tells the story of Atri. Atri planned to retire to the forest, and went to see King Vainya in hopes of receiving wealth to pass on to his sons. But when he offered praise to Vainya he was contradicted by another ascetic, Gautama, and a dispute arose as to whether kings hold supreme power. Sanatkumāra, asked to resolve it, agreed with Atri and declared that kings have been granted supremacy by Brahmins in order to maintain *dharma*. Pleased with this outcome, Vainya rewarded Atri generously.[51]

Gautama's position is that Indra is the primary authority (*prathamaṃ sthātā mahendro*; Mahābhārata 3.183.12); but he is shown to be mistaken. This Vainya

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49   Brinkhaus has argued that Harivaṃśa 10.80 names Manu as *śrāddhadeva*, not Vivasvat, and that Harivaṃśa 11.1 is an interpolation (Horst Brinkhaus, "Manu Vaivasvata as *Śrāddhadeva*: On the Insertion of the *Pitṛkalpa* into the *Harivaṃśa*," in *Epic Undertakings*, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Muneo Tokunaga [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009], 1–11); but Söhnen-Thieme has defended the more obvious sense of 10.80 (Renate Söhnen-Thieme, "The Setting of Purāṇas: Frame Stories, Layers of Interlocution, and Ultimate Authority," in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures*, ed. Petteri Koskikallio [Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2005], 448 n. 30).

50   These include "Ś1"; but the manuscript sigla only sometimes carry over from one volume of the critical edition to another, and judging by the editorial notes this may or may not be the Ś1 used for the Harivaṃśa edition. See Vishnu S. Sukthankar, "Introduction," in *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 3. *The Āraṇyakaparvan* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1942), ii–iii; Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," x–xi; Vaidya, "Introduction," xvi–xvii. On the wider issue, see John Dunham, "Manuscripts Used in the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*: A Survey and Discussion," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 2: "Some libraries have cataloged as separate codices manuscripts which are by the same copyist but are of different *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*."

51   Smith, *The Mahābhārata*, 199 (block italics removed).

is presumably our Pṛthu Vainya or one of his descendants, and the two upākhyānas go hand in hand. What Sanatkumāra states in brief in the Vainya-Upākhyāna is graphically illustrated by the narrative of the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna, and seems intended to obviate brahman scepticism about the royal prerogative: "The ṛṣis, concerned about lawlessness, entrusted power to the kṣatriyas" (adharmād ṛṣayo bhītā balaṃ kṣatre samādadhan || Mahābhārata 3.183.25cd).

This emphasis on the brahmans is evident also in a phala passage that Vaiśaṃpāyana presents before the main body of the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna:

> Hear the mystery declared by the seers, your majesty, as it really is—equivalent to the Veda, and conducive to heaven, fame, long life, and riches. This is "The Birth of Pṛthu Vainya"; a person who always praises it gains the respect of the brahmans, and doesn't regret anything that they have or haven't done (kṛtākṛtam).[52]

The need for a king to be approved by the brahmans is graphically illustrated by the story of Pṛthu; and as far as the story's various listeners are concerned,[53]

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[52] svargyaṃ yaśasyam āyuṣyaṃ dhanyaṃ vedena saṃmitam |
rahasyam ṛṣibhiḥ proktaṃ śṛṇu rājan yathātatham || Harivaṃśa 4.25 ||
yaś cainaṃ kīrtayen nityaṃ pṛthor vainyasya saṃbhavam |
brāhmaṇebhyo namaskṛtya na sa śocet kṛtākṛtam || 26 ||.
Verse 4.26, which labels a section of text (cf. 4.23) and describes its associated phala, is presented in advance of that section. The previous chapters of the Harivaṃśa end with such verses operating retrospectively and labelling the discrete chapters 1 (1.40, ādisarga, "The First Creation"), 2 (2.56, sṛṣṭiṃ dakṣasya, "Dakṣa's Creation"), and 3 (3.112, bhūtasarga, "The Creation of Beings"). Here at the end of chapter 4 one might have expected a similar verse labelling just chapter 4 in retrospect (as, for example, somābhiṣekaḥ, somādyabhiṣekaḥ, or dikpālasthāpanam, for these chapter titles are found in its colophons), but instead the verse labels in prospect, and covers not one but a pair of chapters (5–6). After this there is no similar verse until 7.46 and 49, which seem to be phala verses covering chapter 7 (on the manvantaras) in retrospect, though without quite labelling it. The phalas described at 6.43–48 at the end of the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna are associated with the veneration of Pṛthu rather than with a particular section of text.

[53] These are: Janamejaya, then Śaunaka, then the ṛṣis. For the ṛṣis as a separate audience in a frame (i.e., Mahābhārata 1.1–3) beyond the telling to Śaunaka, see Brodbeck, The Mahābhārata Patriline, 244–45 n. 40, 251, 260; Brodbeck, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches," 231–33. In my opinion the ṛṣis, being located closest to the text's edge, are intended also to stand for the external audience—that is, us (Brodbeck, The Mahābhārata Patriline, 245 n. 40; Simon Brodbeck, "Refuge and Reform: Snakes, Gleaners, and Niṣādas in Early Kāvya," in Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient India through Texts and Traditions. Contributions to Current Research in Indology, Volume 2, ed. Giovanni Ciotti, Alastair Gornall, and

this would be of particular relevance to the most immediate of them—King Janamejaya, who hears it from a brahman. The reference to not being afflicted by *kṛtākṛtam* might also be particularly meaningful for Janamejaya, who was cursed by Saramā for something he didn't do (Mahābhārata 1.3.8), criticized by Uttaṅka for not doing what he should have done (1.3.181), and then instigated the *sarpasatra* at which millions of snakes died (1.52).[54]

Sapta-Upākhyāna

This upākhyāna, which forms the latter part of the Pitṛkalpa (Harivaṃśa 11–19) in between the accounts of the solar and lunar dynasties (Harivaṃśa 8–10, 20–29),[55] is nested within several different dialogues: Vaiśaṃpāyana, narrating to Janamejaya, is relaying dialogue that took place between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma while the latter was lying on his bed of arrows after the Kurukṣetra war (Harivaṃśa 11.6). Bhīṣma in turn is relaying what he once heard from Mārkaṇḍeya, whose narration is based on his encounter with the divine youth Sanatkumāra.[56] In the run-up to the Sapta-Upākhyāna Mārkaṇḍeya explains to Bhīṣma that what he is about to relate is something he observed first-hand, as a result of having been given divine eyesight by Sanatkumāra in order to understand the mysteries of the ancestors (Harivaṃśa 13.71–75). As before, I summarize the upākhyāna here, chapter by chapter, with the colophon chapter titles:[57]

Paolo Visigalli [Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014], 26–27). It is perhaps in terms of the story of *that* audience that the whole Mahābhārata can be an upākhyāna (see again n. 30 above).

54   See Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 233–57.

55   In the summary at Harivaṃśa appx 44 there is no independent mention of this upākhyāna, but only of the Pitṛkalpa. The text reads as follows:
gālavotpattir ikṣvākuvaṃśasyāpy anukīrtanam | appx 44.5 |
pitṛkalpas tathotpattiḥ somasya ca budhasya ca | 6 |.

56   For diagrams and discussion of the dialogical arrangement, see Söhnen-Thieme, "The Setting of Purāṇas," 444–59. "Mārkaṇḍeya, who is ageless and has seen many cosmic eras, is certainly a very suitable authority in historical matters ... he draws on a higher source of knowledge: Sanatkumāra, whose *gāthās* in the name of the ancestors had been quoted before by Bhīṣma in the *śrāddha* section of the Anuśāsanaparvan (88.12 ff) ... Sanatkumāra is introduced in the HV [see 1.31 and 12.11] as the first-born son of Brahmā ... This is as close as one can get, in the HV, to Brahmā" (ibid., 458–59).

57   Cf. Dakshina R. Shastri, *Origin and Development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India* (Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1963), 277–79. For translations, see Dutt, *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsha*, 77–99; Bose, *Harivamsha Translated into English Prose*, 59–78; Marcelle Saindon, trans. *Le Pitrikalpa du Harivamsha: Traduction, Analyse,*

Harivaṃśa 14 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, N M4). Mārkaṇḍeya introduces, to Bhīṣma, characters that Sanatkumāra introduced him to: sons of Bharadvāja, whose yoga efforts were disrupted by misbehavior (1–3). They die, go to heaven, and are then born in Kurukṣetra as Kauśika's sons (4). Because of harmful behavior they will then undergo various lowly births, but because of their former dutiful behavior towards the ancestors they will retain their memories, gradually regain their former yoga, and achieve liberation (5–8). Yoga and *śrāddha* are extolled (9–11d). Mārkaṇḍeya describes the end of his audience with Sanatkumāra (11e–13).

Harivaṃśa 15 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, Ś1 K1.3.4 Ñ1 D4 M1.2; *caṭakākhyānam*, Ñ3 Dn D3.6 T2 G1 M4; *pūjanīyopākhyānam*, Ñ2 B1.3 Ds; *caṭakopākhyānam*, V1; *pitṛkalpe caṭakopākhyānam*, V2; *pitṛkalpe pūjanīyopākhyānam*, V3 B2; *pārijāte caṭakākhyānam*, D5; *śakuntikopākhyānam*, D1.2; *śakuntākhyānam*, G3.5). Mārkaṇḍeya repeats that he saw the sons of Kauśika that Sanatkumāra mentioned (1–2). The seventh of them was reborn as King Brahmadatta, son of Aṇuha of Kāmpilya (3–4). Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma about Aṇuha, and about the transmigrations of these brahmans (5–9). Bhīṣma introduces Brahmadatta and his friends (10–13); then Bhīṣma narrates Brahmadatta's Nīpa lineage, ending several generations after Brahmadatta with the destruction of the Nīpas by Ugrāyudha, whom Bhīṣma killed (14–29). Yudhiṣṭhira asks about Ugrāyudha (30). Bhīṣma narrates Ugrāyudha's ancestry (31–36); then he tells how, after Śaṃtanu's death, Ugrāyudha demanded to marry Satyavatī (37–41). Bhīṣma prepared to attack Ugrāyudha (42–45). Bhīṣma's ministers made him wait until all other methods of pacification had failed (46–55). Ugrāyudha's discus was disarmed because of his sinfulness (56–57), and Bhīṣma killed him after a three-day duel (58–60). Brahmadatta's relatives then regained their patrimony (61–62); they are Yudhiṣṭhira's in-laws the Pāñcālas, who had problems with Droṇa (63–64). Bhīṣma will now relate the ancient seven-birth story (*itihāsaṃ purātanam ... saptajātiṣu ... caritaṃ*) of the yogis (65–68).

Harivaṃśa 16 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, Ś1 K2.4 Ñ2.3 V B Ds D1–5 M1–3; *saptavyādhākhyānam*, T2 G1; *saptavyādhopākhyānam*, G3; *vyādhākhyānam*, G2.5). Mārkaṇḍeya tells how, after Kauśika's death, his seven sons kill and eat their guru's cow; but one of them insists that they dedicate her to the ancestors (1–12). They deceive their guru, die, and are reborn as seven hunters; but because of their deed for

the ancestors, they retain their memories (13–16). They are virtuous hunters; after their parents have died, they renounce and die themselves (17–21). They are reborn as deer, again retaining their memories; after meditating further on their circumstances, they give up drinking and die (22–26). Eventually reborn as *cakravāka* birds, still with their memories intact, they meditate and do yoga (27–33). King Vibhrāja of the Nīpas passes through their forest in splendor, and one of the birds wishes to be like him (34–37).

Harivaṃśa 17 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, N M1–3; *cakravākacaritam*, T2 G1.3.5). Two of the other birds wish to be the first bird's ministers; and since they desired such things, the three birds are cursed, by one of their companions, to get what they want (1–4). Realizing their mistake, the three petition the remaining four for a favor (5–7). They are told they will rise to yoga again when they hear a certain verse, and that the one who becomes the king—that is, the one who, several remembered births previously, insisted that the cow be dedicated to the ancestors—will know the language of every animal (8–11).

Harivaṃśa 18 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, N M1.2; *pitāputrasaṃvādaḥ*, T2 G1.3.5). King Vibhrāja, having been inspired by the yogic birds, returns to his capital (1–3). His son Aṇuha marries (4–7). Vibhrāja retires to seek liberation, performing austerities in the forest where he saw the birds (8–11). He gives his name to the forest and its lake (12). The birds die and are reborn in Kāmpilya; four retain their memories still, but three do not (13–14). The three are Aṇuha's son Brahmadatta—who knows the language of every animal, and is soon a king with a yogic queen—and his two ministers (15–23); the four are poor brahman brothers (24–26). The four wish to leave their father, but he says they have not yet done their filial duties (27–28). They tell him a verse that will yield his fortune if he recites it to the king and his ministers; then they depart (29–32).

Harivaṃśa 19 (*pitṛkalpaḥ*, Ś1 K Ñ V B Dn Ds D1–3.5 T3.4 G2.3 M1; *śrāddhakalpe pitṛkalpaḥ*, M2). Brahmadatta hears an ant pestering its lover, and laughs (1–4). The queen is upset, thinking he's laughing at her; he explains that he understands animals, but she objects in disbelief and threatens suicide (5–9). Brahmadatta petitions Nārāyaṇa for a solution, and is told one is on its way (10–12). Brahmadatta and his two ministers return to town together; the father of the four brahmans sees his moment and recites the verse to them (13–17). It alludes to their births as hunters, deer, and birds (18). The three, stunned, remember everything, and reward the brahman (19–22). Brahmadatta installs his son as king and retires to the forest with his wife, who reveals that she was only pretending not to believe he understood the ants (23–26). The king and his two ministers resume their yoga, and attain perfection (27–29). Mārkaṇḍeya concludes the story and extols its benefits (30–33). Vaiśaṃpāyana also con-

cludes, saying *śrāddha* ensures the waxing of the moon—whose lineage he will now tell (34–35).

The word *upākhyāna* is not common in the colophons for these chapters, except in the case of chapter 15, where the label *upākhyāna* seems to refer to the passage that appears as appx 5 in the critical edition,[58] and that is thus not covered by the above summary. That appendix relates the story of King Brahmadatta and the bird Pūjanīyā, an alternative (non-upākhyāna) version of which is present within the critically reconstituted text at Mahābhārata 12.137.[59] If we set aside the chapter 15 colophon references to that story, the only mention of an upākhyāna in the colophons for these chapters is the labelling of chapter 16 as the *saptavyādhopākhyāna* in a single Grantha manuscript. Nonetheless, the occurrence of the label *upākhyāna* within the text at Harivaṃśa 19.32 justifies our categorization (there are no variants; the word occurs in all manuscripts). I have taken the label to refer to the whole story beginning at chapter 14, even if much of chapter 15 seems tangential to it; and I have devised the title *Sapta-Upākhyāna* myself, based on the number of transmigrants.

Like the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna, the Sapta-Upākhyāna is clearly related to a previous upākhyāna—in this case the Kīṭa-Upākhyāna at Mahābhārata 13.118–20, which is located within the same post-war dialogue between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma.[60] As before, I present Smith's summary:

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58 Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 2, 12–17.

59 On Mahābhārata 12.137, see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 123–26; Adam Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India: The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 258–62. That story and this Sapta-Upākhyāna contain most of what is said about Brahmadatta in the reconstituted Mahābhārata, though he is famous also for his generosity to brahmans (Mahābhārata 12.226.29), and Nārada says there are a hundred Brahmadattas in Yama's *sabhā* (Mahābhārata 2.8.22). The latter remark may play on the appearances of *brahmadatta* as a compound describing gifts (e.g., boons) given by Brahmā, and it may also allude to the frequent mentions of Brahmadatta in stories elsewhere: according to the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, if Buddhist monks forget the name of the reigning king in a story of the past, they are to insert Brahmadatta to fill the gap. Gregory Schopen, "If You Can't Remember, How to Make it Up," in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 398–400.

60 The Kīṭa-Upākhyāna is number 65 in Hiltebeitel's list (Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 469); so it was narrated just four upākhyānas ago.

[118] Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma what has become of all those who, willingly or unwillingly, were slain in the great battle. In reply, Bhīṣma cites the dialogue of Vyāsa with a creeping insect on a busy road. He asked it from what it was fleeing in haste, and it answered that a large ox-cart was approaching and might kill it. Vyāsa asked whether death might not be preferable to life as an insect; the insect replied that living creatures love whatever form of life they have. Formerly it had been a wicked Śūdra; the Śūdra had, however, honoured his mother, and had once paid due honour to a Brahmin guest, and for this reason the insect had retained memory of its former birth, and had hopes of finding happiness once more; it asked Vyāsa for his advice. [119] Vyāsa told the insect that he would use his ascetic power to rescue it; he assured it that it would be able to achieve an exalted birth. Hearing this, the insect remained motionless upon the road, and so met its end; several births later it had arrived at Kṣatriya status. The Kṣatriya returned to Vyāsa, paid him due respect, and asked what he should do now; Vyāsa answered that he could now attain brahminhood by giving up his life in battle for the sake of cows or Brahmins. [120] The Kṣatriya undertook austerities, but Vyāsa advised him that a Kṣatriya's observance was to protect his subjects. The Kṣatriya did so, and not long afterwards he passed away and was reborn as a Brahmin. Bhīṣma assures Yudhiṣṭhira that those Kṣatriyas who died at Kurukṣetra have also attained a happy outcome: he should not grieve for them.[61]

There are several similarities between this story and that of the Sapta-Upākhyāna: in both stories the effect of great sinfulness is counteracted, over a sequence of lifetimes (sometimes featuring voluntary death), as an ongoing result of a virtuous venerative act (or two, in this case) and the continuity of memory that follows from it. It is a nice touch that Vyāsa understands the language of every animal (*sarvabhūtānāṃ rutajñaś*, Mahābhārata 13.118.8). Much could be made of these similarities (and the obvious differences), but for now it will be enough to note the general effect: the Sapta-Upākhyāna plays on the theme of a previous upākhyāna. In the following discussion, I focus upon an issue emergent from the secondary literature.

The story of the Sapta-Upākhyāna is alluded to at Mahābhārata 12.330.38–39, as mentioned by Yokochi and Söhnen-Thieme;[62] and versions are to be

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61   Smith, *The Mahābhārata*, 695–96 (block italics removed).

62   Yuko Yokochi, "The Story of the Seven Brahmans in the *Harivaṃśa*: Studies in the

found in Buddhist and Jaina literature, as mentioned by Vaidya.[63] To date the most extensive study in English is that of Yokochi, whose starting point is "the incoherence of the story in the Critical Edition … of the HV."[64] This incoherence is said to center upon the number of births experienced by the main characters, which is repeatedly stated as seven (*saptajātiṣu*, Harivaṃśa 15.13; 15.67; 16.1; 16.30; *saptajātikṛtena*, 16.31).[65] Star passages 300 and 311 mention a birth that may seem to be required in order to bring the number of births up to seven, but that is not mentioned in the critically reconstituted text.[66] Yokochi speculates that chapter 14—which mentions the first birth, as sons of Bharadvāja—is also a later addition, and that there were once two separate stories, one with seven characters and five (or six) births, and the other with three characters and seven births, and that the two stories were combined into one. Yokochi's reasoning is of a familiar type, whereby almost any poetic circumstance within the text—the mentioning of the same event twice, the repetition of a phrase, the presentation of narrative in a creative manner— may be used subjectively as evidence of textual development, and little or no attempt is made to understand the story as the reconstituted text presents it.

If one makes such an attempt, however, one might find two simple solutions to the problem of the allegedly missing birth. The first is at Harivaṃśa 14.4:

Skandapurāṇa, IV," in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ryutaro Tsuchida and Albrecht Wezler (Reinbek: Dr Inge Wezler / Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 2000), 543; Söhnen-Thieme, "The Setting of Purāṇas," 454 n. 54.

63   Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 1, 790–91. In Jainism, Brahmadatta is the *cakravartin* contemporary with the *tīrthaṃkara* Nemi: see the chart in Eva de Clercq's paper "Karman and Compassion: Animals in the Jain Universal History," *Religions of South Asia* 7 (2013): 143– 44.

64   Yokochi, "The Story of the Seven Brahmans in the *Harivaṃśa*," 525. Yokochi takes this starting point from a 1983 article by Minoru Hara written in Japanese.

65   As Söhnen-Thieme points out ("The Setting of Purāṇas," 455 n. 63), the discussion and chart in Vaidya's notes are defective, conflating the birth as sons of Bharadvāja with the birth as sons of Kauśika (Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 1, 789, 791).

66   Pandey argues that the vulgate version (which contains these star passages) is original and authentic, but that a section of text was at some point omitted by a scribe by accident, and that the defective version then became influential. Jagdishwar Pandey, "The Story of Brāhmaṇa Brothers in the Harivaṃśa Purāṇa: A Critical Study," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 63–64 (1977–78): 723–28. This is unprovable, and scribal omission is contrary to the assumptions of the critical edition project.

Those ones [i.e., sons of Bharadvāja] who had fallen away from their yoga spent a very long time amongst the gods; then they were born as sons of Kauśika—in Kurukṣetra, bull-man![67]

This is the only mention in the story of an interval between two births on earth. Yokochi considers the possibility that this time amongst the gods refers to a separate birth, but dismisses it as "very unlikely … because their species (*jāti*) is not specified there."[68] However, given the locative *deveṣu*, it would seem natural to infer birth as gods. And since 14.3 describes the seven dying at the end of their lives as Bharadvāja's sons (*te sarve saṃyuktāḥ kāladharmaṇā*) and the latter half of 14.4 describes their birth as sons of Kauśika, one wonders how the intervening "very long time amongst the gods" could possibly *not* be another *jāti*. Are we to envisage suspended animation? Isn't the realm of the gods a plane of rebirth? It might seem that Yokochi's desire to find the reconstituted narrative defective and replace it with a narrative of textual history has forced her interpretation.[69]

In any case, there is no need to worry about the precise number of births related. After the seven have died at the end of their lives as deer, we read the following:

Because of that pure behavior, my boy, they went through purer and purer births until, devoid of impurity, they became *cakravāka* birds.[70]

In common with previous translators, Yokochi takes *karmaṇā tena … śubhena* to describe the most recent narrated deed of the seven—that is, giving up drinking and thus dying voluntarily of thirst.[71] But it could also be a description of their behavior in general in recent births, or—more likely—a reference back to their deed for the ancestors, which is after all the key to the story. If it is read in such a way, then most of this verse comes across as a description of the direction of their successive rebirths—from pure to purer birth—rather

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67   tatas te yogavibhraṣṭā deveṣu suciroṣitāḥ |
      jātāḥ kauśikadāyādāḥ kurukṣetre nararṣabha || Harivaṃśa 14.4 ||.

68   Yokochi, "The Story of the Seven Brahmans in the *Harivaṃśa*," 545 n. 50.

69   Something similar, but with different motivations, would be true of those who interpolated star passages 300 and 311. Failure to appreciate the text's literary ways is not just a recent phenomenon.

70   karmaṇā tena te tāta śubhenāśubhavarjitāḥ |
      śubhāc chubhatarāṃ yoniṃ cakravākatvam āgatāḥ || Harivaṃśa 16.27 ||.

71   Yokochi, "The Story of the Seven Brahmans in the *Harivaṃśa*," 527; cf. Harivaṃśa 16.22, where *śubhena karmaṇā tena* explains their births as deer with their memories intact.

than as a description of the specific rebirth just described; and the words *aśubhavarjitāḥ … cakravākatvam āgatāḥ* mark the limit case at the end of that process. So if, for example, the story had been said to be a story of twenty-seven births, then this verse could be summarizing twenty births that intervened between the birth as deer and the birth as *cakravāka* birds, but which are not specified in detail. Reasons for this being said to be a story of seven births are not hard to find—it matches the number of characters undergoing rebirth in the story; it matches the number of different kinds of *pitṛ* described in the immediately preceding chapter 13; and so on—but once the pattern of rebirth has been set, there is no need for the stated number of rebirths to match the number of rebirths actually narrated. All that is required is for there to be enough rebirths to make the point—amongst various others—that no matter how pure one's birth is, one is never out of reach of desire, especially desire for glorious kingship.

That point is surely of special relevance to Bhīṣma. He has resisted the temptations of kingship in this life, and so it fits that he is featured here in the narratorial chain, having carried the story from when he was told it by Mārkaṇḍeya at a *śrāddha* rite for his father Śaṃtanu (Harivaṃśa 11.40–41), to when he now tells it to Yudhiṣṭhira on his deathbed (Harivaṃśa 11.5–6), at the end of a life of filial duty,[72] waiting for the *uttarāyaṇa* and his next postmortem adventure (Mahābhārata 6.114.86–100; cf. 6.30.23–27 = Bhagavadgītā 8.23–27). But as emphasized fore and aft, the story purports to have beneficial effects more generally. After the overview has been given in Harivaṃśa 14, mentioning the gradual yogic perfection achieved by the seven on account of their homage to the ancestors, we read the following:

> And in the same way, your own thoughts will return again and again to your duty, and absorbed in your habit of yoga you will attain the highest perfection. For there's no duty more pressing than yoga duty, you who know your duty! Practice that most important duty of all, Bhārgava! If you perform the *śrāddha* rite, if you prioritize it and are dedicated to it, eating lightly, your senses conquered, then in the fullness of time you will get into the habit of yoga.[73]

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72   From this perspective the narration of Bhīṣma's encounter with Ugrāyudha in Harivaṃśa 15 is not as tangential as it might initially appear, for it emphasizes not only his dedication to his father, but also his dedication to the family (and thus the ancestors) in general. At 15.45 Bhīṣma says he decided to fight Ugrāyudha "seeing as Vicitravīrya was young and was totally dependent on me" (*vicitravīryaṃ bālaṃ ca madapāśrayam eva ca | dṛṣṭvā*).

73   evaṃ dharme ca te buddhir bhaviṣyati punaḥ punaḥ |
      yogadharme ca nirataḥ prāpsyase siddhim uttamām || Harivaṃśa 14.9 ||

The vocative *bhārgava* at 14.10 indicates Mārkaṇḍeya (and Śavnaka) as the addressee, but a few verses earlier, at 14.4, the vocative was *nararṣabha*, "man-bull," which would more naturally indicate Bhīṣma, Yudhiṣṭhira, or Janamejaya.[74] There is no need to take this as a textual problem, as Yokochi does;[75] rather, in their variety and scope the vocatives emphasize that several levels of discourse are superimposed here. This being the case, the quoted verses do not come across as a specific prediction about Mārkaṇḍeya's future, but as a general pre-diction about the potential interaction of yoga and *śrāddha* in the long future of any and every listener to this story. That impression is confirmed several chapters later:

> On that previous occasion these events were visible to me, just so. Heed them, lofty son of Gaṅgā, and you will then be crowned with fortune. And others who heed the amazing career of those [seven] will never be born from any animal womb whatsoever. This upākhyāna is of great import, and the great seek it out; whoever hears it always keeps their yoga prac-tice in mind, Bhārata, and achieves tranquility in due course as a result, and thus arrives at a state of mind that is hard to attain on earth, even for the *siddha*s.[76]

With regard to listeners Yudhiṣṭhira and Janamejaya, this upākhyāna's message may be that their current status as kings is highly enviable; that there will be time for the perfection of yoga after retirement and in future lives; and that a significant start in that direction can be and has been made by dedicating deeds to the ancestors, even (and perhaps especially) if those deeds seem to be dastardly ones—such as the *sarpasatra* to avenge Parikṣit, or the Kurukṣetra war prompted by Pāṇḍu (Mahābhārata 2.11.65–67), which entailed the decep-

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        yogadharmād dhi dharmajña na dharmo 'sti viśeṣavān |

        variṣṭhaṃ sarvadharmāṇāṃ taṃ samācara bhārgava || 10 ||

        kālasya pariṇāmena laghvāhāro jitendriyaḥ |

        tatparaḥ prayataḥ śrāddhī yogadharmam avāpsyasi |.

74   See Söhnen-Thieme, "The Setting of Purāṇas," 453.

75   Yokochi, "The Story of the Seven Brahmans in the *Harivaṃśa*," 540–41.

76   evam etat purā vṛttaṃ mama pratyakṣam acyuta |

        tad dhārayasva gāṅgeya śreyasā yokṣyase tataḥ || Harivaṃśa 19.30 ||

        ye cānye dhārayiṣyanti teṣāṃ caritam uttamam |

        tiryagyoniṣu te jātu na bhaviṣyanti karhicit || 31 ||

        śrutvā cedam upākhyānaṃ mahārthaṃ mahatāṃ gatim |

        yogadharmo hṛdi sadā parivarteta bhārata || 32 ||

        sa tenaivānubandhena kadācil labhate śamam |

        tato manogatiṃ yāti siddhānāṃ bhuvi durlabhām || 33 ||.

tion of guru Droṇa in the matter of a killing (7.164.66–110). And when Arjuna hears Bhīṣma's narration of this story to Yudhiṣṭhira,[77] he might recall what happened when, quailing before the same dastardly deed, he asked Kṛṣṇa what happens to a yogi who dies before perfecting their yoga: he was told that their rebirth is such as to facilitate its continuation, and that "perfected over the course of several lives, they attain the highest state" (*anekajanmasaṃsiddhas tato yāti parāṃ gatim*; Mahābhārata 6.28.45cd = Bhagavadgītā 6.45cd).

Syamantaka-Upākhyāna

This upākhyāna forms the last two chapters of Vaiśaṃpāyana's account of the lunar dynasty (Harivaṃśa 20–29), which in its latter stages has focused on Kṛṣṇa's people, the Yādava-Vṛṣṇis. The episode is mentioned in the summary at Harivaṃśa appx 44, but the word *upākhyāna* is not used (*kīrtanaṃ kṛṣṇasaṃbhūteḥ syamantakamaṇes tathā* | appx 44.10). As before, I summarize:[78]

Harivaṃśa 28 (*syamantakalābhaḥ*, K1.3; *syamantakapratyānayanam*, K2 V2 B2 Ds; *kṛṣṇasya mithyābhiśaptiḥ*, K4; *mithyābhiśaptiḥ*, Ñ2 V3; *syamantakopākhyānam*, B1 D1–3.6 T2 G2.3 M2; *syamantakākhyānam*, D4.5; *syamantakamaṇikathanam*, T4; *syamantakavyākhyānam*, G1). Genealogy of (Andhaka's son) Bhajamāna's descendants, including Kṛtavarman and Śatadhanvan (1–8). Genealogy from Kroṣṭu to the brothers Prasena and Satrājit (9–11). Prasena obtains the Syamantaka jewel, which has beneficial properties (12–13); Kṛṣṇa wants but doesn't take it (14). Prasena, out hunting, is killed by a lion, and Jāmbavat, a bear, takes the jewel (15–16). Kṛṣṇa, suspected of Prasena's murder, sets out to find the jewel (17–18). He follows the trail to Jāmbavat's cave, where he hears the jewel being sung about (19–24). Kṛṣṇa enters and fights Jāmbavat; after twenty-one days his companions leave him for dead and go home (25–27). Kṛṣṇa conquers Jāmbavat, takes his daughter Jāmbavatī and the jewel, returns to Dvārakā, and gives the jewel to Satrājit in public, thus clearing his name (28–31). Genealogy of Satrājit's descendants, including his daughters, whom he gives to Kṛṣṇa (32–35). Genealogy of Pṛśni's descendants, including Akrūra (36–43). The effect of knowing this chapter (45).

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77 Arjuna is present throughout Bhīṣma's address in the Śāntiparvan and Anuśāsanaparvan (see Mahābhārata 12.54.5; 13.152.2), so he is presumably also there when Bhīṣma tells the story of the seven.

78 Cf. Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 1, 792–93. For translations, see Dutt, *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsha*, 152–59; Bose, *Harivamsha Translated into English Prose*, 123–28; Menon, *The Harivaṃśapurāṇam*, 102–9.

Harivaṃśa 29 (*somavaṃśasamudbhavaḥ*, K2 Ñ3 V1 B2.3 Ds; *syamantavara-pradānam*, K3 D4; *syamantakopākhyānam*, K4 D1.2.6; *syamantakacarite vaṃśāvalī samāptā*, V3; *syamantakam ākhyānam*, D3; *syamantakadarśanam*, G2.3). Akrūra fancies Satyabhāmā—Satrājit's daughter, Kṛṣṇa's wife—and the jewel; Śatadhanvan kills Satrājit and gives the jewel to Akrūra, who promises to protect him (1–5). Satyabhāmā tells Kṛṣṇa, who is away, of her father's murder (6–7). Kṛṣṇa returns and gets his brother Balarāma; they pursue Śatadhanvan, seeking the jewel (8–11). Akrūra fails to come to the aid of Śatadhanvan, who flees on horseback (12–15). Śatadhanvan's horse dies; Kṛṣṇa leaves Balarāma behind and goes to confront Śatadhanvan (16–18). Kṛṣṇa kills Śatadhanvan but can't find the jewel (19–20b). Balarāma thinks Kṛṣṇa has taken the jewel for himself, and goes off to Mithilā in a huff (20c–23). Meanwhile Akrūra, who secretly has the jewel, hosts rich rites (24–27). Balarāma tutors Duryodhana in mace-fighting in Mithilā, then returns to Dvārakā at Kṛṣṇa's behest (28–29). Akrūra leaves Dvārakā, but while he's away it doesn't rain, and when he returns it does (30–33). Akrūra, wary of Kṛṣṇa, gives him his sister (34). Kṛṣṇa deduces that Akrūra has the jewel and confronts him in public, demanding it (35–37). Akrūra gives it to Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa gives it back to Akrūra, who now wears it openly (38–40).

The Syamantaka story has been studied recently by Austin, by myself, and by Couture. Austin's main concern is to explain why the story is found within the genealogical part of the Harivaṃśa rather than within the Kṛṣṇacarita, where the Bhāgavata Purāṇa has it.[79] My study connects the Syamantaka with Aśvatthāman's head-jewel and suggests that they both function as symbols of solar kingship, as do various other items of jewellery in the text.[80] Couture interprets the story in terms of its thematic and symbolic coherence with the Harivaṃśa's overall portrait of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's dual cosmic sovereignty.[81] Apart from those recent studies, Strenski has subjected the story to a structur-

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79   Christopher Austin, "The Mystery of the Syamantaka Jewel: The Intersection of Geneal-ogy and Biography in the *Harivaṃśa*," *Religions of South Asia* 5 (2012): 153–69; see also Freda Matchett, "The *Harivaṃśa*: Supplement to the *Mahābhārata* and Independent Text," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 4, no. 3 (1996): 144–45.

80   Simon Brodbeck, "Mercy, my Jewels! Aśvatthāman's *Maṇi* and the Syamantaka (and the Earrings)," paper presented at the Sixth Dubrovnik International Conference on the San-skrit Epics and Purāṇas (Dubrovnik, August 2011).

81   André Couture, "L'affaire du joyau Syamantaka: Un récit clé pour l'interprétation du *Harivaṃśa*," *Journal Asiatique* 301, no. 1 (2013): 139–83 (with English summary).

alist analysis,[82] and Mehendale has discussed the allusion to it in Yāska's *Nirukta*.[83]

Austin says the story "functions narratively to illustrate an important aspect of Kṛṣṇa's role and identity within the larger *vaṃśa* that precedes it."[84] Matchett says:

> The Krishna whom [the author] presents here as part of the dynasty of Yadu is seen from a purely human point of view, before Hv 30-45 has revealed him as Vishnu's earthly manifestation and counterpart.[85]

Austin is sensitive to the danger of such a statement, in that it could—and is probably intended to—evoke an extra-textual developmental history of the status of Kṛṣṇa.[86] But once we remind ourselves that the listening Janamejaya is already fully aware of Kṛṣṇa's divinity and interjects immediately after this story with a long question emphasizing it, Matchett's observation that "Krishna … is seen from a purely human point of view" is a good one, and in fact Austin echoes it: he highlights Kṛṣṇa's earlier decision not to be king, and argues that

> The gem story … summarizes and dramatizes the inner dynamics of Kṛṣṇa's clan, and his role within it as a leader and damage-controller who never truly becomes king, nor actually possesses the gem.[87]

In these terms the story would be of interest to King Janamejaya, who is being aided to reassert his clear paramount status through a robust but clement *sarpasatra*-and-*aśvamedha*. If the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna reassured Janamejaya of

82   Ivan Strenski, "The Syamantaka Gem Story: A Structural Analysis," *Purāṇa* 24, no. 2 (1982): 297–337.

83   Madhukar A. Mehendale, "Nirukta Notes IV: Yāska's Etymology of *Daṇḍa*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80, no. 2 (1960): 112–15.

84   Austin, "The Mystery of the Syamantaka Jewel," 154.

85   Matchett, "The *Harivaṃśa*: Supplement to the *Mahābhārata* and Independent Text," 145.

86   Austin, "The Mystery of the Syamantaka Jewel," 161–62. Brinkhaus evokes something similar when he says that the Syamantaka episode "obviously endeavours to turn Kṛṣṇa's trickster image in the epic into one of an honest and reliable individual." Horst Brinkhaus, "The 16,108 Wives of Kṛṣṇa in the *Harivaṃśa*," in *Battle, Bards and Brāhmins*, ed. John Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012), 320. What Brinkhaus claims here is not obvious, and stands in need of explanation (for example, one wonders what Kṛṣṇa would have done if Śatadhanvan had had the jewel); on the face of it, Kṛṣṇa's character is continuous across the whole Mahābhārata.

87   Austin, "The Mystery of the Syamantaka Jewel," 168.

the brahmans' support for the existence of his office, the Syamantaka-Upā-khyāna reminds him—through a story of the Vṛṣṇis who he knows destroyed themselves at Prabhāsa, the remnant coming north into his domains (Mahā-bhārata 16)—of the dreadful in-fighting that can result when that office is not properly occupied. In this respect, it resembles the story of weak king Dhṛtarāṣṭra; and we may recall that Dhṛtarāṣṭra is a snake's name[88]—thus link-ing Yudhiṣṭhira's battle against Kauravas with Janamejaya's battle against snakes, and linking Vṛṣṇis with snakes.[89]

The narrated Syamantaka story is not celebrated as a unit by *phala* verses in the way that the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna and Sapta-Upākhyāna are. In Vaiśaṃpāyana's narration of the solar and lunar dynasties, a *phala* verse at the end of a chapter usually gives a label for that chapter.[90] The Syamantaka story has such a verse at the end of its first chapter:

> This, as narrated, is "The False Accusation against Kṛṣṇa." And those who accuse falsely can never touch anyone who knows it.[91]

This *phala* relates directly to the events portrayed in the chapter. It would seem to grant Janamejaya, amongst others, invulnerability to false accusation. In Janamejaya's case, we could imagine the possible accusation—on the model of the mongoose accusing Yudhiṣṭhira after the *aśvamedha* (Mahābhārata 14.92–93, in the Nakula-Upākhyāna)—that his recent ritual violence was illegitimate and/or perpetrated through greed.

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88   Gösta Johnsen, "Varuṇa and Dhṛtarāṣṭra," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 9, no. 4 (1966): 256.

89   See Brodbeck, "Refuge and Reform," 27–28.

90   This is the practice visible also in Harivaṃśa 1, 2, 3, and (to some extent) 7; see n. 52 above. There are summative *phala* verses for chapters 8 (8.48, *janma devānāṃ*, "The Birth of the Gods"), 9–10 (10.80, *sṛṣṭim ādityasya vivasvataḥ*, "The Offspring of Vivasvat Āditya"), 20 (20.47–48, *somasya janma*, "The Birth of Soma"), 21 (21.37, *cyāvanaṃ sthānāt pratiṣṭhāṃ ca śatakratoḥ*, "Indra's Expulsion from and Return to his Domain"), 22 (22.45, *yayāteś caritam*, "The Story of Yayāti"), 23 (23.165–66, *pañcavisargaṃ*, "The Offspring of the Five," incorporating also *kārtavīryasya janma*, "The Life of Kārtavīrya," whose *phala* verse is at 23.163), 24 (23.168, *phala* given in advance for *kroṣṭor ... vaṃśaṃ*, "The Line of Kroṣṭu," known in retrospect as *vṛṣṇes trividham ... vaṃśaṃ*, "The Triple Line of Vṛṣṇi," at 24.35), 25 (25.17, *kṛṣṇasya janma*, "The Birth of the Dark One"), 26 (26.28, *visṛṣṭiṃ ... jyāmaghasya mahātmanaḥ*, "The Offspring of Jyāmagha the Great"), and 27 (27.31, *kukurāṇām ... vaṃśaṃ ... amitaujasām*, "The Line of the Immeasurably Powerful Kukuras"). So, except-ing the Pitṛkalpa (Harivaṃśa 11–19), every chapter in the lineal narration so far has a *phala* and label except chapters 9 and 10, which have one between them.

91   imāṃ mithyābhiśastiṃ yaḥ kṛṣṇasya samudāhṛtām |
       veda mithyābhiśāpās taṃ na spṛśanti kadācana || Harivaṃśa 28.45 ||.

There is no *phala* verse at the end of the Syamantaka story's second chapter, either for the chapter or for the story, or for the account of the lunar line (chapters 20–29), or for the Sūryavaṃśa–Pitṛkalpa–Somavaṃśa bundle (chapters 8–29) that began soon after the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna, or for the Harivaṃśaparvan which has often been understood to end just here, before Janamejaya asks his big question about Viṣṇu (chapter 30; see n. 20 above; Couture begins "l'enfance de Krishna" at chapter 30[92]). The absence of any *phala* verse here might seem to have the effect of dramatizing Janamejaya's major interruption at the outset.

Dhanya-Upākhyāna

As mentioned earlier, the Dhanya-Upākhyāna is in the appendicized Harivaṃśa contents list:

> … and the killing of Śambara [chapter 99], and the story of the blessing [Dhanya-Upākhyāna, chapter 100], the majesty of Vāsudeva [chapters 101–5], the fight against Bāṇa, which is treated at length [chapters 106–13] … [93]

As before, I summarize:[94]

Harivaṃśa 100 (*dhanyopākhyānam*, K Ñ V B Dn Ds D1.2.4–6; *dhanyāścaryopākhyānam*, D3; *āryākhyāne paramārthadarśanam*, T1 G3; *āścaryopākhyānam*, T2 G1.4 M4; *āścaryakathanam*, T4 M1–3). Jāmbavatī's son Sāmba is born, and Kṛṣṇa comes home after defending Vṛṣṇi interests abroad; Dvārakā prospers (1–4). Kings visiting Duryodhana in Hāstinapura also come to Dvārakā en masse, to visit Kṛṣṇa and the Yadus (5–10). Kṛṣṇa hosts them in style, and stories are told (11–16). There is sudden bad weather and Nārada arrives from inside a cloud; the bad weather disappears (17–20). Nārada tells Kṛṣṇa that Kṛṣṇa is a marvel (*āścarya*) and a blessing (*dhanya*); Kṛṣṇa replies that he is indeed, and that he is also accompanied by the *dakṣiṇā*; Nārada says his

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92 André Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna: Traduction des chapitres 30 à 78 (éd. cr.)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf / Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991).

93 śambarasya vadhaś caiva dhanyopākhyānam eva ca | Harivaṃśa appx 44.55 | vāsudevasya māhātmyaṃ bāṇayuddhaṃ prapañcitam | 56 |.

94 Cf. Vaidya, "Introduction," xxvii–xxviii; Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 1, 797. For translations, see Dutt, *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsha*, 723–28; Bose, *Harivamsha Translated into English Prose*, 412–15.

utterance has been completed, and makes to leave (21–24). The assembled kings, puzzled, ask Kṛṣṇa about these cryptic utterances; Kṛṣṇa asks Nārada to explain; Nārada sits down and begins (25–31). Nārada once met a massive turtle in the River Gaṅgā, and declared it to be a marvel and a blessing (32–36). The turtle said that the River Gaṅgā was a marvel and a blessing, not he, and explained why (37–38). Nārada visited in turn the River Gaṅgā (39–43), the ocean (44–47), the earth (48–53), the mountains (54–57), Brahmā (58–66), the Vedas (67–72), and the sacrifices (73–77), in each case accosting them with the accolade of being a marvel and a blessing, and in each case being referred to the next. The sacrifices referred him to Viṣṇu, so here he is (78–80). And that's why he called Kṛṣṇa a marvel and a blessing; and Kṛṣṇa responded that he is indeed, and that he is also accompanied by the *dakṣiṇā*, which was the completion of the utterance (81–85). Nārada leaves; the kings go home amazed; Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas go home too (86–87).

This being the Mahābhārata's last upākhyāna, it is significant that it concerns the extension of a string of utterance, from a riverine origin, on and on in a series that ends importantly and precisely with Kṛṣṇa the marvel and the blessing and, along with him, with the *dakṣiṇā*. In this way, Nārada's trek is deliberately made to stand alongside our own trek as Mahābhārata readers. It is as if the passage through the upākhyānas were to stand for the passage through the text as a whole. For the *āścarya* of this upākhyāna is also the *āścarya* of this parvan, the Viṣṇuparvan or Āścaryaparvan,[95] which is mentioned last and cryptically (as *adbhutaṃ mahat* and *prakīrtitam*) in the list of the one hundred and one Mahābhārata parvans (Mahābhārata 1.2.69, 233; pp. 393–94 above). Thus the importance of Nārada continuing to the end of his treasure hunt emphasizes the importance of getting to the end of the Mahābhārata; and this can be so despite it being the case that, from here within Harivaṃśa 100, there is still one full parvan to go (in this sense the Bhaviṣyatparvan returns to its sequential location as parvan number one hundred and one), and—wouldn't you just know it!—exactly eighteen chapters to go.[96] As

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95 See Vaidya's discussion of the name Āścaryaparvan (Vaidya, "Introduction," xxvii–xxviii). Vaidya's suggestion that this name refers to the whole Harivaṃśa is not convincing, since the verses he cites in support are from Harivaṃśa 113 (i.e., they do not cover the Bhaviṣyatparvan; cf. Brinkhaus, "The Division into Parvans and the Bhaviṣyaparvan of the *Harivaṃśa*," 162–63), but nonetheless he does call attention to the link between Harivaṃśa 100 and the larger unit that contains it. Vaidya also suggests a link between Harivaṃśa 100 and Mahābhārata 12.45–46, where Yudhiṣṭhira hails Kṛṣṇa in terms of the "highest marvel" (*paramāścarya*; Mahābhārata 12.46.1; Vaidya, *The Harivaṃśa*, vol. 1, 797).

96 In light of these numerological details, one might revisit Edgerton's comments on the first fascicle of Sukthankar's critical edition: "for the first time this edition reduces to exactly one hundred the list of (sub-)parvans or chapter-groups of the Mahābhārata listed in the

Biardeau said, "You have to read the whole thing"[97]—for the *dakṣiṇā* is distrib-
uted only at the completion of the rite, and only at the completion of the
utterance.

Conclusions

In terms of its title, Hiltebeitel's paper "Not Without Subtales" is an argument
against the supposition that, at some stage in the Mahābhārata's prehistory,
the text had a more or less detailed Pāṇḍava story, but no upākhyānas. That
supposition had sometimes been supported by appeal to Mahābhārata 1.1.61:

> He [i.e., Vyāsa] made a 24,000-verse Bhārata collection without upākhyā-
> nas; that's the extent of what the wise call the Bhārata.[98]

Hiltebeitel has argued, following David Shulman, that this verse would describe
"a digest or abridgment" rather than an earlier text that has since expanded.[99]
The survey and discussion of the Harivaṃśa's upākhyānas presented above
in no way supports the idea of such an earlier text. If Mahābhārata 1.1.61 and
the prehistorical interpretation thereof had not already put that idea into our
heads, there seems to be no reason why we would imagine, for example, that
Harivaṃśa 28–29 is a younger part of the Mahābhārata than Harivaṃśa 27,
or that Harivaṃśa 100 is a younger part of the Mahābhārata than Harivaṃśa

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'Table of Contents' … It is impossible to say confidently, at present, whether Sukthankar's
list will finally prove correct or not … much will depend on how it fits the actual text of the
whole epic when this has been critically edited." Franklin Edgerton, review of *The
Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited*, by Vishnu S. Sukthankar, *Journal of the
American Oriental Society* 48, no. 2 (1928): 189–90. The placement of the Dhanya-
Upākhyāna is a point in favor of Sukthankar's instinct.

97   Alf Hiltebeitel, "'You Have to Read the Whole Thing': Some Reflections on Madeleine
       Biardeau's *Mahābhārata*," in *Du texte au terrain, du terrain au texte. Dialogues disci-
       plinaires autour de l'oeuvre de Madeleine Biardeau*, Journée 2011 du Centre d'Études de
       l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris, 2011, <http://ceias.ehess.fr/docannexe/file/3137/journee_
       biardeau_intervention_alf_hiltebeitel.pdf>.

98   caturviṃśatisāhasrīṃ cakre bhāratasaṃhitām |
       upākhyānair vinā tāvad bhārataṃ procyate budhaiḥ || Mahābhārata 1.1.61 ||.
       In what follows, for the sake of convenience I indulge the fantasy, seemingly set up by this
       verse, that the shorter text would be called Bhārata rather than Mahābhārata; though in
       fact the terms are usually interchangeable (Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 108;
       for details of the distribution of the terms, see Brodbeck, "Analytic and Synthetic
       Approaches," 236).

99   Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 457–58.

101–5. But Mahābhārata 1.1.61 is a puzzling verse nonetheless, because the idea of a text more or less resembling the one we have, but without the upākhyānas, is a very bizarre idea whether that text is imagined to be earlier than the one we have, or later. At least hypothesizing that the shorter text would be earlier makes sense of the presence of Mahābhārata 1.1.61 itself, which then could presumably have been added after or at the same time as the upākhyānas. If the abridgement is later than the full text, then either 1.1.61 must refer in the past perfect tense (*cakre*, "he made") to something that will only happen in the future (i.e., at the time of the completion of the full text, the abridgement has not yet been made), or the text that was abridged is not the text we have before us now—in which case the text without upākhyānas might be an abridgement *and also* part of the prehistory of the text that we have. Although I would not argue that 1.1.61 was designed to prompt that particular thought, nor do I suppose that it refers to an actual, more or less 24,000-verse "digest or abridgment that knowers of the *Mahābhārata* could consult or cite for purposes of performance from a written text."[100] Rather, I think it is a riddle designed to prompt the reader to think about upākhyānas in various ways—to think about the precision of the label, about what exactly it might refer to, and about the relationship between that material and the material that the label excludes, in more or less the ways that Hiltebeitel and some of the other contributors to the larger upākhyāna project have been doing. In other words, that project was imagined and implicitly proposed by the text's author/s.

If the idea of a Bhārata without upākhyānas is bizarre, it is probably less bizarre, and more textually justified (it is explicitly mentioned at Mahābhārata 1.1.61, after all), than the idea of the upākhyānas without the Bhārata; and yet the way in which I have presented the Harivaṃśa's upākhyānas in this paper risks prompting that latter idea. The reader must counter it by remembering that the contextual dependence of the upākhyānas upon the surrounding text goes far beyond the connections I have pointed out here, even though I have pointed out many such connections. That is to say: if one were to try to give some realistic substance to the idea of the upākhyānas without the Bhārata

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100   Ibid. Here, as elsewhere, if one believes what the text says (i.e., if one takes it to be stating historical fact), one should presumably explain why the text is believed here and not, for example, when it says that there once was a brahman born from a pot. In this regard, one does not get into difficulties by interpreting Mahābhārata 1.1.61 in terms of a text prior to the Mahābhārata (indeed, this seems to be a reasonable interpretation); one gets into difficulties only if one then thinks that the verse so interpreted could provide support for any actual theory of the text's prehistory. Cf. Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 9. A contrary interpretation of 1.1.61 is not required—and in fact is not useful—in order to disarm the alleged text-historical implication.

by imagining versions of them different from the versions that are in the Mahābhārata, then they would not be the upākhyānas that the Bhārata without upākhyānas would be without.

Probably more interesting than either of these two ideas (of the Bhārata and the upākhyānas without each other) is the idea of the upākhyānas as stepping-stones through the Mahābhārata. In this sense, we can understand the upākhyānas not only as they relate to the text generally (i.e., to the whole) and contextually (i.e., to their surroundings at the points where they occur), but also as they relate to each other as co-items within a series. I have made remarks in this regard concerning the Pṛthu-Upākhyāna and the Vainya-Upākhyāna, concerning the Sapta-Upākhyāna and the Kīṭa-Upākhyāna, and concerning the Dhanya-Upākhyāna as the last in the series. It is also curious that that Dhanya-Upākhyāna, Harivaṃśa 100, begins with the birth of Sāmba, who is the son of Jāmbavatī, the bear-maiden taken by Kṛṣṇa at Harivaṃśa 28.28 in the Syamantaka-Upākhyāna,[101] and who was born through a boon granted by Śiva and Umā as described in Mahābhārata 13.14–16 in the Upamanyu-Upākhyāna.[102] Further study of the upākhyānas may throw up further examples of this kind of connection.

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101   Also in the Syamantaka-Upākhyāna we hear of Sāmba's wife Sundarī (Harivaṃśa 28.40–41).

102   Georg von Simson, "Kṛṣṇa's Son Sāmba: Faked Gender and Other Ambiguities on the Background of Lunar and Solar Myth," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 235–36.

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The Geography of the Mahābhārata's Upākhyānas

Alf Hiltebeitel

The Mahābhārata's upākhyānas raise important questions. Indeed, one could call their inclusion the epic's last frontier in theorizing an integral Mahābhārata, since other past frontiers—its didactic matter, frame narratives, author function, and "bhakti runs"[1]—have at least been opened to controversy, and are no longer so universally accepted as demarcating what is axiomatically "late."

This article will use the spatio-temporal metaphor of the last frontier to explore an idea of Rajesh Purohit, Deputy Director of the Sri Krishna Museum at Kurukshetra, that the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas are integral in that they function to build the main story into the geography of India.[2] I had not thought of this idea in arguing for the integrity of the upākhyānas in the Mahābhārata in my 2005 article,[3] with which this book opens. I will push Rajesh Purohit's formulation somewhat to ask how the Mahābhārata uses upākhyānas to construct what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a "chronotope."[4] More specifically, how do upākhyānas function in the epic with regard to cosmology—including not only space but time, and time not just with regard to the main story's pasts and futures, but what the Mahābhārata might mean by its primary genre term, *itihāsa* or "history?"[5] Taking our cue from Robert Goldman's contribution to

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1 The phrase is Fitzgerald's (see James L. Fitzgerald, "Negotiating the Shape of 'Scripture': New Perspectives on the Development and Growth of the *Mahābhārata* between the Empires," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 272–73).

2 Rajesh Purohit said this in affirmation of my view of the integral character of the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas at the February 2011 conference "*Jaya Utsava*: Celebrating Living Traditions of *Mahabharata*," Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi.

3 Alf Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales: Telling Laws and Truths in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2005): 455–511.

4 M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

5 See Alf Hiltebeitel, *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata. Essays by Alf Hiltebeitel*, vol. 1, ed. Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), chapter 4: "Why *Itihāsa*? New Possibilities and Limits in Considering the *Mahābhārata* as History"; Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4–5, 18 n. 25 and Index s.v. "*itihāsa*"; Alf Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories," paper presented at the International

this volume, we may look at upākhyānas from the standpoint that *upa-* connotes "near" rather than "sub-": that is, the term functions not only in terms of proximity from below (as in "sub"-tales), but in terms of spatio-temporal nearness to the larger epic *ākhyāna.* In short compass, by raising these questions we will be making our way into what the Mahābhārata means by both the local and the regional. And on a wider scale, the Mahābhārata's horizons make it the first Indian text to envision a regional area such as Kurukṣetra and the upper doab within India (Bharatavarṣa) as a total land and a total people. Set in a still wider world, and indeed a vast cosmology,[6] we will also be exploring how upākhyānas help to build the Mahābhārata's geography into its cosmography—or, more suggestively, in a formulation I owe to a recent article by Randy Kloetzli,[7] make the whole believable by building its cosmograph into its geograph. This sense of the nearness of what by itself seems distant also sustains the value of continuing to look primarily at a finite list of units actually called *upākhyāna*s while also recognizing, as several have done in this volume, that other "near-tales" can look and act within the larger epic more or less like upākhyānas as well.

Seminar on the *Mahābhārata*: Its Historicity, Antiquity, Evolution & Impact on Civilization, April 26, 2012; Alf Hiltebeitel, "Between History and Divine Plan: The *Mahābhārata's* Royal Patriline in Context," papers from the May 2010 Cardiff Conference on Genealogy in India, *Religions of South Asia* 5 (2011): 103–25.

6   On Bharatavarṣa-India conceived as a total land and people, see Aloka Parasher-Sen, *Mlecchas in Early India, a Study in Social Attitudes towards Outsiders up to AD 600* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1991), 91 (dating the Mahābhārata, however, later than *Manu*); Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading: A Window on the Original and the Second Reading by Kālidāsa," in *Revisiting Kālidāsa's* Abhijñāna Śākuntalam: *Land, Love, Languages: Forms of Exchange in Ancient India*, ed. Deepika Tandon and Saswati Sengupta (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan Edition, 2011), 22; "On Sukthankar's 'S' and Some Shortsighted Assessments and Uses of the Pune Critical Edition (CE)," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 97, 102–3 (whether earlier or younger, the Rāmāyaṇa envisions India as a total land but not as a total people; see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Authorial Paths through the Two Sanskrit Epics, Via the *Rāmopākhyāna*," in *Epic Undertakings: Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, vol. 2, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Muneo Tokunaga [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009], 169–214).

7   Randolph W. Kloetzli, "Ptolemy and Purāṇa: Gods Born as Men," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38 (2010): 583–623.

The Mahābhārata's Upākhyānas Grouped into Four Sequences

Since my idea to research this topic began with an inspiration from Kurukṣetra, that will be a good place to start. What might have prompted someone with Rajesh Purohit's intimate knowledge of Kurukṣetra to make such a geographical proposition about the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas? I will work here from a simple fourfold classification of the epic's upākhyānas: those in Book 1; Book 3; those from Books 5 to 9 focused on the war; and postwar upākhyānas, all of which are found in Books 12–14.[8] Since I will come to focus mainly on the first two sets in Books 1 and 3, I will work back to them after offering a few words about the last two.

Almost all the postwar upākhyānas are narrated either at or in connection with Kurukṣetra, but only two of them mention it. One of them is the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 13.2.39c), to be discussed later. The other is the second so-called Rāma-Upākhyāna (12.48–49), about Rāma Jāmadagnya, which Kṛṣṇa tells to Yudhiṣṭhira en route to Bhīṣma's bed of arrows. Kṛṣṇa directs Yudhiṣṭhira's attention to the five Lakes of Rāma, which prompt Yudhiṣṭhira to ask him about Jāmadagnya's killing of all the kṣatriyas twenty-one times over and creating the five lakes at Samantapañcaka from their blood (8). This upākhyāna thus tells about one of the still extant and most famous *tīrthas* at Kurukṣetra.[9]

Nonetheless, once Bhīṣma lauches his four anthologies of dharma teachings, one might maintain that even where Kurukṣetra is not specifically mentioned, all the upākhyānas he tells in Books 12 and 13 reflect a Kurukṣetra perspective, since that is where he speaks from on his bed of arrows. One suggestive illustration will suffice. As Adam Bowles shows, nuanced differences can be recognized in the epic's treatment of the *dasyu*: its term for a loosely taxonomized and far-flung population interchangeable at times

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8   I first worked from this fourfold division in Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 426.

9   See James L. Fitzgerald "The Rama Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the *Mahābhārata*: A New Survey of Rāma Jāmadagnya in the Pune Text," in *Stages and Transitions: Temporal and Historical Frameworks in Epic and Purāṇic Literature*, Proceedings of the Second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, Aug. 1999, ed. Mary Brockington (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002), 96, 104, 118–19; Alf Hiltebeitel, "Tīrthas, Temples, Āśramas and Royal Courts: Towards an Ethnography of Mahābhārata Bhakti," in *The Archaeology of Bhakti II: Royal Bhakti, Local Bhakti*, ed. Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid, 81–126. Pondicherry: IFP & EFEO, 2015), 81–126.

with others from untouchables and śūdras to tribals and *mleccha*s.[10] Yet it is also uses the term more particularly for those in border areas within the orbit of the Kuru realm who pose challenges and opportunities for a Kuru king, as the newly enthroned Yudhiṣṭhira learns from Bhīṣma mainly in the Āpaddharmaparvan, which contains Bhīṣma's advice on how to rule in times of distress.[11] A distinction between *mleccha* and *dasyu* emerges in the last unit of the Āpaddharma: an upākhyāna that James Fitzgerald translates under the title "The Story of the Ungrateful Brahmin" (Mahābhārata 12.162–67).[12] The tale is set among *mleccha*s of the north (162.28), but it uses *mleccha* only that one time to describe this setting, which, as just noted, can be presumed to mean north of Kurukṣetra, where Bhīṣma is speaking.[13] It provides the only usage of *mleccha* in the Āpaddharmaparvan. For the characters in question and their village, the term is *dasyu*, used fourteen times among thirty-two usages

10   See Aloka Parasher-Sen, "Naming and Social Exclusion: The Outcast and the Outsider," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), , 415–55 on different textual processes and principles behind the fluid naming of "outcastes" working within caste society and "outsiders" deemed beyond it, including all the groups named here and many more, most of them mentioned on both sides of this "binary."

11   See Adam Bowles, "The Dasyu in the Mahābhārata," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 155–72 on differentiations among *dasyu*s and their own differentiation from "tribals" in areas around Kuru lands and the upper doab, and on the Āpaddharmaparvan's special pertinence to these formulations.

12   James L. Fitzgerald, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7. *11. The Book of Women. 12. The Book of Peace, Part 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 590–602. Cf. Bowles, "The *dasyu* in the *Mahābhārata*." This discussion also appears in Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories" and reflects my review in Alf Hiltebeitel, "On Reading Fitzgerald's Vyāsa," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 2 (2005): 241–61 of *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7. *11. The Book of Women. 12. The Book of Peace, Part 1*, trans. James L. Fitzgerald (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), and my reservations about his translating *dasyu* as "barbarian."

13   The Mahābhārata also associates the north with *mleccha*s; see Mahābhārata 12.200.38–43, as cited in Hiltebeitel *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 264–65, on Greeks (Yauna) along with Kāmbojas (those in "an Iranian area in eastern Afghanistan that spoke late Avestan"; Michael Witzel, "Brahmanical Reactions to Foreign Influences and to Social and Religious Change," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 461]), Gāndhāras, Kirātas, and Barbaras as "evil-doers" who dwell "without supervision" (*niradhiyakṣān*) to the north and did not exist on earth in the Kṛta *yuga*, but emerged and spread in the Tretā yuga and contributed to "the terrible twilight time at the end of that *yuga*."

of *dasyu* in the Āpaddharmaparvan. This suggests that *dasyu*s may thrive in a *mleccha* domain, but does not equate the two. The Gautama brahman of this *upākhyāna* settles into a village of *dasyu*s, meets a wealthy (good, *brahmaṇya*, "friendly to brahmans") *dasyu*, and starts living the *dasyu* life. The major trait of *dasyu*s that interests the Āpaddharma is that although they can be wild and unruly, especially in their forests, they can be brought into line once a king recognizes that their wildness and unruliness can be of service to the realm if they are allowed to run what are essentially protection rackets.[14] This is of special interest in this subparvan because such unruly but regulable behavior of the *dasyu* (i.e., *dasyudharma*, *dasyumaryādā*) is so precisely mirrored in kings' being given free reign during times of distress to rob others—in both cases exempting brahmans (12.128.20; 133.14–18)—to restore their treasuries (12.128; 129.9; 131.1–6; 134). Still in this vein, it is just after hearing how the exemplary brahman Viśvāmitra robbed and ate dog meat from a *caṇḍāla* in another Āpaddharma tale—the Viśvāmitraśvapacasaṃvāda[15] (12.139): that is, in a *saṃvāda* or "dialogue" rather than in an *upākhyāna*—that Yudhiṣṭhira mentions *dasyumaryādā*, "robber morality,"[16] as something he shuns since it leaves his sense of dharma "completely undone."[17] Yudhiṣṭhira had first problemetized the *dasyu* early in the Āpaddharmaparvan, asking, "Grandfather, when the most meritorious forms of Law are not available, when every livelihood upon the earth has been taken over by barbarians [*dasyu-sādbhūta*] … how might a brahman survive?"[18]—but better, "taken over by robbers," including the king himself as potentially one of them. Taking this *upākhyāna* and *saṃvāda* together, one can see how Bhīṣma deploys the multiform figure of the *dasyu* to offer graded and shaded but also real differentiations between South Asian peoples on the fringes of caste society, including not only *caṇḍāla*s but barbarians or *mleccha*s, whose presence was regionally felt but who had first come from afar (see n. 9 above). Indeed, once one examines a bit further, one finds other "others" on the fringes, including tribals and gleaners.[19]

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14   See Mahābhārata 12.131.10–17 on drawing *dasyu*s into the army; 12.133 on a good *dasyu*, ruler of the Niṣādas, who are among the prototypical *dasyu* "tribals."

15   Fitzgerald has rather loosely "The Conversation between the Seer Viśvāmitra and a Caṇḍāla in the Barbarian's Hamlet." *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7, 498.

16   My translation; cf. *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7, 541: "barbarian law."

17   *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7, 541; Mahābhārata 140.1–2.

18   *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7, 505 and 759; Mahābhārata 12.130.1–2; cf. 139.1–6.

19   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "From Ṛṣidharma to Vānaprastha: the Southern Recension Makeover of the Mahābhārata's Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda," in *The Churning of the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Simon Brodbeck, Alf Hiltebeitel, Adam Bowles (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and D.K. Printworld, in press), 14–45; "The

Similarly, of the eight upākhyānas told in preparation for the war or during it, all could be said to concentrate on Kurukṣetra, even if only two of them mention it: the Ambā-Upākhyāna, in which Rāma Jāmadagnya and Bhīṣma exhaust themselves fighting there over Ambā,[20] and the Vṛddha-Kumārī-Upākhyāna or "Old Maid's Subtale," also to be mentioned later. The latter occurs at Mahābhārata 9.51 and is immediately followed from 9.51.25 through 9.52 by an account of Kurukṣetra itself, most typically titled the Kurukṣetraprasaṃsā, in which the ṛṣis tell Baladeva the epic's chief story about King Kuru: his plowing of this field and getting Indra's promise that the most stringent ascetics and warriors who die in battle at "Kuru's Field" will go directly to heaven purified by the wind and its sacred dust.[21] Kuru, unlike the prior eponyms Pūru and Bharata of the Paurava-Bhārata-Kaurava lineage, seems to be an invention of the Mahābhārata poets—like his mother Tapatī, daughter of the sun, and his father Saṃvaraṇa.[22] Indeed, the two tales the Mahābhārata tells about King Kuru—his birth story, the Tapatī-Upākhyāna (1.160–63), which I will soon mention briefly, and his plowing of Kurukṣetra—seem especially dreamlike and elliptical, which, following Sukthankar,[23] I take to be a characteristic of the Mahābhārata's baseline text reconstructed in the Poona Critical Edition.

Mahābhārata and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories";
Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata: Śiva's Summa on Ṛṣidharma and the Gleaners of Kurukṣetra (London: Routledge, 2016). "*Tīrthas*, Temples, *Āśramas* and Royal Courts."

20   One finds seven mentions of Kurukṣetra from Mahābhārata 5.177.23c–179.17.

21   Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 555; "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories"; *Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata*.

22   See Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967 [1912]), 413: "Saṃvaraṇa is the name of a Ṛṣi mentioned in one passage of the Rigveda" (5.33.10). Cf. Alexander Lubotsky, *A Ṛgvedic Word Concordance*, part 2 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1997) 1454: only usage as a personal name.

23   "The Southern recension impresses us thus by its *precision, schematization, and thoroughly practical outlook*. Compared with it, the Northern recension is distinctly vague, unsystematic, sometimes even inconsequent, *more like a story rather naively narrated*, as we find in actual experience." V.S. Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," in *The Ādiparvan for the First Time Critically Edited* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), xxxvi (author's italics). See further Hiltebeitel, "From *Ṛṣidharma* to *Vānaprastha*" and *Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata*.

Upākhyānas of the Āraṇyakaparvan

Moving back now to Book 3, it is perhaps well enough known that the Āraṇya-kaparvan builds most (eighteen, to be precise) of its twenty-one upākhyānas into two main sequences in which in each case the narrations are mostly by one ṛṣi speaker: in the first series, Lomaśa; in the second, Mārkaṇḍeya. We will see that our picture of upākhyāna geography widens with these two series.

After Nārada has recounted what Pulastya once told Bhīṣma about the merits of visiting *tīrtha*s, including the epic's most detailed description of Kurukṣetra at Mahābhārata 3.81,[24] he introduces Lomaśa to serve as the Pāṇḍavas' *tīrtha* guide, and Lomaśa then tells eight out of nine more-or-less location-specific upākhyānas, all narrated in the Tīrthayātra-Parvan (3.80–153), which the Pāṇḍavas (minus Arjuna) and Draupadī hear as they make a clock-wise *pradakṣiṇā* of the subcontinent with Lomaśa. (Arjuna has gone to Kailāsa and Indraloka to meet Śiva and Indra to obtain divine weapons, and one of the purposes of the four other Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī's journey is to bide the time until they can meet him in the Himalayas when he is ready to come down to earth.)

Lomaśa begins this sequence with the Agastya-Upākhyāna (3.94–108), which, while ranging widely,[25] begins at Agastya's hermitage on the Bhāgirathī (97.26) at the Gate-of-the-Ganges (95.11a), presumably Hardwar. And Lomaśa's upākhyāna-telling along the tour ends, after one interruption by Akṛtavraṇa to narrate the Kārtavīrya-Upākhyāna at Mount Mahendra in Kaliṅga, with the Yavakrīta-Upākhyāna (3.135–39), which Lomaśa tells higher up the Gaṅgā at the hermitage of Raibhya,[26] where Raibhya's Veda-knowledge proved to be supe-rior to Yavakrīta's.[27] From there, Lomaśa leads the Pāṇḍavas further upriver to

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24   Thirteen of Book 3's seventeen mentions of Kurukṣetra occur in this *adhyāya*. See Hiltebei-tel, "*Tīrthas*, Temples, *Āśramas* and Royal Courts" on "Pulastya's *tīrthayātra*" as a "matrix text" for other Mahābhārata pilgrimage texts in that it is narrated to Bhīṣma before the life of Kṛṣṇa changes the landscape.

25   Other locations mentioned include Maṇimatī (where Ilvala and Vatāpi live), Vidarbha (where Agastya gets Lopamudrā from), and of course the Vindhya, which he keeps from growing as high as Mount Meru.

26   En route, they pass the River Madhuvilā Samaṃgā, "the bathing place of Bharata, ... called Kardamila," where Indra also bathed after killing Vṛtra, and where Mount Maināka entered the earth (Mahābhārata 3.135.1–3).

27   Raibhya and Yavakrīta's father Bharadvāja were friends. Yavakrīta disliked Raibhya's better reception by brahmans, and so sought to learn Veda on the Bhāgirathī, where Indra in brahman guise tried to make a dam with scoops of sand to teach him that the two tasks were equally fruitless (Mahābhārata 135.33). Indra then promised Yavakrīta and

a point where the seven-fold Gaṅgā shines forth. There he warns them that they should guard Draupadī, as they are nearing Kubera's domain with its Yakṣas and Rākṣasas (3.140.1–15), and also nearing Mount Kailāsa. This skein of upākhyānas is now over as they all approach Mount Gandhamādana (141.22).[28] It is in the ensuing Gandhamādana narrative that they will be reunited with Arjuna.

Well along this route, Lomaśa tells the Māndhātṛ- (Mahābhārata 3.126) and Jantu- (3.127–28) upākhyānas at Kurukṣetra. Māndhātṛ, an Ikṣvāku, got his name when he suckled Indra's thumb at birth after his hundred-year gestation inside his father, who had drunk a potion intended for Māndhātṛ's mother. Yudhiṣṭhira now stands at "this most holy spot in the middle of Kurukṣetra" (*puṇyatame deśe kurukṣetrasya madhyataḥ*; 3.126.42cd), where Māndhātṛ offered sacrifices to the gods. Jantu, then, is a brahman who suffered for a time in hell for officiating at an adharmic sacrifice—that of King Somaka, who sacrificed one son to obtain a hundred—somewhere on this same terrain.[29] Somaka would seem to be the eponym of the Somaka branch of the Pañcālas, who, like the hundred Kauravas, are destined to be wiped out on the Kurukṣetra battlefield. Next, Lomaśa speaks on the merits of spending the night at "the gate of Kurukṣetra" (3.129.11), and then directs the Pāṇḍavas to Plakṣāvataraṇa on the Yamunā, which is "the gate to the ridge of heaven." As one learns during Balarāma's *tīrthayātra*, Plakṣāvataraṇa is also near the headwaters of the Sarasvatī (9.53.10). The Pāṇḍavas do *yātsattra* or Vrātya things there, carrying "poles and mortars" and offering up Sāsasvata sacrifices.[30] This is "where King Bharata frequently sent off his black-dappled sacrificial horse, after he had obtained the whole earth by dharma"; here Yudhiṣṭhira can "gaze upon the worlds and see Arjuna off on above" (3.129.13–19). They are still near

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Bharadvāja full sight of the Vedas, but Bharadvāja saw this as a source of pride for Yavakrīta that would be his death. Yavakrīta then rapes Raibhya's son Parāvasu's wife, and dies by a sorceress. Bharadvāja cremates Yavakīta and dies in the fire, cursing Raibhya. Raibhya's sacrificial patron King Bṛhaddyumna then holds a session with Raibhya's two sons as priests. Coming home at night, Parāvasu kills Raibhya in the forest, mistaking him for an animal, and tells his brother Arvāvasu he must finish the rite. After further turnabout, the gods favor Arvāvasu and explain to Yavakrīta why his Veda knowledge was inferior to Rabhya's: he learned it the easy way and not from a guru.

28 Heading there, Subāhu, king of the mountain men (Kuṇindas), hosts them (Mahābhārata 141.26–28).

29 See Mahābhārata 3.128.1 ff.: a site for sacrifices by Prajāpati, Ambarīṣa, Yayāti, etc.; 128.17.

30 On Plakṣāvataraṇa/Plakṣa Prāśravaṇa *tīrtha*, see Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 143–55; on *yātsattras* and Vrātyas along Baladrāma's and others' routes, ibid., 121–55, 159–60, 166, 170–71.

Kurukṣetra, for next day on the Sarasvatī, Lomaśa tells them, "This is Prajāpati's altar, five leagues around, the field of that great-spirited sacrificer Kuru itself" (22–23).

Book 3's second main upākhyāna sequence is less topographical than Lomaśa's. It occurs when all five Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī have come down from Gandhamādana by a well-detailed route to the Kāmyaka Forest. There, while they are receiving a visit by Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā, Mārkaṇḍeya arrives (Mahābhārata 180.39). Kṛṣṇa—with the Pāṇḍavas and the brahmans' permission—asks Mārkaṇḍeya to tell all of them "holy tales of the past" (180.42–44). Nārada then drops in close behind Mārkaṇḍeya (45-47), knowing that the ageless sage would speak, and encourages him to begin. As he is about to do so, Yudhiṣṭhira celebrates that Keśava is there to listen (181.1–3), and Mārkaṇḍeya tells Yudhiṣṭhira that the Pāṇḍavas have come to earth from the world beyond for the sake of *surakārya* (39), "the work of the gods."[31] All this is stagesetting for the Mārkaṇḍeya-Sāmasya-Parvan (3.179–221), in which Mārkaṇḍeya now tells a brief opening story—not billed as an upākhyāna—about how brahmans are immune from death (3.282). This prompts Yudhiṣṭhira to give Mārkaṇḍeya the topic of the greatness of brahmans (3.183.1), on which Mārkaṇḍeya tells the Vainya-Upākhyāna (3.183) as illustration,[32] and next how Sarasvatī praises brahmans (3.184), before he seemingly diverges from this topic to tell the Matsya-Upākhyāna (3.185) in which Brahmā, not Viṣṇu, becomes the Fish that saves Manu, getting him to build an ark. This introduces four adhyāyas that are surely the centerpiece of this *upaparvan*, which might itself explain why none of the stories and predictions Mārkaṇḍeya tells in this span are called upākhyānas. These are his revelations (1) about *kalpas* and *caturyuga*s; (2) about swimming during a *pralaya* into the baby Kṛṣṇa's mouth, after which he tells the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī they should take refuge in the same Kṛṣṇa

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31   This is one of many points at which one hears about the "work of the gods" and/or the Pāṇḍavas' or others' divine parentage. Like most of these, it is not mentioned in short-lists of such revelations designed to demonstrate the alleged peripheralty of these themes to the epic. See, e.g., Simon Brodbeck, "Husbands of the Earth: Kṣatriyas, Females, and Female Kṣatriyas in the Strīparvan of the *Mahābhārata*," in *Epic Undertakings: Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, vol. 2, ed. Robert P. Goldman and Muneo Tokunaga (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009), 37–38 and n. 17, and, for comment, Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 573.

32   Atri and Gautama vie for the patronage of King Vainya (not a king of any place mentioned), and get into an argument over whether Vainya (Atri's position) or Indra (Gautama's position) is the "Provider." The arbiter selected is Sanatkumāra who favors Atri's view and thus also Vainya, who gives Atri an abundance of prizes, "for I think you are omniscient!" (32).

seated among them; (3) about the future adversities of the Kaliyuga; and (4) about how the brahman Kalki Viṣṇuyaśas will restore the Kṛtayuga. Indeed, the identification of the Fish as Brahmā in an upākhyāna just before this non-upākhyāna "*bhakti* run" suggests the possibility that Mārkaṇḍeya is treating the Fish story as transitional to his more important revelations about Kṛṣṇa and Kalki. Mārkaṇḍeya has in any case clearly built matters up to a lesson on cosmography rather than geography, of which there is only minimal interest in these stories, upākhyānas and otherwise. Thus even though Yudhiṣṭhira launches Mārkaṇḍeya's next tale with what looks like a reminder that what he wants to hear about is still "the lordliness of Brahmans" (190.1), Mārkaṇḍeya resumes telling upākhyānas that carry his cosmological interest along through the next three of them—the Maṇḍūka- (3.190);[33] Indradyumna- (3.191);[34] and Dhundhumāra-Upākhyānas (3.192–95)[35]—before ending the sequence with the more down-to-earth and whimsically ethical Pativratā-Upākhyāna (3.196–206), most of which takes place in Mithilā.

Mārkaṇḍeya's string of six upākhyānas is interrupted now by Vyāsa, who drops in on the Pāṇḍavas at Kāmyaka Forest to tell them the Mudgala-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 3.246–47), about which I will say a bit in closing. The Pāṇḍavas will then ask Mārkaṇḍeya to tell them two more famous upākhyānas before Book 3 is over: the Rāma-Upākhyāna, the one about Rāma Dāśarathi (3.257–76), and the Sāvitrī-Upākhyāna (3.277–83). Speaking now strictly in terms of upākhyāna sequentiality, one will notice that just as Lomaśa's string

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33 The Ikṣvāku king Parikṣit marries a frog-princess whom he meets in a pool where he goes to bathe in the woods. He must never show her water. But she finds water and resumes being a frog. The king orders the killing of all frogs until he gets her back from the frog king Āyu, who gives back his daughter Suśobhanā, who "has this bad streak: many are the kings she has deceived before." In giving her to this Parikṣit, Āyu curses her to have unbrahmanic sons for having been deceptive (38–42). The eldest son then won't give Vāmadeva back his Vāmya horses, and this brahman shows his superiority through several episodes. With this, if not before, the "greatness of brahmans" theme seems to have petered out.

34 King Indradyumna was bounced from heaven because no one knew him there; his "fame" was lost. He approached Mārkaṇḍeya to see if he remembered him and was told, "We are not alchemists [*rāsāyanikās*]." They finally find a turtle, Akūpāra, in a Himalayan lake who remembers him. Indradumna created the lake by the stamping of the cows he gave away there in his fire sacrifices.

35 Dhundhu, son of the asuras Madhu and Kaiṭabha, bothered Utaṅka by making earthquakes in the desert. The Ikṣvāku king Kuvalāśva, pervaded by the force of Viṣṇu, killed Dhundhu, which gave him the name Dhundhumāra. Viṣṇu had killed Madhu and Kaiṭabha on his uncovered thigh after Brahmā was born from Viṣṇu's navel. An Ikṣvāku genealogy is given down through Kuvalāśva and his remaining three sons—his other 21,000 sons recalling the 60,000 sons of Sagara killed by Kapila (Mahābhārata 195.26).

of eight upākhyānas is interrupted after his second by Akṛtavraṇa's telling of the Kārtavīrya-Upākhyāna, Mārkaṇḍeya's string of eight is broken after the sixth by Vyāsa's telling of the Mudgala-Upākhyāna. This symmetry alone could be misleading. By the time Vyāsa appears to tell Mudgala, the Pāṇḍavas have come back to Kāmyaka Forest after going to Dvaita Forest, where, as is typical of that more conflict-ridden of the two forests that they go back and forth between in Book 3,[36] they survived Duryodhana's attempt to kill them in the Ghoṣayātrāparvan. Moreover, by the time the Pāṇḍavas ask Mārkaṇḍeya to tell his last two upākhyānas, it is upon the heels of Jayadratha's abduction of Draupadī. Mārkaṇḍeya has apparently remained behind in Kāmyaka Forest while the Pāṇḍavas were drawn into these adventures. But his two closing upākhyānas are of an entirely different order from his first 6. The first six surrounded what Mārkaṇḍeya really came to tell the Pāṇḍavas, and what Nārada too came to hear and Kṛṣṇa also came to prompt: Mārkaṇḍeya's central cosmological and theological revelations about Kṛṣṇa-Janārdana. The last two, like the Nala-Upākhyāna (3.50–78) told earlier in Book 3 by the one-shot narrator Bṛhadaśva, are context-defined tales of consolation: what Madeleine Biardeau has called the Āraṇyakaparavan's three "mirror tales" ("contes miroirs"). On the geography of these three "mirror stories," we can afford to say briefly that their main locations are for the most part well enough known elsewhere in the Mahābhārata.[37] Their purpose geographically in Book 3 is not to build the epic's main story into the geography of India but to reinforce in the Pāṇḍavas' hearing tales of kings and kingdoms that were from a familiar wider repertoire.

Having now mentioned most of Book 3's upākhyānas, and discussed its two main upākhyāna sequences, it is a good moment to take stock so far of Rajesh Purohit's geographical view of the epic's upākhyānas. Clearly they do not all build the epic's main story into the geography of India, or do so equally. But some of them do so prominently, and not surprisingly, these include some of those told during the *tīrthayātras* recounted in Books 3 and 9. Moreover, in both cases, the most geographically intensive ones are those that focus in on the Kurukṣetra-Sarasvatī region. This is obvious in Book 9 where all of Balarāma's movements take place heading into that area. But even in Book 3

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36   See Madeleine Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata: Un récit fondateur du brahmanisme et son interprétation*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 437, 448, 572, 671–72 especially, 687, 755 on the two forests in Book 3.

37   On these three "contes miroirs," see Biardeau, *Le Mahābhārata*, vol. 1, 412–13, 571, 700–42. Leading locations in Nala are Niṣadha, Vidharbha, the capital of the Cedis, and Ayodhyā; in Rāma, they are Ayodhyā, Mithilā, Laṅkā, etc.; and in Sāvitrī, they are the kingdoms of the Madras and Śālvas.

where the Lomaśa-plus-Akṛtavraṇa series accompanies the Pāṇḍavas all around India, the only other upākhyāna location to have immediate relevance to the Mahābhārata's main story, and not just as the tales of a once-local former king or *ṛṣi*, is Akṛtavraṇa's Kārtavīrya-Upākhyāna, which is prominent because Mount Mahendra is where Rāma Jāmadagnya went after he created the five lakes of blood *at* Kurukṣetra. Indeed, unlike all the other kings or *ṛṣis* mentioned in Lomaśa's upākhyānas, Rāma Jāmadagnya still resides at Mount Mahendra after having been quite active in the main Mahābhārata story during his well-known dealings with Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Ambā, and Karṇa,[38] and in his attendance during Kṛṣṇa's prewar peace-overture at the Kuru court, where he warns Duryodhana about pride by telling him the Dambhodbhava-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 5.94).

Fortunately, the orientations of the two upākhyāna sequences in Book 3—Lomaśa's, envisioning a totality of India, and Mārkaṇḍeya's, envisioning the place of that totality in the larger totality of the universe—point us toward a fruitful way to conceptualize what the Ādiparvan will have already done with some of its well positioned upākhyānas. Upākhyānas help to build the Mahābhārata's geography into its cosmography, and vice versa. As one particularly revealing example of these suggestive lines of thought, I close my treatment of the Āraṇyakaparvan with a glance at what seems to be a widely overlooked moment in the Nala-Upākhyāna.

When Damayantī has been abandoned by Nala, she addresses a mountain somewhere in central India:

> O best of mountains, have you with your hundred peaks [*śṛṅgaśatair*] that scrape the sky perchance seen king Nala in this terrible forest? (Mahābhārata 3.61.50)

Damayantī then turns north and walks for three days and nights before coming upon a "circle of hermitages" (93d) "looking like a heavenly park" (56-57), populated by ṛṣi-muni ascetics "the likes of Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, and Atri," who "lived on water or off the wind, or fed on leaves" (58–59). Damayantī's ordering of the two words *śata* and *śṛṅga* when she calls the mountain *śṛṅga-śatair* reverses and evokes the Himalayan Śataśṛṅga Mountain of Book 1, where a mix of earthly and celestial ṛṣis protected Pāṇḍu, Kuntī, and Madrī—but especially the two women, one of whom, Kuntī, holds the secret to the birth of sons for the impotent Pāṇḍu. The solicitous Śataśṛṅga Ṛṣis, clearly attuned to the epic's divine plan, then soon escort the Pāṇḍavas, Kuntī, and the remains of Pāṇḍu

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38   On which see Fitzgerald,"The Rama Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the *Mahābhārata*," 109–11.

and Mādrī to Hāstinapura to introduce the boys to the Kurus there as the sons of Pāṇḍu, before vanishing on the spot.[39] Similarly, when the Ṛṣis in the Nala-Upākhyāna now heed Damayantī's call to the hundred-peaked mountain, they arrange for her to find them so that they can reassure her that she will find Nala—only then to vanish, along with their hermitages, leaving her wondering whether she had seen them and their hermitages only in a dream (93).

What the poets have done here, then, is to build the main story's Śataśṛṅga cosmography from the Ādiparvan into the Nala-Upākhyāna. The Mahābhārata's main story does this kind of ṛṣi-fusing at moments when earthly and celestial ṛṣis sidle their way together into its divine plan. Another such instance that involves celestial ṛṣis heading to the Kuru court occurs when a host of them—including Rāma Jāmadagnya, who must be taking leave from Mount Mahendra—descends from the sky to greet Kṛṣṇa on his pre-war embassy to Hāstinapura (Mahābhārata 5.81.26–64). I will mention this trope of ṛṣi-fusing again in connection with the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, the first Ādiparvan sub-tale (according to the Critical Edition).

Upākhyānas of the Ādiparvan

As we shall now see, the Mahābhārata's first two subtales—the Śakuntalā- (Mahābhārata 1.62–69) and Yayāti-Upākhyānas (1.70–80)—clearly do support Rajesh Purohit's proposal. But in contrast to the most geographically oriented upākhyānas of Books 3 and 9, they present a geography defined by the royal ordering of geographical space rather than by *tīrthayātra*s. More than this, these two upākhyānas lead off and exemplify a trait that typifies Ādiparvan upākhyānas more than those found in later Books. The Śakuntalā- and Yayāti-Upākhyānas are the only two told within the overarching momentum of the *aṃśāvataraṇa*—the "descent of the partial incarnations" of supernaturals into human lineages to relieve the earth's burden. Accordingly, one can think of them as woven into the Mahābhārata's primary construction of cosmo-gonically anchored *itihāsa* or history.[40] The same might be expected of this

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39   See for discussion Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 393-409; "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories."

40   See Simon Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline: Gender, Culture, and the Royal Heredi-tary* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 28–29. Each of the two upākhyānas is further the lead-in to one of the epic's two dynastic genealogies: the *śloka vaṃśa* coming after "Śakuntalā," and the prose *vaṃśa* after "Yayāti" and the Uttara-Yāyāta.

dynasty's third eponym, Kuru, already mentioned, whom the Ādiparvan also introduces in the Tapatī-Upākhyāna (1.160–63), which is named after Kuru's mother Tapatī. But the landscape and time-frame of the Tapatī-Upākhyāna is best discussed not in the context of dynastic geography or history but in relation to the two intermingled upākhyānas about ṛṣis that immediately follow it: the Vasiṣṭha- (1.164–68.173) and Aurva-Upākhyānas (1.169–72). These five, plus the aforementioned Sunda-Upasunda-Upākhyāna (1.201–4) will be the main Ādiparvan subtales under scrutiny from here on in this essay. The six will be taken up in the order just given, which is the order in which they appear in the Critical Edition. Nonetheless, it is worth keeping in mind that the full eleven upākhyānas of Book 1 could be seen to convey a certain tightening of cosmographic, geographic, and especially itihāsic momentum from first to last.[41] For whereas the first two deal with kings who establish the Kuruvaṃśa's rule over the entire world, the last one coincides with the burning of the Khāṇḍava Forest that clears the land for a new branch of that dynasty, the Pāṇḍavas, to found their new capital at Indraprastha, traditionally identified with Delhi.[42]

With regard to the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna's geo-history, I must call attention to some modifications and fine-tunings made quite early by the redactors of the Southern Recension, which I will often refer to as elsewhere by S. I have written an article on S's "first reading" of Śakuntalā that touches on the Yayāti-Upākhyāna as well.[43] The Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna begins with Janamejaya saying that now that he has heard about how the Gods, Dānavas, Rākṣasas, Gandharvas, and Apsarases took on their *aṃśāvataraṇam*, he wants Vaiśaṃpāyana to tell

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41   Of the other four upākhyānas not mentioned in this paragraph, Mahābhiṣa- (Mahābhārata 1.91) anticipates Gaṅgā's down-to-earth appearances and the geography they entail up and down the river, including her decision to enter history by loving the Bhārata/Kuru line (1.92.12c–13; 93.45–46; see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 352); Aṇimāṇḍāvya- (1.101) follows after the dynastic account has reached the birth of Vidura, but mentions no particular locations when an unnamed king's men chase a bunch of thieves into an ashram (101.9); Vyuṣitāśva- (1.112) tells of an unregistered lunar dynasty king; and Pañcendra- (1.189.1–34), by which Vyāsa explains why Draupadī should marry all five Pāṇḍavas, begins in Naimiṣa Forest (1a), but would seem to shift at verse 9 to somewhere on the Gaṅgā where the sacrificing gods see golden lotuses floating by, which Indra traces to their upriver source where it is possible to see Śiva playing dice on a Himalayan peak (14). Note that the ṛṣis who come at the bidding of the impaled silent Muni in Aṇimāṇḍavya-return at night in the form of *śakuna* birds (101.13-15) to ask about his predicament—marking, as in Śakuntalā-, the interplay between geosphere and cosmosphere. But in Śakuntalā-, the birds are *śakunta* birds and are not *ṛṣis*.

42   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Among Friends: Marriage, Women, and Some Little Birds," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 117–26.

43   Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading."

him "from the beginning [*āditaḥ*] ... how the Kuru *vaṃśa* came into being"
(Mahābhārata 1.62.2). Vaiśaṃpāyana then introduces Duḥṣanta[44] as a Paurava
vaṃśakāra or "lineage maker" who was a "herdsman of the earth to her four
horizons" (*pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā*). He enjoyed not only "the entire earth
with all four quarters" (*caturbhāgaṃ bhuvaḥ kṛtsnam sa bhuṅkte*) but "also the
countries that are surrounded by the ocean" (*samudrāvaraṇāṃś cāpi deśān*),
and his pleasure extended as a "scourge of his enemies as far as all forest tribes
and barbarians" (*ā mlecchāṭavikān sarvān ... ripumardanaḥ*) (62.3c–5b).[45] Note
that Janamejaya, whom Vaiśaṃpāyana immediately calls *Bharatasattama* or
best of Bharatas (62.3d), asks about the *Kuru*vaṃśa and is taken back to the
earlier *Paurava* line that reaches Duḥṣanta, who, it seems, is the one credited
with being the *vaṃśakāra* within this one line. Clearly, just as the poets find
ways to suggest the fusion of celestial and earthly *ṛṣis*, they find ways to estab-
lish continuity within a single Paurava-Bharata-Kuru dynastic line.

Duḥṣanta goes hunting. S's first five interpolations are leisurely, yet sug-
gest the Southern Recension's game plan for "Śakuntalā" in toto. After leaving
Duḥṣanta's brutal hunt intact through a first forest, S's first insertion comes
as Duḥṣanta approaches a second forest. This insertion and the second intro-
duce the idea that this transitional second forest, and the third where he
finds Kaṇva's hermitage, are resorted to by Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Apsaras, and
Gandharvas. The third Southern Recension insert then says of Kaṇva's āśrama
that it is "frequented by hosts of Maharṣis" (64.22/681*). A fourth insertion then
accounts for practitioners of all four Vedas there. And the fifth describes its
resident brahmans as specializing in all kinds of Vedic sciences.[46] The middle
interpolation about Maharṣis thus erases the distinction between the celestial
hosts mentioned in the first two inserts, and the worldly brahmans in the last
two. Just as it did on the Śataśṛṅga Mountain, this signals that both types are
found in Kaṇva's hermitage.

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44   I use the Critical Edition's spelling Duḥṣanta, though as I indicate in Hiltebeitel, "The
     Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading," 18, n. 2. I regard it as an emendatation
     of a more likely Duṣyanta.

45   On the compound *mlecchāṭavikān*, used only one other time in the Poona Critical Edition
     in connection with the imminent fall of Duryodhana, the "last Kaurava," see Hiltebeitel
     forthcoming C § A. Since according to the Bhṛgu-Bharadvāja Saṃvāda (see n. 8 above)
     *mleccha*s or barbarians do not appear until the *Tretā yuga*, this might strain the idea that
     the idyll would imply a *Kṛta yuga* (on which see Madeleine Biardeau, "Śakuntalā dans
     l'épopée," *Indologica Taurinensia* 7, *Dr. Ludwig Sternbach Felicitation Volume, Part I* [1979]:
     115–25), though it could just be that Duṣyanta is a king who makes the *yuga* a *Kṛta*.

46   See Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," xxxviii.

S thus brings out that Kaṇva is an exemplar of both types of ṛṣis, as of course he already is in the baseline story. That is, he is a ṛṣi suited to make interventions on behalf of dharma and a divine plan. Indeed, we have just noted two episodes that involve a mix of celestial and earthly ṛṣis heading to Hāstinapura: one, to escort the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī there to meet the astonished Kauravas, the first among them being Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu's brother and for now the reigning king; the other to join Kṛṣṇa on his pre-war embassy there. The most striking parallel and the one proximate to "Śakuntalā" in the Ādiparvan is the first, for Śakuntalā too will have an escort to Hāstinapura, which Kaṇva himself will arrange, and Śakuntalā has to introduce Bharata at Hāstinapura to another equally caught-off-guard "Kuru" king, her husband-in-denial Duḥṣanta. But Kṛṣṇa's embassy also presents parallels, for in this episode it will also be a question of ṛṣis who will bear witness to what goes on in the Kuru court. Indeed, by the time of the Mahābhārata's main story, Kaṇva, like Rāma Jāmadagnya, has clearly become one of the ṛṣis who is cued into the epic's divine plan. He is most likely[47] among those who descend from the skies to see Kṛṣṇa as he approaches Hāstinapura as the Pāṇḍavas' last "peace" envoy, who then descend again to take seats in the Kuru court to hear and witness what Kṛṣṇa will say and do there (Mahābhārata 5.92.40–45). In any case, he is there with Rāma Jāmadagnya, and as soon as Jāmadagnya tells Duryodhana the Dhambhodbhava Upākhyāna (5.94), Kaṇva launches two tales of his own. First, he tells Duryodhana about Indra's charioteer Mātali—an "ancient history" (*itihāsam-purātanam*; 5.95.11b) rather than an upākhyāna. This is about Mātali's search of various earthly and subterranean worlds including finally Bhogāvatī, the world of Snakes, for a son-in-law to marry to his daughter (5.95–103). Kaṇva prefaces this story by mentioning the indestructibleness of Brahmā and of Nara and Nārāyaṇa (95.1–3). And he ends on the point that, just as Garuḍa's pride was humbled by Viṣṇu, so will Duryodhana's be by Vāsudeva, whom Duryodhana should rather recognize as the one he should turn to as the "savior" of his lineage (*vāsudevena tīrthena kulaṃ rakṣitumarhasi*, 103.34cd)— which only provokes Duryodhana to derisive laughter (36). Undeterred, Kaṇva then tells his story of Gālava (5.104–21)—likewise called an *itihāsam-purātanam* (5.104.7ab) but also a "great narrative" (*mahad-ākhyānam*, 121.22ab)—that further features Garuḍa, now taking Gālava on tour over the four directions, before he brings King Yayāti back into focus from Book 1, along with novelties about Yayāti's daughter Mādhavī. As the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna appears

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47   He is not mentioned in the short list of such *ṛṣis* who appear at first along with Rāma Jāmadagnya (Mahābhārata 5.81.26–28), but it is clearly a question of these and countless others; see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 620–21.

within the overarching momentum of the *aṃśāvataraṇa*, one could think that Kaṇva's protection of Śakuntalā in it is already part of a divine plan.[48]

But for now, as Duḥṣanta comes to the third forest, he finds that "a sovereign beauty reigned over it" (*lakṣmyā paramayā yutam*; Mahābhārata 1.64.5).[49] He has arrived at Kaṇva's hermitage on the banks of the Mālinī River, which "added to the loveliness of this forest of austerities" (64.18).[50] "Thereupon the illustrious warrior drew nigh to the [*śrī*-posssessing][51] hermitage that ... was the image of the world of the Gods [*devaloka*]" (64.19). This verse describes how Vaiśaṃpāyana says the hermitage looked to Duḥṣanta, and his starting with its being like *devaloka* probably goes with its being *śrīmān*. But as Biardeau astutely says, "Duṣyanta first thinks he is in Devaloka ..., but it is rather a Brahmaloka ..., for the place resonates with Veda recitation and all preoccupy themselves with sacrificial tasks."[52] Biardeau offers only a shorthand explanation of why she speaks of Brahmaloka here. But let us consider a more cosmologically attuned account of that place by André Couture as he comments on chapters 39 and 40 of the Critical Edition of the Harivaṃśa. Couture's debts to Biardeau as her former student and her continuing reader are acknowledged and profound here, and his work on the Harivaṃśa is important in working out that text's relations with the Mahābhārata.

The "Viṣṇuite *bhakti*" of the *Harivaṃśa*, says Couture,

> conceives of Brahmaloka as a world where, in order to honor Viṣṇu, one must continue to practice the Vedic dharma. It is thus a world of equality

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48   See Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading," on one of S's few insertions into the story of Śakuntalā's birth that she tells Duḥṣanta, quoting what her mother Menakā said before abandoning her:

"You, luminous one, are the destructress of the foremost *tapas* of the great Ṛṣi. Therefore I will go to heaven, having come for the purpose of the work of the Gods" (*devakāryārtham;* 66.8/603* lines 3-4).

As I say there, this *devakārya* would probably "include more than just the benefit of one god like Indra, who was worried about Viśvāmitra's *tapas.* We may thus infer that the baby Menakā addresses will carry on the *devakārya* by engendering the Bhārata dynasty."

49   Note how the Buffalo image of a king out of control, and needing a Mahiṣī, now alternates to an image of his royal complement being Śrī-Lakṣmī.

50   Cf. 3.80.64 (p. 375) on Kaṇva's hermitage, said there to be near Agastya's Lake and where Yayāti fell.

51   See note to 1.64.5. Van Buitenen does not complicate his translation, but *śrīmān* is significant here in describing the *āśrama*. See also 64.34.

52   Biardeau, "Śakuntalā dans l'épopée," 116. Biardeau cites as usual the Vulgate; see 64.30, 34, and 40. Note further S's attention to the weird *munis* of Kaṇva's ashram with their varied diets at App. 1, No. 47 lines 13-16.

where all celebrate together the same eternal rites; but not a world of indifference, because in celebrating the ancient rites prescribed by the Veda, a Brahmin, in respecting his *svadharma*, gives homage to Viṣṇu.[53]

This is not to say that the Harivaṃśa provides an eternal place to do one's *svadharma* only for brahmans, "those who dedicate themselves to asceticism according to the Vedānta."[54] For when Kṛṣṇa lifts Mount Govardhana to protect the cowherds, he opens the still higher world of Goloka to all, beginning with those who pursue the *svadharma* of cowherds. And still higher than that, "there remains the ascetic residence reserved for Viṣṇu himself."[55] It seems that the Harivaṃśa inserts Goloka into what Couture calls this "new cosmology,"[56] otherwise seeking to provide a more definitive theological and soteriological structure to elements it knows from the Mahābhārata, including Kṛṣṇa's teachings on *svadharma* in the Bhagavadgītā.[57] This is background to what Couture has to say about Brahmaloka that is most interesting with respect to the way that Kaṇva's hermitage might represent it in the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna:

> In effect, everything transpires as if, between the supreme abode that is Viṣṇu and the triple world, there has been elaborated in place of the traditional Brahmaloka a midspace (*lieu mitoyen*) inaccessible to the gods, a sort of mysterious ashram where the relations of the Lord with the world of manifestation are tied together. Brahmaloka is no longer Brahman as Being, Consciousness, and Bliss (*saccidānanda*), the Absolute of the

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53 André Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna: Traduction des chapitres 30 à 78 (édition critique) du Harivaṃśa* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf; and Montreal: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991), 144 n. 1. Couture draws here on Nīlakaṇṭha and comments that the chapter (1.49 in the Vulgate) has the purpose of showing "que même les habitants du Brahmaloka honorent (*bhajanti*) Viṣṇu. Ils ne vivent pas dans l'indifférence, en s'imaginant que c'est ce qu'exige leur devoir."

54 Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna*, 51.

55 Ibid., citing HV 62.24–32.

56 Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna*, 51, mentioning that "Il y a peu de texts qui parlent explicitement de ce fameux Goloka," but showing precedent for it in the Mahābhārata's myth of King Pṛthu (Mahābhārata 12.29.129–36; 12.59), to whose story the Harivaṃśa consecrates its fifth and sixth chapters (51–53).

57 Couture presents the Harivaṃśa as having thoroughly absorbed the Gītā's teachings on *svadharma* (Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna*, 41, 46, 56–57, 67–68, 87 n. 21 [*karmayoga*], 98 n. 21, 407, 427)—something that I believe the Mahābhārata has not done so thoroughly with regard to the Gītā's cosmologically tuned alignment of *svadharma* with *karmayoga*; see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 462, 518–34, 536 n. 32.

Vedānta. It is a Brahmaloka frequented both by the Brahmanical ṛṣis in as much as they are the origin and limit of the Vedic tradition and the rites prescribed in it (ch 39), and by this ancient ṛṣi who is Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa in the role of origin and limit of the triple world and of all its inhabitants (ch 40). Concerning the Brahman and the Puruṣa, this Brahmā Nārāyaṇa has inherited from the entire Vedic tradition. But in contrast to the Brahman of the Vedānta, this personalized Brahmā can nonetheless be qualified as Nārāyaṇa only within the interior of a relation of unconditional devotion to the Puruṣottama and Mahāyogin Viṣṇu.[58]

One profit we can draw from this lengthy quotation is the backing it gives to my proposal that we understand Mārkaṇḍeya's representation of Manu's Fish with Brahmā as interior to a relation of devotion between Beings and Kṛṣṇa-Janārdana. Another is that its evocation of Brahmaloka as a hidden mysterious āśrama can clarify the comings and goings of the celestial ṛṣis who fabricate a parallel forest āśrama in which to appear before Damayantī. But for now, turning back to Kaṇva's āśrama, the Nālinī River is described at length embracing it, culminating in a verse that compares the site to the "dwelling place [*sthānam*] of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, adorned by the Gaṅgā," while the hermitage itself, which Duḥṣanta knows to be that of Kaṇva-Kāśyapa, whom he has come to see (Mahābhārata 1.65.8ab), is compared to Citraratha's park (64.20–25; 65.8). It is, of course, unlikely that Duḥṣanta has been either to Nara and Nārāyaṇa's hermitage (presumably Badarī) or to Citraratha's park. He does, however, now enter Kaṇva's hermitage alone with such ruminations attributed to him, while telling his escort to wait behind for him (1.64.26–27; 65.1). He finds the place humming with Vedic sounds and bustling with Vedic business, which is extensively described at the end of an adhyāya.

Once in the āśrama, Duḥṣanta finds it empty but for the beautiful Śakuntalā. She tells him her "reverend father" (*pitā me bhagavān*) Kaṇva is away gathering fruits (Mahābhārata 65.9ab; 67.6ab). Pressed by Duḥṣanta to confirm his sense that she cannot be a brahman's daughter and must be a kṣatriya's, she tells him the story—which she once overheard Kaṇva tell a visiting ṛṣi (65.19)—of how Indra persuaded the Apsaras Menakā to seduce Viśvāmitra, and Śakuntalā became their daughter, all of which took place in the vicinity of the current conversation: "on a lovely tableland in the Himalayas [*prasthe himavato ramye*] by the river Mālinī" (66.8cd). There on the Mālinī's bank, Menakā abandoned Śakuntalā at birth and went back up to the assembly of Indra (9); and there

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58   Couture, trans. *L'enfance de Krishna*, 148 n. 1.

Kaṇva found her.[59] Hearing herself propositioned now by Duḥṣanta, Śakuntalā makes one condition, which Duḥṣanta accepts—that their son will be his heir. He promises her additionally that he will send a great escort to conduct her to his city (*nagaram*; 67.18d); and after he has lain with her, he adds reassuringly that the escort will consist of footmen, horses, chariots, and elephants (20), making it a virtual fourfold army. Yet he worries about Kaṇva's anger as he enters his capital (22).

Kaṇva is soon back and consoling Śakuntalā that her son will be a king "who will enjoy the entire earth to the corners of the ocean" (*ya imaṃ sāgarāpāṅgāṃ kṛtsnāṃ bhokṣyati medinīm*; Mahābhārata 1.67.28cd); he will be a *cakravartin* whose "wheel will forever roll unimpeded" (29).[60] It is also predicted that Bharata will perform hundreds of *aśvamedhas* (68.59), to which S twice adds thousands of *rājasūyas*.[61] Both of these royal ceremonies involve rites that display a king's universal access or conquest, and this is probably why so many of them are predicted for Bharata.

S, however, now makes a major geographical innovation in two long interpolations. In the first, Kaṇva sends Śakuntalā and Bharata to Hāstinapura (called *gajasāhvayam*; 68.12d) by way of Pratiṣṭhāna, where "Śakuntalā's son's grandfather was king in Pratiṣṭhāna city for a long time with Urvaśī" (No. 47.22–23). S thus interjects a prior dynastic precedent into the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, since Purūravas, a pre-Paurava lunar dynasty ancestor of Bharata, married an Apsaras like Śakuntalā's mother Menakā. I describe this long detour elsewhere,[62] but we must keep Pratiṣṭhāna in mind for the Yayāti-Upākhyāna.

Once Śakuntalā has come to Hāstinapura and argued back and forth with Duḥṣanta, she begins her parting shot with a cosmographically contoured geography lesson:

> King, you see the faults of others that are small like mustard seeds and you look but do not see your own, the size of pumpkins! Menakā is one of the Thirty Gods. The Thirty come after Menakā! My birth is higher than

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59 See, however, the more condensed and perhaps more romantic verse where Śakuntalā re-summarizes matters for Duḥṣanta: "The Apsaras Menakā gave birth to me on a flank of the Himalaya [*himavatah pṛṣṭhe*] and abandoned me piteously and went as if I were another's child" (Mahābhārata 68.69; cf. 68.73, where Duḥṣanta repeats these words calling Menakā a slut, and then calling Śakuntalā the same).

60 S also has Kaṇva predict to Śakuntalā that when Bharata is born after her three-year pregnancy (Mahābhārata 1.68.2; 58ab), he will be a *cakravartin*—a prediction that Vaiśaṃpāyana, in the baseline, saves for the end of the story (69.45–47).

61 1.624*, lines 4-7, after 68.2; 1.649* after 68.59ab.

62 See Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading."

yours, Duḥṣanta! You walk on earth, great king, but I fly the skies. See how we differ, like Meru and a mustard seed! I can roam to the palaces of great Indra, of Kubera, of Yama, of Varuṇa: behold my power, king! (Mahābhārata 1.69.1–4)

Yet although she says she can go to palaces of the four Lokapālas, she remains in place and closes out her speech on a down-to-earth note: "Even without you, Duḥṣanta, my son shall reign over this four-cornered earth crowned by the king of mountains (*śailarājāvataṃsakam | caturantām imām urvīm*; Mahābhārata 1.69.27), to which S has her recall Indra's prophesy at Bharata's birth that he will become a *cakravartin*. S then gives her these final words: "A witnessless woman of small fortune, I will go as I have come" (1.625*, l 4; 670*, ll 1 and 4). She departs, clearly on foot, with S adding that she took Bharata with her, and in the same interrupted verse, the disembodied heavenly voice bears witness to Duḥṣanta that she has spoken the truth (69.28 and 671*).

As noted, S now reverses the back-to-back order between "Śakuntalā" and "Yayāti." Since putting "Yayāti" before "Śakuntalā" makes the "Vedic" past more linear, S probably reverses the order from an interest in advancing the epic's own genre identification as *itihāsa*, "history."[63] But N's baseline could have had its prior reasons to historically prioritize Bharata. Bharata, unlike his ancestors Yayāti or Pūru or his descendant Kuru, has from Yajur Veda and Brāhmaṇa texts on, been linked to a prototypical royal name that has unified Vedic peoples,[64] and, from the Mahābhārata on, linked that name with a still larger Vedic land, Bhāratavarṣa.

Moving on to Yayāti, I will keep mainly to the upākhyāna in his name (Mahābhārata 1.70–80), and say less about its two sequels: the Uttara-Yāyāta (1.81–88) that follows it immediately; and Book 5's Gālava narrative, already briefly mentioned. Each has geographical interest,[65] but it is the Yayāti-Upā-khyāna that is positioned informatively not only within the *aṃśāvataraṇa*

63   For the Mahābhārata, *itihāsa* is more specific than *itihāsapurāṇa*, and the epic's genre is not *kāvya*, on which Romila Thapar, *Śakuntalā: Texts, Readings, Histories* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 5–8 is misleading.

64   In the *rājasūya*; see Jan Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājasūya Described According to the Yajus Texts and Annotated* (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1957), 70; Hiltebeitel, "The Southern Recension's Śakuntalā as a First Reading," 22 n. 20.

65   A movement from lower heavenly worlds to higher ones is developed further in the Uttarayāyata at 1.84.13 ff., and as Sathaye notes in this volume, Yayāti's grandsons rule later kingdoms that would have been of interest to epic audiences. And "Gālava" begins with Garuḍa showing Gālava all four regions from the sky, before he finds his way to the four grandsons.

(which is also the case for the Uttara-Yāyāta), but (in the Critical Edition) just after the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna. I also attend to only two matters of Yayāti-Upākhyāna geography: the apparent proximity of the asura king Vṛṣaparvan's city to Yayāti's capital; and Yayāti's dispensation of lands to his five sons.

Until one gets to the latter scene on which the Yayāti-Upākhyāna closes, Yayāti's story presents a geography of two kingdoms. These are Yayāti's kingdom among humans and Vṛṣaparvan's among asuras. A third kingdom, Indra's among gods, is there too, but less in play. The key ṛṣi is the asuras' imperious chaplain, *guru*, and sorcerer, Kāvya Uśanas or Śukra, and it is the fortunes of this brahman's daughter Devayānī that come to be of interest in all three kingdoms, but especially in Vṛṣapavan's and Yayāti's. In *their* two kingdoms, the main locations are their two *puram*s, and between them lies a forest that is, once again, "like Citraratha's" (Mahābhārata 1.73.4b). There Yayāti meets Devayānī when he pulls her up by hand from a well—an action that she later recalls as equivalent to his having married her when he meets her there a second time, both meetings having occurred while he was hunting. Van Buitenen creatively waffles in translating *puram*. He wants both *puram*s at least for a while to be folkloric "castles." Thus he first makes Vṛṣaparvan's *puram* his "castle" when Śarmiṣṭhā, Vṛṣaparvan's daughter, leaves it to become Devayānī's slave (1.75.19d).[66] Likewise, Yayāti's *puram* is *his* "castle" when, just after he has married Devayānī, he returns happily to it with her (76.35c; 77.1).[67] Yet Vṛṣaparvan's *puram* has from the beginning been where Śukra dwells "in the city of the lord of the asuras" (*asurendrapure*; 1.71.16c). And in the end Yayāti too has "departed from his city (*purāt*)" to undertake a forest life (1.80.25c), once he has gotten his "city and country peoples'" (*paurajānapadais*; 80.24a) leave to go.

Two questions emerge from these three main locations in this phase of the story: Where is Yayāti's *puram*? And where is it in relation to Vṛṣaparvan's and the forest between them? The location of Yayāti's capital is not made explicit in Book 1 (that is, in either the Yayāti-Upākhyāna or the Uttara-Yāyāta), but Kaṇva mentions that it was Pratiṣṭhāna in the Gālava-Ākhyāna in Book 5 (Mahābhārata 5.112.9c). Yet one has no reason to think it would have been anywhere else in Book 1. For early in the Uttara-Yāyāta, Yayāti tells Indra that he gave his central inheritance to Pūru in terms that befit Pratiṣṭhāna: "All this country between the Ganges and the Yamunā is yours. You shall be king in the middle of the earth" (1.82.5a-c; Van Buitenen trans.). When the Pāṇḍavas hear

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66　And again when Devayānī, satisfied, agrees to go back to it (Mahābhārata 1.75.24a); and when Kāvya Uśanas, also placated, goes back into the "castle" with both of them (75.25c).

67　And again when Yayāti repairs to it after getting Uśanas to mitigate his curse, and asks first his eldest son Yadu to give him his youth (Mahābhārata 1.79.1).

that Pulastya had recommended Pratiṣṭhāna as a pilgrimage site during their forest exile, it is called "the vagina of the earth" (3.83.71).

More interesting for now, though, is a second question: How near would the two cities be with only a forest between them? By the time of the Mahābhārata's main story, most of the earth's kingdoms are ruled by demons, but not demon kings like Vṛṣaparvan. Rather than demons who rule on earth *as they are*, the main story knows of demons who have *incarnated as human kings* to burden the earth and occasion the *aṃśavātaraṇa* that will relieve her of that burden by killing them. Vṛṣaparvan and Yayāti's times are more ancient. Let us begin to try out the idea of calling them one of the Mahābhārata's representations of "Vedic times." Apparently, in those "Vedic times," one could have real demons (like Śambara) for one's neighbors, for so it was too in the time of Agastya. In the Agastya-Upākhyāna, three human kings rule three unnamed lands and kingdoms. They are Kings Śrutarvan, Vadhryaśva, and an Ikṣvāku with the Vedic name Trasadasyu Paurukutsa (Mahābhārata 3.96.12ab). They were all either neighbors of the demon king Ilvala and his brother Vātāpi; or, more likely, all three had serially contiguous borders, the third of them with Ilvala— possibly extending eastward toward Ilvala's domain.⁶⁸ When the three human kings have one after another had to regret that they lack the riches to give Agastya what he needs to obtain the costly bed and jewelry his wife Lopamudrā demands before she will make love to him, they jointly mention Ilvala to Agastya with the words, "There is this Dānava on earth, Brahmin, the rich Ilvala" (*ayaṃ vai dānavo brahmann ilvalo vasumān bhuvi*; 3.96.19ab). In other words, all three kings know of Ilvala's riches and where to find the border of his kingdom *on earth*. Note too that there is no mention of passing through any intermediate forests, which seem to be mentioned only when someone goes hunting or, in the main story's *later* times, on pilgrimage. As to the forested *deśam* or "region" (1.73.14a) where Yayāti goes hunting, curiously, when he first meets Devayānī there, he asks her, "Who are you with your copper-red nails and dark complexion (*śyāmā*) …" (73.17ab)? In this forest, the key woman, even

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68   Each king, including Ilvala, greets Agastya and the kings who one after another join him, "at the border of his realm" (*viṣayānte*; Mahābhārata 3.96.2c, 13d, 97.1d; *viṣayasyānte*, 96.7c). I mention the possibility that having the Ikṣvaku third may suggest Ayodhyā, but if so, the text leaves it only a suggestion, which may be significant in this epic representation of Vedic times. On Vedic Ikṣvākus and their eastward movements, see Michael Witzel, "The Vedas and the Epics: Some Comparative Notes on Persons, Lineages, Geography, and Grammar," in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures*, Proceedings of the Third Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas, September 2002, ed. Petteri Koskikallio (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and the Arts, 2005), 21–80.

though she is a brāhmaṇī, turns out to have the same dark complexion of the earth as Draupadī. As noted, however, the gods interest in her fortune is not direct, and the main ṛṣi in the story, her father, has to be neutralized because he favors the asuras. If the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna hints at *devakārya* or the workings of a divine plan, the Yayāti-Upākhyāna suggests that Yayāti is more on his own than that any gods or ṛṣis might be guiding him. Part of Yayāti's charm is that he always seems to be making things up as he goes along. Yet as the Agastya-Upākhyāna shows, in Yayāti's ancient "Vedic times," other human kings had demon neighbors.[69] It is just that whereas their lands and kingdoms were little defined, Yayāti's occupied the center of the earth.

This brings us to the second matter of geographical importance in the Yayāti-upākhyāna, his apportioning of the earth among his five sons. On this, Georges Dumézil made an argument that the "Vedic times" represented in the Yayāti story would once have been actual, since he viewed the full Yayāti dossier to be laced not only with para-Vedic elements but still older Indo-Iranian and Indo-European ones, through which he considered Yayāti as a type of legendary "first king." Even though I no longer find convincing Dumézil's, Wikander's, or any other scholar's arguments for para-Vedic elements in the Mahābhārata's main story,[70] such an argument could still carry for an old upākhyāna about a first king. I believe that in the case of the Yayāti-Upākhyāna, Dumézil's careful study means that we must still take that possibility seriously.[71] Still, let us note that there is one element that Dumézil makes no attempt to align with Vedic, Indo-Iranian, or Indo-European prototypes. It is the very one we have found the Mahābhārata itself assigning to "Vedic times": the proximity of neighborly

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69   The Yayāti- and Agastya-Upākhyānas are also connected by the power of revival—even of one who has digested someone (Kāvya Uśanas's disciple Kaca; other brahmans but not Agastya) who will burst open the eater (Kāvya Uśanas; Ilvala) to come out alive. In both, the power belongs originally to demons (in "Yayāti" through their guru), who have to be deprived of it. One difference is that whereas Kāvya Uśanas imparts his secret to his brahman disciple Kaca so that it can be used to revive Uśanas as well, Ilvala has apparently not told his brother Vātāpi. But Vātāpi has no chance to come out alive thanks to Agastya's hot digestive tract.

70   See Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 379 n. 96; "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It—Part 1," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 2–26 and "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It—Part 1," *Exemplar: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–14, and Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories," on Dumézil's view that Dharma's incarnation in Yudhiṣṭhira is a late retouch of an older Vedic connection between Yudhiṣṭhira and Mitra.

71   As I viewed Dumézil's findings about Yayāti and Mādhavī in Alf Hiltebeitel, "Dumézil and Indian Studies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1974): 136–37.

demon kings like Vṛṣaparvan or Ilvala. Based on Dumézil's findings, we would have to say that if he is right that much of the rest is para-Vedic, Vṛṣaparvan neighborliness—despite the Ṛgvedic precedent for the proximity of demon kingdoms—would have to be an Indian contribution of "late epic" times.

I have already quoted the first three *pādas* of the verse that is most central to Dumézil's argument, which comes from what Yayāti tells Indra near the beginning of the Uttara-Yāyāta that would befit his having given his youngest son Pūru the central inheritance of ruling from Pratiṣṭhāna. Here is Dumézil's translation of the whole verse:

> The whole land between the Ganges and the Yamunā is yours; you your-self will be king over *the center* of the earth; your brothers will be lords of *the outlying regions*.[72]

With his interpretation of Yayāti as a first king, Dumézil wants these "outlying regions" to be, or to originally have been, the four cardinal directions. That is, he wants Pūru's four older brothers, each of whom has rejected Yayāti's request to exchange their youth for his old age, to be given an inheritance of a quarter of the earth. But much depends on how *antya* is translated in the last *pāda*. Van Buitenen takes it similarly: "your brothers shall rule the *outer regions*."[73] We have at least seen *anta* (if not *antya*) used quite appositely, in the sense Dumézil wants, in the Śakuntalā-Upākhyāna, where Vaiśaṃpāyana introduces Duḥṣanta as a "herdsman of the earth to her four horizons" (*pṛthivyāś caturantāyā goptā*; Mahābhārata 1.62.3c; Van Buitenen trans.).[74] But Yayāti could also be saying, "your brothers will be lords over 'peripherals'" in the sense of "the lowest," since these are more specific meanings of *antya*.[75] Such is its sense when Duryodhana, having collected the tribute at Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya, says, "The Himalayas and oceans and marshes that produce all the gems serve like the lowliest

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72   Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chi-
      cago Press, 1973), 27 (Dumézil's italics).
      gaṅgāyamunayor madhye kṛtsno 'yaṃ viṣayas tava |
      madhye pṛthivyās tvaṃ rājā bhrātaro 'ntyādhipās tava || (Mahābhārata 1.82.5)

73   J.A.B. van Buitenen, trans. *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 1. *1. The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago:
      University of Chicago Press, 1973), 197 (my italics).

74   See also among Śakuntalā's parting words to Duḥṣanta before he hears from the heavenly
      voice: "my son shall reign over the four-cornered earth" (*caturantām imām urvīm*; Mahābhā-
      rata 1.69.27).

75   Monier-Williams's primary definition of *antya* is "last in place, in time, or in order; … low-
      est in place or condition, undermost, inferior, belonging to the lowest class." Monier
      Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 44.

(*antyāḥ*) in Yudhiṣṭhira's household" (2.46.22c; Van Buitenen trans.); and when Mārkaṇḍeya foretells, "The lowest will rise to the middle ranks, the middle ones will end up on the bottom [*antyā madhyā bhaviṣyanti madhyāś cāntāvasayinaḥ*]; that is to be the way the world is when the end of the Eon is at hand" (3.188.19; Van Buitenen trans.). Most appositely, however, it has this sense when Yayāti himself says to his second oldest son Turvaśu,

> Therefore, Turvaśu, your offspring will face extinction. Fool, you shall rule over people whose customs and laws are corrupt and whose walks of life run counter to decency, the lowest ones [*antyeṣu*] who feed on meat. They will lust after the wives of their gurus and couple with beasts; evil barbarians that follow the laws of cattle are they whom you will rule! (Mahābhārata 1.79.11-13; Van Buitenen trans.)

Yayāti is of course cursing the four oldest sons who will not exchange their youth for his senility, and Turvaśu in particular will be linked with the Yavanas (80.20). Yayāti is not assigning them four directional lordships they might actually want.

Dumézil, who often wants to reconstruct an ancient civility and nobility for the ārya and the Indo-Europeans,[76] seems to suppress this demeaning sense of *antya*. It "could well be," he says, "that, from vedic times, Yayāti, through his sons, was regarded as the one who was responsible for the distribution of men among the 'Fifths' of the earth, that is, the four cardinal points and the center."[77] He relies here on ʀᴠ 8.10.5, addressed to the Aśvin twins: "May you be in the east or the west, O possessors of high good, may you be among Druhyu, Anu, Turvaśa or Yadu, I call you, come." The mention of east and west together is, according to Dumézil,

> evidently equivalent here, in shortened fashion, to the sum of the cardinal points, that is, to the geographical totality of the world (elsewhere indicated by the expression 'the five lands'). In such a context, the second enumeration, that of the proper names, could only be a means of saying the same thing from another angle, and expresses, likewise incompletely, the same totality. Thus ethnography reflects topography: humanity (or

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76   See some discussion in Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 385–86.

77   Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, 19.

the arya nationality), analyzed into its typical divisions, fills out the local divisions of the space it occupies.[78]

But Dumézil is very much aware that there are difficulties in taking Yayāti's main usage to imply the four cardinal directions:

> In fact, despite this beautiful declaration opposing the center and the periphery, the countries where the four bad sons are sent seem to be concentrated in the northwest. This probably is related to displacements of peoples and changes in their horizon between the time of the hymns and that of the epic. This *śloka* thus prolongs the old doctrine, while *śloka* 3533 [this should be 3433] 'actualizes' the doctrine geographically in an inadequate, degenerate fashion.[79]

This latter verse (= CE 1.80.20) says,

> From Yadu are born the Yādavas, from Turvasu the Yavanas, from Druhyu the Bhojas, and from Anu the Mlecchas (Dumézil trans., 1973, 18).

Clearly, Dumézil does not actually suppress the "inferior" meaning of *antya*; he rather displaces it to a degeneration or degradation of the myth itself, in which all five of Yayāti's sons would have peopled the earth with āryas.

Dumézil also never mentions that the world-centered capital of the "whole land between the Ganges and the Yamunā," which Yayāti bequeaths to Pūru, is at Pratiṣṭhāna. That too would have to have been a relocation from the northwest, though not a degradation of the myth. For if the rulerships he assigns to his four oldest sons surrounded this center, it could not be that far to their east. Here Dumézil could have turned for support to O.P. Bharadwaj, who finds a way to locate the Pratiṣṭhāna of Yayāti's ancestor Purūravas in the "Sarasvatī-Dṛṣadvatī *doab*" and Kurukṣetra area. Bharadwaj traces the etymologies of several local names there back to a hypothetical *Pratiṣṭhāna* "without claiming the list to be exhaustive," and argues that, with its prefix *prati-* meaning "against or in opposition to," Pratiṣṭhāna could denote "a town founded against or in opposition to an earlier town" and thereby describe "a king's second or new seat of Government." From this vantage point he asks "the crucial question" of whether Purūravas's Pratiṣṭhāna can be spotted "anywhere on the

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78   Ibid., 19–20.

79   Ibid., 137 n. 57, citing D.D. Kosambi,"The Vedic Five Tribes," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87 (1967): 38–39.

Sarasvatī," and affirms that it can be located at a town named Patran, and pro-
nounced Pātaḍān, "not very far from the western bank of the Ghaggar which
is undoubtedly the original *Ṛgvedic* Sarasvatī."[80] Although all of this is implau-
sible none of it is impossible. But even if one granted that the Yādavas, Bhojas,
Yavanas, and Mlecchas could denote "degraded" āryas, I still do not see any way
to get this degradation to hark back to four lands identified with the four cardi-
nal directions. Rather, it seems that Yayāti curses all four to be identified with
only one proverbially bad direction, which can be said of northwestern lands
in both epics.[81] At best, this could still be evidence that the Yayāti-Upākhyāna
retains this orientation as a Vedic reminiscence while relocating the center to
Pratiṣṭhāna.

   This brings us to the Tapatī-Upākhyāna, which, as noted, tells of the birth of
Kuru, a dynastic successor of Yayāti and Pūru, Duḥṣanta and Bharata. The Tapatī-
(Mahābhārata 1.160–63), Vasiṣṭha- (1.164–68, 173), and Aurva-Upākhyānas
(1.69–72) are told one after the other, with the last two overlapping, in the
Citraratha Upaparvan (1.153–73). The Upaparvan begins just after the Pāṇḍavas
have finished up their business with the Rākṣasa Baka at Ekacakrā, and ends
just before the next upaparvan (1.174–85) takes them to Pañcāla for Draupadī's
svayaṃvara. A brahman comes to Ekacakrā and tells stories, and is asked about
the Pañcāla court. He retells the story of Droṇa and Drupada (see 1.121–22 and
1.128) up to the births of Draupadī and Dhṛṣṭadyumna, and Droṇa's acceptance
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna as his pupil. Kuntī then says that Ekacakrā has gotten boring,
they ought to go to Pañcāla. On the way they meet Vyāsa who tells them that
Draupadī is destined to be their wife. Reaching the Somaśravāyana Ford on the
Gaṅgā at night, they trespass on the territory of the Gandharva Aṅgāraparṇa
Citraratha, who threatens them. I am not certain whether this is a down–to-
earth version of Citraratha's Park. In any case, Arjuna challenges and defeats
him with an *āgneya* missile, and Citraratha's wife prays for mercy, which
Yudhiṣṭhira grants (158.1–30). The Gandharva gives up his name and bestows
on Arjuna a magic of Vision, which came from Manu to Soma to Viśvāvasu
to Citraratha, and he gives each Pāṇḍava a hundred horses, wherepon he and
Arjuna make a friendship-alliance (30–55). Citraratha says that the Pāṇḍavas
were vulnerable because they have neither fires nor a priest; they should find
a *purohita*. He also tells Arjuna that he knows the five brothers as having six
progenitors, their divine parents plus Pāndu; and he keeps calling Arjuna by

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80   O.P. Bharadwaj, *Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India* (Delhi: Popular
      Prakashan, 1986), 45–46.

81   E.g., Madra, Balkh, Gāndhāra (with Śakuni), and Sindh in the Mahābhārata; Kekaya (with
      Kaikeyī) in the Rāmāyaṇa.

the name Tāpatya, which leads Arjuna to formulate his leading question that prompts Citraratha to tell him the Tapatī-Upākhyāna (159).

As with Duṣyanta and Yayāti before him, everything begins for Saṃvaraṇa when he goes hunting. Though by Saṃvaraṇa's time, we might imagine that the future "Kurus," who would seem to be named after his son, might have again moved their capital, the epic does not help us to make such an identifi-cation.[82] But once again, there is no name for Saṃvaraṇa's city/capital (see Mahābhārata 1.160.20; 163.15–20), or of the mountain toward which he heads. The main novelty seems to be that his horse dies on this mountain's slope (*par-vatopavane*; 160.21d) or plateau (*giriprasthe*; 160.26a; 162.10c), which is also left vague. As with so many of these upākhyānas, where geography is invoked, the point is to fit the geograph to the cosmograph. How is a king to meet the Sun's daughter, or get in touch with her again after she has bedazzled him first on her own doing? The second problem is solved by Saṃvaraṇa's *purohita* Vasiṣṭha. While Saṃvaraṇa watched from his position of prayer, Vasiṣṭha strode up from the mountain plateau to see and converse with the Sun (162.16)! The upākhyānas foreground a narrative world where the main Mahābhārata story's geograph would be believable. With this, Tapatī joins the run of divine mothers who have entered and, with Draupadī, are about to enter, the Mahābhārata patri-line. The upākhyāna ends with Tapatī giving birth to Kuru (163.23ab), which leaves it somewhat surprising that before this, Saṃvaraṇa is already repeatedly called a Kuru (160.12b; 161.3c; 163.6d) and even Kauravaśreṣṭha, "the best of Kauravas" (161.41c).

No connection is made during the Tapatī-Upākhyāna with the fact that Vasiṣṭha is Saṃvaraṇa's *purohita* and did just what was needed to bring Saṃvaraṇa and Tapatī together. One must wait for Arjuna to make this con-nection at the beginning the Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna, asking to hear more about "the blessed seer who was the house-priest of our forebears" (Mahābhārata 1.164.4). The Gandharva then makes that his next point (164.11–14). It is curious that Vasiṣṭha serves the *Kuruvaṃśa* in the Tapatī-Upākhyāna. The Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna quickly makes it clear that the Mahābhārata knows him as

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82 Such a geography would reflect the one described by Michael Witzel ("The Development of the Vedic Canon and Its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu," in *Inside the Texts— Beyond the Texts: New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas*, ed. Michael Witzel [Cam-bridge, MA: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 1997], 247–345) for the origins of the Kuru state; see Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories."

purohita of the Ikṣvākus (1.164.9–10). Perhaps things were also getting boring in Ayodhyā.

The Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna now gets into the story of King Gādhi and his son Viśvāmitra, from Kanyakubja/Kanauj (1.165.3–4). It is presumably in a forest not far from Kanauj that Vasiṣṭha's cow Nandinī routs Viśvāmitra's *anārya* troops (165.35–37). The cow produces *mleccha*s now right there, in the doāb heartland and in olden times, to prevent Viśvāmitra from abducting her by fighting his army. If one prioritizes early elements of the Yayāti-Upākhyāna to the Vasiṣṭha-Upākhyāna, which might make sense since one can date the Vasiṣṭha- and Viśvāmitra-maṇḍalas of the Ṛgveda later than its other family books, which do mention at least the five peoples if not their having any connection with Yayāti,[83] one could deduce that *mleccha*s have now advanced from the northwestern borders into central India. Note too that three of the four *mleccha* contingents that are said all in one verse (35) to come from Nandinī's piss and shit—the Śakas, Pahlavas, and Yavanas—are the most historically au courant *mleccha*s with the epic's likely time of composition. And the fourth group mentioned with them, the Śabaras, are a tribal population from central India itself.[84] A more diverse Indic group then comes from Nandinī's foam in the next verse (36)—all being, however, *mleccha*s (37).

Next we come to the story of Kalmāṣapāda, the Ikṣvāku king whom Vasiṣṭha's son Śakti curses to become a cannibal in some other forest where the Ikṣvāku king is hunting. During their mutual vituperation, Viśvāmitra is a hidden listener who uses his knowledge of this curse to contrive the killing of Śakti and then Vasiṣṭha's other ninety-nine sons—who are all set up by Viśvāmitra for Kalmāṣapāda to devour after Śakti has cursed him to become a cannibal. When Vasiṣṭha has lost his hundred sons and tried many times to kill himself, his first attempt is to *jump from Mount Meru*, hitting his head on a rock (166.41)! This could be in the same vein as his striding up to see Sūrya in the Tapatī-Upākhyāna. But one may also recall that as part of what follows from the Mahābhiṣa-Upākhyāna, the Vasus once came too near to Vasiṣṭha on Mount Meru, and that there too there was some funny business about Dyaus being the ringleader in stealing Vasiṣṭha's cow, which led to Dyaus's incarnation as

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83   See Kosambi, "The Vedic Five Tribes," 33, 36,

84   On second to first century BCE incursions of Yavanas and Śakas into central and eastern India in the Yuga Purāṇa, and by all three foreign groups in Buddhist texts that tell of the end of the Buddhist dharma at Kauśambī (near Kanauj), see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 273–336. Śabaras/Śavaras (i.e., today's tribal Saoras) also play a part in this mix in the Yuga Purāṇa. See ibid., 285; John E. Mitchiner, *Traditions Of The Seven Ṛṣis* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), 62–63. See also Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories."

Bhīṣma.[85] Meanwhile, back down to earth, after his ineffective leap from
Mount Meru and two further failed attempts at suicide, the first by fire in a
great forest (*mahāvane*), and the second in an unnamed (but in terms of what
follows, let us guess the "western") ocean (Mahābhārata 166.42–45), Vasiṣṭha
jumps into a river that leaves him "freed from the fetters [*pāśair vimuktaḥ*]"
with which he had bound himself to drown, and names the river the Vipāśā
(Beas), after which he makes one more try to kill himself while wandering
toward the Himālaya, where another anecdote explains why he gave the name
Śatadru (Sutlej) to the river he jumps in there, which, considering Vasiṣṭha to
be like fire, "ran off in a hundred directions [*śatadhā vidrutā*[" (167.6–9). The
epic has thus moved from Vasiṣṭha cosmological preeminence on Meru to his
quasi-cosmogonic naming of two rivers of the Vedic Panjab.[86]

   Vasiṣṭha finally decides to remain among the living when he hears the voice
of Veda recitation coming from the womb of his daughter-in-law (*snuṣā*)
Adṛśyantī, who is carrying the precocious child of Śakti in her twelfth year of
pregnancy (Mahābhārata 167.14). The child is Parāśara, named after this
incident,[87] who remains in the womb far longer than it takes *his* son Vyāsa
(who was born knowing the Veda on the day he was conceived), and four times
as long as it took Vyāsa to have "made the *Mahābhārata*."[88] In this light it can
hardly be incidental that Adṛśyantī now tells Vasiṣṭha that only he can ward off
the cannibal Kalmāṣapāda (Śakti's devourer), since Vasiṣṭha is "the first of all
scholars of the Veda" (*sarvavedavidāṃ vara*; 167.20b). Kalmāṣapāda uses the
same epithet shortly after this (168.13) when requesting a boon from Vasiṣṭha
on behalf of the Ikṣvākus,[89] which will be that Vasiṣṭha come back with him to

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85   See Alf Hiltebeitel, "Bhīṣma's Sources," in *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honor of Asko
      Parpola*, ed. Klaus Karttunen and Petteri Koskikallio, Studia Orientalia, no. 94 (Helsinki:
      Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), 261–78.

86   See Michel Danino, *The Lost River: On the Trail of the Sarasvatī* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2010),
      62, 261–62 on the latter story, and earlier Ṛgvedic lore linking these two rivers, along with
      discussion of their possible relation to the lost Sarasvatī.

87   "Since the child in the womb had stopped Vasiṣṭha, who at the time was ready to die
      (*para-asuḥ*), he was known in the world as Parāśara" (Mahābhārata 1.169.3).

88   Mahābhārata 1.56.32. Indeed, in the Aurva-Upākhyana, where Vasiṣṭha deters Parāśara
      from destroying the world after he has learned of his father's being cannibalized, the ges-
      tation of a Veda-knowing embryo is even more surprising: Aurva's brahman mother tells
      the kings who have been blinded by Aurva's effulgence at his birth that he had been con-
      cealed as an embryo in her thigh for a hundred years, during which time she bore him as
      one who would know the Vedas and their six aṅgas for the benefit of the Bhṛguvaṃśa
      (170.3–4).

89   Note that when Vasiṣṭha frees Kalmāṣapāda from his Rākṣasa possession, the latter recog-
      nizes Vasiṣṭha, whom he was just about to devour, as he had devoured his sons, by saying

Ayodhyā and perform a levirate union with Kalmāṣapāda's *mahiṣī* (168.11–12)—who, once Vasiṣṭha makes her pregnant and departs back to his hermitage, carries the child for another twelve years until she hits her womb with a stone, splitting it to give birth to Aśmaka ["Little Stone"] who then grows up to rule not from Ayodhyā but from a place he settles called Potana (168.24–25). Kalmāṣapāda is registered in the Ikṣvāku *vaṃśa* in the Rāmāyaṇa (Rāmāyaṇa 1.69.27; 2.102.23–24; cf. 7.57.34), but not Aśmaka or Potana. But needless to say, one may be reminded both of Vyāsa's levirate with the "two *mahiṣīs*" of Vicitravīrya, Ambikā and Ambālikā; and of the termination of the two-year pregnancy of Gāndhārī.[90] As elsewhere, an upākhyāna's geosphere ranges beyond, into, and intersects with the stratosphere in a way that crisscrosses with the main story. Indeed, note that when the Bhṛgus come from Pitṛloka to tell Aurva not to destroy "all the worlds," they mention the "seven worlds":

> Restrain your mind from this evil destruction of all the worlds [*pāpāt sarvaloka parābhavāt*]. For none of the barons or any of the seven worlds [*lokāh sapta*] offended our might and mortification, son. (Mahābhārata 1.170.20c-21b; Van Buitenen trans.)

The inset Aurva-Upākhyāna also ends by taking us to one of the outer cosmological worlds when Vasiṣṭha tells Parāśara that Aurva's Bhṛgu ancestors convinced Aurva to release his wrath (*manyu*) into Varuṇa's realm, the ocean, where it became what Vedavids know as the great Horse's Head that spits fire while eating or drinking the ocean's waters (Mahābhārata 171.21–23)—the same Horse's Head whom the Nārāyaṇīya's quasi-upākhyāna[91] about Hayaśiras knows as a Veda-spouting form of Nārāyaṇa.

"I am your patron" (*aham ... yājyas te*; 168.8ab)—pointing to his being an Ikṣvāku—for whom Vasiṣṭha would be the *purohita*.

90 On Vyāsa and the "two *mahiṣis*" (Mahābhārata 1.97.9), see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 364, 380–81, 391, 400–401; on Gāndhārī's pregnancy, 382–94.

91 I use this tentative description because the Hayaśiras story—which the Nārāyaṇīya has Sauti introduce as a "*purāṇa* equal to the Veda" (*puraṇaṃ vedasammitam*; Mahābhārata 12.335.7d)—could be considered "upākhyānic" since it is told among the follow-ups to Nārada's "White Island" (Śvetadvīpa) narrative, which is mentioned earlier in the Nārāyaṇīya as the "essence" (*sāra*) of all the Mahābhārata's upākhyānas (12.326.114–15). See Hiltebeitel, "Not without Subtales," 505; Alf Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata," in *Between the Empires: Society in India, 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 245–49.

With regard to the main narrative, however, this three-upākhyāna series, in being focused throughout on Vasiṣṭha and carried along through stories about his son Śakti and grandson Parāśara, has come to intersect not so much with the Pāṇḍava-Kaurava line itself as the family history of Vyāsa, who, in the main story that surrounds this interlude, is keeping busy setting up the Pāṇḍavas, his own grandsons, for their rendezvous with destiny at Draupadī's *svayaṃvara*. Indeed, after these three upākhyānas, it will be Vyāsa who tells the next one himself, the Pañcendra-Upākhyāna, to secure that union. Were we to follow this fifth Ādiparvan upākhyāna in its better-known geographical detail, it would take us via Indra's journey, tracing Śrī's floating golden teardrops, up the Gaṅga from Naimiṣa Forest to a Himalayan peak where Śiva and, apparently, Umā can overlook a cave housing four former Indras for whom Śrī is weeping.[92]

This brings us finally to the last of the six Ādiparvan upākhyānas that hold prime lessons about Mahābhārata geography. For one thing, it offers the Ādiparvan's single mention in its eleven upākhyānas of Kurukṣetra. Its narrator is the well-traveled Nārada, who has dropped in on the Pāṇḍavas to tell a cautionary tale about two demon brothers who killed each other fighting over a woman. Nārada tells it to urge the five to adopt some rule by which to manage bedroom relations with Draupadī. Sunda and Upasunda are sons of Nikumbha, in the lineage of Hiraṇyakaśipu, who do *tapas* in the Vindhya (Mahābhārata 1.201.1–6)—perhaps, with Nikumbha, suggesting a connection with the Goddess there. Brahmā finally grants them the boon they request, that of invulnerability to everyone but each other. After they conduct a festival to celebrate this empowering boon, they prepare their army to conquer heaven. Brahmaloka, to which the Gods have retreated (202.6), seems to be beyond their ken. In any case, they ignore it.

Then, after also conquering all classes of beings down to Snakes, and all barbarian peoples (*mlecchajātis*; Mahābhārata 202.8d), which implies their conquest up to heaven, down to the netherworld, and then back to earth, they start on earth from the east and conquer in all directions targeting brahmans and royal ṛṣis—those whose sacrifices benefit the gods (202.10). This forces the brahmans who survive to "abandon their life-rules [*niyamān*]" and flee in all directions, and ascetics to flee their despoiled hermitages (202.16–18). Taking forms of wild animals—elephants, lions, and tigers—the brothers pursue

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92   See Mahābhārata 1.189.1–34; Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1976]), 144–92; Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 118–19; Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It," Parts 1 and 2; and Hiltebeitel, "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories."

those who go into hiding until "treasure-filled Earth saw sacrifice and Veda-study halt, kings and Brahmins perish," rites and festivals cease, plowing and cattle-tending end, and her cities and hermitages razed, such that "Earth, bestrewn with bones and skeletons, became a loathsome sight" (22–24). Their mission accomplished such that the universe (*jagat*) is in disarray up to the moon, sun, stars, and constellations, "the two Daityas, having thus cruelly conquered all the directions [*diśo*], without a rival left, made their dwelling place at Kurukṣetra" (27).

This is said, I presume as a point of emphasis, in the last verse of an adhyāya, whereupon the next one begins with the devarṣis and siddhas, who have seen this massacre, going "out of pity for the universe" (*jagataḥ kṛpayā*; Mahābhārata 203.2d) to Brahmaloka to report matters to Brahmā. He is surrounded there by some of the highest gods—Mahādeva, Agni, Vāyu. Candra and Āditya, Dharma, and Parameṣṭhin (203.4)—and by strange high-spirited ṛṣi-types: not only by siddhas and brahmarṣis (203.3c) but by Vaikhānasas, Vālakhilyas, Vānaprasthas, Beam-Drinkers (*marīcipāḥ*), Unborn Ones (*ajāḥ*), the Undistracted (*avimūḍhāḥ*), Firewombs (*tejogarbhāḥ*), and other *tapasvin*s (5). In consultation with Mahādeva Sthāṇu, Parameṣṭhin, Indra, Dharma, and others, Brahmā summons Viśvakarman to create Tilottamā, who, in circumambulating the gods before departing, makes the gawking Shāṇu into a virtual *caturmukhaliṅgam* ("four-faced *liṅga*") and Indra into the "thousand-eyed" Sahasrākṣa (26).[93] As she leaves, "all the gods and supreme ṛṣis thought that her perfect beauty had already done the gods' work [*kṛtam ityeva tat kāryam*]" (203.29).[94]

How long Sunda and Upasunda stayed at Kurukṣetra and what they did there goes unmentioned. The denouement has the two asuras, now corrupt with power and pleasures, return "one day to play on a rock plateau on a ridge of the Vindhya" (*vindhyasya pṛṣṭhe sama śilātale*; Mahābhārata 204.6ab) with their women, engaging in wine, song, and dance. There Tilottamā makes her appearance, and the brothers clobber each other to death with maces (*gadā*s), seeing which, their women and the rest all retreat in fear and despair (*viṣāda*) to Pātāla (204.20)! Brahmā then dismisses everyone from Brahmaloka, and puts Indra in charge of the triple world.

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93   "Thus the Great God Sthāṇu became of yore four-faced, and the slayer of Vala thousand-eyed" (Van Buitenen trans.).

94   Literally, "the Gods and Supreme Ṛṣis thought that her beauty had [already] done what was to be done," that is, the *devakārya* or "the work of the gods." On this recurrent term, see Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, chapter 12.

As we might expect of our narrator, Nārada is quite precise in making delineations and marking spatial distinctions. He is consistent throughout on cosmographical usages, such as *jagat*, *trailokya*, earth, and *pātāla*. Timewise, though, he is vaguer. How would we imagine the Mahābhārata dating these two demons relative to the likes of Vṛṣaparvan and Ilvala, and those who have now come to burden the earth in the time of Nārada's Pāṇḍava listeners? Sunda and Upasunda do not seem to be the type of uncomfortable neighbors one meets in "Vedic times" in such persons as Vṛṣaparvan or Ilvala, but rather something quasi-Purāṇic, and anticipatory or in between their time and that of the main protagonists. Note how the demons' surviving kin retreat at the end to Pātāla, from which the main story's demons will emerge to take birth in human kingly lineages. Perhaps their tenure at bone-strewn Kurukṣetra would suggest a period before the early Kurus ruled from the unnamed capital of Saṃvaraṇa, and before his son Kuru first ploughed it? And what of the ṛṣis? Is sitting around Brahmā the only thing they do in Brahmaloka? Probably not, considering that at least they come and go from there. If we think back to what Couture tells us about Brahmaloka in the Harivaṃśa, we could easily imagine them in an ashram. Or just as easily, one could recall Johannes Bronkhorst's argument, that the epic āśrama may sometimes be an alternate face of the Brahmadeya, and imagine them in a village.[95]

Weirdos of Brahmaloka and Kurukṣetra

In closing, let me suggest that it is worth considering a juxtaposition between Brahmaloka and Kurukṣetra. If the Mahābhārata provides descriptions of oddball ṛṣis who can reside in, as well as come and go from, Brahmaloka, and who likewise dwell around Śiva and Umā on Mount Kailāsa in the Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda (Mahābhārata 13.126–34),[96] we may see their celestial āśramas or villages as projections of the types of āśramas or villages that the brahmans who composed the Mahābhārata dreamed of living in on earth—like Kaṇva's āśrama near the beginning of "Śakuntalā," and like many others mentioned in the epic's upākhyānas and visited by the Pāṇḍavas on *tīrthayātra*.

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95   Johannes Bronkhorst, "Āśramas, Agrahāras, and Monasteries," paper presented at the Fifth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, Dubrovnik, August 11–16, 2008.

96   See Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 607-16; "From *Ṛṣidharma* to *Vānaprastha*" and *Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata*.

But Kurukṣetra, although it is a place the Pāṇḍavas and Baladeva come to on pilgrimage, can hardly be thought of in this way. As we have seen, the epic introduces it through the five lakes of blood left there by Rāma Jāmadagnya, and in the Sunda-Upasunda Upākhyāna, the first upākhyāna to mention it, it is the place from which the demon-brothers rule an earth bestrewn with bones and skeletons once they have left the universe (*jagat*) in disarray up to the sun, moon, and stars. There are, however, a few upākhyānas that mention Kurukṣetra as a place once lived in not so much by ancient "Vedic" ṛṣis as by real and probably more recent—in the chronotope that the epic's poets have constructed—unusual men and women. I will discuss the four upākhyānas that do this—all briefly already mentioned. The first two feature women; the last two men.

My first example (these are not discussed in their epic order), the Vṛddha-kumārī-Upākyāna or "Old Maid's Subtale," presents the story of a *tīrtha* along the route taken by Balarāma while he is on his *tīrthayātra* along the Sarasvatī moving through Kurukṣetra near the end of the Mahābhārata war.[97] He is already at Samantapañcaka when it is told (Mahābhārata 51.25). The "old maid" did *tapas* at Kurukṣetra, yet conceded to a one-night marriage of convenience after Nārada told her that, even though she was a *brāhmacāriṇī*, she had not fulfilled the requirement of having a husband that confers a woman's access to heaven. She finds a man who will agree, despite her age, to a one-night marriage, during which she becomes beautiful and young, leaving him wistful the next morning when she insists that he keep to their agreement (*samayam*). Now called a *sādhvī* or chaste woman (51.21c), she attains her heavenly reward that very day.[98] While Balarāma is there, he hears of the death of Śalya (51.24–25); he is nearing the fighting just in time to see the final mace duel between Bhīma and Duryodhana that will end the Mahābhārata war. Memory of this exceptional *sādhvī* lives on from the time of her brief union with a son of Gālava named Śṛṅgavat or Gālavī (51.14–16), which suggests that she married him, and left him with only the fond memories, perhaps a long generation after a seemingly unmarried Gālava took Yayāti's daughter Mādhavī on tour.

The second instance comes from the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna (Mahābhārata 13.2), the first in the Anuśāsanaparvan, which begins with Yudhiṣṭhira asking

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97   See *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 7, 769 n. to 12.148.12: "The Sarasvatī bounds the northern side of 'Kuru's Field,' and the Dṛṣadvatī the southern; see мвh 3.81.175 and мвh 9.36.41 and 48, which locates Kurukṣetra on the southern bank of the Sarasvatī."

98   See Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 248 on this upākhyāna; Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata*, 145 n. 55 on Vṛddhakanyā Tīrtha and its heroine.

Bhīṣma if he knows of any householder who ever conquered death. Sudarśana comes along in an account of the kings of Mahiṣmatī that traces their descent from Ikṣvāku through fifteen generations down to a Mahiṣmatī ruler named Duryodhana, who had a daughter named Sudarśanā so beautiful that Agni, disguised as a brahman, coveted her. When Duryodhana would not marry her to a brahman, Agni withdrew from the kingdom's sacrifices until Duryodhana learned what was amiss. He then bestowed Sudarśanā on Agni in return for the boon that Agni would always remain in Mahiṣmatī, which, Bhīṣma mentions, is why Sahadeva met Agni there while conquering in the south (referring to Mahābhārata 2.31–32). Note how each of these two narrations pauses over an event within the main story: the death of Śalya; Sahadeva's *digvijaya*. Now, it is from the union of Agni and Sudarśanā that the Sudarśana is born who gives this upākhyāna its title. He marries Oghavatī, a princess in the line of King Nṛga. Sudarśana's *varṇa* is not clarified, but he is clearly not in line for the Mahiṣmatī throne.[99] The emphasis is on the couple taking up a life devoted to the householder *āśrama* (2.39), presumably in line with Sudarśana's being a son of Agni, who is a guest and host in every household. Or more suggestively, Sudarśana may represent a line of descent through which Agni reigns at Kurukṣetra. As Sudarśana and Oghavatī begin their story, they have taken up residence at Kurukṣetra. Sudarśana-"Pāvāki" has taken a vow of unquestioning hospitality, and instructs Oghavatī that she should do the same to satisfy any guest, even if it be in offering herself while Sudarśana is away, to which she agrees to leave nothing he says undone (2.41–46). To test them, Dharma comes disguised as a brahman while Sudarśana is off collecting firewood, and demands hospitality in Oghavatī's arms. At the very moment Sudarśana arrives home to hear Dharma's report from the bedroom that he is there with her. Death (Mṛtyu) is standing over Sudarśana with a concealed iron mallet to test his reaction (2.66). Upon only a moment's hesitation, Sudarśana lives up to his vow and happily tells Dharma to enjoy himself. Dharma then discloses that this was all a test, and he announces that half of Oghavatī—who was throughout the test both a *sādhvī* and a *pativratā* (80-81; cf. 62)—will be transformed into the river by that name that flows in Kurukṣetra,[100] and that her other half will enjoy worlds of eternal bliss with Sudarśana because he has conquered death.

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99   That is, there is nothing about his mother Sudarśanā being a *putrikā* for King Duryodhana. See Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*.

100   As the form taken by Sarasvatī there, according to 9.37.24c–25 see Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 147. On the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna, see Brodbeck, *The Mahābhārata Patriline*, 147–48; Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, 153–56, 247–48.

The last two upākhyānas about unusual human beings at Kurukṣetra are gleaners' tales—the Mudgala- and Nakula-Upākhyānas—but they are differently oriented. In the Mudgala-Upākhyāna, in response to Yudhiṣṭhira's question, which of the two counts for more in the afterworld, *dānadharma* or *tapas* (Mahābhārata 3.245.26), Vyāsa speaks in favor of giving so long as one gives rightfully obtained wealth (32), which leads him to tell about the ṛṣi Mudgala who gave unstintingly to guests what little he garnered from living righteously off what rice he gleaned from harvested fields at Kurukṣetra (246.3a). Yet when an envoy of the gods tries to interest him in ascending to heaven, telling Mudgala he will find there "the law-minded, the masters of self, the serene and controlled and unenvious, those accustomed to *dānadharma*, and champions with their scars showing" (247.14), Mudgala rejects heaven in favor of "the eternal and supreme perfection that is marked by extinction."[101] Mudgala is a solitary straight-shooter like the Vṛddhakumārī, even if he wants something higher than she does, and does not have to deal with any one-night interruptions.

In the Nakula-[Mongoose-]Upākhyāna, the Mahābhārata's last, a half-golden blue-eyed mongoose, soon revealed to have been Dharma in disguise, tells Yudhiṣṭhira that his *aśvamedha* was not worth the barley grains of a gleaner whose vow was to live off what he got from picking over the ground like a pigeon "on the *dharma*-field Kurukṣetra chosen by many who know *dharma*" (*dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre dharmajñair bahubhir vṛte*; Mahābhārata 93.2ab).[102] This *uñchavṛtti*- or gleaner-brahman still fed his guests before he fed his wife, son, or daughter-in-law, and these three likewise observed his vow along with him, when Dharma, in still another disguise, appeared as a hungry brahman to test the gleaning brahman's "pure gift" (*śuddha dāna*; 93.57).[103] Like the Sudarśana-Upākhyāna, this one tells about a household or family. These families of Kurukṣetra do not pursue a solitary's exit from the world to another but an arduous dharma in this one.

Needless to say, one could say more about these four upākhyānas just as a set, not to mention their wider thematic repercussions with gleaners[104] and

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101   Mahābhārata 3.247.43cd: jagāma śāśvatīṃ siddhiṃ parāṃ nirvāṇalakṣaṇam; see J.A.B. van Buitenen, trans., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2. *2. The Book of the Assembly Hall*; *3. The Book of the Forest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 705.

102   The first *pāda* echoes Bhagavadgītā 1.1; the second could also be translated "covered by many who know *dharma*." Cf. Mahābhārata 14.92.7, 21 also mentioning the gleaner's residence at Kurukṣetra.

103   See Hiltebeitel, "Not Without Subtales," 492; *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 436.

104   Note how the beginning of the Uttara-Yāyāta includes a phase for Yayāti to practice gleaning (Mahābhārata 1.81.13c) toward the end of the first thousand years of the long ascetic

with Dharma taking on disguises. But what I would like to suggest in closing is this: what the epic poets do with Kurukṣetra is describe a place that is familiar to them. When they speak of such unusual men and women—no less oddballs than those in Brahmaloka, but in different ways—they may actually be writing a Mahābhārata ethnography out of their own experience there. I have been pursuing this notion in other recent essays,[105] and for now, let me just cite T.P. Mahadevan, with whom I have been putting my head together on it: "The story seems to begin with the Pūrvaśikhā Brahmans, with their original homes in the Kuru-Pāñcāla area. ... They may well have been part of Hiltebeitel's inter-generational committee of 'out of sorts' Brahmans, the Śrotriya or Uñchavṛtti Brahmans, giving us the first Brahmanical redaction of the epic, ... or a text very close to it, ca. third BCE."[106] Actually, I was never bold enough to think that gleaners could have been among the composers, and am wary of the phrase "first Brahmanical," as if there must have been something earlier. And I still would prefer a second to first BCE date. But the Pūrvaśikhā geography looks full of promise.

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regime that gets him just to Indraloka. On gleaners, cf. Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, 611–14, contrasting earthly gleaners and odd-type celestial Ṛṣis in the Umā-Maheśvara-Saṃvāda much as I contrast the strange types here found at Kurukṣetra and in Brahmaloka. See further Hiltebeitel, "From *Ṛṣidharma* to *Vānaprastha*" and *Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata*.

105   See Hiltebeitel, *Non-Violence in the Mahābhārata* and "*Tīrthas*, Temples, *Āśramas* and Royal Courts."

106   Thennilapuram Mahadevan, "The Three Rails of the *Mahābhārata* Textual Tradition," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 41.

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