


---

<b>title:</b>	The Ritual of Battle : Krishna in the Mahabharata SUNY Series in Hinduism
<b>author:</b>	Hiltebeitel, Alf.
<b>publisher:</b>	State University of New York Press
<b>isbn10   asin:</b>	0791402509
<b>print isbn13:</b>	9780791402504
<b>ebook isbn13:</b>	9780585061283
<b>language:</b>	English
<b>subject</b>	Mahabharata--Criticism, interpretation, etc, Krishna (Hindu deity)
<b>publication date:</b>	1990
<b>lcc:</b>	BL1138.27.H55 1990eb
<b>ddc:</b>	294.5/923
<b>subject:</b>	Mahabharata--Criticism, interpretation, etc, Krishna (Hindu deity)

If you like this book, buy it!

The Ritual of Battle  
Krishna in the *Mahabharata* \*

If you like this book, buy it!

SUNY Series in Hinduism  
Wendy Doniger, editor

If you like this book, buy it!

The Ritual of Battle  
Krishna in the *Mahabharata* \*

Alf Hiltebeitel

State University of New York Press

If you like this book, buy it!

Published by  
State University of New York Press, Albany

© 1990 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews

For information, address State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N Y, 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hiltebeitel, Alf  
The ritual of battle Krishna in the Mahabharata \* / Alf  
Hiltebeitel  
p. cm. (SUNY series in Hinduism)  
Includes index  
ISBN 0-7914-0249-5 ISBN 0-7914-0250-9 (pbk)  
1 Mahabharata\* Criticism, interpretation, etc 2 Krishna (Hindu  
deity) I Title II Series  
BL1138 27 H55 1990 89-35594  
294 5'923dc20 CIP  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*TO ADAM AND SIMON*

If you like this book, buy it!

## CONTENTS

Foreword	13
Abbreviations	23
Part one   Preliminaries	
1. Traditional Epics	27
2. Three Krsnas *: Variations on a Theme	60
Part Two   Before the War	
3. The Marriage of Draupadi*	79
	86
4. Krishna's Absence from the Dice Game and the Disrobing of Draupadi*	
5. Krishna and Odinn: Interventions	102
6. Two Theophanies, Three Steps	114
Part Three   World Sovereignty	
7 Sri* and the Source of Sovereignty	143
8. The Royal Virtues	192
9. Sins of the Sovereign	229
10. The Deaths of the Four Marshals	244
11. Absolutions	287
Part Four   The End of An Age	
12., Epic Eschatology	299
13. "Renaissance"	336
14. Conclusions	354
Appendix: Genealogical Table	361
Index	362

## FOREWORD

*The Ritual of Battle* is a benchmark in Indology; it is in some ways the culmination of a long series of approaches to the great Epic formulated for many decades before it, and it has proved to be the source of a whole series of new approaches in the decade that has followed its original publication, leading on to other important works including Alf Hiltebeitel's own on-going, multivolume, epic study of Draupadi. His debt to the more recent past is to several giants primarily Georges Dumézil, Madeleine Biardeau, J. A. B. van Buitenen, Victor Turner, and Mircea Eliade whose shoulders provide what turns out to be not so much a resting place as a springboard for his own contribution to the never-ending *parampara of Mahabharata* \* studies. The book abounds in theories which appear far-fetched at first but are invariably substantiated that there are three black Krishnas that mediate between the red and the white; that both Krishna and Siva, though ostensibly absent from or passive at the disrobing of Draupadi and the disastrous dice game, are in fact essential elements of these episodes; and many more. Several chapters deal at length, and in



great detail, with the death of the hero, the destruction of the world, and other aspects of the tragedy at the heart of the Epic. These are analyzed in the light of many complementary theories gleaned from an impressive array of scholarly works cited in the copious footnotes. But this is no patchwork of other peoples' theories; it is an integrated and highly original view of Krishna and of the great Epic as a whole.

To begin with, Hiltebeitel is one of Georges Dumézil's greatest supporters, who paid his homage to the master by translating a number of Dumézil's works into English. One great strength of this book is the skill with which the author places the Krishna epic in the context of other Indo-European epics that Dumézil has elucidated, particularly the Scandanavian and Greek epics. Many of Dumézil's ideas are put to new tests here. Some of them prove, in Hiltebeitel's hands, to be even more exciting than when they were first boldly suggested by Dumézil. Some are right but not particularly illuminating. Some of them prove to be dead wrong.

For Hiltebeitel challenges Dumézil on many important points. Thus, where Dumézil (and J. A. B. van Buitenen) regarded the story of the Pandavas' divine heritage as a late addition, with even later Saiva retouchings, Hiltebeitel suggests that an old tradition may have been preserved and linked with Siva, and he argues that the activities of Visnu and Siva were integral to the work from an early period of its construction (p. 174). Unlike Dumézil, he views the mythological paternities of the heroes as an integral part of the Epic. Following the lead suggested by Dahlmann at the turn of the century, that the myths are not "interpolations," Hiltebeitel builds upon Angelo Brelich's formulation and argues that the Epic integrates myths, which tell how gods create fate, with legends, which tell how heroes challenge fate. The didactic elements, too, and the whole consideration of sin and virtue, are correctly regarded as part and parcel of the epic narrative.

But Hiltebeitel is also an admirer of Madeleine Biardeau, who is critical of the Critical Edition that Dumézil and van Buitenen endorse, an edition that has selected what appears

to be the oldest layer of the major epic, called it "the *Mahabharata* \*," and relegated all other variants to appendices. Thus, like Biardeau and unlike Dumézil, Hiltebeitel consistently draws upon material that is rejected by the critical edition, using what the critical edition labels "interpolations" to develop his persuasive ideas about such matters as the scene in which Draupadi, distressed by the efforts to disrobe her, calls upon Krishna to rescue her and he appears (p. 88); the importance of the *jeu truqué* in Indo-European eschatology in general and the death of Abhimanyu in particular (343 n.); and the reference to the warrior Salya as an incarnate demon (p. 91) and to the Madraka as "dirt" (p. 277). He remarks that an essential variant of the myth of Visnu as the dwarf is provided by "what must be regarded as one of the earliest tellings of the myth even though it occurs only in the Northern recension of the *Mahabharata*\*" (p. 137). Yet, though Hiltebeitel follows Biardeau in many of her interpretations, he does not follow her slavishly. Thus, in discussing a possible interpolation that would make

Draupadi an incarnation of Saci, the wife of Indra, rather than of Sri, goddess of fortune, he notes that "Biardeau seems to want it both ways...This solves little" (p. 145 n.).

The combination of the Dumézilian and the Biardeauvian approaches makes this book both exciting and sensible. Hildebeitel feels that "the apparent irreconcilability of the two approaches is only superficial, for both [Dumézil and Biardeau] draw on sources which can often be elucidated by a common frame of reference the practical and conceptual milieu of the Brahmanas" (p. 15). He succeeds in combining the Indo-European perspective of Dumézil with what he calls the Puranic or Hindu perspective of Biardeau, blessing this French marriage by citing the old Sankhya simile of the blind man and the lame man (p. 140). He manages to walk the razor's edge between the two camps, taking a lead gratefully from each when the lead is good, challenging or correcting a hypothesis when he finds good grounds to do so, and refraining from clapping his hands in Oedipal triumph when he points out a flaw in the master. Where Biardeau tends to be vague,

Hiltebeitel is specific; where Dumézil is Procrustean, Hiltebeitel reshapes the theoretical bed on which the data are to lie.

Thus, for example, he combines what he gleans from Biardeau's study of the motif of the Hindu doomsday with what he gleans from Dumézil's work on the Scandanavian myth of the Ragnarok, pointing out weaknesses in both approaches, non-correspondences between the *Mahabharata* \* material on the one hand and the Scandanavian or Puranic material on the other. He himself argues that there was an Indo-European epic crisis of "eschatological proportions," an end to the age of heroes, which was correlated with a mythic crisis concerning the end of the world. Here, as elsewhere, he sees a correlation rather than a transposition, a parallel development rather than a layering. The tragic human holocaust is thus clearly, and in many strikingly detailed ways, correlated with the great holocaust of the universe.

There is another important ancestor in Hiltebeitel's intellectual lineage, an ancestor whose work he has, again,

both followed and carried forward. J. A. B. van Buitenen taught Hiltebeitel his Sanskrit at the University of Chicago and taught him much about the Epic, as Hiltebeitel acknowledges. Thus, building upon van Buitenen's suggestion that the dice game in the second book of the *Mahabharata* \* is part of a ritual of royal consecration, Hiltebeitel points out the important role of the god Siva not only in this game but in other sacrifices that go out of control (the brutal night raid in the *Sauptikaparvan* and the myth of Siva's destruction of Daksa's sacrifice). This connection between different manifestations of "the ritual of battle" has proved to be one of the most insightful and influential ideas in recent Indology. Yet Hiltebeitel, rightly, in my opinion, disagrees with van Buitenen both when van Buitenen disagrees with Dumézil (about the importance of the mythological level of the Epic, which van Buitenen dismissed and Dumézil and Hiltebeitel defended) and when van Buitenen disagrees with Biardeau (on the subject of the critical edition, which van Buitenen supported and indeed translated, but Biardeau and Hiltebeitel criticized).

If you like this book, buy it!

Two other important Chicago influences were Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade. Indeed, if Biardeau and Dumézil supplied the sacred-royal function, and van Buitenen the martial (or what he would have called the baronial) function, it may be that Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade supplied the fertile function. Turner not only published the original edition of this book in his series, "Symbol, Myth, and Ritual," but taught Hildebeitel a lot about the ritual aspects of the Epic. In his fascinating discussion of the color symbolism of the four Ages and the four social classes, the three strands of matter and three Krishnas, Hildebeitel cites to great advantage Victor Turner's suggestion that, on a more universal level, white is associated with milk, semen and life; red with blood, childbirth (life) and bloodshed (death); and black with cessation of consciousness ("blackout") and death. In this way he carries the argument beyond the Indo-European framework and into the world of true comparativism. For, when the chips are down, Hildebeitel is a historian of religions. Once, he told me, when he and Victor Turner were talking together, Hildebeitel

admitted that he was still an Eliadean at heart, and Turner replied, "So am I." This comparative stance leads Hiltebeitel to formulate correlations (what the Vedic poets called *bandhus*) that, however much they may be grounded in Indo-European or even Indian data, are more broadly applicable to the true hero of this book, who is not Krishna but Eliade's *homo religiosus*.

WENDY DONIGER

If you like this book, buy it!



## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Aitareya Brahmana *</i>
<i>ABORI</i>	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AKGWG</i>	<i>Annoles der Kaiserl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Göttingen</i>
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi</i>
<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
<i>BAUp</i>	<i>Brhad-Aranyaka* Upanisad*</i>
<i>BEFEO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient</i>
<i>Bhag*. P.</i>	<i>Bhagavata* Purana*</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Böhtlingk and Roth, Sanskrit-Wörterbuch</i>
<i>CE</i>	<i>Critical Edition of the Mahabharata*, Poona</i>
<i>Chand*. Up.</i>	<i>Chandogya* Upanisad*</i>
<i>EMH</i>	<i>"Etudes de mythologie hindoue"</i>
<i>EPHE</i>	<i>Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Annuaire de</i>
<i>ERE</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Hastings</i>
<i>GB</i>	<i>Gopatha Brahmana*</i>
<i>HRJ</i>	<i>History of Religions Journal</i>
<i>HV</i>	<i>Harivamsa*</i>
<i>IAB</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary (Bombay)</i>
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>IJJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>Sorensen's Index to the Names of the Mahabharata*</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JB</i>	<i>Jaiminiya* Brahmana*</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Indo-European Studies</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (London)</i>
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal des Savants</i>

<i>KB</i>	<i>Kausitaki * Brahmana*</i>
<i>Kaus*.</i>	<i>Kausitaki* Upanisad*</i>
<i>Up.</i>	
<i>Mark*.</i>	<i>Markandeya* Purana*</i>
<i>P.</i>	
<i>Mbh.</i>	<i>Mahabharata*</i>
<i>ME</i>	<i>Mythe et épopée</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Maitrayani* Samhita*</i>
<i>M-W</i>	<i>Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>La Nouvelle Clío</i>
<i>NKGWG</i>	<i>Nachrichten Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Göttingen</i>
<i>OS</i>	<i>Orientalia Suecana</i>
<i>PAPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i>
<i>PB</i>	<i>Pancavimsa* Brahmana*</i>
<i>QII</i>	<i>Quaestiunculæ indo-italicæ</i>
<i>OJMS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Religion och Bibel</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Revue Celtique</i>
<i>RV*</i>	<i>Rg* Veda</i>
<i>SB*</i>	<i>Satapatha* Brahmana*</i>
<i>SBE</i>	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i>
<i>SKAWW</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlich Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien</i>
<i>SKBGW</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Königl. Böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Taittiriya* Brahmana*</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Taittiriya* Samhita*</i>
<i>Vaj*. S.</i>	<i>Vajasaneyi* Samhita*</i>
<i>Vam*. P.</i>	<i>Vamana* Purana*</i>
<i>VP</i>	<i>Visnu* Purana*</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

PART ONE  
PRELIMINARIES

If you like this book, buy it!

## Chapter 1 Traditional Epics

Epic stories have never suffered from lack of attention, but all too often they have been viewed as extensions of something else: most commonly of myth, ritual, or history.<sup>1</sup> Granting that epic stories have almost always drawn something from these three areas, I hope to show that epic is best regarded as a unique category.

Nevertheless, the "myth and epic" approach has been fruitful in studying the *Mahabharata* \*, since it has settled two points. First, the leading heroes of the epic, the five sons of Pandu\* and their wife Draupadi\*, "transpose" into human or heroic terms a mythic, apparently Indo-European, theologem. The oldest son representing sovereignty and moral virtue as they are connected with what Georges Dumézil has called the Indo-European first function, is Yudhisthira\*, the son of Dharma (the latter plausibly a substitute for the Vedic god Mitra). Representing the brutal and chivalric sides of the second, warrior, function are Bhima\* and Arjuna, sons of Vayu\* and Indra. Representing the third function are the twins, Nakula and

<sup>1</sup> On both myth and history as prior to epic, see Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 34-48; *idem*, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 199. For reflections on such assumptions in critical studies of Germanic legends, see Georges Dumézil, *From Myth to Fiction: The Saga of Hadingus*, Derek Coleman, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 15 and 26. On the evolutionary order ritual-myth-epic, see Gertrude Levy, *The Sword from the Rock: An Investigation into the Origins of Epic Literature and the Development of the Hero* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953).

Sahadeva, sons of the twin Asvins \*, who show, like their divine parents, a capacity for service, beauty, healing, and a connection with cattle and horses. Complementing them all is their wife-in-common Draupadi\*, incarnation of Sri\*. Following the seminal work of Stig Wikander,<sup>2</sup> Dumézil and Madeleine Biardeau have both continued to use this type of analysis and have filled the dossier of meaningful transpositions so as to include almost every major figure in the poem.<sup>3</sup> Second, with more controversy and with each of the three scholars pointing in a different direction, there is still agreement that the great *Mahabharata*\* war, taking place at the end of the Dvapara\* yuga and the beginning of the Kali yuga, is at least in part the epic reflection of a mythic eschatological crisis.<sup>4</sup>

The search for mythic foundations has also led Dumézil and Wikander to insights concerning the manner by which other Indo-European peoples have shaped their epic material. Not all is by "transposition": the euhemerized Scandinavian and Welsh stories, in which gods retain their names but are given human status; the Scandinavian, Roman, and Iranian "histories of origins" in which successions of kings are arranged to reflect the order of the functions; the Roman histories in which the trifunctional gods interact with various heroes, but without an expressed mythology. All of these cases present their own peculiar problems, but the prevailing assumption, the tool by which these discoveries have in fact been made, retains its value. Epic, legend, pseudohistory, and "roman" are all better

2 See initially Stig Wikander, "Pandava-sagan\* och Mahabharatas\* mytiska förutsättningar," *RB*, VI (1947), 27-39; trans. by Georges Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, IV: *Explication de textes indiens et latins* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. 37-53; discussed and amplified, pp. 55-85, hereinafter *JMQ*, IV.

3 See Dumézil's summary work on the *Mahabharata*\* in *ME*, I, pp. 33-257. On Biardeau, see the bibliography cited and discussed in later chapters, especially 2, 3, 6, and 13.

4 See below, Chapter 13.

understood through an appreciation of their mythic backgrounds.<sup>5</sup>

I do not wish to take issue with the results, or even the methods, of such a successful, stimulating, and scrupulously carried-out enterprise. However, as a means of interpreting epic, the underlying assumption can lead to excesses and over-simplifications. Such I fear are what we find in two efforts to discover mythic foundations for the *Iliad*.<sup>6</sup> But this point is not crucial. One cannot fault a method because some have overextended its use or followed it uncritically, yet I think there is a lesson here. The assumption that myth has an inherent priority over epic has led scholars, discontent with epic tales as tales in themselves, to manufacture mythic patterns and prototypes for them. One result is that the epic story is ultimately robbed of autonomy. Taken to the extreme, epic becomes, in essence, a replica of myth.

In order to move beyond this impasse, it seems we must work toward a definition of the relationship between myth and epic. First I must admit or better, insist that my own usage is tailored to meet the requirements and the character, which are in some respects peculiar or exceptional, of the *Mahabharata* \*. The generalizations that follow will thus proceed from this base, and there is no denying that the relationships between other epic and mythic traditions might suggest, and indeed

<sup>5</sup> For general reflections, see Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. vi to xi, and *idem*, *The Destiny of the Warrior*, Alf Hiltebeitel, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 4-6.

<sup>6</sup> Jan de Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 27-33, viewing Achilles, Agamemnon, and Helen as heroized divinities; C. Scott Littleton, "Some Possible Indo-European Themes in the *Iliad*," *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, Jaan Puhvel, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 229-46, who wanders all over the Aegean to find heroes and themes to fit Dumézilian categories. Cf. Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 82-83, on the overapplication of the label "Odinic hero."

have inspired, other approaches. I do not, of course, suggest that the *Mahabharata* \* is to be viewed as the norm of epic.

We must assume that the various Indo-European epic and mythic traditions survive, in their written form, as casualties: segmented, fragmented, or uprooted from the cultures which produced them. The final redactors of such epic traditions as are found in the *Shah-nama*\*, the *Mabinogion*, the *Tain*\* *Bó Cuailnge*, and in Saxo Grammaticus' account of the Battle of Brávellir conserve epic material that is no longer enriched in the authors' own minds by any contact with a living mythology. On the other hand, the various euhemerizers who conserve mythic traditions under the guise, or within the dimensions of, "history," are obviously prevented (even if the material in their hands retains a mythic structure<sup>7</sup>) from allowing their humanized gods any significant interplay with the mythic beings they once were. Only in a few cases is there a sustained interaction between the figures of myth and epic: for instance, in Rome, Greece, and India. In each of the first two cases, the mythology to which the heroic traditions allude has in one way or another been denatured. In Rome the primal kings of the "history of origins" interact frequently with the trifunctional divinities through prayers, omens, blessings, and punishments. But as Dumézil has emphasized, these gods are essentially without mythology, there being no divine adventures with which to compare those of the legendary kings. And in Greece, although Homer's Olympians interfere constantly in the affairs of the heroes, they appear essentially as "symbolic predicates of action, character, and circumstance"<sup>8</sup> whose adventures "are not myths in any strict sense, but literary inventions that have something in common with the ingenious mythological

<sup>7</sup> This is Kees Bolle's argument: "In Defense of Euhemerus," *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, pp. 25-32.

<sup>8</sup> Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1965), P. 223.

elaborations of Euripides."9 Only in India, then, are the epic poets not only fully aware of, but deeply involved in, a living mythology.

Such a continuum between myth and epic need not be regarded as totally peculiar, yet here terms have often been used loosely. Epic, whatever its stylistic features and its origins as a narrative and poetic genre, should be regarded, in terms of content, as falling under the heading of legend. And legend, with epic as a subcategory, should be distinguished from myth. All this is made problematic by authors who have treated myth as an imperialistic category.10 William Bascom has shown that the distinction between myth and legend has a long scholarly history and is definitely applicable to the different types of narratives found in primitive societies.11 In fact, one distinguishing feature, according to Bascom, is that while both myths and legends tell "true stories," they do so with different time referents: the former evoking the remote past, the latter a more recent past.12 Moreover, as M. L. West has shown in the "Prolegomena" to his edition of Hesiod's *Theogony*, continuums between theogonic myth and heroic genealogies are also found in Hesiod, in Genesis, in the *Bundahishn*, the Puranas \* and

9 G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Sather Memorial Lectures, vol. XL (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), P. 174.

10 See *ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 19, 179 (but also 34, 40, and 173); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, John and Doreen Weightman, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 4 (and then, defying his own refusal to make "preconceived classifications," p. 138).

11 William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," *JAF*, LXXVIII (1965), 3-20; Kirk's argument (*Myth*, p. 32) that "the categories drawn by unsophisticated peoples can be confusing" is unworthy of refutation.

12 Bascom, "Forms of Folklore," pp. 3-6; this double classification of "true stories," as distinct from the "false story" or "folktale," adds useful precision to the discussions by Raffaele Pettazzoni, *Essays on the History of Religions*, H. J. Rose, trans. (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 11-12, and Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 8-9.



*Mahabharata* \*, the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, in Polynesian oral literature, and in the *Kalevala*.<sup>13</sup> With such continuities in mind, let me thus propose the following definitions, solely in terms of the contents of the two genres.

Myths are stories which take place in the fullest expanses of time and space (they articulate a cosmology); they deal with the origin, nature, and destiny of the cosmos, and their most prominent characters are gods.

Legends are stories which take place at a specific time and on a specific terrain; they deal with the origin, nature, and destiny of man, and their most prominent characters are heroes.

Each item in this pair of definitions is capable of refinement, and there will certainly be some overlap.<sup>14</sup> But the main purpose is to provide definitions which, while maintaining distinctions, allow important rapports between the two genres to show through. With such distinctions in mind, and with epic seen under the larger heading of heroic legend, an epic morphology can be discerned. One should not confuse this subject with the "heroic morphology" of Angelo Brelich,<sup>15</sup> whose research points out a direction in which future *Mahabharata*\* research might well evolve. Brelich tries to show the complex of associations, from both legend and cult, which the Greek heroes have with certain particular themes: death, combat, athletic contests, prophesy, healing, mysteries, oracles, founding cities, the initiation of young adults, and the founding of clan groups. While I shall often draw on Brelich's beautiful

<sup>13</sup> M. L. West, ed., *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 1-16.

<sup>14</sup> Certainly these definitions allow "myths" about men (the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Buddha's Birth and Enlightenment), and hardly imply that gods do not make appearances in legends or epics. Also, I seek to avoid identifying myths solely with the past; obviously, eschatologies deal with the future.

<sup>15</sup> Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci: Un problema storico-religioso* (Rome: Edizioni dell 'Ateneo, 1958).

work, it is my intention to concentrate directly on a complex of various features within epics and heroic traditions themselves, rather than on the relations between such traditions and matters of cult. While the themes are not necessarily all unique to epic, together they constitute a complex whose outlines become easily intelligible once the place of epic is recognized in a continuum with myth. My hope here is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, to set the exploration of the *Mahabharata* \* in a comparative framework.

## Fate

Brelich points to the way myth and legend, and the two dimensions of time which they present, are often related. Discussing the place of "la struttura eroica" with the larger "col-lettività mitiche" of Greece, Brelich says that whereas the activity on the mythic level concerns a past which involves the formation of the world and the childhood, or in any case, the not-yet-fulfilled life of the gods, "the heroes have an analogous position, only with respect to the formation of the human world."<sup>16</sup> This analogy, this coincidence of planes, between the formation and direction of the cosmos and the formation of the world of man, gives the lives of heroes their special gravity. Their activities are weighted with a burden of recompense. Whereas the gods and goddesses play out their intrigues in the fluid, formative, and free realm of myth, identical or similar intrigues, when acted out by heroes or heroines, take shape in a different mold which, in fact, hardens into their destiny. The cosmic order which the gods (whether polytheistic or monotheistic) create and sustain is nothing else for the hero than fate, sometimes happy, but usually cruel and harsh. Indeed, in epics where such themes are already articulated, the relation between these two forces cosmic order and human destiny is often a matter for great reflection. From

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 375 (my translation).

the heroes' standpoint, the forces may coincide, as with two of the *Mahabharata's* \* words for fate: *vidhi*, "what is ordained," and *daivam*, "what pertains to the gods."<sup>17</sup> But fate is usually at least something with which the heroes must come to terms, as can be seen from Helmer Ringgren's study of epic fatalism in the *Shah-nama*\* and Cedric Whitman's essay on "Fate, Time, and the Gods" in the *Iliad*.<sup>18</sup>

What is important, however, is not so much that certain epicthe Greek, Persian, and Indian especiallyhave worked out cleat formulations of fatalism, or that they reveal important correlations between the concepts of fate in the epics and those that have been worked out elsewhere in those cultures, in other types of texts.<sup>19</sup> What is significant is that epics present a context in which the heroes, coming to terms with the origin, nature, and destiny of the universe as it impinges upon them, inevitably make some type of responsesubmission, defiance, courage, faith, self-discovery, stoicism, humility, vacillation, doubt, cowardicewhich takes on determinitive symbolic value in terms of an understanding of the origin, nature, and destiny of man.

I thus suggest that the concept of epic fatalism can be extended beyond those heroic traditions in which a specific philosophy of fate is worked out. In this respect, it would be more fruitful to compare the related themes in various epics directly, rather than try to interpret the fatalism of the *Shah-nama*\* and the *Mahabharata*\*, for instance, as common derivatives from an

<sup>17</sup> On fate and destiny in the *Mahabharata*\*, see Dumézil, *ME*, I, 162-70, and the bibliography on p. 163, n. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Helmer Ringgren, *Fatalism in the Persian Epics*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, No. 13 (Uppsala and Weisbaden, 1952), especially Chapter V, "God and Destiny," pp. 111-23; Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, pp. 221-48 (Chapter X).

<sup>19</sup> This is essentially the focus of Ringgren, *Fatalism*, and also of R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Putnam's, 1961), pp 240-42, as if epic fatalism were a sort of phaseaberrant at thatin the religion.

anterior Indo-Iranian philosophy of fate.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the term "fate" would, of course, have to be used open-endedly, implying that the heroes face the conditions that "determine" human existence, that "shape" human destiny. Examples are not necessary here, except to say that one highly visible type, the hero who faces up bravely to the conditions which will bring on his death, is responding to, or fulfilling, a personal fate, whether this be stated explicitly, as with Achilles, Karna \*, Siyavosh\*, or Gilgamesh, or implicitly, as with Cúchulainn, the Christian martyrs, or the Australian heroes of the dreamtime. The lives and activities of heroes, then, imply a sort of crystallization of fate. Mythic meaning has impinged into human life, and the hero defines himself by his response to conditions which may never occur again, but are "true" for all time. For many heroes, their response of greatest import is in the case of their deaths. We thus move from the abstract to the concrete.

### Births, Deaths, Fatalities

The devices which link the divine and the heroic are highly informative symbols of the relationship between myth and epic. Incarnations,<sup>21</sup> possessions,<sup>22</sup> and relations of favor or disfavor between particular divinities and individuals<sup>23</sup> all find their

<sup>20</sup> Ringgren, *Fatalism*, pp. 40-47, is unconvincing on a genetic connection between Indian Kala-\* and Iranian Zurvan-speculation. He seems more credible when, noting the great number of terms for "time" in the *Shah-nama*\*, he says: "This must imply that the important thing is the conception of time, and that epic fatalism is no mere reproduction of ancient Zervanism" (p. 47).

<sup>21</sup> H. Munro Chadwick and Nora Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, 3 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1936, 1940), II, 525, see no parallel (I think correctly) to the *avatara*\* theme in Western heroic literature, although several authors will speak of Cúchulainn as an "avatar" of Lug; cf. the incarnations in the Tibetan Gesar epic: Alexandra David-Neel and the Lama Yongden, *The Superhuman Life of Cesar of Ling* (rev. ed., London: Rider, 1959), pp. 30, 54-59.

<sup>22</sup> See, along with Siva's possession of Asvatthaman\* in the *Mahabharata*\*, that of Hektor by Ares in the *Iliad* 17. 210-11.

<sup>23</sup> Out of countless examples, see the relationship between Odinn and Haraldus Hyldetan at the Battle of Brávellir, discussed below, Chapter 5.

places, in various epics, as indexes to a hero's "true" identity. The most common device is that which links heroes to gods by means of their births. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, nowhere are the divine-human origins of heroes and heroines more significant than in the *Mahabharata* \*, but, as is well known, pairings between mortal and godly parents also lie behind such illustrious names as Achilles, Aenias, Sarpedon, Helen, Heracles, Cúchulainn, the "two-thirds divine" Gilgamesh, and the Tibetan Gesar. But when Homer and Hesiod describe the heroes of Troy as "demigods" (*Iliad* 12 23; *Works and Days* 160), they refer to a conception that extends beyond the immediate birth of every hero.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the heroes' closeness of contact with the gods, their life in a time when such contact was the norm rather than the near-impossible exception, a time when humans were greater than they are now, gives the heroes a special intermediary position between gods and men for which their births may serve as a primary symbol.

Such divine origins or affiliations, however, are never the "whole story." In and through the lives of the heroes, these conditions, these divine rapports, vanish, and in contrast to the conditions under which their lives are begun, their ends are marked by all-too-human themes.<sup>25</sup> As Brelich remarks,<sup>26</sup> very few of the Greek heroes die a natural death, while an incalculable number are slain. Most of the heroes, we are told

24 See Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 13, who cite Jordanes' description of the "chiefs" of the Goths as *semideos*; also Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 117, noting that in the *Rg Veda* the hero Trasadasyu\* is called *ardhadevam*\*, "demigod."

25 This generalization might be refined by pointing out that where the link with the gods is by means other than birth such as by a possession or by initiation this still constitutes a "new beginning" or "birth" in the hero's career. Heroes who die a "divine death" like certain "Odinic heroes" still do so as heroes and actually die, unlike Odinn (whose death at the Ragnarok\* is of a different order), in the corresponding conditions; see Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 129-53.

26 Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, pp. 88-89.

by Hesiod, died in war at Thebes or Troy, others in single combat; some were slain through treachery, some by near relatives; some were torn to pieces, some turned to animals, and some were destroyed by Zeus's thunderbolt; some fell victim to certain types of incidents, such as snake bites or mishaps during chariot races, hunts, or training exercises; and others committed suicide. One may certainly also recall here the two deaths most highlighted in the *Iliad*: those of Patroklus and Hektor. Before Achilles slays Hektor, he says to him: "I only wish that my spirit and fury would drive me to hack your meat away and eat it raw for the things that you have done to me" (22. 346-48). Then, when Hektor is slain and all the Achaeans stab his body (22. 371), there follows the "shameful treatment" (22. 395) by Achilles, who drags the corpse before the walls of Troy, then across the plain to the Achaeans' camp, and there three times around the body of Patroklus (24. 16). As to the latter's death (16. 784-867), three times (as Achilles' stand-in) Patroklus attacks the Trojans and kills nine each time, is then disabled by Apollo who strikes him on the back, is speared by the Dardanian Euphorbos between the shoulders, and then again in the belly by Hektor whom he tells, with his dying words: "You are only my third slayer" (16. 850). I do not know whether scholars more familiar with Greece have pondered the meaning of these various symbolisms. The invitation is to be found in some apt words of Victor Turner: "Since most epics are replete with combats, battles, wars and assassinations, the killing scene is often an epitome or multivocal symbol of the scheme of values underpinning the whole work."<sup>27</sup>

Although such matters will be taken up in subsequent chapters, let me mention here some general points. I will try to show that the *Mahabharata* \* has taken special pains to lend coherence to thematic material of this type. Certain deaths follow

<sup>27</sup> Victor Turner, "Comparative Epic and Saga," p. 7 (unpublished essay).

directly on others, and I believe the symbolisms are related. Second, the heroes' deaths often involve mythic themes which, as the latter provide a background for "human" events, shape them into inevitable fatalities. The clearest case is the death of Karna \*: what is a mythologem on one level, a divine opposition between Indra and Surya\* which leads, in the mythology, to no more than the latter's loss of face and a gain for one of Indra's human protégés, is, on the heroic level, an intrigue shaped by a preceptor's curse which predestines the hero, Surya's\* son, to his death at the hands of Arjuna, Indra's son. But whereas the mythic drama involves an opposition between the gods of Storm and Suna drama which takes place at no particular time, or in a perennial seasonal time, and which demands no final resolution in terms of the relationship between the two gods the heroic drama takes place once and for all and requires human motivation, a series of fatalities, to account for the hero's end.<sup>28</sup>

In later chapters I will discuss several cases where the causalities which bring on heroes' deaths have mythic dimensions. But even where no related myth is known, the deaths of the epic heroes are charged with symbolism. Almost always, and especially in the battle scenes, certain fatalities set up the conditions whereby a particular death becomes possible: not only curses and blessings, but oaths or vows (the deaths of Dhrstadyumna\*, Drona\*, Duhsasana\*, Jayadratha, Duryodhana, and others) and personal prohibitions, whether dishonored (as with Sisupala\*, who dies when he commits one more than the hundred offenses permitted him) or honored (as with Bhishma\*, who falls because he refuses to fight anyone who was formerly a woman). It is as if the hero were invulnerable to death that his closeness to the gods, whether by birth or by his activities,

<sup>28</sup> For fuller exploration of this episode and the background myth, see Dumézil, "Karna\* et les Pandava\*," *OS*, III (1954), 60-66, and *ME*, I, 130-38. Added commentary can be found in my doctoral dissertation, *Gods, Heroes, and Krsna\*: A Study of the Mahabharata\* in Relation to Indian and Indo-European Symbolisms*, University of Chicago, 1973, PP. 5-8.

would make him immortal were it not for some intruding and apparently arbitrary human factor, or series of factors, which, in his dealings and interactions with other heroes, has brought a nonetheless inevitable mortality upon him.

It would be instructive to examine the world's epics for the variety of forces which seal the fates of their heroes. No doubt the Indian stress on the power of curses, blessings, and vows owes something to Hindu asceticism (although parallels are easy to find elsewhere). But the device of the personal prohibition, which in Bhishma's \* case appears essentially as a negative vow, finds a close analogue in Ireland. There, a hero or heroine will have his or her destiny shaped by a *geis* (plural *gessa*), a personal prohibition, which may set the conditions for a woman's marriage (as with Medb of Cruachan, according to the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*<sup>29</sup>) or a man's death. Unlike Bhishma\*, who falls because he virtuously upholds his negative vow, Irish heroes often fall because their *gessa* are broken (as with Conaire) or, more particularly, where they have been broken because one *geis* has conflicted with another (as with Cúchulainn).<sup>30</sup> In any case, such epic devices are no doubt as ancient as the myths in which we find parallel dramas.<sup>31</sup>

### Character and Psychology

The details of the hero's death and the fatalities that bring it on are telling strokes in the portrayal of his character. But throughout a hero's life, compelling motivations are produced

29 See Dumézil, *ME* II, pp. 337-39; on Medb's *geis*, see below, Chapter 8.

30 On Cúchulainn, see Whitley Stokes, trans., "The Tragical Death of Cuchullin," *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature*, Eleanor Hull, comp. and ed. (London: David Nutt in the Strand, 1898), pp. 253-58, and the discussion (also covering Conaire) by Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 326-33. On *gessa*, see John Revell Reinhard, *The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance* (Halle A. S: Max Niemeyer, 1933).

31 Comparisons of fatalities will also reveal devices peculiar to specific epic and heroic traditions, such as prophecies, prayers, horoscopes, hecatombs, auguries, interpretations of omens, divinatory practices, games of skill and chance.



by desires, demands, and conflicts which, together, constitute the basic texture of epic drama. Aristotle appreciated long ago the importance of character in epic;<sup>32</sup> W. P. Ker, in contrasting the stress on character in epic and the emphasis on mood and sentiment in romance, picked up on Aristotle: "Without dramatic representation of the characters, epic is mere history or romance; the variety and life of epic are to be found in the drama that springs up at every encounter of the personages."<sup>33</sup> This conception very properly leads beyond the single figure to the more revealing depiction of the relationsconflicts and solidaritiesamong characters.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, if one admits at least the general importance of character in epic, it should be possible to regard epic, and perhaps most heroic stories, as primary vehicles for the expression of psychological values. It is certainly no accident that the "Oedipus complex," the "Electra complex," and, as Brelich would have it, the "Iphiclus complex,"<sup>35</sup> all take their names from Greek heroes. Psychological disequilibrium seems to be a fundamental given of epic conflict and drama.

In this connection, certain problems arise with a point made by Dumézil, who seems to let the ease with which he finds

<sup>32</sup>*Poetics* 1460. a. 5: "Homer is the only poet who knows the right proportions of epic narrative; when to narrate, and when to let the characters speak for themselves. Other poets for the most part tell their story straight on, with scanty passages of drama and far between. Homer, with little prelude, leaves the stage to his personages, men and women, all with characters of their own."

<sup>33</sup> William Paton Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (2d rev. ed., 1908; repr. New York: Dover, 1957), p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> This point is made partly to delimit the value which I attach, at least as regards epic research, to certain studies which deal with only one type of hero and his "monomyth," especially what I would call the composite "Oedipal Bodhisattva" of Joseph Campbell in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Meridian, 1957).

<sup>35</sup> Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, p. 243, n. 52, suggests that if Freud had known the Iphiclus legend, he would have used this term for the "castration complex"; see Apollodorus, *The Library* 1. ix. 12: as a child, Iphiclus ran away when his father laid beside him the bloody knife he had been using to geld rams; later, he had to be cured of impotence.

trifunctional and other mythical themes transposed into the *Mahabharata* \* suggest a misleading contrast with the *Iliad*, where such patterns are harder to come by. According to him, in the *Mahabharata*\* (and also in other non-Greek Indo-European epic and legendary traditions), "the personages, entirely defined by their function, present scarcely anything of psychological interest. Yudhishthira\*, Bhima\*, Arjuna, Dhrtarastra\*, Bhishma\* are all of one piece, and one can readily predict what each of them will do in each new circumstance." In contrast to the many-sided and open-ended character of Achilles, free of mythic prototypes, Dumézil sees Karna\* simply as the "son and copy of the Sun, of the enemy of Indra, ... [who] can only confirm to his mother his inflexible resolution to kill Arjuna, Indra's son, or die by his hand." And he adds: "In brief, Greece has chosen, as always, the better part: to settled reflections, to the preestablished relations between men and things which she inherited from her ancestors of the North, she preferred the risks and chances of criticism and observation."36

This is a surprising paean to the West. Granting that Homer's psychological characterizations are largely free of pre-established mythological patterns (though hardly free of divine promptings) and have a critical and objective quality, this does not mean that other modes of epic characterization lack psychological interest. The depiction of Arjuna, the "warrior yogin,"37 provides the basis for as complex a psychology as one could wish. But even where there are mythic models, the epic continuations (I avoid here the mechanical tone of terms like "copy" and "transposition") can be of the greatest psychological subtlety. Things occur differently on the two different planes, and that is the valueand for the *Mahabharata*\* the purposeof having both. It is perhaps presumptuous, and probably impossible, to analyze the psyches, the motivations,

36 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 633 (my translation).

37 See Madeleine Biardeau, *Clefs pour la pensée hindoue* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1972), pp. 95-96, 160-66.

the inner struggles of the gods; from the human point of view, there is something whimsically pure about their actions. But when the themes of myth are viewed in terms of the lives, fates, and deaths of heroes, they can be examined with great psychological depth. Thus the motivations of almost every major figure in the *Mahabharata* \*except Krishna, who plays his hand mysteriously are constantly under review. In the example already cited several times, Karna's\* inner struggles are actually of the highest interest: rich in loyalty, pride, courage, stubbornness, determination, and especially resentment, obvious but never overstated. Moreover, some of the *Mahabharata's*\* most intriguing characterizations emerge directly from a juxtaposition of mythic and epic themes. One thinks of Arjuna, the son of Indra who is reluctant to fight, and of certain other mythic-epic correlations handled with restrained but unmistakable irony.<sup>38</sup> As for Krishna, although his mind can never be read, his involvement is often the foil by which the thoughts and true dispositions of others are bared. In the *Udyogaparvan* especially, his alleged peace mission is the catalyst by which all the various conflicting claims and desires are brought into the open, and thus into inevitable opposition.

One is thus compelled to think of different devices and different "epic psychologies" for different cultures. As to the *Mahabharata*\*, one need only look to Irawati Karve's delightful and provocative *Yuganta* and to Vishnu S. Sukthankar's *On the Meaning of the Mahabharata*\* to see how the epic has provided material for character studies and psychological delineations of considerable subtlety.<sup>39</sup> Sukthankar, in particular, interprets

38 For example, Yudhisthira\* as incarnation of Dharma and Draupadi\* as incarnation of Sri\*, topics discussed in several chapters below.

39 Karve, *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* (Poona: Desmukh Prakashan, 1969), and Sukthankar, *The Meaning of the Mahabharata*\* (Bombay: Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1957). In Karve's work, one enjoys in particular her portrayal of Bhishma\* as a consistent woman hater (pp. 36-38) and her appreciation of the tender side of the relation between Bhima\* and Draupadi\* (pp. 128-32). In Sukthankar, see the portrayals of Vidura and Dhrtarastra\*

(Footnote continued on next page)

the epic in terms of a specifically Hindu psychology which, so long as he checks his impulse to fabricate new "complexes" à la Freud,<sup>40</sup> has much to teach us. Not unassimilable to my depiction of Krishna as a foil, Sukthankar's psychology is based on the recognition of Krishna as the "Inner Self" (*Paramatman* \*) and Arjuna, the warrior yogi, as the incarnate soul (*Fivatman* \*). From this foundation, says Sukthankar: "If you pursue steadily the indications offered by the symbolism underlying the lineaments of Arjuna and Sri\* Krishna and dive yet deeper into the plot of this great drama, you will discern as though in a dim twilight unmistakable traces of an exhaustive but carefully veiled allegory underlying the whole narrative, a very delicate tracery of thought reflected, as it were, in the subconscious of the poets and finding an elusive expression now refined and subtle, now clumsy and, to us, grotesque in the characterization of most of the *dramatis personae* as well as in the delineation of many of the scenes."<sup>41</sup> Preferring to see a mythic background for specific character traits rather than a subconscious allegorical patterning of various components of the psychelike the empirical ego (= Dhrtarastra\*), the *buddhi* (= Vidura), and various desires (= the Kauravas)<sup>42</sup> I would nonetheless agree with Sukthankar's starting point, Krishna, and his conception of the sweep of an "epic psychology." After all, such a psychology becomes intelligible in a religious tradition which places such regular emphasis on the belief that the divine is found in every man, the center to which all else relates. One would hardly expect a psychology like this from Homer. It is one, nonetheless.

(Footnote continued from previous page)

(PP. 54-57), and the concluding statement: "When we read the poem with attention we discover that from end to end the interest is held on character."

<sup>40</sup> See Sukthankar, *Mahabharata*\*, p. 53, where he speaks of Karna's\* "frustration complex."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102 and, more generally, on the allegory of the psyche, pp. 102-10.

<sup>42</sup> Allegorical interpretations of the *Mahabharata*\* by Indian authors go back at least to the thirteenth century *Tatparyanirnayaprarambhah*\* of Madhva.

## Sins and Virtues

Contrary to popular assumptions, the epic hero is rarely a uniformly ideal figure. Peter Hagin says of eighteenth-century English efforts to create epics around idealized noble statesmen: "The numberless qualities of the neo-classical hero only conceal his narrative weakness."<sup>43</sup> Rama \*, one of the few heroes to approach a standard of complete perfection, appears idealized.<sup>44</sup> When we find complex character and subtle psychology, however, we may expect characterization in depth. And in most cases, epic heroes even the most honored and the most despised are depicted ambivalently. Thus, when two of the *Iliad's* most noble heroes, Aeneas and Achilles, meet each other in combat, Aeneas can say: "There are harsh things enough that could be spoken against us both, a ship of a hundred locks could not carry the burden" (20. 246-47). Similarly, Reuben Levy has remarked that the "lapses" of the heroes of the *Shah-nama*\* are no less evident than the nobler side of its villains.<sup>45</sup> Such ambiguity wickedness among heroes, goodness among their foes has misled some scholars, expecting heroic perfection, to propose the so-called "inversion theory" of the *Mahabharata*\*: that the "bad" side must originally have been the good and the "good" side the bad.

One of the most stimulating treatments of this darker side of the hero is that of Brelich. The Greek heroes, he says, com-

<sup>43</sup> Peter Hagin, *The Epic Hero and the Decline of Epic Poetry: A Study of the Neoclassical English Epic with Special Reference to Milton's Paradise Lost* (Bern: Franke, 1964), p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> Rama\* commits only one truly nefarious act, the treacherous and much-discussed slaying of the monkey king Vali\* (*Ramayana*\* 4:13-18); see most recently V. Raghavan, *Ramayana-Triveni* (Madras: Ramayana, 1970), pp. 1-12, giving it a dharmic interpretation; see also Benjamin Khan, *The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1965), pp. 143-50; see pp. 140-41, for Rama's\* less glaring offenses: two untruths.

<sup>45</sup> Reuben Levy, trans., *The Epic of Kings. Shah-nama*\* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. xx-xxi.

monly present two types of characteristics: "physical monstrosities" and "moral imperfections." The list of the former<sup>46</sup> is one which might be instructively compared with unusual physiological traits found elsewhere. Indian heroes of all sorts are described by their *laksanas* \* ("marks"),<sup>47</sup> one trait in particular having been compared to the famous *riastrad* ("distortion") or *delba* ("forms") that affect Cúchulainn; and one may also think of the *lus-nan* \* ("bad body") of Gesar.<sup>48</sup> Brelich, in fact, thinks that physical and moral abnormalities are intimately connected, sharing a "common denominator" of "monstrosity"; and he suggests that his proposed distinction may actually be culturally conditioned, imposed on the heroes through the more recent perspectives of Greek rationalism and Christianity.<sup>49</sup> Although I will not follow this lead, it is certainly true that physical and moral defects may complement each

46 See Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, pp. 233-48; giganticness and dwarfishness, theriomorphism, traces of androgyny, physical deformities of teeth (cf. Harald Hyldebrandt), of inner organs, humpbacks, headlessness, many-headedness, defects of legs and feet (wounds and lameness: see Claude Lévi-Strauss' treatment of this feature of the Oedipus cycle: *Structural Anthropology* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967], pp. 210-13) and the eyes. One notes the apparent absence of the theme of arm loss which is so prominent in Roman, Irish, Scandinavian, and Indian (Bhurisravas\*, Bhima's\* son Sutasoma, Savitr\*) myths and legends.

47 India's most famous case is the thirty-two major *laksanas*\* of the Buddha; see Eugene Burnouf, *Le Lotus de la bonne loi*, II: *Appendice (Mémoires Annexes)* (Paris: Maisonneuve Frères, Editeurs, 1925), 553-647; on Krishna's auspicious bodily features, see A. C. Bhaktivedanta, *The Nectar of Devotion: A Study of Srila\* Rupa\* Gosvami's\* Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu\** (Boston: Iskcon Press, 1970), pp. 158-60. *Mbh.* 12:102,6-20 gives an intriguing list of heroic marks (*sura*\* ... *laksanani*\*; 6). In this vein, Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 161-64, discusses the strange but similar grimaces one eye raised, the other lowered, or, as with Arjuna, high cheekbones of Cúchulainn, the Viking Egill (on these two, see also de Vries, *Heroic Song*, pp. 82-85), and Arjuna. Indeed, *Mbh.* 12:102, 14 tells us that the brave are those of "crooked [or squinty] eyes, prominent foreheads, and fleshless jaws [or cheekbones]" (*jihmaksah\* pralalatasca\* nirmamsahanavo*\*)!

48 See Rolf-A. Stein, *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1959), pp. 544-45.

49 Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, p. 232.

other, as, for instance, with the doubly blind Dhrtarastra \* and perhaps the pale and "impotent" Pandu\*.<sup>50</sup>

As this suggests, the sins of a hero, or of a group of heroes, may sometimes form a significant symbolic structure; but material of this kind is not always systematized into coherent patterns. For instance, I would not superimpose the scheme of the "three sins of the warrior" which I shall discuss later on the single episode in which Achilles, insulted, resolves not to fight.<sup>51</sup> Yet there is no doubt that his behavior in general his wrath and hubris is ambiguous and far less than "ideal." Such incidents, however, invariably provide important indexes to key cultural and religious values whether they are systematized or not. Brelich has called attention to certain "moral imperfections" among the Greek heroes that find interesting analogues in the Indian heroic tradition: excessive violence and sexuality, incest, untruthfulness, deception, and insolence.<sup>52</sup> Equally important for comparative purposes, he observes faults that find few if any analogues in the Indian epos: hubris itself ("pride" is a common moral defect in the *Mahabharata*\*, but it never has as much play, and certainly not the same connotations, as in Greece<sup>53</sup>), and also madness, patricide,

<sup>50</sup> On these traits, see, for both Pandu\* and Dhrtarastra\*, Dumézil, *ME*, I, 151-52, 155-57, 162-74, and, for Pandu\*, *idem*, *FMQ* IV, 76-80.

Regarding Brelich's thesis, it seems to me that the two types of "monstrosities" point in different directions: the physical defining the hero as *materia prima*, an emergence into human form of a mythic identity; the moral defining the hero not in relation to myth (or some inherent natural disposition) but to the structures of human society. Although such a formulation requires further thought, one may think of Sisupala\*, whose physical abnormalities at birth (three eyes, four arms) define him in relation to Siva\*, but whose sins correspond to the three social functions; see Dumézil, *ME*, II, 59-68.

<sup>51</sup> See Littleton, "Indo-European Themes in the *Iliad*," p. 238, and see my article, "Dumézil and Indian Studies," *JAS*, XXXIV (1974), 133-34.

<sup>52</sup> Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, pp. 248-65.

<sup>53</sup> For the most part, pride (*darpa*, *abhimana*\*) seems in the *Mahabharata*\* to be a fault confined to Duryodhana and to others whose pretensions to specifically royal prerogatives must occasionally be smashed: see, for example, Indra's pride, 1:189, 17 (discussed in Chapter 7) and that of Yayati\* (discussed in Dumézil, *ME*, II, 274).

and outright robbery.<sup>54</sup> However, as with its strange deaths, the *Mahabharata* \* has correlated and systematized much of this ethical content into coherent frameworks, ones which I hope to make clear. In fact, the sins and deaths are in some instances intimately connected and form the nucleus of a complex and extensive fabric of symbols.

I would like once again to suggest that such material is more naturally "heroic" than "mythic." To be sure, there can be divine sins and follies, some of the same sorts as are committed by heroes: adulteries, incests, deceptions, sometimes even murders. And some sins are more clearly limited to heroes, such as sacrilege and impiety (only in India could Indra, a god, commit a sacrilege by killing a brahmin). But the main point is that only among heroes, as essentially human figures, can the full implications of violations and misdeeds be worked out and understood as sins. When Loki instigates the murder of Baldr, when Zeus indulges his sexual appetite, even when Indra commits his assorted crimes, these are pure deeds. They invite no moral investigation. The gods act out of their own essential natures, and that is that. But when a hero sins, whether the sin be implicit or explicit, one finds a dilemma, a matter of choice, which gives his act its special finality and tragedy and which leaves it open to investigation from every angle. It is perhaps from such considerations as these that the *Mahabharata*\* supports our point with the following words: "Virtue and sin exist, O king, only among men; these do not exist among creatures other than men" (*manusesu\* maharaja\* dharmadharmau\* / na tathanyesu\* bhutesu\* manusyarahitesviha\**; 12:238, 28).

This quote makes my next point sufficiently obvious. Some correlation may be expected between epic sins and epic virtues, and the *Mahabharata*\*, clearly systematizing once again, will not disappoint us, nor is it alone. The Chadwicks have said: "Statements of social standards are expressed in the *Mahabharata*\* far

54 Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci*, pp. 248-65, 295-96. As far as I can see, Indian epic knows extremely erratic ascetics and stressful situations, but nothing like madness, whether feigned or real.



more frequently than in Western heroic poetry," a fact they attribute "in the main to the very large didactic accretions." But when they discuss the Western epics, they make it very clear that such material is there, too: sometimes explicitly, as in *Beowulf*, sometimes thematically important but not made the subject of discussion, as in the Norse, Irish, and Homeric stories. For the Chadwicks, of course, the cardinal virtues are those of the heroic age, and thus quite uniform: courage, loyalty, generosity. Moreover, the vices are these virtues' anti-theses: cowardice, disloyalty, and meanness, plus others like avarice, arrogance, violence toward one's own household, and a disregard for oaths.<sup>55</sup> The virtues here are less interesting than the vices, for such "unheroic" qualities as wisdom and cleverness, which one finds in the *Iliad*, not to mention some of the stranger virtues which occur in the *Mahabharata* \*, are left out of the Chadwicks' enumeration. Yet one step toward understanding the moral imperfections of epic heroes will be to investigate the ideals of moral perfection which they also embody, albeit inadequately, imperfectly, incompletely.

### The Heroic Age

These various morphological features of epic come together in the heroic age. The idea of a "heroic age" was adopted by H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, and used before them by W. P. Ker and after them by Cecil Maurice Bowra and others, to refer to what they all regarded as the historic situation in which epic heroes lived and in which their peculiar life style was possible.<sup>56</sup> According especially to the Chadwicks and Bowra, the historical core of epic could invariably be uncovered by paring away the apparatus of nonhistorical and above all

<sup>55</sup> Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, II, 490-91; I, 74-78.

<sup>56</sup> Ker, *Epic and Romance*, especially pp. 3-15; H. Munro Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912); Cecil Maurice Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London: Macmillan), pp. 25-29, 535; *idem*, *The Meaning of a Heroic Age*, Earl Grey Memorial Lecture, No. 37 (King's College, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1957).

"mythic elements," which would either reflect later accretions or "the beliefs of an uncritical age,"<sup>57</sup> that is, the heroic age itself. This procedure of taking epics primarily as repositories of historical events and social conditions has led to some interesting conclusions and comparisons, most notably those in the groundbreaking work of Ker, whose main contribution lies in the contrast he draws between epic and romance and the corresponding "heroic" and "chivalric" ages which they portray.<sup>58</sup> But though epic tales probably always reflect some actual past conditions in one way or another, even the Chadwicks realized that one must usually look outside the epics, wherever possible to concurrent sources, for criteria to determine what was historical and what was not. In many of the Germanic traditions they could, of course, demonstrate how historical personages had sometimes been worked into heroic poems, often anachronistically.<sup>59</sup> But since concurrent documents are usually wanting, and since epics, on their own, present no inner criteria for historicity, and in fact usually have distorted whatever history one might find in them, such efforts at reconstruction were, and still are, all too often guided by a pleasing but wholly unreliable combination of common sense and wishful thinking. Both the *Mahabharata* <sup>60</sup> and the *Ramayana* <sup>61</sup> have been subjected to such an approach. Historical solutions to the peculiarities each epic presents are simply imagined, such as the hypothetical tribal practices and traits which

<sup>57</sup> Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, p. 130; cf. Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 198ff.; Bowra, *Meaning of a Heroic Age*, pp. 3-5, says that historicity may be assumed even where it is unknown and refers to mythic features like divine births as "incidental and almost irrelevant."

<sup>58</sup> Ker, *Epic and Romance*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, *Growth of Literature*, I, 199-204.

<sup>60</sup> N. K. Sidhanta, *The Heroic Age of India: A Comparative Study*. (New York: Knopf, 1930).

<sup>61</sup> Shantikumar N. Vyas, *India in the Ramayana\* Age* (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1967); cf. P. C. Dharma, *The Ramayana\* Polity* (Mylapore: Madras Law Journal Press, 1941), pp. 3-4.

are supposed to lie behind the polyandric marriage of Draupadi \* and the alliance of Rama\* with the monkeys.<sup>62</sup>

Apparently it is impossible to view the "heroic milieu" of some epics as an historical record, for epics seem to play havoc with history<sup>63</sup>if, indeed, they do not create it. The degree of distortions will have something to do with what Victor Turner has called the "epic relation," which he defines as a relation between two periods of time: "(1) the 'heroic time' of the narrated events, with its implicit background of 'heroic' society; (2) the 'narrative time' when the epic was first composed or believed to have been composed; (3) the 'documentary time' which covers the period for which we have manuscripts of the epic in their various recensions (revision)."<sup>64</sup> Turner has formulated this schema because he disagrees with Ker that epic poetry is a "direct reflection" (the term is Turner's) of the heroic age. As he says, "Much of the tension and mystery of epic derives from the ambivalence of the poet to the past." But even though Turner speaks of the past as "imagined," and as a combination of the "fanciful and factual," he is still inclined to see the poet's tension, however creative, as one which con-fronts two periods of history:

It may well be also that the derivation of epic's values, ethical imperatives and manners from several dissonant epochs may be the very cause of its well-known universal-human quality. The poet is forced by his materials away from the familiar paths of systematically connected customs and norms to make original assessments of character and individual worth. He is at a sufficient distance from the

<sup>62</sup> On the polyandry, see Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, II, 519, 528; Sidhanta, *Heroic Age*, p. 120. On the monkeys, see Vyas, *India in the Ramayana*\*Age, pp. 45-59.

<sup>63</sup> Most important in dispelling historicity as the necessary basis for an epic is the careful research of Stein, *Épopée et barde*, pp. 108, 142-45, 234, 249-50, 294-99, and *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> Turner, "Comparative Epic and Saga," p. 12; cf. Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, III, 754-55.

standards of the heroic age to be objective about them and even daringly to judge those standards themselves by their good or bad effects on the fully human beings the multidimensional quality of his material has allowed to emerge.<sup>65</sup>

I have no argument with the idea that this attitude of the poet toward the past will involve a reflection on some facts of history, some ancient standards, combined with efforts of "creative imagination."<sup>66</sup> But in his allegiance to the view that the "heroic age" is primarily a category of history, perhaps Turner has not gone far enough.

It is perhaps best to begin with the classical source of this theme in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. After the hubris-ridden heroes of the bronze age had destroyed each other by their own hands and departed anonomously for Hades, Zeus "made yet another (generation), the fourth, upon the fruitful earth, which was nobler and more righteous, a godlike race of hero-men who are called demigods, the race before our own, throughout the boundless earth" (156-60).<sup>67</sup> Like their immediate predecessors, many of the heroes died in battle, but unlike them, many were given a place by Zeus "in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep swirling Ocean, happy heroes" (171-72). It is widely argued that Hesiod's age of heroes is intercalated between the ages of bronze and iron,<sup>68</sup> and it is sometimes argued that the basic myth of the four ages is

<sup>65</sup> Turner, "Comparative Epic and Saga," pp. 15-17. Turner suggests additionally that frequently (Iran, India, Ethiopia's *Kebra Nagast*) "major religious changes have occurred between heroic and narrative times" (p. 14); cf. Bowra, *Meaning of a Heroic Age*, p. 19, speaking of intervening political changes.

<sup>66</sup> Bowra, *Meaning of a Heroic Age*, p. 21.

<sup>67</sup> Hugh G. Evelyn-White, trans., *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Horaerica* (London: William Heinemann; New York: Putnam's, 1914), pp. 13-15.

<sup>68</sup> See T. A. Sinclair, *Hesiod. Works and Days* (1932; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), p. 15; Jean Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs : Études de psychologie historique* (2d ed.; Paris: François Maspero, 1966), p. 20; Kirk, *Myth*, p. 233.

originally oriental,<sup>69</sup> or perhaps even Indo-European.<sup>70</sup> We need not enter the discussions concerning source and diffusion, but it is easy to imagine how an Indian Hesiod might have fashioned a five-yuga system by intercalating a "heroic age" between the Dvapara \* and Kali yugas, thus saving a special niche for the heroes of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>71</sup> In such configurations, no matter how many ages are conceived and one is reminded here of the Irish device of the five invasions of the island the "age of heroes" stands out at a pivotal juncture between a past that is essentially mythic and one that is purportedly historical. One thus meets a continuum between two ages, or really three: the mythic, the heroic, and the "historical" so it is highly significant that the interactions between the mythic and heroic realms are so basic to the fabric of epics.

Such connections establish the starting point for our discussion, for they determine the conditions which define the heroes as heroes and thus permit the heroic age to begin. In this respect, the heroic age must be defined primarily, in its inaugural conditions, as a category related to myth, not history; but it is more than roots and "beginnings," for other features of heroic ages exhibit a mythic structure. Here I am indebted to Stig Wikander, one of whose Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago Divinity School in the fall of 1967 dealt with the question at hand. My notes on his lecture do not allow me to represent fairly the sequence of his thinking or the range of

<sup>69</sup> Richard Reitzenstein, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1926), pp. 45-57; see the discussion between J. Gwyn Griffiths (pro) and H. G. Baldry (con), *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XVII (1956), 109-19 (Griffiths: "Archeology and Hesiod's Five Ages"), 533- 54 (Baldry: "Hesiod's Five Ages"), and X I X (1958), 91-93 (Griffiths: "Did Hesiod Invent the 'Golden Age'?").

<sup>70</sup> See Georges Dumézil. *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus, I: Essai sur la conception indo-européenne de la société et sur les origines de Rome* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), P. 259; and, although noncommittal, Vernant, *Mythe et pensée*, pp. 42-43. Both see a trifunctional pattern in the concerns of the gold and silver ages with justice, of the bronze and heroic with war, and of the iron with labor.

<sup>71</sup> But the *Ramayana*\* heroes would require a sixth age!

his documentation, but I can reconstruct three of his points.

1. The idea found in Ker, the Chadwicks, Bowra, and others, that a "heroic age" is an essentially "magnificent and aristocratic"<sup>72</sup> feudal stage through which a society may pass (and then recall), is seriously tested by certain features of such ages in different societies. First, no grounds, other than personal conviction, can be offered for regarding the primary material of the Indian or Iranian<sup>73</sup> (and also the Celtic) heroic ages as historical. Second, Iceland's heroic age had no antecedent heroic society; heroic tradition was developed in peasant conditions. Some societies recall two "heroic ages," like Ireland (with its Ossianic and Ulster cycles) and India (with its two epics). And last, it is, I believe, misleading to overemphasize the "aristocratic" and "warrior" aspects of the heroic age. Both the Chadwicks and Bowra speak of priests and magic as essentially alien to the heroic milieu.<sup>74</sup> This view ignores the close collaboration, or at least interaction, between warriors and such figures, in various epics, as brahmins, druids, seers, poets, and wizards. Interactions between "classes" would seem, after Dumézil's research, to be an archaic feature of Indo-European societies, which their epics reflect.

2. Within heroic ages there are almost always certain anomalies which either defy historical explanation or invite it only at considerable peril. A list culled from a variety of sources yields anachronisms and temporal incongruities, impossible time sequences (the fantastic life spans of such figures as the

<sup>72</sup> Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> That of the pre-Achaemenid kings, which Wikander discusses in his "Sur le fonds commun indo-iranien des épopées de la Perse et de l'Inde," *NC*, I (1950), 318-22.

<sup>74</sup> See H. M. Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, pp. 440 and 459: a heroic age need require no more than "Mars and the Muses." Bowra, *Meaning of a Heroic Age*, sees the heroic age as aristocratic and centered on war (p. 13), an age which has freed itself from the magic and superstition which preceded it (p. 9) and which must take opposition to the "priestcraft" of later times (pp. 9, 22-24) lest its story be "mangled" like the *Mahabharata* \* (p. 23).

*Mahabharata's* \* Bhisma\* and Vyasa\*, the *Shah-nama's*\* Zal, Rostam, and Afrasiyab\*, the Celtic Fintan, the Tibetan sPyi-dpon Khrargyan,<sup>75</sup> and certain Old Testament figures), initiations, journeys, combats, trials, unusual marriages (the case of Draupadi\* hardly stands alone), special relations or identifications with animals (Rama's\* alliance with the monkeys is not unique), and then the various features already discussed: strange births and deaths, physical and moral "monstrosities," and so on. The list is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to imply that any one of these traits is to be found in every heroic age. Such features are hardly likely to record actual historic social conditions or practices. One must perforce look elsewhere for an interpretation.

3. Often a peculiar and very striking structure is apparent in the way that heroic ages come to an end. First, although Wikander did not mention this, the heroes usually receive some special reward: as Hesiod puts it, the Greek heroes were given a place by Zeus in the "islands of the blessed." This destiny usually holds out the high, and the sometimes impossible, hope for later mortals. But with their disappearance, there often come to an end the clearly shaped (if impossible) chronology, the well-rounded narrative, and the delineated characterizations that have attended their stories. In such cases we move from the heroic age to the "dark age," a time of flux and uncertainties out of which the outlines of factual history gradually emerge in the inevitably dry form of genealogies and chronicles, royal or otherwise. Victor Turner has nicely caught the tone of this transition as it is handled in the two Greek epics: the *Odyssey*, he says, "might be compared to a long cooling-off ritual in which the heroic age passes into the com-

<sup>75</sup> His name means "Universal-Chief Old-Falcon"; see Stein, *Épopée et barde*, pp. 464-65, and David-Neel, *Superhuman Life of Gesar*, pp. 105-6 (calling him Chipön). Like Zal, he is born with white hair!

monplace of mere history, through the tunnel, as it were, of a liminal legend, Odysseus' narrative of his wanderings."<sup>76</sup>

As Wikander pointed out, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Persia, and India (and we might add Wales<sup>77</sup>) all have poor historical traditions, but rich lore concerning their heroic ages. One cannot maintain that these heroic ages, and the "dark ages" that follow them, are the result of diffusion. The datelines differ too markedly. Is one then to work backward, relying on these skeletal histories when they claim some form of descent for men of later ages from the heroes of old, as if the latter's "history" was preserved in each and every case while all else is vague and rudimentary? Or is one to work in the other direction, starting from the assumption of a legendary heroic past in which history, when and if it plays a role, conforms largely to mythic and heroic patterns, and to which later generations would have traced their ascent artificially? The second alternative usually recommends itself. In fact, the "dark age" must also be regarded as primarily a mythic construct, no less than the heroic age on which it relies. Although in some traditions, like the Roman, the link between "heroic ages" and actual history is made rather smoothly, usually it is not, even by some of the most "historically" oriented peoples in the world. There is chronological confusion, after the clear "history" from the patriarchs down to Moses, in the books of Joshua and Judges, out of which the dynastic history of Israel gradually emerges. Or one might think of H. G. Creel's statement on the most celebrated and "heroic" dynasty of Confucian China: "For the first centuries of the Chou dynasty we have no connected history. Even the orthodox Chinese histories give only scattered anecdotes and the names and order of the kings, not attempting

<sup>76</sup> Turner, "Comparative Epic and Saga," p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> See Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 531: after the heroic age, "a very long period which appears to be almost blank."



a continuous narrative."78 The Christian age of martyrs and the Buddhist first age of the dharma both ended in "darker" periods, preceding our own, when sainthood or arhatship become more and more difficult. In primitive religions, where the question of historical documents does not come up, there is still an implicit temporal gulf between the knowable present and the formative ages peopled by such heroes as the Australian totemic ancestors,79 the heroes of American Indian legends,80 and the so-called Dema-Divinities of Ceram and New Guinea whom Wikander, most tellingly, referred to as comparable to the heroes of the *Mahabharata* \*.81 This is not to say that historical material may not in some of these cases find a place in a heroic age, or that a dark age may not correspond to an actual falling off from some earlier more "heroic" achievements. It does say that these temporal sequences exhibit a cosmological structure that is primarily mythic, not historical, and that such sequences are found not only in societies which have had heroic pasts of the type imagined by Ker and the Chadwicks, but in societies whose heroes are totally unheroic by these scholars' standards.

78 Herlee Glessner Creel, *The Birth of China: A Study of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization* (New York: Ungar, 1937), P. 237.

79 Adolphus P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 209-10, 217, even uses the term "heroic age" to describe the time of the heroic ancestors.

80 See Paul Radin, *Winnebago Hero Cycles: A Study in Aboriginal Literature*, Supplement to *International Journal of American Linguistics*, IV, no. 3 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948). 11, and George A. Dorsey, *The Pawnee*, pt. I: *Mythology* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1966), pp. 13 and 141 both authors making distinctions between myth and legend which square with those discussed by William Bascom (see above, n. 11).

81 See Adolf Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples*, Marianna Tax Choldin and Wolfgang Weissleder, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 91: the Demas' effectiveness "goes back to an ancient primal past or, better, to the end of the primal past." Jensen insists on using the term "divinities" for the Dema, as they have the primary religious mythic and cultic role among the paleocultivators; but he notes that they are of the type that has "often been called tribal or culture heroes." As to Wikander's comparison, my recollection is that he was referring to the Demas' "creative deaths."

Moreover, they occur in societies with strong historical traditions (China, Tibet, Israel), weak historical traditions (the Indo-European examples cited by Wikander), and "no" historical traditions (primitives, those without written records). In other words, heroic ages and dark ages occur irrespective of history.

One may thus reasonably ask whether the ancient Indo-Europeans, before and during their migrations, had a conception of a heroic age. Dumézil, in two of his most precise and illuminating studies, has shown that certain types of epic figures, both heroes and heroines, can be traced, with their legends intact, to an Indo-European source. Such is the legend of the monstrous birth, three sins, and final annihilation attached to the names of the Scandinavian Starkadr (or Starcatherus), the Greek Heracles, and the Indian Sisupala\*; and such is the case with the Indian and Irish legends of the homonyms Madhavi\* and Medb: their quadruple marriages, their dealings with their royal fathers, and with other family matters of royal concern. Indeed, in both these cases Dumézil makes the point that the stories are primarily heroic. In the first, the gods provide a discrete background drama of their own; and in the second even in the Indian story they barely interfere.<sup>82</sup>

Such illustrations of the tenacity and durability of legend,<sup>83</sup> coupled with the insistence that myth and epic be maintained as distinct categories in a potential continuum, might give the appearance that I am poised, with Dumézil, to move beyond the comparison of individual legends to the larger question of a common Indo-European epos. But at least up to now, Dumézil's interests and his operating assumptions have led him elsewhere. He has been eager to reconstruct a comparative

<sup>82</sup> See Dumézil. *ME*, II, pt. 1; pt. 3, and above, n. 29; and pt. 3, pp. 21-22, 81-95, 118-21 (Sisupala\* and company), and 361 (Madhavi\* and company).

<sup>83</sup> See Radin's remark, *Winnebago Hero Cycles*, p. 12, that "myths" (his term: "'sacred' folktales") are less durable than legends because of the fluctuating use made of them in rituals.

Indo-European mythology, but the possibility of reconstructing Indo-European epic has only lately commanded his attention. Referring to Stig Wikander as "pioneer once again,"<sup>84</sup> he cites with tentative approval the latter's explorations into this area: "A *priori*, the existence of Indo-European epic themes, or more generally of an Indo-European literature, is likely [vraisemblable] The study which Wikander begins is thus full of promise."<sup>85</sup>

At this point, a few comparative studies, by Wikander and others, have shown that the *Mahabharata's* \* story has close analogues in other Indo-European epic traditions. Its cousins include not only the main narrative segment of the Persian *Shah-nama*\*,<sup>86</sup> but the Norse Battle of Brávellir recounted in the seventh and eighth books of Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*.<sup>87</sup> One cannot yet be certain how to interpret the points of contact between these stories: common origin? similar story

84 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 255.

85 Dumézil has also pioneered in this area; see my review article, "Comparing Indo-European 'Epics,'" *HRJ*, XV (1975), 90-100. See also the loose but informed list of parallels in S. Srikantaiya, "Asvatthaman," *QJMS*, XXI (1931), 392-95, 401-2.

86 Wikander, "Sur le fonds commun, pp. 310-29; James Darmesteter, "Points de contact entre le Mahabharata\* et le Shah-Namah\*," *JA*, X (1887), 38-75; Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, trans., *The Sháhnáma of Firdausi*, Trübners Oriental Series, 7 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905-1912), IV, 129. In both epics, one finds, in the same sequence, a leading "bad" hero (Duhsasana\*, Piran\*) having his blood drunk (see only Wikander); the effort by the "bad" king (Duryodhana, Afrasiyab\*) to hide in a lake after his army's defeat (see Darmesteter and Wikander); and the ascent of the "good" king (Yudhisthira\*, Key Khosrow) to heaven, leaving his five loyal companions behind dead or about to die (see all three authors).

87 Wikander, "Från Bråvalla till Kurukshetra," *ANF*, LXXV (1960), 183-93; *idem*, "Germanische und Indo-Iranische Eschatologie," *Kairos*, II (1960), 83-88. In both "epics," one finds a dynastic crisis shaped by similar incidents through four generations, culminating in a war between the forces of a blind old king (Dhrtarastra\*, Haraldus Hyldetan) against his nephews which the latter cannot win until they eliminate a great champion (Bhisma\*, Ubbo Frescius) by filling his body full of arrows. Some of these points, and others too, will be pursued and extended in Chapters 5, 11, and 13 below.

types from comparable heroic ages? parallel transpositions from a lost mythology? literary borrowings? My preference for the first of these options will become clear.<sup>88</sup> But one point is established: comparative research shows that the *Mahabharata* \* does not stand alone in the Indo-European continuum; rather, one finds stories analogous to it in striking and cumulative details. Its story, at least in some of its basic contours and episodes, may thus be very old. Indeed, it may be our best preserved "record" of the Indo-Europeans' heroic age.

<sup>88</sup> So too Warner and Warner on the Indo-Iranian convergences and, seemingly, Dumézil on the Indo-Scandinavian, although Wikander does not commit himself, ruling out only the second possibility. Darmesteter, ruling out the third ("Points de contact," p. 49), takes the fourth option and argues that India borrowed from Iran (pp. 51-57, 72); but Wikander shows that if it is a case of borrowing, the reverse would be more likely ("Sur le fonds commun," pp. 311-12). An argument for borrowings has also claimed the *Mahabharata*\* as a source for the *Aeneid*: Madeleine Lallemand, "Une source de l'Énéide: Le Mahabharata\*," *Latomus*, XVIII (1959), 262-87. However, none of the features which may link these two epics are the same as those which link the *Mahabharata*\* with the others, thus leaving the argument that the latter connections derive from a common epic heritage unaffected.

## Chapter 2

### Three Krsnas \*: Variations on a Theme

Nearly all the great theories about the *Mahabharata*\* have turned upon their authors' images of Krishna.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a curious set of facts has so far escaped mention in critical studies. The *Mahabharata*\* knows not just one Krishna; it knows three Krsnas\*. The nomenclature is quite emphatic. First, there is the Krishna of our title, often called by the patronymic Vasudeva\*, son of the Vrsni\* prince Vasudeva and his wife Devaki\*.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, as elsewhere, I shall refer to him, and him alone, by the spelling Krishna. Second, there is King Drupada's daughter Draupadi\*, Krsna\*. (long "a" is the feminine ending) being her given name at birth because of her dark or black color or complexion (*krsnabhutsa\* hi varnatah\**; 1:155,50). Third, there is Vyasa\*, his proper name also being Krsna\*, or more precisely Krsna\* Dvaipayana\*, "the Island-born Krsna\*," since his mother Satyawati\* (also called Kali\*, "Black") gave birth to him the very

1 I hope to write a separate article on the history of epic- and Krish-criticism. For the present, see Chapter 4 of my dissertation, *Gods, Heroes, and Krsna\**, pp. 133-90.

2 A *Krsna\* Devakiputra\** appears in *Chand\*. Up.* 3, 17,6 in conditions that neither support an identification with nor a separation from the epic figure; for the most reasonable discussion, see S. K. De, "Vedic and Epic Krsna\*," *IHQ* XVIII (1942), 297-300. As to the patronymic Vasudeva\*, many have assumed no "real" Vasudeva lies behind it; there is too little to go on one way or the other; Krishna's father Vasudeva does, however, appear in the epic and cannot be a Puranic\* invention.

day of his conception on an island in the Yamuna \* (1:54,2; 57,69-71).<sup>3</sup> A fourth Krsna\*, Arjuna, receives this name only through his connection with Krishna Vasudeva\* in instances where, recalling their mystical identity as Nara-Narayana\*,<sup>4</sup> the dual case is used to refer to them as "the two Krsnas\*" (*krsnau\**).<sup>5</sup>

As their roles in a number of incidents will show, the "three Krsnas\*" have things in common. For instance, they seem to cooperate in bringing about Draupadi's\* foreordained marriage. Beyond this, all are incarnations of main figures in the Vaisnava\* "pantheon." Krishna and Vyasa\* incarnate Visnu-Narayana\* (the latter more particularly Narayana\* alone<sup>6</sup>), and

<sup>3</sup> Certain authors have discussed two of the three together: Christian Lassen, *Indische Altertumskunde* (1847-1862; repr. 4 vols; Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1968), I, 790, on Draupadi\* and Vasudeva\*; Auguste Barth, review of Joseph Dahlmann's *Das Mahabharata\* als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, pt. 2, *JS* (1897), p. 327; see also below, n. 6.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of Arjuna and Krishna in this identity, see below, Chapter 10, at n. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning Arjuna, in two passages which describe the Pandavas'\* com-plexions, Yudhisthira\* and Bhima\* are said to be *gaura* ("white, fair, shining, golden") while Arjuna is *svama\** ("black, dark"): see 15:32,5 7 and a Northern passage, *Virataparvan\**, 1136\*, II. 1, 7, and 11. As to the "two Krishnas," S. Sorensen\*, *Index to the Names in the Mahabharata\** (1904; reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963), p. 425, gives over thirty citations.

<sup>6</sup> For Vyasa\* as an incarnation of Narayana\*, see 12:334, 11: "Know Krsna\* Dvaipayana\* Vyasa\* to be the lord Narayana\*" (*krsnadvaipayanam\* vyasam\* viddhi narayanam\* prabhum*; var.: *narayanam\* bhuvi*, "Narayana\* on earth"), and 12:337,4c: "born a portion of Narayana\*" (*narayanamsajam\**). Madeleine Biardeau, "Etudes de mythologie hindoue: Cosmogonies puraniques\*," pt. 1 (hereinafter EMH, 1-3), *BEFEO*, LIV (1968), 35, n. 1, remarks that Vyasa\* is "a sort of doublet" of Vasudeva\* in the epic, often repeating what the latter says. But she makes no further comment other than to reject a derivation of Dvaipayana\* from *dvipad* or *dvipada*, which could make *dvipa* a synonym of Nara; see also EMH, 2, *BEFEO*, LV (1969), 82, n. 1, and Edward Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (1915; repr. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1969), p. 216, n. 1, for whom Vyasa's\* link with Narayana\* is "the last word of the Bhagavatas\* and not early epic." Although true that the identifications of Vyasa\* come in the presumably late *Narayaniya\** section of the *Santiparvan\**, they are probably based on the standard epic identification of Vyasa\* as the "Island-born Krishna," an identity linking him with Krishna, Draupadi\*, and thus Visnu-Narayana\* as well.

Draupadi \* quite emphatically incarnates Visnu's\* consort Sri\*.7

One is tempted to seek some means by which to interpret this triple appearance of Krsnas\*, for although they are not explained by any single source or coinciding structure, their common designation is surely more than fortuitous. Rather than any one interpretive framework, the "three Krsnas\*" evoke several. Not surprisingly, the common denominator in most of these and I will discuss four involves connotations of the name Krsna\*: "Black."

### Signs of the Times

Black is the color of the Kali yuga, the yuga which is about to come into being as the *Mahabharata*\* battle brings the preceding yuga to a close. According to Puranic\* traditions, the beginning of the Kali yuga is marked, among other things, by Krishna's death.<sup>8</sup> More important, this is the closest one comes to an epic articulation of our theme. One of the passages describing Vyasa's\* relation to Narayana\* seems to link two of the "three Krsnas\*" to the blackness of the Kali yuga. Asked about his emanation from Narayana\*, Vyasa\* tells that after Narayana\* had completed the "seventh creation" by emitting Brahma\* from his navel (12:337,17), and after he had determined to assume his various *avatara*\* forms (337,32-36), he then, from a syllable of speech [*bhoh*\*! 37; the *sloka*\* identifies this sound with Sarasvati\*], gave birth to the rsi\* Sarasvat, also called Apantaratamas\*,<sup>9</sup> and commanded him to divide and arrange the Vedas (39). At the fulfillment of this command, Narayana\* delegated the rsi\* to repeat this task at each Manvantara (41). Then, nar-

7 There is some controversy here, on which see below, Chapter 7; but the CE makes it clear that Draupadi's\* connection with Sri\* is authentic and that an effort to connect her with Saci\*, and Krishna's\* wife, Rukmini\*, with Sri\*, is an interpolation (see 1:61,5 and 566\*).

8 See F. E. Pargiter, *The Purana\* Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age* (1913; repr. Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1962), p. x.

9 See Ganguli-Roy, *Mahabharata*, X, 616, n. 1: "The name 'Apantaratamas' implies 'one whose darkness or ignorance has been dispelled.'"

rowing the time focus still further to a single Mahayuga \*, Narayana\* predicted that at the beginning of the Kali yuga the rsi\* would be the progenitor of "certain descendants of Bharata named Kurus, high-souled princes celebrated on earth," among whom would erupt "a dissension in the family [*kulabheda*] having its end in their mutual destruction, without you [*tvamrte*]\*.10... And when that dark yuga arrives, you will be of dark complexion" (*krsne\* yuge ca samprapte\* krsnavarno\* bhavisyasi*; 337,45-44). Narayana\* added: "And you shall see me in the world armed with a discus [that is as Krishna Vasudeva\*]" (337,51).

From elsewhere, we know that black is Krishna's color for the Kali yuga alone, as he had assumed the colors white, red, and yellow in the preceding yugas (*sukla\**, *rakta*, *pita\**, *krsna\**; 3:148,5-37; *HV* 2:71,31; but cf. *Mbh.* 3:187,31, reversing the middle pair). It is also reasonable to think of the blackness of the third Krsna\*, Draupadi\*given her identity as an incarnation of Sri\* and thus her mythological consolidarity with the other twoas being similarly related to a periodic coloring. The *Vamana\* Purana\** tells us that Sri-Laksmi\* is created in four colorswhite, red, yellow, and blue (*nila\**)mainly showing her connection with the four varnas\*, but also signaling a decline in dharma similar to that involved in the course of the yugas (*Vam\**. *P.* 49,36-39). Thus, at the very least, the blackness of the three figures seems to be a sign of the times, that is, of the arrival or onset of the Kali yuga.

### Glimpses of Popular Settings and Continuations

A second frame of reference is provided primarily by ethnological considerations and is based on the fragmentary evidence gathered from early texts outside the epic and from possible

10 Presumably this means "without you taking part in the destruction." Ganguli-Roy translate "excepting yourself," which would imply that Vyasa\* was the sole survivor of the war, something the epic story will not support. Ganguli-Roy then give alternate readings; *ibid.*, p. 618, n. 3.



cult survivals. I rely here heavily on the reconstructions of Walter Ruben and Suvira Jaiswal.<sup>11</sup>

First, Buddhist stories in the *Jatakas* \* refer to each of these figures as Kanha\* (-a\*), that is Krsna\* (-a\*). In some instances, as Ruben observes, the stories seem to be slanderous distortions of the epic material. In others they seem to rely on ancient local and cult traditions which may have influenced not only the formation of the stories, but aspects of the epic as well. *Jataka*\* 536 is a case of the first type. As Ruben says, Kanha\* (Draupadi\*) is introduced as an example of vice. She marries the five Pandavas\* out of sexual greed, and, when they are absent, she lustfully seduces her attendant, a humpbacked cripple.<sup>12</sup> As the scene is summarized in verse, the cripple is in addition a dwarf:

In ancient story Kanha\*, it is said,  
A single maid to five princes was wed.  
Insatiate still she lusted yet for more  
And with a humpbacked dwarf she played the whore.<sup>13</sup>

Almost certainly this extramarital passion is a distortion or confusion of the relationship of Draupadi\*, as Sri\* incarnate, with Visnu\* in the latter's most easily derided form: the dwarf. If so, it provides testimony that the identification of Draupadi\* with Sri\* was known, even if it was misrepresented, in Buddhist literature dating from a relatively early period of the epic's literary formation.

A less slanderous representation is found in the *Ghata Jataka*\* (*Jataka*\* 454), which presents the other "two Krsnas\*" together

<sup>11</sup> See Walter Ruben, *Krishna: Konkordanz und Kommentar der Motive Seines Heldenleben*, Istanbul: Schriften, No. 17 (Istanbul: n. pub., 1944??, pp. 60, 66-68, 249-51, 280; Suvira Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of I'aisnavism*\* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), pp. 65-68.

<sup>12</sup> Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 250-51; see Edward Byles Cowell, ed., *The Jataka\**; or, *Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (6 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895-1907), V, 225-28.

<sup>13</sup> Cowel, *Jataka*\*, p. 225.

in a drama that also involves a sister of Kanha \* Vasudeva\* named Anjanadevi\*. Jaiswal refers to the latter as "the black goddess,<sup>14</sup> *anjana*\* being a word for black pigment or collyrium. Here, although Ruben sees the story not as the kernel of Krishna Va-sudeva's\* biography but a work of "polemical, malicious origin,"<sup>15</sup> there is material of interest. The story concludes with the fulfillment of the prophecy of the destruction of Dvaraka\*, an episode found in the *Mausalaparvan* of the *Mahabharata*\*. But the two accounts differ. After his advice has helped Kanha\* Vasudeva\* capture Dvaraka\*, Kanhadipayana\* (Krsna\* Dvaipayana\*) takes a place held in the epic (see *Mbh.* 16:2,4-10) by three other rsis\*: it is he who is taunted and insulted by the Vrsni\* youths (here the sons of the ten brothers), one of whom dresses up as a pregnant woman; they ask the sage what kind of fruit or offspring "she" will bring forth. Seeing that this is his moment to die, Kanhadipayana\* prophesies that the masquerade will result in the destruction of the family. The youths murder the visionary. His ashes are thrown into the river, but certain plants emerge from them and turn into clubs which at a festival slay everyone except Kanha\* Vasudeva\*, Baladeva (Balarama\*), Anjanadevi\*, and their chaplain.

Thus with no parallel in the *Mahabharata*\* (where one never hears of Vyasa's\* death), the death of Kanhadipayana\* is linked with that of Kanha\* Vasudeva\* (who dies after the festival) and with the destruction of the latter's family. As to Anjanadevi\*, who is born to Devagabbha\* (?Devaki\*), before her marriage to an adventuresome figure named Upasagara\*,<sup>16</sup> she figures as

14 Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 68.

15 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 250, with full summary, pp. 249-51.

16 He replaces (?) Vasudeva; see above, n. 2. Having been expelled from his older brother's kingdom for intrigues in the latter's zenana, he comes to Kamsa's\* realm where he sees Devagabbha\* (who is imprisoned to prevent her from bearing a son), bribes her maidservant Nandagopa\* to gain him entry to her tower, where the two conceive Anjanadevi\*. Ruben sees all this as a Buddhist denigration of Vasudeva\*, whose parents will of course be these same two lovers.

the elder sister of her ten legitimate brothers. In place of one of the brothers, she takes charge of one-tenth of the earth over which the brothers have established sovereignty. She alone survives the final catastrophe.

Jaiswal views Anjanadevi\* as a variant name for a strange figure in the family of Krishna and Balarama\*. This is Ekanamsa\*, another older "sister," the girl born to Nanda and Yasoda\* in the cow settlement who is exchanged for Krishna to protect him from Kamsa\* at birth.<sup>17</sup> Once exchanged, her part in the usual story is brief: dashed against a stone by Kamsa\*, she rises into the sky to announce Krishna's birth and to predict Kamsa's\* destruction.<sup>18</sup> The name Ekanamsa\*, meaning "she alone who is without a portion," or "the single portionless one" (M-W), has been variously explained. Ruben suggests "she who was no portion (of Visnu's\*)." <sup>19</sup> Another explanation stresses her "blackness" (Jaiswal refers to her as "the black goddess Ekanamsa\*" <sup>20</sup>): hers is a name for Kuhu\* (*Mbh.* 3:208,8), the dark invisible moon on the first day of the new moon; and this may be related to the *Harivamsa's*\* notion that Ekanamsa\* is an incarnation of Visnu's\* *yoganidra*\*, the yogic sleep which lasts for a "night of Brahma\*."<sup>21</sup> In any case, Jaiswal shows that in popular and local traditions, Ekanamsa\* was identified, or at least grouped, with the dark heroine of the *Mahabharata*\*. A variant name for Ekanamsa\* in certain Puranas\* is Ekadasa\* (the "Eleventh," probably recalling the *Jataka*\* tradition of her having ten brothers). According to the *Lalitavistara*, Ekadasa\* is "a goddess living in the west, along with seven other goddesses, such as Alumbusa\*, Krsna\*, Draupadi\*, etc."<sup>22</sup> The association with

<sup>17</sup> See Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, pp. 66-67, and Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 66-67, citing *Harivamsa*\* 59, 8-49; see M. N. Dutt, trans., *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsa*\* (Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1897), pp. 255-57.

<sup>18</sup>*Harivamsa*\* 59,39-42; she is four-armed and clad in dark blue.

<sup>19</sup> Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 67.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 66; see *Harivamsa*\* 59,10.

<sup>22</sup> Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 66; see Ph. Ed. Foucaux, trans.,

(Footnote continued on next page)

the west may indicate Dvaraka \*. However, Ekanamsa's\* fate seems to have been an increasing absorption into the cults and identities of Durga\* and Sri.\*.23

One thus has a means of glimpsing often through Buddhist sources the kinds of links that were sometimes forged or perceived between the epic figures and extraepic, often popular, traditions. In some respects the three Krsnas\* are more closely associated with each other in these sources than they are in the epic: just as Krishna's birth is marked by the birth, self-sacrifice, and prophesies of his black "sister," his death is marked by the self-sacrificing death and prophesies of Kanhadipayana\*.

This does not imply, however, that the nominal blackness of each of these figures would always have the same meaning. Here, our only good index is provided by the female member of the triad.<sup>24</sup> As Madeleine Biardeau has pointed out, the blackness of Draupadi\* and her link with Sri\* call to mind the

(Footnote continued from previous page)

*Le Lalita Vistara, Annales du Musée Guimet*, VI and XIX (Paris: Leroux, 1884-1892), Chapter 24, verse 137 (VI, 324), giving "Krsna-Draupadi\*" as one of seven "daughters of the gods," all of whom are included in the lengthy charm by which the Buddha, having just accepted food from two merchants seven weeks after his enlightenment, calls for the protection of the merchants by the gods, goddesses, constellations, etc., of the four directions. Draupadi\* is today also a goddess in South India, called "Drowpathi-Amman" or "Panchali-Amman." At her temples, however, I was told either that she is not called Krishnai (Krsns\*), or that the name is used because she was a devotee of Lord Krishna. On wooden festival idols her skin is painted pink, unlike Krishna's and Arjuna's.

23 Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 68.

24 Krishna's blackness is also pointed up in Tamil Sangam\*> literature where he is named Mayon or Mayavan, "the Black One"; see Bhagwansingh Suryavanshi, *The Abhiras: Their History and Culture* (Baroda: Maharaja Sayajirao University, 1962), p. 72. As to triads, the three Krishnas must not be confused with another triad, two brothers plus a woman, especially their sister or wife, such as is found with Vasudeva\*, Balarama\*, and Subhadra\* or with Rama\*, Laksmana\*, and Sita\*. As both Ruben (*Krishna*, pp. 59-61) and Jaiswal (*Origin and Development*, pp. 127-28) suggest, this type of triad may recall very early cultic and legendary traditions such as culminate (or survive?) in the cult of Jagannatha\* at Puri\*.

connection of both with the "prosperity" of the "black" earth.<sup>25</sup> But I insist that this is not the primary sense in which Draupadi \* and Sri\* are related in the epic.<sup>26</sup> If earthy blackness and odor were the dominant features of Draupadi's\* divine antecedents, the epic poets would have done better to have made her an incarnation of Visnu's\* other wife, the goddess Earth, Bhudevi\*.

### Red, White, and Black

A third approach to the "three Krsnas\*" may perhaps get us closer still to the symbolism of their common color, but the degree of speculation is higher than heretofore. It is suggested by G. J. Held's conception of a triadic circulatory marriage system in the epic, a system which he also sees reflected in the triads of the *trimurti*\* and the three *gunas*\*<sup>27</sup> One may agree with Held that this latter pair of groupings is related,<sup>28</sup> and, moreover, that the triadic relationship that exists between the epic's dominant "families"the "phratry"-like pair of the Pandavas\* and Kurus, and the "mediating" third group, the Yadavas\*bears a similar structure.

25 See Biardeau, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," Article liminaire, *Annuaire de l'EPHE*, LXXXIX (1971-1972), 40-41; *idem*, *Clefs*, p. 187; in the former she notes that both Indian myths and Vaisesika\* philosophy attribute blackness and odor to the earthqualities shared by Krsna-Draupadi\* and Vyasa's\* mother Satyavati\* or Kali\* ("Black") and the latter's son Vyasa\* (for whose smell, *gandha*, see *Mbh.* 1:99,42-43). Throughout India, of course, goddesses are frequently associated with blackness, not the least Kali\* herself, but also South Indian goddesses (among whom one finds Draupadi\*; see above, n. 22) who, in some cases (Mundla Mudamme, Kulagollamma) are associated with black stones; see Wilber Theodore Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism; A Study of Local Village Deities in Southern India*, University Studies, X, no. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1915), 69 and 74.

26 See above, n. 7, and below, Chapter 7: their connection through the theme of "royal prosperity."

27 See Garrett Jan Held, *The Mahabharata\*: An Ethnological Study* (London and Amsterdam, 1935), pp. 58-59, 70, 160, 170, 223-24.

28 See Biardeau, EMH, 1, pp. 40-42; as is well known, Visnu\* is linked with *sattva*, Brahms with *rajas*, Siva\* with *tamas*.

In the societal groupings, Held sees the basic triadic system as infinitely extendable.<sup>29</sup> Other families and their members may be involved, particularly in the "mediating" position. This would seem to apply to the Pancalas\* and in particular to Draupadi\*, for the latter, both in her Svayamvara\* (marriage rite by "Self-Choice") and in the dice game, is a figure who stands between the two sides, offering and presenting judgments on both. In the former case, she chooses the Pandava\* Arjuna over a host of suitors, including the Kaurava Duryodhana. In the other, she stands in the assembly hall amid her husbands and the Kauravas, provides the arguments by which it becomes moot whether Yudhishthira\*, the oldest Pandava\*, has truly gambled her away, and thus saves the day for her husbands.

Concerning this propensity to mediate, what is true of Krsna\* Draupadi\* is true of the "three Krsnas\*." Where stress and opposition, as well as rituals and games, occur between the two "phratries," at least one of the "three Krsnas?" is usually in a position to mediate between them. In fact, all three have their key moments. Along with Draupadi\* rescuing the Pandavas\* from the Kurus at the dice game, we find Krishna representing the Pandavas\*' cause to the Kurus on his "peace mission,<sup>30</sup> and Vyasa\* (along with Narada\*) "standing" between the missiles of Arjuna and Asvatthaman\* (insofar as the latter represents the Kurus), saving the three worlds and ultimately, with additional help from Krishna, the Kuru-Pandava\* line.<sup>31</sup>

It is not, however, just a matter of three "black" mediators, but of a wider color symbolism, for, as I will insist again later,<sup>32</sup> the *Mahabharata*\* has dressed a number of prominent themes in rich and suggestive hues. I have already mentioned color associations that pertain to the yugas and *varnas*\*. Here, however, we are concerned with one of the "circulatory" triads men-

29 See Held, *Ethnological Study*, p. 58: all that's needed is at least three clans.

30 See Chapter 6 below.

31 See Chapter 12 below.

32 See below, Chapter 10, following n. 79.

tioned by Held in connection with the epic "families": the three *gunas* \*. Well-known color associations belong to these three "strands" of matter (*prakṛti*\*), of which *sattva*, linked with lucidity, is white; *rajas*, dynamic energy, is red; and *tamas*, the tendency toward entropy, is black.

Now there is evidence, unfortunately somewhat tenuous on one point, that these same three colors are associated with the two and their three mediators. As the latter are definitely black, the Pandavas\* are most readily connected with the color white and the Kauravas, perhaps distantly, with the color red. With the exception of Arjunawho, despite his name ("White, Silver"), is described as dark<sup>33</sup>the Pandavas\* connection with whiteness seems to stem initially from their father Pandu\*, whose name means "Pale" or "White." In the text itself, however, I have located only one passage where a red-white contrast appears, and unfortunately it is somewhat ambiguous. With battle looming, Karna\* tells Krishna of a vision he has had in which he saw the Pandavas\* dressed in white turbans (*svetosnisah*\*) and white garments (*suklavasasah*\*; 5:141,28), and, on Duryodhana's side, either "all the kings" (*sarve ... parthivah*\*; Northern recension) or "all the Kauravas" (... *kauravah*\*; Southern recension) dressed in red turbans (*raktosnisah*\*; 141,39). In the passage itself, these colors seem to denote the survivors (white) and the slain (red) in the upcoming battle, as all the other survivors but Krishna Satyaki\* (36), Asvatthaman\*; Kṛpa\*, Kṛtavarma\* (39) are envisioned, along with the Pandavas\*, in white apparel. But the Southern recension's insistence that it is the Kauravas in particular, and their army only in general, whose headgear is red may rely on a long tradition. Alfred Ludwig first suggested a red-white opposition, backing up his association of the Kurus with red by showing that the name "*kuru*" itself sometimes carries the connotation "red."<sup>34</sup> Related symbolisms are

<sup>33</sup> See above, n. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ludwig, "Über die mythische grundlage des Mahabharata\*," *SKBGW* Classe für Philosophie, Geschichte, und Philologie (1895), p. 4; cf. Held,

(Footnote continued on next page)

sometimes found in adaptations of the *Mahabharata* \* story to drama: the South Indian Kathakali dances and the Indonesian shadow puppet theater, the Wayang Kulit or, as it concerns the epics, the Wayang Purva.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, one cannot attribute such epic colorations simply to the model of the three *gunas* \*. As Victor Turner has shown, the *gunas* \* themselves seem to be an Indian philosophical utilization of a far more archaic and universal systematization of a basic color triad.<sup>36</sup> Turner's study of the symbolism of these colors in African and other cultures may help us to appreciate some of the connotations of blackness as a term in this triad, and, in turn, to interpret some of the meanings of the blackness of the "three Krishnas" in their roles as mediators between the representatives of the two other hues.

(Footnote continued from previous page)

*Ethnological Study*, p. 297 and n. 1. Ludwig cites a Kuruvarkana\* people mentioned in some Northern manuscripts (see CE notes to 6:10,15), taking their name as "'kuru'-colored"; he also cites *kurupisangila* \* (a color mixed from "kuru" and yellow); *kuruvaka* (red amaranth); *kuruvinda*, *kuruvilva* (or -*bilva*; ruby); *kurunga* \* ("bloodshot eye"), and other compounds. See also the plate facing p. 121 of the CE *Bhismaparvan* \* depicting the *Bhagavad Gita* \* scene where the dark Arjuna and Krishna converse between white- and red-clad armies.

35 On Kathakali colors, see Clifford R. Jones and Betty True Jones, *Kathakali: An Introduction to the Dance-Drama of Kerala* (San Francisco: American Society for Eastern Arts, 1970), pp. 23-35. According to them, the basic triad is white-red-black (p. 35), with other colors especially green for good heroes in permutations. On Wayang Purwa, see especially H. Ulbricht, *Wayang Purwa: Shadows of the Past* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 36: "Red, black, white and gold predominate.... Red symbolizes opposition to the cosmic order, black and white that the body is under the control of a mind which is reconciled with the universe, and gold stands for the splendour of youth.... The difference between black and white seems to be that black, the color of the ascetics, indicates harmony with the other world while white, the color of noble warriors, expresses righteousness on earth."

36 Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 85-86 (the *gunas* \*) and 90: "Since the experiences the three colors represent are common to all mankind, we do not have to invoke diffusion to explain their wide distribution. We do have to invoke diffusion to explain why other colors ... are ritually important in certain cultures."



Turner's main contention is that the three colors owe their universality to their ability to "epitomize the main kinds of universal human organic experience"<sup>37</sup>: white associated with milk, semen, life; red with blood and thus with both childbirth (life) and bloodshed (death); black with cessation of consciousness ("black out"), death, and sometimes (although rarely explicitly) feces and urine. These psychobiological experiences are then the basis for a wide fan of related social and cosmic referents which appear in rituals, myths, speculations, and so on.<sup>38</sup>

As regards the particular colors, Turner indicates that although a brief summary of the Ndembu material would identify whiteness as positive, redness as ambivalent, and blackness as negative, the latter color is highly multivalent. "Black is very often the neglected member of the triad" (p. 79), and, according to Turner, "its very absence may be significant since it is the true emblem of the hidden, the secret, the dark, the unknown and perhaps also of potentiality as opposed to actuality" (pp. 81, 73). Along these lines, Turner shows that when the triad is reduced to dyads, white/black oppositions occur predominantly in abstract, conceptualized contexts while white/red oppositions occur most often in concrete, actual, ritual situations. Moreover, "Where a twofold classification of things as 'white' or 'red' develops, with black either absent or hidden, it sometimes happens that red acquires many of the negative and undesirable attributes of blackness, without retaining its better ones" (p. 80). And finally, in a specific instance, he mentions that blackness (alluvial mud as a symbol of love) "may repre-

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Turner contends that life-crisis rituals provide the primary context in which these colors are applied, but one will note that the Ndembu root their ritual usage of the colors in the myth that the rivers of the three colors have their source in the High God Nzambi (*ibid.*, pp. 61-62,68). It thus does not seem necessary to take myth (or for that matter legend) as a secondary elaboration.

sent the cessation of hostilities between two intermarrying groups."39

When we turn to the *Mahabharata* \*, all these remarks are highly suggestive. One thinks immediately of the hiddenness and mysteriousness of Vyasa\*, who, setting his mind on asceticism, disappears into the forest at the moment of his birth, telling his mother Satyawati-Kali\* that he will appear when she needs him (1:57,70-71); he mysteriously reappears throughout the narrative in complicated and threatening situations. There are also two "significant absences" of Krishna, to be discussed in later chapters.40 And all "three Krishnas" serve in various situations to "represent" (through marriage, counsel, consolation, embassies, and so on) the cessation of hostilities between the two groups.

Still more significant, however, is Turner's observation of a contrast between the "actual" and the "potential." The actual war between the Pandavas\* and the Kurus, between the white and the "red," confronts the two groups as a dyad in which the latter, the ambivalent Kurus,41 "acquire many of the negative and undesirable attributes of blackness." But in the hidden, mysterious workings of the "three Krsnas\*" are the potential, the resources, to bring the conflict to cessation, whether through peace or, as happens, through war. More particularly, the "three Krsnas\*" have a common ability to turn moments of stress and conflict, where the Kurus and/or adharma appear to be on the verge of triumph, into scenes of victory for the Pandavas\* and "subtle dharma," *suksmo\* dharmah* \*.42 Dharma in such

39*Ibid.*, pp. 71-81. Among ambiguities, black may represent sexual passion, p. 73 (a note worth pondering for Krishna scholars).

40 See below, Chapters 4 and 12.

41 The "inversionist" theories of the epic, associated with uncle-nephew team of the two Adolf Holtzmanns, sought to explain the ambiguous character of such "noble foes" as Duryodhana and Karna\* by supposing that the "original epic" favored their "party."

42 For instance, most clearly in the actions of Draupadi\* in the dice game, of Vasudeva\* in the battle, and of Vyasa\* in justifying Draupadi's\* marriage.

instances is always "subtle," hidden, and ambiguous: the three Krsnas \*, by representing, using, and expressing this subtlety, thus represent the potential for restoring dharma out of adharma, even by the apparent use of the latter. It can thus be no coincidence that all three are incarnations of the "family of Visnu\*," the god who appears, from yuga to yuga, to restore dharma (*Bhagavad Gita\** 4,8). Also significant is their triple appearance at a turning of the ages, between two yugas, in a sort of "liminal" time during which dharma and adharma are in a state of flux. In this context their blackness can signify a restoration of dharma, perhaps provisional, and, as the first section of this chapter suggested, an anticipation of the dark age to come.

### Vaisnava\* Triads

A final approach to the "three Krsnas\*" concerns their number. Dumézil\* has drawn attention to an analogous situation: India knows three Ramas\*.<sup>43</sup> Dumézil\* has not gone out on any limbs to interpret this fact, as there is nothing to suggest that the three Ramas\* form a coherent structure on their own. But his frame of reference, his hint at what such a structure might be, is roughly trifunctional: Parasurama\*, "Rama\* with the Axe," is a brahmin; Rama\* Dasaratha\*, the Dharmaraja\* of the *Ramayana\**, is a ksatriya\*; and Balarama\*, Krishna Vasudeva's\* brother, is the plow-bearing, wine-drinking hero widely recognized for his associations with agriculture.<sup>44</sup> This is also their order of appearance.

The "three Ramas\*" share certain traits, at least in essentials, with the "three Krsnas\*." First, whereas the latter are all in-

<sup>43</sup> Dumézil\*, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 72; *ME*, I, 113. The first to call attention to this triad of Ramas\* seems to have been Hermann Jacobi, *Das Ramayana\** (Bonn, 1893), p. 135; see S. N. Ghosal, trans., *The Ramayana\*: Das Ramayana\* of Dr. Hermann Jacobi* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960), pp. 100-1. Jacobi argues unconvincingly that Rama\* Dasaratha\* and Balarama\* are eastern and western variant forms of Indra.

<sup>44</sup> See Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 12, 203, 212; Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, pp. 51-60.

carnations of Visnu's \* "household," the former are all more specifically *avatars*\* of Visnu\* himself. The major difference is that whereas the "three Krsnas\*" appear synchronically, all in the same time span, the three Ramas\* appear separately, scheduling themselves diachronically, in different yugas, in accord with the *avatara*\* doctrine. Second, and still more intriguing, as Jacobi points out: "The word Rama\* means 'black,' 'dark colored' in the Veda, but in the classical Sanskrit 'delightful,' 'lovely.'<sup>45</sup> One can only wonder at this coincidence. As far as I know, the second connotation always predominates in the descriptions of Rama\* Dasaratha\*, but it is certainly possible that the older meaning, or a combination of the two meanings, may have provided the three Ramas\* with their original names.

Admitting the danger of interpreting one mute or unstated structure by referring it to another, certain coincidences do occur, for possibly in both cases there is a residual trifunctional symbolism reflected in the disposition of Visnu\* or his "household" to be apportioned in such threesomes. In fact, in the case of the "three Krsnas\*," a trifunctional interpretation suggests itself as easily as in that of the "three Ramas\*": Vyasa\* is a brahmin and a rsi-poet\* (*suta*\*), the highest exemplar of "Vedic" teaching; Vasudeva\* is a ksatriya\*; and Draupadi\*, in addition to being a woman, is Sri\*, "Prosperity" incarnate, affiliated with the "black" earth.<sup>46</sup>

Each of these threesomes would thus seem to represent a totality. The central figures in whom Visnu\* incarnates himself (Rama\* Dasaratha\*, Krishnaboth ksatriyas\*) are flanked by mysterious satellites who complement them, whether their tasks be performed simultaneously or at different times. The characterization by the functions is admittedly loose and provisional,<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Jacobi, *The Ramayana*\*, p. 100, n. 74.

<sup>46</sup> See above, n. 25.

<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting, however, that neither with the Ramas\* nor the Krsnas\* can the three identifications be reduced to caste: neither Balarama\* nor Draupadi\* is a *vaisya*\*.

and I do not wish to go further on this limb than Dumezil \*. But it may possibly explain not only why the three Krsnas\* are black, but why they are three. It also presents an appropriate arrangement whereby Visnu\*, the god associated with the restoration of dharma, can appear, along with his consort Sri\*, in forms that are related to three traditional zones of dharmic activity.

If you like this book, buy it!

PART TWO  
BEFORE THE WAR

If you like this book, buy it!

## Chapter 3

### The Marriage of Draupadi \*

The epic Krishna becomes more tangible as we move to some of the episodes in which he appears. Mine is not the first attempt to follow his involvement from scene to scene, but I believe the paths my few predecessors have taken have either covered unyielding terrain or gone off in thin air. First are those led by Hopkins and Tadpatrikar who have sought out only what they judged to be of historical plausibility.<sup>1</sup> Second are those led by Walter Ruben who have envisioned an epic originally without Krishna and sought to show Krishna's superfluosity to the "main story."<sup>2</sup> This second fancy must occasionally be dispelled, and nowhere is there a better starting point than Krishna's first *Mahabharata*\* appearance: his presence declared "unnecessary" by Ruben because he comes only to watch, not to participate<sup>3</sup> at Draupadi's\* wedding ceremony, her Svayamvara\* or "Self-Choice."

This status as a spectator is not insignificant. First let us recount the events that set the background for the Svayamvara\*

1 See Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 215-16; Tadpatrikar, "The Krishna Problem," *ABORI*, X (1929), 269-343.

2 See Ruben, *Krishna*, especially pp. 282-84, anticipated in his views by Hermann Jacobi, "Incarnation (Indian)," *ERE*, VII, 195, and Hermann Oldenberg, *Das Mahabharata\*: Seine Entstehung, sein Inhalt, seine Form* (Gottingen: Bandenhoed & Ruprecht, 1922), p. 42. For an impassioned denunciation of such guttings of the epic, see Vishnu S. Sukthankar, *Mahabharata*\*, pp. 94-95.

3 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 283.

scene. The childhood and adolescent conflicts between the Kurus and Pandavas \* have just come to a head in the lacquer house episode, in which Duryodhana's scheme to burn the Pandavas\* and Kunti\* in this firetrap has been foiled. To prevent news of their escape and thus forestall further attempts on their lives, they travel disguised as brahmins, or more exactly as *brahmacarins\**, and settle in a brahmin's house in the town of Ekacakra\*. There, on two occasions (1:153 and 157), they hear the second time from Vyasa\* about the upcoming wedding ceremony of Draupadi\*, the princess of Pancala\*. Intrigued, they make their way to the capital of this kingdom and take up residence where their concealment may be maintained: in the "atelier" of a potter (*kumbhakarasya\* salayam\**; 1:176,6) of the Bhargava\* line (282,1; 183,2; 184,1).<sup>4</sup>

Draupadi's\* marriage to the Pandavas\* has provided one of the most important keys to the Wikander-Dumezil\* analysis of the epic, for Draupadi\* complements this trifunctional team of brothers in a way reminiscent of several Indo-European goddesses.<sup>5</sup> Some of the issues raised by these two authors will be discussed in Chapter 7, but here, where the focus is more directly on Krishna, let us note an observation by Biardeau: Draupadi's\* marriage to five husbands is "the result of an intervention by Siva\*."<sup>6</sup> This is true of both of the stories known to the epic which account for her multiple marriage.<sup>7</sup> In one case, as Vyasa\* tells it twice (1:157,6-14; 189,41-49), Draupadi\*, in a

<sup>4</sup> Biardeau's interpretation of this curious scene is most suggestive: in their present condition, the Pandavas\* embody the union of the *brahman* and the *ksatra\** powers, a condition also found in legends about members of the Bhargava\* *gotra* and in the cult of the South Indian god Aiya Nar-Sasta\* who is served by potter-priests; see "Brahmanes\* et potiers," pp. 31-37, 45-55.

<sup>5</sup> See Dumezil\*, *JMQ* IV, 50-52 (translating Wikander's study) and 75-76; also *idem*, *ME*, I, 103-24.

<sup>6</sup> Biardeau, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 38 (my translation). Dumezil\* minimizes Siva's\* importance here; see *ME*, I, 111, and below, Chapter 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Mark\**. P. knows another version which omits Siva\*, which Dumezil\* thinks is older: *ME*, I, 113-16. But the *Mahabharata\** is consistent in relating her to Siva\*; 18:4, 10 speaks of her as *nirmita\* sulapanina\**, "fashioned by the holder of the trident" (that is, by Siva\*); see also below, Chapter 7.



former life, was an anxious maiden whose repeated requests for a \* husband were granted by Siva\* to the number (five) of her entreaties.<sup>8</sup> In the other (1:189,1-39), also recounted by Vyasa\*, it was as Sri\* herself that, in a most curious scene, she witnessed the subjugation by the dice-playing Siva\* of five Indras, and, when the latter obtained Siva's\* agreement to let them take birth as "five Indras among men" (the Pandavas\*), she (Sri\*) was appointed by Siva\* to be their human wife (Draupadi\*).

Biardeau draws these two scenes together. In both accounts, she points out, the adharmic side of Draupadi's\* irregular marriage is initiated by Siva\*: "When Siva\* intervenes and breaks the rules of the ideal society, it is always with an eye to destruction, but a destruction necessary to the renewal of the world."<sup>9</sup> In the legend of the overanxious maiden, it is Siva's\* insistence on the polyandric marriage that introduces the adharmic note; and in the myth of the five Indras, it is his intoxication with dice that not only sets up the conditions for the marriage but links the marriage symbolically with (a) the dice game between the Kurus and Pandavas\*, and (b) the course of the yugasthe names for which are those of different dice throwswhich in themselves comprise a steady waning of dharma.<sup>10</sup> Against this background, let us now follow Krishna through the Svayamvara\* episode. Siva\* is not alone in working behind the scene.

Krishna first appears when Dhrstadyumna\*, Draupadi's\* brother, calls the roll of those present at the Svayamvara\*. Krishna is there with his kinsmen (177,16-17), and when Dhrstadyumna\* completes his announcements, he does not exclude Krishna when he says to Draupadi\*: "These and many others ... have come for the purpose of obtaining you" (177, 21). As the scene develops, it is said that the limbs of all were

<sup>8</sup> The Southern recension has the story told a third time; see V. S. Sukthankar, "Prolegomena" to *Adiparvan\**, (Critical Edition), p. xxxix, and *Adiparvan\**, Appendix I, no. 100.

<sup>9</sup> Biardeau, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 38 (my translation).

<sup>10</sup> Summarizing *ibid.*, p. 38, n. 4.

overcome by the god of love (*samkalpajenapi \*pariplutangah\**; 178,3), making them rise up in unison with the words "Krsna\* [Draupadi\*] shall be mine" (*ibid.*). But is Krishna really among those who are so affected, and is he really a suitor? The words of Walter Ruben are instructive: Krishna comes "without doing anything on his own, but as a spectator." 11 Indeed, in this status of "spectator" Krishna is "in action" for the first time.

In the first words to describe Krishna and Balarama\*, it is said that, along with their kinsmen, they "made a viewing" (*preksam\* sma cakrur*; 178,8) of the scene. In this posture, they are distinguished from the "other various sons and grandsons of kings with [their] inner natures, minds, and eyes set on Krsna\*" (*anye tu nananrpaputrapautrah\* krsnagatairnetramanahsvabhavaih\**; 178,11). But if Krishna and his kinsmen are the only ones not obsessed by the sight of her, their gaze wanders to something else that interests them greatly: it is their first sight of the Pandavas\*. Krishna is the first to see beneath their brahmin disguises. He meditates upon them (*parthan\* pradadhyau*; 178,9) and then informs Rama\* who, "having surveyed [*niriksyā\**] them slowly and gradually, looked back at Janardana\* pleased in mind" (178,10). These various emphases on "sight" (see also 180, 17-22) certainly support the view that Krishna is a spectator, not a participant, at the Svayamvara\*. Nor is he mentioned as one of those who attempts to string the bow that must be shot to win Draupadi's\* hand.

Krishna's spectator role does not, however, mark him as an extraneous figure. First one is reminded of Held's notion that there is a circulatory clan relationship in which Krishna and the Yadavas\* are mediators between the Pandavas\* and the Kurus. 12 Here, on the one side, Arjuna is successful in stringing the bow, on the other Duryodhana, although he is not mentioned as one of those to take a turn with it, is the first named by Dhṛstadyumna\* in his roll call of those who have come to seek

11 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 283 (my translation).

12 See above, Chapter 2 at nn. 27 and 28.

Draupadi's \* hand ( 17,1). This scene thus finds its place among others where Krishna appears betwixt and between the two sides and in inactive, nonparticipant roles.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, he is always able to maintain his favoritism for Arjuna and the Pandavas\*. The scene brings up a problem of myth and epic: if Visnu's\* consort is Sri-Laksmi\* what is Krishna's relationship with Draupadi\*, Sri\* incarnate, who is now about to marry Krishna's closest ally (or allies) and who maddens everyone with desire except Krishna himself and his kinsmen? To untangle this second matter takes us back to the role of Siva\*.

After Arjuna has succeeded with the bow where all others have failed, and after Arjuna and Bhima\* still disguised have fought off all the assembled ksatriyas\* who are outraged that Draupadi\* should be a brahmin's prize, Krishna intercedes: "He caused those lords of earth to be restrained, saying: 'She has been won righteously' [*dharmena labdheti*], thus conciliating them all" (181,32). Hearing his appeasing words, all the wonder-struck (*vismitah*\*) kings stop their fighting and abruptly return to their respective realms (181,33). We are told that the wrath of the kings and princes against King Drupada for slighting them by bestowing his daughter on a brahmin was justified by a precept of *sruti*\*: "The Svayamvara\* is for ksatriyas\*" (180,6). But Krishna, thanks to his secret recognition of the Pandavas\* (this is again stressed just before his statement; 181,32ab), is able to say: "She has been won in accordance with dharma." He is, of course, correct, and his authority, in this instance, goes unchallenged.

So far, however, Krishna sanctions only the first stage in Draupadi's\* marriage; it only concerns Draupadi\* and Arjuna. The crucial test of dharma is the "adharmic" situation instigated by Siva\*: the polyandric marriage. And on this troublesome point, when it comes to those who justify and approve, we

13 Krishna is "placed" between the two sides when he awakens from his sleep to find Duryodhana and Arjuna requesting his aid in battle (see below, Chapter 5), in his "peace mission" (see below, Chapter 6), in the *Bhagavad Gita*'s\* setting, and, in general, in his noncombatant status during the war.

meet a most interesting group. First, as we have seen and as Biardeau has stressed, Vyasa \* continually delivers the stories of Siva's\* decreefirst to the "dharmic" Pandavas\* and then to Drupadaas a "just" imposition. In this, says Biardeau, there is nothing illogical: "Vyasa\*, one of the two epic incarnations of Narayana\*, is justly indicated to transmit the message and answer for this act of shocking appearance: he represents the positive and reconstructive phase of this restoration of the social order, of which Siva\* symbolizes the destructive phase."14 But this is not all. In the richer and, in my view, most important of the stories justifying the marriage the myth of the five Indras is not simply a matter of Siva\* decreeing that Sri\* will have the five "Indras among men" as her terrestrial husbands. As soon as he has so "ordained" [vyadadhat\*]: "The god [Siva\*] then, indeed together with them [presumably the five Indras and Sri\*15] went to the immeasurable [apramemayam] Narayana\*; and he [Visnu-Narayana\*] also ordained [vyadadhat\*] all this. Then all took birth on earth" (189,30).

The verb *vi-dha-*\*, used here in connection with both Siva\* and Visnu\*, has many connotations, and it seems likely that whereas Siva's\* part is simply to "ordain," Visnu's\* is more complex. Monier-Williams gives six basic, nonspecialized meanings for the verb, the first five of which are: (1) to distribute, apportion, grant; (2) furnish, supply; (3) put in order, arrange; (4) ordain, enjoin; (5) form, create. Do we then view Narayana\* as "granting" that this may happen, even "bestowing" or "supplying" his own wife to the five Indras? Does he "apportion" the others' lots (excepting Siva's\*)? Does he put in order, even "form" or "create,"16 where Siva\* has initiated disorder and destruction? I doubt that one can totally dismiss any of these possibilities,

14 Biardeau, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 39 (my translation).

15 Ganguli-Roy, *Mahabharata\**, I, *Adi Parva*, 418, takes *tair* as referring only to the Indras, but what follows implies that Sri\* is present too, being among the *sarve* ("all") who take birth on earth.

16 The related substantive, *vidhatr\**, often means Creator.

but the verb's total range of meaning would in any case seem to imply a connection between Visnu-Narayana's \* "approval" and dharma. Thus it is not only Vyasa\*, one of Narayana's\* incarnations, who lends dharmic approval to the polyandric marriage, but Narayana\* himself. And what about Visnu-Narayana's\* other incarnation, Krishna? Does he give approval to this second stage of Draupadi's\* marriage as well as the first? Yes, this time not by referring to it explicitly as meeting the precepts of dharma, but by an act which is itself an implicit sanctioning of its virtuousness: the bestowal of wedding gifts (191,13-18).

The marriage of Draupadi\* is thus part of a vaster theological drama that involves, at numerous levels, both Siva\* and Visnu-Narayana\*. This was hinted at by Biardeau, but as we have seen, not only Vyasa\* but Krishna and Narayana\*. deepen the Vaisnava\* "restorative" contribution. The various collaborations between different figures are of interest. We see the three Krsnas\*Vyasa\*, Draupadi\*, and Vasudeva\*mysteriously working to a common end. But more than this, if it is Siva's\* role to instigate or signal the disruption of dharma, it is the role of Krishna, Vyasa\*, and Narayana\* first to sanction that disruption and, moreover, to perceive the hidden structure of dharma even while it has been suspended and to preserve it through its suspension. Thus, even while dharma wanes, it is being preserved in kernel, in essence, in the actions of Arjuna, the Pandavas\*, and Draupadi\* which only Krishna and Vyasa\* perceive in their true contextas dharma.

## Chapter 4

### Krishna's Absence from the Dice Game and the Disrobing of Draupadi \*

After his appearance at Draupadi's\* Svayamvara\*, Krishna is involved in several incidents. Staying with the Pandavas\* a while after the wedding, he is present when they accept half the Kuru kingdom and set up residence at Khandavaprastha\*; indeed, Krishna leads them (*pandavas\* ... krsnapurogamah\**) to this "terrible forest" (*ghoram\* vanam*; 1:199,26-27) and helps them, along with Vyasa\*, to build the heavenlike city of Indraprastha (199,28-47). Back home at Dvaraka\*, he encourages Arjuna to abduct Subhadra\*, Krishna's own sister, from a festival so as to assure her compliance in marriage (1:211-213). Then, coming to Indraprastha to celebrate Arjuna and Subhadra's\* wedding, he stays for the birth of their son Abhimanyu and performs the birth ceremonies for this new and beloved nephew (1:213,55-64). This visit includes Krishna in one of the strangest scenes of the epic, the burning of the Khandava\* forest.<sup>1</sup> Before he leaves he asks the Asura Maya to build the Pandavas\* their magnificent hall, "a *sabha\**

<sup>1</sup> This scene has drawn recent and varied comment from Madeleine Biardeau, *Compte-rendu of "Conferences de Mile Madeleine Biardeau," Annuaire de l'EPHE, Section des Sciences Religieuses* LXXIX (1971-1972), 140-41 (hereinafter these will be referred to as *EPHE*, LXXVII [1969-1970], LXXVIII [1970-1971], and LXXIX), and from van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata\**, I, 1,9-11,13. See also my "The Burning of the Forest," *New Essays in Hinduism*, Bardwell L. Smith, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 208-24.

where we may see arranged designs that are godly, asuric, and human" (2:1,11) in fact, the very architecture that will make a fool of Duryodhana, leading him to covet the Pandavas' \* prosperity (*sri*\*, 2:43,13 and 17) and to formulate his plan to divest them of it by inviting them to a dice game (43,13). Last, Krishna is invited to Indraprastha to advise Yudhishthira\* on the latter's wish to perform a Rajasuya\*, the "royal consecration" ceremony which confers the title of *samraj*\*, "universal sovereign" (2:12,11-12). Encouraging Yudhishthira\* to perform this rite, Krishna helps Arjuna and Bhima\*, before it begins, to dispose of Yudhishthira's\* single rival, King Jarasandha\* of Magadha; and then, during the rite, he prevents its disruption by slaying Jarasandha's\* obstreperous marshal Sisupala\*. These two episodes have received their most satisfactory treatment in a beautiful study by Dumézil\*,<sup>2</sup> some of whose conclusions I will draw from in later chapters. From the building of the Pandavas'\* *sabha*\* through the performance of the Rajasuya\*, we have entered the *Mahabharata*'s\* second book, the *Sabhaparvan*\*.

At the successful conclusion of the Rajasuya\* sacrifice, Krishna goes home (2:42,51-58). He is not involved in the climactic scenes which close the *Sabhaparvan*\*: the two dice games which result in the Pandavas'\* humiliation, loss of kingdom, and exile to the forest. I will not discuss the dice games here in any detail.<sup>3</sup> Rather, noting that Walter Ruben sees Krishna's absence from this "turning point" as worthy of an exclamation point in support of his thesis that the original story did without Krishna,<sup>4</sup> let us examine this matter of

2 *ME*, I, pt. 1, 17-123; see also Biardeau, *EPHE*, LXXIX, 141-46, and my "Comparing Indo-European 'Epics,'" pp. 93-96.

3 See Heinrich Luders, "Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien," *AKGWG, Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, N. F., IX, 2 (1907), 1-74; Held, *Ethnological Study*, pp. 253-77; K. de Vreese, "The Game of Dice in Ancient India," in *Orientalia Neerlandica: A Volume of Oriental Studies* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1948), pp. 349-62; J. A. B. van Buitenen, "On the Structure of the Sabhaparvan\* of the Mahabharata\*," *India Maior* (Gonda Festschrift) (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 78-83.

4 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 283.

absence more closely.<sup>5</sup> It is taken up by Krishna himself on his first visit to the Pandavas \* at the beginning of their period of exile in the forest. We are now in the *Aranyakaparvan*\*, and the Pandavas\* have already received two of the many illustrious visitors Vidura and Maitreya who will come to console them, on their forest travels, with edifying discourses that bear only a tangential relationship to the course of the epic drama. Krishna will make another visit, and a third visit by him is interpolated. Here, however, there are no illuminating tales or exhortations, and the relationship of this visit to the preceding events of the *Sabhaparvan*\*, and to what ultimately follows, is direct and, in my view, of considerable importance.

The visit serves one clear purpose: it reaffirms Krishna's relationship with the Pandavas\* after his absence during their time of distress at the dice game. In particular, he reconsolidates this relationship by a series of exchanges with Yudhishthira\*, Arjuna, and Draupadi\*. To Yudhishthira\*, whom he had helped consecrate as *samraj*\*, he promises consecration anew and, his wrath mounting, punishment of his enemies (3:13,5-6). To Arjuna, who must pacify Krishna's anger by recounting his past deeds,<sup>6</sup> he recalls their identity as Nara and Narayana\* (13,37-40). Most significant is the exchange with Draupadi\*; their words point beyond the surface events to the mythological identities of the figures involved.

Draupadi\* speaks first. Recognizing each of her five husbands as an "equal of Indra" (*pancanamindrakalpanam*\*; 13,108); acknowledging Krishna as "Visnu\*," as "the sacrifice, the

<sup>5</sup> Actually, a famous tradition does have Krishna appear at the dicing scene; in an episode recounted in numerous versions (see CE notes following 2:61,40), Draupadi\*, distressed over Duhsasana's\* efforts to disrobe her, calls on Krishna to rescue her. But Franklin Edgerton's work on the *Sabhaparvan*\* CE proves this an interpolation; see Edgerton, "Introduction," *Sabhaparvan*\*, CE, pp. xxvii-xxix.

<sup>6</sup> 3:13,10-36: a strange list, accenting past lives (?) as an ascetic (10-14) and sacrificer (16-17,21-22), plus triumphs over human and demonic foes. The one *avatara*\* reference has Krishna traverse the three worlds as a child (*sisu*\*) rather than a dwarf (24).



sacrificer, and he for whom the sacrifice is to be performed" (*tvam \*yajno\* ... yasta\* tvamasi yastavyo\**; 13,44), as well as a number of related identities (43-52), she asks: "How then, being the wife of the Parthas\* [=five Indras], your friend [*sakhi\**], O Krishna [= Visnu\*], and the sister of Dhrstadyumna\* [= Agni], could one like me be dragged into the *sabha\**?" (53.)<sup>7</sup> Her tale of woe continues at some length (to *sloka\** 108), followed by tears, sighs, and the concluding "angry words" that she has truly neither husbands, sons, brothers, father, nor friends if all this could happen to her (112-13).

In response to this expression of tears, anger, and bereftness, Krishna replies:

Surely the wives of those at whom you are wrathful shall also weep, O angry [or radiant] one [*bhamini\**], [seeing their husbands] covered with the arrows of Arjuna, bathed in torrents of blood, slain, having abandoned life, lying on the earth's surface. Whatever is suitable for the Pandavas\*, that I will do. Do not grieve. I promise you truly: you shall be the queen of kings [*rajnam\* rajni\* bhavisyas*]. The sky might fall, Himavat might split, the earth might be rent, the ocean might dry up, O Krsna\*, but my word shall not be vain. [13, 114c-117]

Note the plural: Draupadi\* (Krsna\*!) will be the queen of kings. This is nothing but Krishna's reply-in-kind to Draupadi's\* question. Like her, he penetrates to the mythological identities of the principal figures: Draupadi\*, the queen of kings, is Sri\*, "Prosperity," whose marriage to every king, not to mention the "five Indras among men," is the sign of a virtuous reign. In symbolic terms, as Draupadi\* says herself, she is without husbands, for, since they have lost their kingdom, the relationship between them and herself *as Sri\**, "royal Prosperity," has

<sup>7</sup> An equal sign indicates a heroic-mythic consolidarity between the figures outside and inside the parentheses or brackets. On the five Indras, see above, Chapter 3 and below, Chapter 7, and cf. 5:80,20-26 where, just before Krishna departs on his "peace mission" to the Kuru court, Draupadi reminds him that even as his "dear friend" (*priya\* sakhi\**; 21) and the wife of five husbands "resembling five Indras in splendor" (*pancendrasamavarcasam\**; 22), she was dragged and insulted in the *sabha\**.

"dissolved." But although earth, sky, mountains, and ocean might be destroyedimagery of the *pralaya* or universal "dissolution"their relationship shall once again, at Krishna's true word, be reconstituted.

It is altogether fitting that the destructive dice game, which has dissolved the royal relationship and identities of Draupadi \* and the Pandavas\*, has occurred in Krishna's absence. As Biardeau has shown so well, in the symbolism of the *pralaya* that pervades the epic at many points, the destructive role of Siva\* is counterbalanced by the reconstitutive role of Visnu-Narayana\*. And during the time that each of these two great gods performs his roleSiva\* burning the three worlds, Visnu\* lying on the cosmic oceaneach is alone; the other, if one may say so, is out of the picture. Such a pattern of presences and absences is discussed again in Chapter 12.

Krishna, having just reaffirmed his consolidarity with the Pandavas\* and Draupadi\*, also provides a most thorough and illuminating explanation of his absence and a response to the events which transpired without him. Had he been at Dvaraka\* when the game was announced, he would, he says, have come to Hastinapura\* to prevent it. First, addressing the Kuru elders, he would have sought to impress upon them the many evils of dicing, the very worst vice of the "fourfold addiction" (*vyasanam\* catustayam\**)women, dice, hunting, and drinking by which "prosperity [*sir\**] vanishes" (3:14,7).<sup>8</sup> Then, should his advice, "healthy for dharma" (*anamayam\* ... dharmasya*; 11), go unheeded by Dhrtarastra\* and Duryodhana, he would have stopped the game "by force" (*balena*; 12). "However," he concludes, "my nonpresence [*asamnidhyam\**], being at that time among the Anartas\*, has become [the cause] by which you have obtained this calamity brought about by dice" (14).

Krishna then turns at great length to the matter that detained him away from Dvaraka\*: his combat with King

8 These same four occur at 2:61,20 and in *Manu* 7,50.

Salva\*, lord of the city of Saubha. The story is placed as a sequel to the Jarasamdha\* and Sisupala\* episodes, as Sisupala\* was Salva's\* brother (3:15,13). Outraged at Sisupala's\* death, Salva\* had attacked Dvaraka\* while Krishna was still at Indraprastha, attending and protecting Yudhisthira's\* Rajasuya\* (3:21,1). Salva\* destroyed all the city gardens, slew many heroic Vrsni\* youths (3:15,7), and led his army to a standoff fight against some of Krishna's sons. In the featured match, however, Pradyumna Krishna's son by Rukmini\*<sup>9</sup> was prevented from slaying Salva\* by Indra, Kubera, and the entire divine host (*devaganah\* sarve*), who sent the rsi\* Narada\* and the Wind (*svasana\**; 20,21) to tell Pradyumna: "It has been ordained by the Creator [*dhatra\**] that Krishna the son of Devaki\* shall be [the cause of] his death in battle" (20,24). This reminds one of the prophecy concerning Salva's\* brother Sisupala\*,<sup>10</sup> and the interest of the entire divine host suggests that Salva\* is a figure of no mean significance. One may even wonder at the gods' interference in this duel, for the postponement of Salva's\* death results in Krishna's fateful absence from the dice game. But we know little of the gods' interest in Salva's\* death, for his file is full of gaps. Although, like Jarasamdha\* and Sisupala\*, he is an incarnate Asura,<sup>11</sup> his own pedigree is a matter of doubt. Krishna refers to him as "an innately sinful descendent of Diti" (*papaprakrtirdaitya\**; 21,19), but it is only belatedly, in various Northern texts, that the epic connects him with a particular Asura, and this is the inconsequential Ajaka (see notes to 1:61,17). Moreover, a glance at Sørensen's *Index* reveals the deplorable situation of three,

9 A long-standing family feud may lie behind this duel: Sisupala\* was once betrothed to Rukmini\*; see Dumezil\*, *ME*, II, 109-13, and 2:42,15.

10 See 2:40, 3-5 and 9-10: an "incorporeal voice" (*vag\* ... asaririni\**; 3) reveals that the person who will eventually be Sisupala's\* slayer (Krishna) is the one on whose lap Sisupala\* will be placed so that his extra eye will vanish and his extra arms drop off.

11 On the Asuric precedents of Jarasamdha\* and Sisupala\*, see *ME*, II, 84-85,89.

and possibly four, Salvas \* in the epic: one slain on each side in the great battle; one slain in the present episode by Krishna; and one the cautious fiancé who refuses to marry the princess Amba\*previously engaged to himafter she and her two sisters were abducted from their Svayamvara\* by Bhishma\* (5:170-93, the *Ambopakhyanaparvan\**). There is certainly one good reason to suppose that this last figure is identical with Krishna's victim: both are referred to as Saubhapati, lord of Saubha (cf. 5:175,24; 176,2). But the two characterizations are markedly different. In the famous *Ambopakyhana\**, Salva\* is the king of an apparently earthly realm who refuses to marry Amba\* partially because of fear of Bhishma\* (5:172,22). In the other, with Salva\* seemingly raised to the status of a foe of Krishna, Saubha becomes a remarkable sky-ranging city which goes wherever its lord wishes (3:15,6; cf. 20,27; 21,25), and which Krishna, with his discus, finally manages to split and dislodge from the sky, "like Tripura shaken by the shaft of Mahesvara\*" (32,24). After this, Krishna uses the *cakra* to divide Salva\* himself in two and burn him with its energy.

This is not the only conquest of an aerial city in Indian mythology,<sup>12</sup> but the important point is that Salva's\* miraculous capacity as Krishna's foe contrasts sharply with his characterization as a potential opponent of Bhishma\*. This would seem to indicate that the two stories reflect different milieus with contrasting literary and theological interests. Indeed, one may note further that Krishna's conquest of Salva\* follows upon one of the few incidents where the epic dwells at length on the exploits of Krishna's children. Moreover, unlike the slayings of Jarasamdha\* and Sisupala\*, Krishna's conquest of Salva\*, like his victory over Kamsa\*which is also told to the Pandavas\* only as background information to more pressing

12 Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 217-18, like the passage just cited, compares the conquest of Saubha with Siva's\* conquest of Tripura; see also Hiranyapura\* (3:170,1), conquered by Arjuna, as mentioned in a note to me by van Buitenen.

events (2:13,30-33) has direct concern only for Krishna's people, and not for the Pandavas \*. In short, it would seem that the Krishna-Salva\* episode finds its closest analogues in stories, like the slaying of Kamsa\*, which come to their fullest expression in the Puranas\*. One suspects that the *Mahabharata*\* has elaborated here upon a fragment of tradition about Krishna, a fragment similar to those in the list of sins against Dvaraka\* and its people with which Krishna charges Sisupala\* before he slays him (2:42,7-11).<sup>13</sup> Whether these and other fragments ever formed a continuous narrative is debatable, but only this one episode, the conquest of Salva\*, is given full dramatic treatment in the *Mahabharata*\*. This has probably been done to meet the structural requirements of the main epic narrative, for it is a requirement that Krishna be absent from the dice game. As he has said, had he been there, the result would have been different. And as he prepares to return to Dvaraka\*, his closing remarks make the same point: "For this reason, O king, I did not come to Hastinapura\*; if I had come, surely Duryodhana would not be alive" (3:23,41).

Putting this more into the terms of the epic scenarists, Krishna's absence from the dice game does not hinge so much on this adventitious episode as on the fact that had he been present, the dice game could not have taken place, or, perhaps better, could not have taken place with the same results. But his distance from and dislike of dicing are consistent with his attitude elsewhere. It is not the only place where Krishna speaks out against gambling. When, at the end of the war, Yudhishthira\* stipulates that Duryodhana can still win back the kingdom should he defeat just one Pandava\* opponent of his own choosing in a mace duel, Krishna rebukes Yudhishthira\*, comparing this to the beginning of another *dyuta*\* (*dyutamarambham*\*) that will be "dangerous and uneven" (*visamam*\*; 9:32,7).

13 See Dumézil, *ME*, II, 66-68, and below, Chapter 9.

But Krishna is not the only divinity whom the epic characterizes by an attitude toward dicing. In fact, we are faced with an intriguing, and probably quite significant, opposition. If, to begin with, Krishna is opposed to dicing, his obvious counterpart is Siva \*, whom the epic describes as "fond of dice" (*aksapriya*\*).<sup>14</sup> Perhaps one may see an early trace of such an inclination where the *Satarudriya*\* litany exclaims: "Homage to the cheater, the swindler, to the lord of burglars homage."<sup>15</sup> In any case, in the myth of the five former Indras, we find Siva\* "exceedingly intoxicated with dice" (*aksaih\* subhrsam\* pramattam*; 1:189,15) as he and Parvati\* absorb themselves in the game on the top of Mount Kailasa\*. As we have already observed,<sup>16</sup> Biardeau has argued that Siva's\* connection with dice in this scene has a symbolic link with the dice game in the *Dyutaparvan*\* between the Kurus and the Pandavas\*:

Siva's\* dicing with Parvati\* atop Mount Kailasa\* is rich in meaning if one recalls that it is at a throw of the dice that the fate of the Pandavas\* is played out, that the four yugas, or the four ages in which the course of dharma declines, bear respectively the names of the four dice throws, and that the epic narrative is situated at the juncture of the two last yugas, the game of dice being won by [Sakuni\*] the incarnation of the Asura Dvapara\* (the next-to-last yuga) for the benefit of [Duryodhana] the incarnation of the Asura Kali (the final yuga).<sup>17</sup>

These remarks should be supplemented by those of Held. Comparing Siva's\* dice play to a "heavenly potlatch ceremony," Held argued that dicing was a potlatchlike ritual game

<sup>14</sup>*Mbh.* Calcutta Edition 12:285,47, cited by Held, *Ethnological Study*, p. 278, n. 1. I do not have consistent access to this fascicule of the Critical Edition, where it appears only in an Appendix.

<sup>15</sup>*TS* 4,5,3d; Arthur Berriedale Keith, trans., *The Veda of the Black Yajus School, entitled Taittiriya Sanhita* (1914; repr. in 2 vols.; Delhi: Motilal Ban-arsidass, 1967), II, 326.

<sup>16</sup> See above, Chapter 3, n. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Biardeau, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 38, n. 4 (my translation).

played in a specially constructed *sabha* \*, and then stated: "We are firmly convinced that the game of dice [the game in the *Dyutaparvan*\* being the case in point] has something to do with Rudra-Siva\*."18 This conviction, apparently shared by Biardeau, leads to our basic problem.

Some of Held's evidence for a connection between Siva\* and ritual dicing is intriguing, for instance the use according to him of wood from the house of the *aksavapa*\*, "dice keeper," for Rudra's altar during the Rajasuya\* ceremony.19 Indeed, this ceremony, as it is described in the Brahmana\* literature, shows other instances where Siva\* is associated with dicing. In *Satapatha\* Brahmana*\* 5, 3, 1, 10, during the Rajasuya\*, Gavedhuka\* seeds are brought to the sacrificing king's house from the houses of the Aksavapa\* and the "Slaughterer" (Govikartana) an interestingly "destructive" pair and are made into a pap that is offered, as the last of the Ratnin offerings, to Rudra. And *Taittiriya\* Samhita*\* 1, 8, 9 says of the same segment of the Rajasuya\*: "To Rudra [he offers] an oblation of Gavidhuka\* in the house of the thrower of dice."20 All this leads to an important point made by van Buitenen: just as in the ritual texts the Rajasuya\* is concluded by a dice game,21 similarly, in the *Sabhaparvan*\*, Yudhisthira's\* Rajasuya\*, ostensibly complete,

18 Held, *Ethnological Study*, pp. 274-278, 258.

19 *Ibid.*, but given without citation. Held also says that Sakuni\* can be a name for Siva\*: p. 318, n. 1. See also p. 193 and n. 1, noting that the last day of the Divali\* festival "is usually held to be an exceptionally lucky day to gamble upon.... It is said that Siva\*, playing at dice upon that day with his consort Parvati\*, forfeited to her all that he possessed."

20 Keith, *Veda of the Black Yajus School*, I, 120. See J. C. Heestermann, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957), chart facing p. 49, n. 12. Bothlingk and Roth give the same tree coix barbats for Gavedhuka\* and Gavidhuka\*.

21 See Heestermann, *Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 153; the dice game in the Rajasuya\* "may be considered a cosmogonical rite intended to bring about the recreation of the universe and the birth of the king." If this interpretation of the Brahmanic\* rite is correct, the inverse of this applies to Yudhisthira\*, who loses the game.

is technically incomplete without the dice game.<sup>22</sup> Thus, if Rudra is significantly connected with the dicing that concludes the Vedic ritual, there are additional reasons beyond those proposed by Biardeau and Held to link him, at least implicitly, with the dice game of the epic.

Biardeau and Held have thus led us to an impasse. They have shown the importance of Siva's \* connection with dicing and have pointed to a symbolic continuity between the two dicing scenes: the game between Siva\* and Parvati\* and the game at the end of the *Sabhaparvan*\*. But only by looking at the two dicing scenes in their full complexity, *with all the figures involved*, can we see that "the game of dice [in the *Dyutaparvan*\*] has something to do with Siva\*."

As Chapter 3 made clear, the dice game on Mount Kailasa\* concerns not just Siva\* and Parvati\*, but Sri\* and the five Indras, and ultimately Visnu-Narayana\*. The world's present Indra has followed a trail of tears-turned-to-golden-lotuses to the source of the Ganges. There he meets the "ill-fortuned" (*mandabhagya*\*) Sri\*. The latter is weeping because while Siva\* and his spouse intoxicate themselves with dice, her husbands four former Indras whom the fifth, our Indra, is now carelessly imitating have insulted Siva\* by their folly and pride and have been forced to lie dormant in a cave. At Siva's\* insistence, only by being reborn in human wombs (as the Pandavas\*) can they perform karman that will regain them the "world of Indra." As for Sri\*, Siva\*, with Narayana's\* "approval," will allow her to rejoin them by taking birth as Draupadi\*, their wife-in-common.

By viewing this not only as a myth about Siva\* dicing, but as seen in Chapter 3 as a myth about the dissolution and restoration of the relationship between Sri\* and the five Indras,

22 Van Buitenen, "The Sabhaparvan\*," pp. 79-83; according to him, this *parvan* "borrowed its structure from the Vedic *rajasuya*\*...; two events in this book are so basic that they must have been given from the beginning: the *unction* and the *dicing*" (p. 82). For an analogous continuity between royal legend and royal ritual (the Vajapeya\*), see Dumézil, *ME*, II, 359-60.



Krishna's explanation of his absence from the *Dyutaparvan* \* dice game, his words to Draupadi\*, and his denunciation of dicing make sense. Indeed, the two dice games and their aftermaths provide a number of instructive parallels, oppositions, and inversions, which I present graphically for the sake of the greatest simplicity and clarity:

### Parallels

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Siva*. and Parvati* play at dice, symbolizing the course of the yugas on a mythic or cosmic scale.</p> <p>2. This involves the fall of Indras one after another (diachronically) from the "world of Indra," from heavenly world sovereignty.</p> <p>3. In connection with the game of dice here through the Indras' folly and pride the relationships between them and Sri* are dissolved.</p> <p>4. The "ill-fortuned" Sri* weeps tears that turn into golden lotuses.</p> | <p>1. Sakuni* (= Dvapara*) and Duryodhana (= Kali) play dice, symbolizing the course of the yugas in a transitional microcosmic moment "between the yugas," on an epic, linear, or "historical" scale.</p> <p>2. This involves the fall, all at once (synchronically) of "five equals of Indra" (3:13,108), and, in particular, of Yudhisthira* from the position of <i>samraj</i>*, earthly universal sovereign.</p> <p>3. Through Yudhisthira's* folly, the Pandavas* relationship with Draupadi* is symbolically dissolved: as Krishna puts it, a result of playing dice is that "<i>sri</i>* vanishes" (<i>bhrasyate</i>* <i>sriyah</i>*; 3:14,7); and as Draupadi* puts it, she is now without husbands, and so on. (3:13,112).<sup>23</sup></p> <p>4. Draupadi* weeps continually when dragged into the <i>sabha</i>* (2:60,15; 62,3 and 22) and laments her condition when Krishna visits in the forest.</p> |
|---|---|

<sup>23</sup> This question of status is the turning point around which the first "invitation" of the dice game revolves. Draupadi\* was the last stake bet by Yudhisthira\* (2:58,32-43 see *sloka*\* 33, in which Yudhisthira\* compares her with Sri\* and Laksmi\*). Thus Draupadi's\* first question (2:60,7) is whether Yudhisthira\* wagered her before or after himself, for if it were the latter, he was not her husband. This dangerous question is never answered by Yudhisthira\* and is evaded by Bhishma\* (60,40-42 ; 62,14-21); its insolubility helps her win her husbands their freedom.

### *Parallels*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>5. At Siva's * command, the first four Indras gestate in a cave; they will ultimately be reborn in "human wombs."</p> <p>6. Visnu-Narayana* agrees that Sri* may be reunited with the five Indras by taking birth as Draupadi*.</p> | <p>5. At Duryodhana's command (I draw here from a well-attested symbolism) the Pandavas* must go through their forest exile stripped of their royal identities (wearing ascetic garb), after which, disguised in the royal court of Matsya, they will live "undiscovered like infants in the womb" (4:66,10).</p> <p>6. Krishna promises Draupadi* that once again she will be "the queen of kings" (3:13,116).</p> |
|--|---|

### *Oppositions and Inversions*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Siva* is present at the dice game as a player.</p> <p>2. Siva* is intoxicated with dicing (1:189,15).</p> | <p>1. Krishna is absent from the dice game.</p> <p>2. Krishna denounces dicing as the worst of addictions (3:14,7).</p> |
|---|---|

It is not a matter here of myth providing the model for epic, or, for that matter, vice versa. The course of the epic narrative strays too far from the story of the myth to suggest any significant structuring influence. For instance, the two stories diverge sharply at point 5, leading into very different thematic areas which only I, and not the epic poets, have contrived to put together. An important difference in direction and motivation is also indicated by the following: whereas the *Dyutaparvan*\* dicing scene involves an opposition between the Pandavas\* and the Kurus incarnating the Devas (in particular, the five Indras) and the Asuras (or Raksasas\*) the dicing scene atop Mount Kailasa\* involves no Asuras, but a direct conflict between the boastful Indras and the higher god Siva\*. Rather, as Chapter 7 will seek to show, the myth of Siva\* and the Indras has its analogue and prototype elsewhere. And last, the myth is not told at a point adjacent to the epic episode: the poets have connected it with Draupadi's\* marriage, not her humiliation.

Given all these hesitations, however, clearly the words which Krishna exchanges with Draupadi\*, and the words with which

he denounces dicing, are heavy with mythological allusions. The references to the five "equals of Indra" (item 2), to Sri \* vanishing and to Draupadi's\* loss of husbands (item 3), and to her once again becoming the "queen of kings" (item 6) are all clear in their mythic import. And it is not just the general theme of the loss and return of "Prosperity," but the specific myth of the former Indras, that makes this clarity apparent.

A lesson may be drawn here. There is more than one way in which myth and epic have been interrelated in the *Mahabharata*\*. While in some cases whole episodes are correlated with myths, in others, where there are moments in the lives of the heroes and heroines that evoke mythical themes, the poets allow their personages to reveal glimpses of their mythical identities and to relive, as it were, scenes from their "prior" mythical adventures. In the present case, not just one allusion but a whole cluster of parallels makes the alignment of the two dicing scenes meaningful and coherent. But it is not just the parallels that are coherent so too are the oppositions and inversions. The pattern of Siva\* being present and Krishna or Visnu\* being absent at moments when violence is done to dharma is one I will discuss at greater length in Chapter 12. In the present instances, however, the oppositions are not wholly complete. In the myth, Siva\* is present and Visnu-Narayana\* is elsewhere, available for consultation and his required approval; but only the first fact is given any weight in the telling. And in the epic, no matter how "firmly convinced" one may be that "the game of dice has something to do with Rudra-Siva\*," we are faced with a near opposite situation: the only matter given weight, this time the only matter given mention, is the fact of Krishna's absence. Our situation thus has the following look:

Myth: SIVA* PRESENT	Visnu* absent
Epic: (Siva* present [?] symbolically or implicitly)	KRISHNA ABSENT

One might say, then, that the two episodes are constructed around different poles: in one case highlighting Siva\*, in the

other, at least in its aftermath, Krishna. But from these polar emphases, the two episodes once again reveal their complementarity. The opposite attitudes of the two "divinities" toward dicing can be appreciated as reflections upon each other. If in the hands of Siva \* and Sakuni\* the dice reflect the course of the yugas, the increase of adharma, the loss of "prosperity," and, in the case of Siva\*, an intoxicated aloofness to matters of gain and loss, there is a clear contrast with Krishna, who leaves nothing to chance. The arbitrary, addictive, and destructive character of dicing runs counter to his application of suitable "means" for every perilous situation, his patient, constructive efforts toward the "restoration of dharma."

Moreover, in terms of the construction of the epic story, the continuities demonstrated by van Buitenen between the *Dyutaparvan*\* and the *Rajasuya*\* bring Krishna's absence from the former into a still sharper focus. According to the *Mahabharata*\*, "the great armed Janardana\* [Krishna] protected that sacrifice [the *Rajasuya*\* of Yudhisthira\*] until completion" (*tam\* tu yajnam\* mahabahura\* samapter\* janardana\* / raraksa\**; 2:42,34). But as the poets no doubt knew,<sup>24</sup> it was not really complete without a dice game, which, as Krishna says himself, the Pandavas\* could not have lost had he been present. The situation thus suggests two possibilities. Perhaps, out of dramatic necessity, the poets simply provided an interval (the *digvijaya*, the "conquest of the regions" by Yudhisthira's\* brothers) between the *Rajasuya*\* and the dice game in order to remove Krishna from the scene. Or, viewing the entire *parvan*, including the *digvijaya*,<sup>25</sup> as a coherent whole structured from

24 Van Buitenen, "The Sabhaparvan\*," p. 78: "I do not pretend to propose that our present *Sabha*\* 'grew' out of a baronial account of the *rajasuya*\*, but only that the composers of the *parvan* were aware of the sequence of events in the Vedic *rajasuya*\* and used it in building the narrative analogously."

25 *Ibid.*, see pp. 73-75; van Buitenen points to the parallels between the *digvijaya* and the *Rajasuya*\* rite of the *digvyasthapanam*\*.

beginning to end by the *entire* Rajasuya \*, we may suppose some rapport between Krishna-Visnu\* and the sacrifice<sup>26</sup> through the completion of its chief purpose, the unction; and, second, a similar rapportone certainly hinted at in the Brahman\* passages cited abovebetween Rudra-Siva\* and the concluding segment of the rite, the dicing. My leaning is toward the latter alternative. It seems to me that, whether or not we follow Biardeau and connect the dicing with Siva\* through the waning course of dharma through the yugas, we are presented in the dicing segment, or sequel, of the Rajasuya\*both in the epic and in the traditional ritewith an element of destructive chance, randomness, which the king must overcome for his sovereignty to be complete. Indeed, as Heestermann suggests,<sup>27</sup> it is this gameif he "wins"which may symbolize the king's "recreation of the universe" and "new birth." It is not difficult to see how this potentially destructive and random element would, or could, have been associated with Rudra, or how Krishna, the exponent of dharma, would have taken exception to it.

<sup>26</sup> The relation between Krishna, Visnu\*, and the sacrifice will be treated more fully in Chapters 11 and 12; for the moment, recall Draupadi's\* recognition of Krishna as "the sacrifice" (3:13,44) toward the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> See above, n. 21.

## Chapter 5

### Krishna and Odinn: Interventions

The study of Krishna in the *Mahabharata* \*, as the last three chapters show, cannot be a study of Krishna alone, but involves his relations to other heroes and heroines and his rapports, as *avatara*\* of Visnu-Narayana\*, with many of the major divinities of the Hindu pantheon. But this is not all, for, as I will attempt to show, the Krishna of the *Mahabharata*\* sometimes takes us beyond India to the mythic and epic traditions of other Indo-European peoples. I call attention now to two episodes from Germanic legends concerning Odinn which find close analogues in consecutive scenes in the *Mahabharata*'s\* fifth book.

#### At the Waking Krishna's Bedside

After his first visit to the Pandavas\* in the forest, Krishna sees them there two more times (3:118, 15-120; 3:180-224), or three counting a clear interpolation (*Aranyakaparvan*\*, Appendix I, No. 25). Then, after the Pandavas\* have successfully concluded their year of concealment at King Virata's\* court, Krishna brings Subhadra\* and Abhimanyu (who have stayed with him at Dvaraka\*) to join them and attends the latter's wedding to Uttara\*, Virata's\* daughter (4:67). This visit of the fourth book, the *Virataparvan*\*, is extended to the beginning of the fifth, the *Udyogaparvan*, or book of "preparations" for war. Meeting with the Pandavas\* and their allies at Upaplavya, a town in Virata's\* kingdom, Krishna advises the Pandavas\* to send a messenger to the Kurus to demand that Duryodhana

comply with the terms of the dice game: Yudhisthira \* must be returned his half of the kingdom now that the Pandavas\* have completed their thirteenth year of exile unrecognized. Then Krishna leaves for Dvaraka\* with parting words that are soon invested with meaning. First, underlining his supposed impartiality, he says: "Our relationship [*sambandhakam*] to the Kurus and Pandavas\* is equal, wishing well to both ... while they are occupied with each other" (5:5,3). And then, noting that Duryodhana might reject the messenger's entreaties, he urges that in such a case the Pandavas\* should summon him and the other kings as well.

The Pandavas\* do not wait for the failure of their first ambassador's mission to begin their search for allies. The reason is clear from certain words of Drupada's at the Upaplavya meeting: "Duryodhana will now also call everywhere [for allies]; and approached beforehand, the good partake of the earlier invitation" (*purvabhipannah\* santasca\* bhajante purvacodakam\**; 5:4,9). The obligation to grant the initial request thus takes precedence over any personal preference for one side or the other.

Krishna himself must be courted, and each side sends its "best." Duryodhana comes to Dvaraka\* for the Kauravas, Arjuna for the Pandavas\*. There "they found Krishna sleeping, and approached him [as he was] lying down" (*suptam\* dadarsatuh\* krsnam\* sayanam\* copajagmatuh\**; 5:7,5). But they do not arrive at the same time or in the same manner: "As Govinda was sleeping, Suyodhana [a euphemism for Duryodhana] entered [his room] and sat down on a choice seat toward Krishna's head. And after him entered the highminded Kiritin\* [Arjuna]. And he stood, below Krishna, bowing and joining his hands. And when Varsneya\* awoke, first off he saw [*dadarsagre\**] Kiritin\*" (7,6-8ab). Duryodhana, however, is the first to speak, and his words remind us of those of Krishna at Upaplavya stressing his "equal relationship" to the Kurus and Pandavas\*. "As if with a smile" (*prahsanniva*), Duryodhana says to Krishna: "Surely your friendship [*sakhyam*] is equal for

both myself and Arjuna, just as our relationship [*sambandhakam*] is equal with you, O Madhava \*" (7,10). Letting Krishna know that he arrived first, Duryodhana also evokes the maxim previously cited by Drupada: the good (*santah*\*), of whom Krishna is the best in the world (*sresthamo\* loke*), side with those who are the first to come to them for help (11-12).

Krishna acknowledges these claims, but, he says, although Duryodhana was the first to arrive, "Arjuna was the first seen by me." Thus assistance must be granted to both, and up to this point everything has reinforced the idea of parity in the relationship of the two heroes and their parties to Krishna. Here Krishna introduces a note that breaks the deadlock: "The first choice is to be made by whoever is younger, so it is heard [*pravaranam\* tu balanam\* purvam\* karyamiti\* srutih\**]; therefore Partha\* Dhananjaya\* [Arjuna] is worthy of the first choice" (15). With his supposed impartiality, Krishna then dictates the terms. The choice will be between a large *arbuda* of cowherds (*gopas*) known as the Narayanas\*, "equalling me in strength" (16), or Krishna himself, "alone, not fighting in battle, my weapons laid down" (*ayudhyamanah\* samgrame\* nyastasastro\* 'hamekatah\**; 17). With little fanfare,<sup>1</sup> Arjuna picks Krishna, and Duryodhana, with the "utmost delight" (*paramam\* mudam\**; 20), accepts the thousands upon thousands of troops. When Duryodhana has left, Krishna agrees to be Arjuna's charioteer (32-35), and the two set off to join Yudhisthira\* at Upaplavya to continue the "preparations" for war.

This brief but crucial episode presents some intriguing difficulties as well as some striking symbolism. Neither has captured much attention. Walter Ruben, however, touches upon one difficulty, noting that it is "illogical" that Duryodhana should try to win over Krishna, as the latter is ever on the Pandavas'\* side.<sup>2</sup> V. S. Sukthankar appreciates

<sup>1</sup> Except in certain Northern manuscripts, which interpolate a gratuitous glorification of Krishna (41\*, after 5:7,19).

<sup>2</sup> Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 220-21.



the symbolism in terms of his "ethical" and "metaphysical" planes, first seeing the two heroes as a "static representation" of the Deva-Asura, Pandava-Kaurava \* conflicts, and then the full scene as an allegory of the daivic and asuric elements before the central Self.<sup>3</sup> These are all points worthy of further examination.

Ruben is right that there is little "logic" at least in human terms, whether emotional or social in Duryodhana's appeal. Not only are Krishna's affections for Arjuna and the Pandavas\* common knowledge, even to Duryodhana. Genealogically, Krishna's relation to the Pandavas\* is far closer than his relation to the Kurus. His father Vasudeva is Kunti's\* brother, and Arjuna is married to Krishna's sister Subhadra\*, making their son Abhimanyu Krishna's cherished nephew. Yet Krishna mentions his equal disposition toward the two sides.

Excluding preferential and genealogical explanations, then, we should examine the mythological one suggested by Sukthankar. Here Arjuna, the third member of this threesome, not only agrees with the others about Krishna's intermediary position but supplies a key to the mythic background. Urging Krishna, before he sets out as the Pandavas'\* next emissary for Hastinapura\*, to seek peace there, Arjuna says: "You are the foremost friend [*paramaka suhrt*]\* of both the Pandavas\* and the Kurus, even, O hero, as Prajapati\* is among the Devas and Asuras" (5:76,7). As several authors have shown, a coalescence of Prajapati\* with Visnu\* is well attested in the Brahmanas\*,<sup>4</sup> and this identification is sometimes carried over to Krishna, especially where he is connected with the sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

3 Sukthankar, *Mahabharata*\*, pp. 70, 110-11.

4 See Sylvain Lévi, *La Doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brahmanas*\* (Paris: Leroux, Editeur, 1898), p. 15, n. 3; Jan Gonda, *Aspects of Early Visnuism*\*, pp. 78, 173; *idem.*, *Les Religions de l'Inde, I: Védisme et hindouisme ancien* (Paris: Payot, 1962); Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 291-92.

5 See especially 14:70,21, cited below, Chapter 11; cf. 3:13,44-52, cited above, Chapter 4, n. 26 and preceding; and see Sörensen, *Index*, s.v. Prajapati\*<sup>4</sup> p. 558.

Prajapati \* is not only "impartial" toward the Devas and Asuras as their father;<sup>6</sup> his status is more generally one of kinship to both parties, that which allows Arjuna to imply that he is their mutual "friend" or "family member."<sup>7</sup> And just as Arjuna and Duryodhana are in rivalry here for Krishna, so the Devas and Asuras are ever in contention for the "indivisible" Prajapati\*.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, as Arjuna indicates, the two sets of relationships one divine, the other heroic are homologous. But more than this, the comparison leads to the meaning of the terms by which Krishna determines that the first pick, in the choice between himself and the Narayana\* *gopas*, goes to Arjuna. It goes to the younger. And it is not simply that Arjuna, in epic chronology, is a year younger than Duryodhana. This fact at least as it shapes the present scene is itself a reflection of a mythical paradigm. The Devas are usually the "younger brothers" of the Asuras.<sup>9</sup> The epic scene is thus more than "a static representation" of the Deva-Asura conflict. It is a dynamic one. Duryodhana comes first, Arjuna comes second, but by a mythically identifiable turnabout, hinging on youth Arjuna gets the first choice.

The passage is a rich one, however, and calls to mind other themes. In particular, the picture of Krishna asleep, "lying down" (*sayanam*\*) and then waking (the only such scene to

<sup>6</sup> See Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, pp. 27 (with citations in n. 5) and 36ff.

<sup>7</sup> Van Buitenen, "The Sabhaparvan\*," p. 81, n. 2, says "a *suhrd*\* in the epic is most often a family member"; but *sambandhaka*, *sakhi*, and *suhrd*\* all seem to evoke both friendship and family.

<sup>8</sup> Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> On this theme in the Brahmanas\*, see Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, p. 36 and n. 2, citing *MS* 4,2,1 and *TB* 2,3,8,1-3; P. 99 and n. 1, citing *MS* 4,1,2; and p. 43, where he speaks of the Asuras' "right of prior ownership" in certain matters concerning the sacrifice. Although Lévi says that "the right of seniority is undecided between the two groups," the majority of passages he cites favor the Asuras. The *KB* passage cited in opposition simply lists the beings Prajapati\* created in the order Devas, Men, Asuras; they may not have been born in that order. On the Asuras as elders in the epic, see E. W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 47, and Held, *Ethnological Study*, p. 169.

be included in the Critical Edition) cannot help but remind us of Visnu \* Anantasayin\*, Visnu\*, asleep and reclining on the serpent Ananta or Sesa\*, whose awakening signals the dawn of a new *kalpa*.<sup>10</sup> Krishna himself tells Arjuna at one point (7:28,25cd-26) that of his four forms (*murtis\**), the fourth is that which, upon awakening at the end of a thousand years (*mahayugas\**?) of sleep, "grants excellent boons to those deserving of boons" (26cd). This symbolism is open-ended enough to support two epic myths: in one, the goddess Earth comes to Krishna to request boons for her son Naraka (7:28,27-35); and in the other, Visnu\* sees the Danavas\* Madhu and Kaitabha\* when he awakens and offers them the "choicest boon" (*varam\* srestham\**), which they foolishly reject (3:194,8-30). As both concern the offering of boons only to Asuras, and as neither concerns a request for the service of Krishna or Visnu\* in person, they cannot be linked structurally with the epic scene. But the underlying theme is shared: Arjuna and Duryodhana come before the sleeping Krishna to obtain "boons" when he awakens. Moreover, Krishna is "awakening" to his longest act of service: assisting the Pandavas\* in preparing for, fighting, and then resolving the effects of the Kuruksetra\* war. Indeed, noting the contrast with the comfortably seated Duryodhana, perhaps one may see in the devotional pose of Arjuna, who stands at the foot of Krishna's bed with hands joined (*krtanjalih\**; 5:7,7), a recognition by Krishna's dearest *bhakta* of the cosmic meaning of his friend's position.

One crucial theme has so far gone unmentioned in these comparisons. What makes it possible for Krishna to maintain his stance of impartiality once he learns that Duryodhana had entered his room first, and what makes it possible for him to set up the choice which will allow him to side with the Pandavas\*, is the fact that, upon waking, "first off he saw Arjuna."

10 On the waking-sleeping myth, especially its yogic patterns, see Biardeau, EMH, II, 73-74.

This theme finds a remarkable analogue from a Germanic tradition, the legendary history of the Langobards (Lombards). From Paulus Diaconus' *Historia Langobardorum* 1,7-8, which bases its account on an anonymous seventh-century work called the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, we have the following account.<sup>11</sup> First known as the Winnili, the Langobards settled in a region called Scoringia<sup>12</sup> where they were confronted by the Vandals. The latter, "coercing all the neighboring provinces by war" and "elated by many victories...sent messengers to the Winnili to tell them that they should either pay tribute to the Vandals or make ready for the struggles of war." With the approval of their mother Gambara, Ibor and Aio, the two leaders of the Winnili, determined that liberty was preferable to tribute and sent messengers back to the Vandals with the reply that they would "rather fight than be slaves." Here Paulus gives us a description of the men on the favored side that accords well with themes in the *Mahabharata* \*: "The Winnili were then all in the flower of their youth, but they were very few in number."<sup>13</sup> Although the present story of youths in migration would seem to imply a *uer sacrum* ("sacred spring"), we are reminded of the youth of Arjuna. The matter of inferior numbers could also just as well characterize the Pandavas\* at Kuruksetra\* (see, for example, 5:152,23).

Now, with the two sides set for battle, we meet the theme of the waking god:

At this point, the men of old tell a silly story that the Wandals coming to Godan (Wotan) besought him for victory over the Winnili

<sup>11</sup> See William Dudley Fourke, trans., *History of the Langobards by Paul the Deacon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Department of History, 1907), pp. 11-17; cf. H. Munro Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, p. 115, and E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> Fourke, *History of the Langobards*, p. 11, n. 1, says this was probably in the region of the lower Elbe.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

and that he answered that he would give the victory to those whom he saw first at sunrise; that then Gambara went to Frea (Freja) wife of Godan and asked for victory for the Winnili, and that Frea gave her counsel that the women of the Winnili should take down their hair and arrange it upon the face like a beard, and that in the early morning they should be present with their husbands and in like manner station themselves to be seen by Godan from the quarter in which he had been wont to look through his window toward the east. And so it was done. And when Godan saw them at sunrise he said: "Who are these long-beards?" And then Frea induced him to give the victory to those to whom he had given the name. And thus Godan gave the victory to the Winnili. These things are worthy of laughter and are to be held of no account. For victory is due, not to the power of men, but it is rather furnished from heaven.<sup>14</sup>

Such is the account of Paul the Deacon. Certainly the role of Frea and the theme of the false beards find no analogues in the story of the waking Krishna, but there is a basic similarity in outline. In both stories, before the battle, each of two opposed sides seeks the boon of ultimate victory from a god who favors the side which he sees, or will see, first upon waking. Moreover, one cannot help wondering whether, as mentioned above, the youth of the Langobards might not have something to do with Godan's (Odinn's) attraction for them. Possibly their youth is to be connected with another theme that, at least according to Paulus,<sup>15</sup> has to do with Godan's seeing them first: their place in the east, the direction of the "young" sun. And the false beards imply either shaving or juniority.

#### Shapers of Strife

The second confrontation of Krishna with Odinn, or more exactly with a figure whom Odinn impersonates was first

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> In the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, Frea must trick Godan into looking eastward; contrary to Fourke, however (see *ibid.*, pp. 16-17, n. 1), it seems unlikely that this earlier account shows an original preference of Godan for "his Wandal worshippers."

presented by Stig Wikander in one of his two articles comparing the events surrounding the battles of Brávellir and Kuruksetra \*.<sup>16</sup> His remarks on this momentous comparison are very cautious, as is certainly proper. But perhaps another look will uncover further evidence that the points in common concerning Krishna and Odinn are well integrated into these two stories, in which Wikander has discovered so many remarkable parallels.

In both stories, a blind old king leads his forces whether actually (Haraldus Hyldetan) or nominally (Dhrtarastra\*) against those of his nephews in a great battle which the nephews finally win. In both cases, as Wikander observes, a god in human form intervenes in the strife and, "with an ambiguous and sly maneuver, secures the victory for the side he favors. So it is with Odinn at Brávellir and with Krishna at Kuruksetra\*." He also says it is "striking that Harald has the servant Bruno, Odinn disguised, as his driver. This reminds us of Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*\*, who did not know that his driver was the god Krishna before he revealed himself to him."<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, the dissimilarities strike one as soon as the similarities are mentioned. Krishna drives the chariot for the chief hero of the side he favors, serves only as a noncombatant, and, in revealing himself to Arjuna, bestows the highest divine blessing upon him; Odinn, as Bruno, drives the chariot of the chief figure of the side he opposes, and, when he reveals himself, clubs the blind old king to death.

<sup>16</sup> See above, Chapter 1, n. 87.

<sup>17</sup> Wikander, "Från Bråvalla," pp. 184, 189 (my translation, aided by David Goldfrank). The presence of Bruno and Haraldus on the chariot is, according to Wikander, un-Scandinavian, such vehicles being unused in warfare; but this, he says, is ambiguous evidence for the provenance of the Scandinavian story: it could at this point be a poorly understood retelling of the Indian story, or of a story ultimately from India, where Krishna appears on his chariot with Arjuna; or it could be a reminiscence of a genuine epic tradition from an older cultural stage.

No such fate befalls Dhrtarastra \*. But a closer look at Bruno will keep us from easily dismissing the possibility of some connection with Krishna. Just after telling us that Haraldus has transferred one of his nephews, Olo (prince-regent of Norway), to the service of his other nephew and eventual chief rival Ringo (prince-regent of Sweden), Saxo describes the machinations of Bruno:

At this time one Bruno was the sole partner and confidant of all Haraldus' councils. To this man both Haraldus and Ringo, whenever they needed a secret messenger, used to entrust their commissions. This degree of intimacy he obtained because he had been reared and fostered with them. But Bruno, amid the toils of his constant journeys to and fro, was drowned in a certain river; and Odinn, disguised under his name and looks, shook the close union of the kings by his treacherous embassy; and he sowed strife so guilefully that he engendered in men, who were bound by friendship and blood, a bitter mutual hate, which seemed unappeasable except by war.<sup>18</sup>

Krishna, of course, does not have to kindle the strife between the Kurus and Pandavas\*, but as early as the Rajasuya\* sacrifice, and certainly after the dice game, we see him fanning it. The parallels are most striking, however, in the *Udyogaparvan*, where Krishna, like Bruno, is an ambassador between the two parties, the last to have the ear of both, and a figure of whom "treachery" and "guile" would hardly be unrealistic charges.<sup>19</sup> The position of intermediary is in both cases made possible by a special "intimacy": Bruno reared and fostered apparently with both Ringo and Haraldus, Krishna bearing an "equal relationship" to both parties. Different theologies may also account for the different modes of impersonation: Krishna the lifelong *avatara*\*, Odinn, in what looks like either a much attenuated story or Saxo's monkish sleight-of-hand,

<sup>18</sup> Oliver Elton, trans., *The First Nine Books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus* (London: Norrna Society, 1905), II, 468-69.

<sup>19</sup> See below, Chapter 6.

the double of a figure who has drowned. Most curiously, while the name Krishna means "Black," Bruno would seem to mean "Brown."<sup>20</sup> One can only speculate on what if any connection these two dark colors might have; to be sure, there are no "three Brunos" to parallel the *Mahabharata's* \* "three Krsnas\*."

A final parallel is the apparent divine shaping of both crises and their resolution. It is, according to Saxo, Odinn "whose oracle was thought to have been the cause of his [Haraldus'] birth,"<sup>21</sup> and, after Odinn helps Haraldus to consolidate his kingdom and gains his confidence as the ambassador Bruno, it is by Odinn-Bruno's hand that he dies. In the *Marabharata*\*, things are more complicated, but the underlying motivation is similar. Dhrtarastra's\* father is not Krishna, but Vyasa\*. Yet Vyasa\* is in fact a second Krsna\*, Krishna\*, a Dvaipayana\*, and, like Krishna Vasudeva\*, an incarnation of Visnu-Narayana\*. Thus Odinn, only partly through Bruno, shapes the career of Haraldus from birth to death, and Visnu-Narayana\*, only partly through Krishna, shapes that of Dhrtarastra\* from birth to defeat. In each case, the intrusive, deformed element which the god has helped to create and sustain is finally overcome, and the renewal of order is achieved by the triumph of the blind king's nephews.

<sup>20</sup>*The Oxford English Dictionary*, for "brown" gives the etymology OE brún, OFris brún, ON brún-n (Sw brun, Da brunn), OTeut \*brûn-o-z, \*brûn-â; H. S. Falk and Alf Torp, *Norwegisch Dänisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Oslo and Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1960), p. 107, shows that *brun* ("brown") has the root meaning of "bright, shining," as "of a color which looks like something burnt." Cf. Fr. *brunir*, Eng. burnish. It is thus possible that Bruno could mean "Shining"; but it seems unlikely the root meaning by itself would have supplied the hero with his name.

<sup>21</sup>Elton, *Danish History*, p. 456; on this oracle, see Wikander, "Från Bråvalla," p. 188: the "pilgrimage" of Haraldus' father to the oracle at Uppsala to cure his wife's sterility is uncharacteristic of Scandinavian religion but typical of Indian. But Wikander argues that this need not be taken as an indication that the story is borrowed from India, as Saxo could have placed a Christian pilgrim image anachronistically in heathen time.



These two confrontations of Krishna-Visnu \* with Odinn which will not be the only ones to engage us are curious from several angles. Both concern interventions by these gods in human, that is, epic-heroic, affairs. More specifically, they involve interventions at the beginnings, and, at Kuruksetra\* and Brávellir, also at the conclusions, of great, if not the greatest, heroic battles in their respective traditions. We thus find Krishna's activities before the war doubly elucidated by comparisons with Germanic legends. But his role as the Pandavas'\* ambassador must be investigated further by additional Indo-European comparisons, ones concerning not only legends but rituals.

## Chapter 6

### Two Theophanies, Three Steps

Nowhere is Krishna more conspicuous than in the *Udyogaparvan*, the "Book of Preparations," making speeches, representing the Pandavas \* on his embassy to Hastinapura\*, and catalyzing the conditions that build up to the inevitable clash at Kuruksetra\*. But the "preparations" for war actually culminate not in the *Udyogaparvan* but the *Bhismaparvan*\*, where Krishna, Arjuna, and Yudhishthira\*<sup>1</sup> complete their readiness for battle. In the case of Arjuna and Krishna, this final "preparation" is, of course, the *Bhagavad Gita*\*. Thus, in following this segment of the epic through its natural course, I will focus not only on dramatic themes that concern Krishna in the *Udyogaparvan*, but on ones that concern him in his famous dialogue with Arjuna.

### Arjuna's Vision: Observer at the Pralaya

In her remarkable study of the Hindu myth of the *pralaya*,<sup>2</sup> Madeleine Biardeau has provided a new perspective on the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*\*, in which Krishna reveals to Arjuna the *visvarupadarsana*\*, the sight of his universal form. The celebrated theophany, which most scholars, perhaps judiciously, have left to explain itself, is now appreciated within a ritual context. As Biardeau observes, the text in particular verses 15-33, which concern Arjuna's description of the vision

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chapter 9.

<sup>2</sup> Biardeau, EMH, 3, *BEFEO*, LVIII (1971), 17-89.

(15-31) and Krishna's explanation of its meaning (32-33) is one of two used in the ritual of entry into *samnyasa* \*, the life of renunciation.<sup>3</sup> It must suffice here to summarize: one who performs this ceremony symbolically renounces the three sacrificial fires and the three samsaric\* worlds and enters into the enlarged universe in which there are four additional worlds<sup>4</sup> beyond those of the ordinary person, there to find himself in the company of the Devas and Pitrs\*, "all of these, like himself, being admitted to deliverance at the moment of the cosmic *pralaya*."<sup>5</sup> The choice of *Gita*\* 11,15-33 to be recited at this juncture is full of significance: "It recalls to the *samnyasin*\* the cosmic and terrible dimension of the god of deliverance, as if henceforth the perspective of a purely individual deliverance was forbidden him and was bound to a cosmic catastrophe."<sup>6</sup> For, as Biardeau demonstrates, the *Gita*\* theophany itself depicts such cataclysm: "The vision which Arjuna has is near to that which an observer of the *pralaya* would have were he situated beyond it."<sup>7</sup>

Others, of course, have noticed that several points of Arjuna's description call upon images of the end of the *kalpa*.<sup>8</sup> And

3 Biardeau brushes aside the question of when the *Gita*\* passage was put to this ritual use; as she points out, the *Gita*\* does not seem to know the seven worlds (probably a later, Puranic\* formulation) upon which the ritual depends for its cosmology; EMH, 3, P. 54, n. 1; cf. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 60.

4 Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, and Brahmaloka (or Satyaloka).

5 EMH, 3, P. 50 (my translation); the ritual, described in *Baudhayana\* Dharma Sastra*\* 2, 10, 11-30, and *Vaikhanasa\* Smarta\* Sutra*\* 9,6-8, is summarized and discussed in EMH, 3, PP. 49-50, 52-54, and in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*\* (5 vols.; Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), II, pt. 2, 930-75, especially 953-62.

6 EMH, 3, P. 53 (my translation).

7 *Ibid.*, p. 54 (my translation).

8 See Robert C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gita*\* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), commenting on verses 19 and 25 on "Time's [devouring] fire"; W. Douglas P. Hill, trans., *The Bhagavadgita*\* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), similarly on verse 25 and on verse 15, explaining Krishna's many bellies "as the storehouse of creatures at their dissolution"; Swami Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944), on verses 18, 25, 32, and 33.

Walter Ruben has appreciated the mythic character of the theophany as a whole in his otherwise artificial comparison of Krishna, revealing himself as all-devouring Time (*Kala* \*), with Chronos-Kronos, "Time" swallowing up his own children.<sup>9</sup> More precise points have led Biardeau to observe the correlations between the *pralaya* myth and the *Gita*\* theophany. Puranic\* descriptions of the *pralaya* distinguish two classes of beings: those who have not escaped rebirth and the law of *karman*, and who are absorbed, after the great "fire of time," by the "one ocean" into which the three worlds dissolve; and those who have been delivered to oscillate between the four higher worlds on the way to final release.<sup>10</sup> Out of the "single ocean," through the awakening of Visnu-Narayana\* who lies upon it, the first group will re-emerge in the next *kalpa* as part of the substance of the new creation; but the delivered are free to witness and experience the transformations of the cosmos in the timeless and blessed company of the most sublime divine actors Visnu\*, Siva\*, and Brahma\* (or either of the first two, or the goddess, in their all-inclusive identities).

Now Arjuna, in witnessing Krishna's theophany,<sup>11</sup> is for a moment placed at this latter vantage point by Krishna's grace. I cite the most pertinent verses, dividing them according to the order in which Arjuna sees (1) the fate of the delivered, (2) the fate of the nondelivered, and (3) the fate of the (three)

9 Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 221-22.

10 EMH, 3, PP. 19-37; *Vayu\* Purana\** 1, 7, 18-19ab gives the most complete list of the delivered: Devas, Pitrs\*, Munis, Manus, and Suras ("gods" as juxtaposed with Asuras); EMH, 3, PP. 19-20 (text and translation) and 34 (discussion).

11 Experiencing the *pralaya* is a sort of absolute revelation: see the Markandeya\* myth (*Mbh.* 3:186, 56-78, and Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* [New York: Harper, 1962], pp. 35-53), and EMH, 3, P. 57, where Biardeau discusses the absolute experience of those who live through the *prakrtapralaya\**, the end of a life (not just a day) of Brahma\*.

worlds:

(1) For into Thee are entering yonder throngs of gods [Suras];  
 Some, affrighted, praise Thee with reverent gestures;  
 Crying "Hail!" the throngs of great seers [Rsis \*] and perfected  
 ones [Siddhas]  
 Praise Thee with abundant laudations.

The Rudras, the Adityas\*, the Vasus, and the Sadhyas\*,  
 All-gods, Asvins\*, Maruts, and the Steam-drinkers [Pitrs\*]  
 The hosts of heavenly musicians [Gandharvas], sprites [Yaksas\*],  
 demons [Asuras], and perfected ones [Siddhas]  
 Gaze on Thee, and all are quite amazed. [21-22]

(2) And Thee yonder sons of Dhrtarastra\*,  
 All of them, together with the hosts of kings,  
 Bhishma\*, Drona\*, and yonder son of the charioteer (Karna\*) too,  
 Together with our chief warriors likewise,

Hastening enter Thy mouths,  
 Frightful with tusks and terrifying;  
 Some, stuck between the teeth,  
 Are seen with their heads crushed.

As the many water torrents of the rivers  
 Rush headlong toward the single sea (*samudram*),<sup>12</sup>  
 So yonder heroes of the world of men into Thy  
 Flaming mouths do enter. [26-28]

(3) As moths into a burning flame  
 Do enter unto their destruction with utmost impetuosity,  
 Just so unto their destruction enter the worlds [*lokas\**]  
 Into Thy mouths also, with utmost impetuosity.

Devouring them Thou lickest up voraciously on all sides  
 All the worlds with Thy flaming jaws;

12 The word "single" should be in brackets, as in Zaehner's translation, although it is implied.

Filling with radiance the whole universe,  
Thy terrible splendours burn, O Visnu \*!13 [29-30]14

One could make further precisions and qualifications on the comparison: the enumeration of the delivered is much more generous (even including Asuras!) than in any Puranic\* list (see above, n. 9); Arjuna's vision is gained not from any ulterior worlds (see above, n. 2) but from a battlefield in this one; and Arjuna is not a *samnyasin*\* but a prince, whom Krishna teaches that *karmayoga* is superior to *samnyasa*\* (*Gita*\* 5,2).15 But the main fact stands: it is as lord of the *pralaya* itself a theme which he weaves into many of the *Gita's*\* teachings16 that Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna.

One need not insist on the importance of this chapter in the structure of the *Gita*\*. Here, as a final capping of Krishna's arguments, which have already dispelled Arjuna's delusion (11, 1), Arjuna is turned back toward his ksatriya\* dharma; and

13 I assume that in identifying Krishna and Visnu\*, the *Gita*\* is revealing one of its essential "teachings" and not just some accident of history Krishnaism incorporating Visnuism\*, or vice versa. Too many scholars have allowed their search for separate origins to obscure the all-important significance of this relationship; on this verse and verse 24, where Arjuna also calls Krishna "Visnu\*," see, for example, the labored efforts of Hill, *Bhagavadgita*\*, p. 33, to keep them apart: "He [Krishna] is called Visnu\* ... in contexts where Arjuna may well have been reminded of the sun."

14 Here and elsewhere (unless otherwise noted) I quote from Franklin Edgerton, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita\* Translated and Interpreted*, Harvard Oriental Series, XXXVIII and XXXIX (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), XXXVIII. Again, one cannot insist on more than three worlds for the *Gita*\* (see above, n. 3); the *pralaya* teaching would seem to have been able to develop around this core.

15 But this question is much more complex, as *samnyasa*\* and yoga form a unity in the *Gita*\*; see EMH, 3, PP. 61-67.

16 See *Gita*\* 7, 5-14 (in connection with the image of the universe "strung on me like heaps of pearls on a string"); 8, 15-28 (in connection with the *devayana*\* and *pitryana*\*); 9, 5-10 (on *prakrti*\* at the *pralaya*); 14, 2 (on devotees of Krishna being undisturbed by *sarga* or *pralaya*); 14, 15-16 (in connection with the *gunas*\*); cf. 16, 11, and see Etienne Lamotte, *Notes sur la Bhagavadgita*\* (Paris: Guethner, 1929), p. 67, for brief discussion.

one may observe that once this chapter is over, Arjuna's questions no longer have dramatic value: he is "convinced" and is merely asking for clarification on points of doctrine.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this is one of the two points in the *Gita* \* where Krishna reveals to Arjuna something of his divine purpose and the significance of his part in the *Mahabharata*\* war. The first is Krishna's famous identification of his activity with the *avatara*\* doctrine and the yuga structure (4,8cd): "To make a firm footing for the right [dharma], I come into being in age after age [yuge-yuge]." <sup>18</sup> But now, seemingly going to a deeper level of his identity, he discloses that his activities are linked with the *kalpa* structure and the destructive side of Time.<sup>19</sup> With the vision still before him, Arjuna asks for an explanation; Krishna replies: "I am Time [Death], cause of the destruction of the worlds, matured / And set out to gather in the worlds here. / Even without thee (thy action) all shall cease to exist, / The warriors that are drawn up in the opposing ranks" (11,32).

It is against this second background, then, and immediately (11,32-33 and 51 ), that Arjuna comes to understand his duty to fight. Not only does he see himself as Krishna's friend and ally in the intrayuga struggle between dharma and adharma; at a deeper level,<sup>20</sup> as Krishna's *bhakta* for it is only "by

<sup>17</sup> See *Gita*\* 12,1; 14,21; 17,21; and 18,1; with his interest in dramatic continuity, Rudolf Otto, *The Original Gita*\*, J. E. Turner, trans. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1939), regards everything from 11,51 to 18,58 as interpolation.

<sup>18</sup> It is a futile argument that because the term *avatara*\* is not used here that the doctrine or the identification with Visnu\* (see above, n. 13) is not implied.

<sup>19</sup> On the importance of recognizing the distinctness of yuga and *kalpa*, see EMH, 1, pp. 22-23, and EMH, 3, PP. 37 and 65, n. 1, 66, n. 5. In particular, Biardeau observes that while the yuga cycles have to do with the rise and fall of dharma, the *kalpa* cycle occurs irrespective of dharma.

<sup>20</sup> Note that Otto, *Original Gita*\*, p. 136, regards 11,33 as "the principal verse of the *Gita*\* the *carama sloka*\* since it is solely from them that Krsna's\* conversation with Arjuna receives its real meaning"; but he rejects 4,7-8 from the "original *Gita*\*."

unswerving devotion" (11,54) that this vision is manifested he now sees himself as a "mere instrument" (*nimittamatram* \*; 11,34) in the awesome process, totally without struggle and beyond dharma and adharma (see above, n. 19), by which Krishna-Visnu\*, as Time, brings the worlds to ripeness and "gathers them in." Yet this double perspective completes Arjuna's instruction: he learns the secret that, with regard to the central teachings of the performance of duty and the desirelessness of man's activity, the end of the yuga and the end of the *kalpa* must be as one. To participate in Krishna's universe is to be his "friend and devotee" (4,3; see 11,44), that is, both to uphold dharma and to seek *moksa*\*.

### The Theophany in the Kuru Court

Biardeau's insights allow us to appreciate that it is not just one chapter, but the whole *Gita*\*, which presupposes such a significant cosmology. But more than this, we have been led to speak of the *Gita*\*theophany and all as an integral part of the *Mahabharata*\*<sup>21</sup> And it so happens that this is not Krishna's first theophany in the epic, but his second:<sup>22</sup> a fact which could hardly have been insignificant in the eyes of the *Mahabharata*'s\* poets, but which has escaped the notice or mention of seemingly

<sup>21</sup> On the *Gita*'s\* place in the epic, see, most recently, and rather inadequately, Georg von Simson, "Die Einschaltung der *Bhagavadgita*\* im *Bhismaparvan*\* des *Mahabharata*\*," *IJJ*, XI (1969), 159, nn. 1 and 2, actually citing only those who more or less agree with him that it is an interpolation. For counteropinions, see S. Lévi, "Tato Jayam Udirayet," L. G. Khare, trans., *ABORI*, I (1918-1919), 13-20; V. S. Sukthankar, *Mahabharata*\*, p. 119; Otto, *Original Gita*\*, pp. 11-14; Dumézil, *ME*, I, 221, 93, 34; Zaehner, *Bhagavad-Gita*\*, pp. 6-7; and Biardeau, *EMH*, 3, P. 61, n. 1. K. T. Telang, trans., *The Bhagavadgita*\*, SBE, VIII (1882; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), P. 5, registers "a feeling of painful diffidence regarding the soundness of any conclusion whatsoever."

<sup>22</sup> One other epic theophany (14:54,3-7), supposedly redisclosing the *Gita*\* form (there called *rupamaishvaram*\*; 3) to the desert sage Uttanka\*, yields no *pralaya* imagery and holds no important narrative links with the other theophanies.



all the *Gita's*\* critics but one.<sup>23</sup> His name is famous: Rudolf Otto. Although I cannot share his views on an "original *Gita*\*," we may note with admiration how two facets of his approach have borne fruit. First, not surprisingly, he has been guided by what we would call the *Gita's*\* theology rather than its philosophy; and second, surprising to me, he has insisted that the *Gita*\* must be understood within its narrative context. He says that the *Gita*\* theophany is "a quite obvious parallel to the Theophany in which Krsna\* has already revealed himself to Duryodhana," and he insists that "these subtle parallels and contrasts of sublime epic construction cannot and must not be ignored."<sup>24</sup> I will return to his exposition of these relationships, but first let us familiarize ourselves with the new scene.

As Otto says, it is just "a short time before" the battlefield scene of the *Gita*\* that the first theophany occurs.<sup>25</sup> Krishna has come to Hastinapura\* as the last of a series of three emissaries who have gone between the two sides to perform acts of prewar diplomacy. He represents the Pandavas\* before the Kurus with a series of pro forma exhortations to peace and compromise, and these are backed up since there is no real possibility that they will be accepted by Duryodhanawith lists of grievances, exchanges of insults, and threats of war. But Krishna's words are persuasive, so much so that Duhsasana\*, Duryodhana's foremost brother, is pressed to say that if Duryodhana does not accede, "assuredly, having bound you, the Kauravas will deliver you over to the son of Kunti\* [Yudhisthira\*]" (5:126,22). Upon hearing these words, Duryodhana makes a memorable gesture: "sighing like a great snake" (126, 24), he rises from his seat in anger and quits the assembly, followed by his brothers and the assembled kings (whose silence earlier had shown deference to Duryodhana although "they

<sup>23</sup> Quite possibly someone has been overlooked, but generally *Gita*\* criticism has been preoccupied with other problems.

<sup>24</sup> Otto, *Original Gita*\*, pp. 14, 11, n. 4.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

applauded Krishna with their hearts" [5:93,62]). Krishna's persuasiveness, then, has no effect on Duryodhana other than to press him into an act of disrespect, for his defiant exit is an insult to Krishna and the various Kuru elders who remain behind.

Along with the exit, which Krishna will respond to in kind, the scene confronts us with another theme that builds now to a powerful climax. Earlier (5:86,12-15), Duryodhana had publicly expressed his intention to restrain and bind Krishna upon the latter's arrival at Hastinapura \*; but Dhrtarastra\* and Bhishma\* had denounced him. Now, with negotiations completely broken down, each side turns to this device as a last resort. First, with Duryodhana and his supporters absent from the court, Krishna urges the Kuru elders to do exactly what Duhsasana\* had feared (126,33-49): abandon Duryodhana, he says, as the Yadavas\* did Kamsa\*, and bind him with his closest confederates over to the Pandavas\* as Varuna\*, the lord of Waters, bound the Daityas and Danavas\* in the ocean with his nooses and with those of Dharma (*tanbaddhva\* dharmapasaisca\* svaaisca\* pasairjalesvarah\* varunah\**; 46). These words provoke neither comment nor action. Rather, Duryodhana is summoned back to court to hear one more appeal from his mother Gandhari\*, and when he walks out again, disregarding her words, he meets secretly with Karna\*, Duhsasana\*, and Sakuni\*. Suspecting that Krishna and Bhishma\* will try to seize them, Duryodhana once again but this time covertly plans with his allies to seize Krishna and thus destroy the hopes of the Pandavas\* (128,4-8). Yet even as they state their resolution, one senses their apprehension of the difficulty of seizing the "quick-acting" (*ksiprakarina\**; used twice: 128,4 and 8) Krishna.

At this point, rather strangely, it is not Krishna but his kinsman Satyaki\* "skilled in interpreting signs" (*ingitajna\**; 128, 9) who intuits the plan. He sees to it that Krishna's troops are alerted and then enters the court to warn him. There are some hurried deliberations in which Krishna says

he would not object should Duryodhana try to seize him, as this censurable and futile act would only benefit the Pandavas \* (128,24-29). At this, Dhrtarastra\* calls his son back one last time, together with his fellow conspirators and the kings (33)-Amidst the final pleas for reconciliation, a restrained but charming expression of *bhakti* is evoked from Dhrtarastra\*, once again taking us to a "deeper level" of insight into what is going on: "Like the wind, difficult to seize with the hand, like the moon (or the rabbit), hard to touch with the hand, like the earth, hard to bear on the head, Krishna is difficult to seize by force" (128,39).<sup>26</sup> But Duryodhana cannot be dissuaded. The impasse is complete, and the scene is set for Krishna's first theophany in the *Mahgbhgrata*\*.

Possessing energy [*viryan*], Krishna addressed Duryodhana: "Alone am I [*eko 'hamiti*]. That is how you regard me, O Suyodhana, from delusion [*mohat*]. And surrounding me, O weak minded one, you wish to seize me. Yet here are all the Pandavas\*, as also the Andhakas and Vrsnis\*. Here are the Adityas\*, Rudras, and Vasus, together with the Maharsis\*." Saying this Kesava\*, that slayer of hostile heroes, laughed loudly. And while the high-souled Saurin\* was smiling, the thirty [the gods]having forms of lighting, of the size of a thumb, flashing like fire [*vidyudrupa*\* ... *angusthamatras*\* ... *pavakarcisah*\*]were released [*mumucur* (Ganguli-Roy trans.: "from the body")]. Situated on his forehead was Brahma\*, and Rudra was on his breast. The World Regents were on his [four] arms, and Agni [Fire] was produced from his mouth, as also the Adityas\*, Sadhyas\*, Vasus, Asvins\*, the Maruts together with Indra, and the Visvedevas\*. And such also became the forms of the Yaksas\*, Gandharvas, and Raksasas\*. So from his two forearms were manifested Samkarsana\* and Dhananjaya\*Arjuna on the right with his bow, Rama\* [Balarama\*] on the left with his plow. Behind him were Bhima\*, Yudhisthira\*, and the two sons of Madri\*, and the Andhakas, Vrsnis\*, Pradyumna and others of prominence were in front of Krishna, their great weapons upraised.

26durgrahah\* panina\* vayurduhsparsah\* panina\* sasi\*  
durdhara\* prthivi\* murdhna\*durgrahah\* kesavo\* balat\*.

And on Krishna's various arms were seen the conch, the discus, the mace, the dart [*? sakti \**], the bow Sarnga\*, the plow, and the sword, all upraised and ready for striking, blazing on all sides. And from his eyes, nose, ears, and from all sides were manifested highly terrible [*maharaudrah\**] sparks of fire mixed with smoke, and also [sparks] like the sun's rays in the pores of his skin. And beholding this dreadful self [*ghoramatmanam\**] of the high-souled Kesava\*, the kings shut their eyes, their hearts trembling, but not Drona\*, Bhishma\*, and the highly intelligent Vidura, and the highly favored Samjaya\*, and the Rsis\* possessed of wealth of *tapas*, to whom the Lord [*bhagavan\**] Janardana\* gave divine sight. And beholding that very surprising [appearance] of Madhava\* in the court, celestial drums sounded and a rain of flowers fell; the whole earth trembled and the ocean was agitated, and the inhabitants of the earth [or the kings (*parthivah\**)] became deeply perplexed. [129,1c-15]

Krishna then withdraws this form (*vapus*), which is referred to as "variegated" (*citra-*) and "auspicious" (*rddhimat-\**, literally: "possessing growth or increase"), and walks outrighteously where Duryodhana had just left unrighteously with his kinsmen Satyaki\* and Krtavarman\* ( 16-17).

Such is the theophany in which Rudolf Otto saw "subtle parallels and contrasts of sublime epic construction" with the theophany of the *Bhagavad Gita*\*. But when we turn to his *The Original Gita*\*, we find little indication of what he has in mind. Krishna "disarms the miscreant" in one instance and obtains obedience to his "supreme divine decree" in the other; both Duryodhana and Arjuna are "victims of anxiety": the former "about the issue of the contest," the latter "about the sacred laws of piety"; Duryodhana is "unmasked," Arjuna is "accepted as a tool for the exalted deeds of God, although he is at the same time humbled because of his 'wilfulness.'" These "parallels and contrasts" do not, of course, have much to do with the epic's narrative structure. Rather, the oppositions that preoccupy Otto concern the psychological states of the two heroes, what he several times refers to as their "specific situation." And it soon becomes apparent that in confining himself to parallels of this type, Otto is allowing his notion of an

"original *Gita* \*" to color his comparison of the theophanies. His "original" is pared of Samkhya\*, Yoga, Vedanta\*, and Bhakti doctrines to reveal "Krishna's own voice and deed" by which he renders Arjuna "willing to undertake the special service of the Almighty will of God Who decides the fate of battles."<sup>27</sup> We need only point out that from the perspective opened up by Biardeau, the "fate of battles" is a trivial issue indeed.

There is, then, a sort of "Here I stand" quality to the manner in which the Lutheran scholar sees Arjuna and Duryodhana face to face with God, submitting to, or being submitted to, his will.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, he sees the multiform aspects of the *Gita*\* theophany as "expressions of the numinously terrible, not speculative symbols of Universal Unity." Even if we agree with this as it is phrased, we realize that Otto fails to see any importance in the symbols themselves and in what the principal figures represent. My earlier expression of admiration should now be qualified. Otto is guided by the *Gita's*\* theology, but it is a theology relieved of its cosmology (which Otto never discusses) and its symbols (which Otto is satisfied to explain by their numinousness). And although Otto insists on the significance of the narrative context of the two theophanies, Arjuna and Duryodhana are important to him only as recipients of revelations (presumably historical) by God. He is only barely interested in them as figures in a wider epic drama and not interested in although apparently recognizing the nature of this drama, at least on one level, as "myth."<sup>29</sup>

More commentary on the two theophanies may be added. First, with regard to narrative context, there is another incident, also forming part of the sequence of events leading up

<sup>27</sup> Otto, *Original Gita*\*, p. 11 and n. 4; cf. pp. 153-54; other quotes at pp. 14, 136, 138, 146, 153.

<sup>28</sup> Presupposing a linear historical development of Indian "monotheism" behind these theophanies, Otto even suggests that the god to have originally inspired such an awesome vision as that in the *Gita*\* was probably Rudra-Siva\*; *ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149, n. 2, 137.

to the war, in which Arjuna and Duryodhana are juxtaposed to one another in their relationship to Krishna: the scene at the waking Krishna's bedside.<sup>30</sup> Krishna's "equal relationship" to the two invites a search for meaningful contrasts in the narrative implications of the two divine self-disclosures. On some points, it seems we are rewarded. In the court theophany, Krishna's ostensible purpose is to make peace, whereas in the battlefield theophany it is to make war. More than this, the first theophany takes place in a scene which has built up to the point where the deluded Duryodhana regards Krishna to be "alone," whereas the second occurs in the very midst of the battlefield, between the two drawn-up armies, where Arjuna has had Krishna take him so that he can view the assembled hosts which comprise in their ranks representatives of "all" the peoples of the world. And yet, when he appears to be alone, his manifestation is public (appreciated by all who do not close their eyes), whereas when he is in the midst of many, his revelation is private, reserved for his "friend and devotee."

These oppositions, however, begin to make sense only within the context of Hindu cosmology, with its symbols and structures. Here Biardeau's comments on the *Gita* \* help us to extend Otto's rather narrow conception of the parallels and contrasts between the two theophanies. In brief, when Krishna appears alone, he produces or "releases" all classes of beings (except Asuras)<sup>31</sup> from his own person; and when he appears at the very center of all beings, he dissolves them into himself. If Arjuna is close to being "an observer of the *pralaya*," Duryodhana or more accurately the elders and Rsis\* to whom Krishna gives "divine sight" is witness to a sort of creation. In the one case, Krishna shows his dissolving "dreadful form" (*ugrarupam*\*: *Gita*\* 11,31); in the other even though the kings see it only as his

30 See above, beginning of Chapter 5.

31 Possibly the poets view the production of Asuras as a redundancy, since the Asuras are already present, incarnated in the assembled kings.

"dreadful self" (*ghoramatmanam* \*) and close their eyeshis form is "variegated and auspicious [or increasing]." In this connection, a comment by Zaehner takes on added significance: when Arjuna concludes his description in the *Gita*\* and asks Krishna to explain this *ugrarupam*\*, his words, in Zaehner's translation, are: "Fain would I know you as you are in the beginning" (*vijnatum\* icchami\* bhavantam adyam\**>; 11,31 ). As Zaehner comments: "Arjuna does not yet understand the terrible side of his nature displayed by Krishna. . . . Nothing in Krishna's teaching had prepared him for this. He would sooner know Him 'as he is in the beginning', in his eternal rest, rather than his incomprehensible and seemingly savage activity."<sup>32</sup> The opposition thus seems to be implied within the *Gita*\* itself, in Arjuna's uncertain response. What the epic poets have done, then, is give us two contrasting or at least partially contrasting visions of Krishna's form and modes of action. Or, to use an Indian terminology, the poets have used the device of presenting the divine nature from the standpoint of different *darsanas*\*, a device used with considerable frequency in connection with other subjects in the epic,<sup>33</sup> and one which has required in this case that we suspend the question of which theophany might be the older (certainly it is not a question of an "original") in order to examine them for the light they shed on each other.

However, although we can speak of meaningful contrasts on the levels of Indian theology and cosmology, we see that it is not simply a neat, sequential juxtaposition of cosmogony (*sarga*

32 Zaehner, *Bhagavad-Gita*\*, p. 311.

33 See below, Chapter 12, discussing the two "views" of how Asvatthaman\* could have succeeded in his night raid, and, in a similar vein, the many "views" on Drona's death expressed at the end of the *Dronaparvan*\* (see below, Chapter 10); our general point should be set beside a memorable remark of van Buitenen's ("The *Sabhaparvan*\*," p. 79): "The epic is a series of precisely stated problems imprecisely and therefore inconclusively resolved, every inconclusive solution raising a new problem; until the very end, when the question remains: whose is heaven and whose is hell?"

or *pratisarga*) followed by *pralaya*. As we said, the court theophany is only a sort of creation. The narrative context, the modes of revelation, and the symbols involved in the description are in no way direct reminders of any Hindu creation myth, although in matters of mode and symbol it seems quite likely that the poets have kept the *Purusa \* Sukta\** in the backs of their minds.<sup>34</sup> Thus, although the two theophanies offer "perspectives" (*darsanas\**) on Krishna's creative and destructive aspects, his all-out-of-one and his all-into-one dimensions, they do so without presenting them as a complete diptych. The court theophany seems to hint at something else, which would never have come to light were it not for a brief but important article by Dumézil.

### Krishna and the "Three Steps"

Dumézil has explored the Indo-European myths and legends which show parallels with the ritual roles and practices of a college of Roman priests, the *fetials*, who were formally responsible for making peace and declaring war.<sup>35</sup> Their duties would take them as envoys or ambassadors in rituals of diplomacy into lands of "foreigners" and especially of enemies and could entail the making of treaties,<sup>36</sup> the presentation of demands

<sup>34</sup> For example, the general theme of the emergence of beings from the god's person, and more particularly the connection in both "theophanies" of Agni with the mouth. In an interpolation made in one Devanagari\* text, the description continues after *sloka\** 11 (CE 5,495\*) with mention of Krishna's thousand feet, arms, and eyes, and the sun and moon standing in his eyes; see Otto's trans., *Original Gita\**, p. 152). The text read along with the *Gita\** theophany in the *samnyasa\**-entry ritual (see above, n. 3) is the *Purusa\* Sukta\** (EMH, 3, 52-53) the use in this ritual perhaps signifying a reflection on the two modes of divine action in creation and destruction.

<sup>35</sup> Dumézil, "Études et mémoires, I, Remarques sur le '*Ius fetiale*'" (here- inafter "Remarques"), *Revue des Etudes Latines*, XXXIV (1956), 93108; the study is reprinted with important additions in Dumézil, *Idées romaines*, pt 1, Chapter 3, "*Ius fetiale*" (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 61-78.

<sup>36</sup> At the conclusion of which they would invoke the trifunctional triad of gods: Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus (Polybius 3. 25,6); see Dumézil, "Remarques," p. 108.



for reparation of wrongs and thus, if these were not met, preparation for a "just" war,<sup>37</sup> and also pseudonegotiations of considerable duplicity.<sup>38</sup> The key passage for our purposes is one from *Livy* concerning the procedure followed by the Pater Patratus, the fetial who would go to another city to demand justice on behalf of the Romans:

When the envoy [*legatus*] has arrived at the frontiers of the people from whom satisfaction is sought, he covers his head with a bonnetthe covering is of wooland says: "Hear, Jupiter; hear, ye boundaries of"naming whatever nation they belong to;"let righteousness hear [*audiat fas*]! I am the public herald of the Roman people; I come duly and religiously commissioned [*iuste pieque legatus venio*]; let my words be credited." Then he recites his demands, after which he takes Jupiter to witness: "If I demand unduly and against religion that these men and these things be surrendered to me, let me never enjoy my native land." These words he rehearses when he crosses the boundary line, the same to what man soever first meets him, the same when he enters the city gates, the same when he has come into the market place [*forum*], with only a few changes in the form and wording of the oath. If those whom he demands are not surrendered, at the end of three and thirty daysfor such is the conventional numberhe declares war. [1,32,6-8 (B. O. Foster, trans., Loeb Classical Library, 1919); cf. *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* 2,72,6-9]

As Dumézil shows, in these four stops for invocations, the Pater Patratus marks out three zones in this "foreign world."<sup>39</sup>

There is ample documentation of Indo-European parallels to get us from Rome to India, and, as Dumézil says, it is not a matter of finding other examples of similarly specialized

<sup>37</sup> Dumézil, *Idées romaines*, p. 61; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 72. 4.

<sup>38</sup> In a letter of January 5, 1969, which first alerted me to his study and to the possibility of this comparison, Dumézil refers to the negotiations after the episode of the Caudine Forks (*Livy* 9. 10, 7-10) as "the extreme case" of "the complicity of the *fetialis* and the Roman general." See also Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, Philip Krapp, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 123.

<sup>39</sup> Dumézil, "Remarques," pp. 105-6.

priests ("the Indian priest is multivalent, omnivalent"), but of appreciating similar scenarios in myths and legends.<sup>40</sup> This does not mean making comparisons with other ambassador figures, although such an investigation might prove interesting.<sup>41</sup> Rather, the important common theme is that of stepping forth, usually with three strides, into or through uncharted or enemy territory so as to establish a just or religious base or foundation.<sup>42</sup> there and to open up (one might say sacralize) the space necessary for conquest by war. Two other instances are the Iranian Rashnu who provides Mithra with the space necessary for his exploits and who takes part in opening the way for righteous souls to ascend through the three regions of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds;<sup>43</sup> and the strange Irish figure Amairgen, hero of the last race to occupy Ireland, whose first right-footed step on the island is given special textual emphasis and whose approach on his initial prewar mission to the island's capital is thrice arrested, each time by one of the queens of the land.<sup>44</sup> Both of the figures just cited have been compared with Visnu \*,<sup>45</sup> for it is Visnu\*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> We have already noticed (Chapter 5 at n. 19) the embassy of Bruno in Saxo's account of the Battle of Brávellir. One should also look at Odysseus and Menelaos' embassy before the Trojan War (*Iliad* 3. 201-2, 217-24, and 11. 138-40), and at Rostam's embassy to Mazandaran in the *Shah-nama*\* (Warner and Warner, trans., *Shahnama*\*, 11, 63-70).

<sup>42</sup> See Dumézil, "Remarques," pp. 96-101, linking *fetialis*\*, presumed from *fetis*\* ("fondement"), and Sanskrit *dhatu*\* ("fondation").

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 204; cf. Dumézil, "Visnu\* et les Marut à travers la réforme zoroastrienne," *JA*, CCXLI (1953), 11-17.

<sup>44</sup> Dumézil, *Idées romaines*, pp. 75-78.

<sup>45</sup> On Rashnu, see above, n. 43. On Amairgen, Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 96-100, make two comparisons, the first the less plausible: (1) Amairgen on the sea before his first step on the isle (see R. A. Stewart Macalister, ed. and trans., *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, pt. 5, Irish Text Society, XLV [Dublin, 1956], 33) with Visnu\* lying on the ocean, both empowered to "bring a new world into being"; and (2) Amairgen's theophany, which follows an "I am" formula ("I am Wind on Sea, / I am Ocean Wave, etc." (see Macalister, *Lebor Gabála*, pp. 110-13),

(Footnote continued on next page)

who has given the three strides their renown. First, in the *Rg \* Veda*, Visnu's\* three steps create for Indra "the vast field which will be the theatre of their victory" over Vrtra\*.46 The cosmogonic overtones of this scenario have impressed F. B. J. Kuiper,47 but from the comparative perspective, it looks as if this Vedic "opening of the cosmos" is but a variant of the wider and highly multivalent theme of the opening of alien or hostile space. Second, from the Brahmanas\* to the Puranas\*, it is after entering the realm of the Asuras that Visnu\*, in his Dwarf (Vamana\*) form, enlarges himself so as to step through the three worlds and restore them to the gods.48

There are important structural differences between the two Indian myths. The Vamana\* takes his three steps not *into* the enemy territory, as in other Indo-European scenarios, but, having already entered it, *from within it outward*. By the same token, the Dwarf, by his three steps, does not open the way for Indra to conquer the worlds, but conquers them himself.

(Footnote continued from previous page)

with Krishna's description of his "supernal manifestations" (*vibhūtis\** in *Gita\** 10,20-42). However, whereas Amairgen describes his forms when he steps on land, at the start of his initial nonmartial campaign into the island, Krishna describes his after the nonmartial mission into Kuru-land, at the beginning of the war. In a wider framework another unsettling parallel emerges: in the series of five races that occupy Ireland, Amairgen's theophany occurs at the beginning of the last; in the series of four yugas, Krishna's also occurs at the start of the last, both coming at the juncture between "pre- history" and "modern times."

46 Dumézil, "Remarques," p. 104, quoting from Hermann Oldenberg, *La Rdigion du Veda*, Victor Henry, trans. (Paris: Félix Alcan, Editeur, 1903), p. 193 (my translation).

47 Kuiper, "The Three Strides of Visnu\*," *Indological Studies in Honor of W. Norman Brown*, Ernest Bender, ed. (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1962), pp. 137-51. Kuiper's article is of great importance in establishing the nonsolar character of the three steps (p. 141) and in insisting on the "central" character of the Vedic Visnu\* (p. 144), a position analogous to that of the epic Krishna (pp. 145 and 150).

48 On the many variations within this narrative framework, see Gaya Charan Tripathi, *Der Ursprung und die Entwicklung der Vamana-Legende\* in der Indischen Literatur* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968), with English summary, pp. 237-43. My discussion of the Vamana\* myth draws from this work.

Furthermore, the theme in the Vamana \* myth concerning the *restoration* of territory to the gods differs from that of the *opening* of new territory which, as (still) seen in the Vedic "cosmogony," is most comparable to other Indo-European examples. It is worth keeping these contrasts in mind, for as we return to the epic Krishna, we find an intrigue that corresponds to the Vedic and Indo-European patterns in each instance but the last. First, however, let us note that Dumézil has invited the comparison: "In the *Mahabharata*\*, Krishna is the incarnation and the epic transposition of Visnu\*. . . ; his role as an ambassador, a veritable fetal, on the eve of the war, throughout the whole fifth book (*Udyogaparvan*), ought to be considered in the light of this present study."<sup>49</sup> No doubt Dumézil has precise points in mind, some of which, one hopes, will correspond with those offered here. In any case, let us now look more closely at Krishna's ambassadorship and the events surrounding his court theophany.

Krishna is the last of three emissaries to seek peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas\*, but he does not really expect peace. As he explains to Yudhisthira\* (5:71,25-34), he will go to the Kuru court to remove "the doubt of all men" (*sarvalokasya*. . . *samsayam*\*; 26) by praising Yudhisthira's\* virtues and denouncing Duryodhana's transgressions, thus persuading not only the assembled kings but also the people of town and country, the young and the old, and the four *varnas*\* (29); although he sees no virtue (dharma) in suing for peace, he can represent Yudhisthira's\* desire for it while observing the inclinations and proceedings of the foes (32-33), all the while expecting war with them (*sarvatha*\* *yuddhamevahamasamsami*\* *paraih*\* *saha*; 34). He departs after a morning ritual (81,9-10), taking Satyaki\* (81,22) along with ten *maharathas*\*, "great chariot warriors," and thousands of troops (82,1-2). Aside from the portents which accompany his movements wherever he goes

<sup>49</sup>*Idées romaines*, p. 74, n. 2 (my translation) a new note in the 1969 version of the original 1956 article (see above, n. 35).

there are gentle breezes and auspicious signs while everywhere else are disasters (82,4-12) the poets are interested in a ritual concern, the matter of hospitality. Krishna first makes his way to Vrkasthala \* (82,20), one of the five towns demanded by Yudhisthira\* (see below, note 54), and there spends the night. Hearing that he has set out, Dhrtarastra\* orders that sumptuous pavilions or halls (*sabhas*\*) be built to receive him there, and the task is carried out by Duryodhana (83,9-17). But Krishna sidesteps the entrapment that accepting these honors would bring, "not having even looked at [*asamiksyai*va\*] all those diversely bejeweled pavilions" (83,18). Dhrtarastra\* then plans a second time to honor Krishna upon his arrival at Hastinapura\* by preparing a gala reception for him in the city and in his own palace and readying for him Duhsasana's\* mansion, the most splendid of all (85,19-21); instead, after a public welcome and a mere exchange of courtesies at Dhrtarastra's\* home, Krishna takes up residence unostentatiously at the home of Vidura (87,52).<sup>50</sup> Then, after a visit to Duryodhana's mansion, Krishna refuses his hospitality: having been offered cows, honey, and then palaces and the kingship (88,9),<sup>51</sup> as well as food (11), he again accepts hospitality only from Vidura, pending the success of his mission.

Several things stand out among these three refusals to accept favors at three different stages in his journey. First, this is the only instance where the stages of one of Krishna's journeys are marked; elsewhere, as Ruben has noted, the poets allow him to cover vast distances without the blink of an eye.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, we see similarities to the approaches of some of the other

<sup>50</sup>Krishna's allegiance to virtue seems to be suggested here, as Vidura incarnates a portion of Dharma.

<sup>51</sup>*Nivedayamasa\* tada\* grhanrajyam\* ca kauravah\**; 5:89,9cd; on this mere for-mality cf. 1:117,18: Bhishma\* "offered kingship and kingdom" (*rajyam\* ca rastram\*... nyavedayat*) to an arriving group of Maharsis\*.

<sup>52</sup>Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 282; for Ruben, the failure to account for Krishna's manner of covering vast distances suggests that the epic has intermingled two originally independent story cycles.

figures we have discussed. First, noting what is similar in the three stops, just as Krishna must not be swayed by the offerings of palaces and other items of wealth, the Irish Amairgen must not be swayed by the three queens of the island. Quite possibly these are two variations of wealth and sex of temptations by use of the third function. And noting what is different at each stage, we see similarities between Krishna's three stops and those of the Pater Patrus once the latter is past the boundaries of Rome: while Krishna stops at a town (the first?), the fetal stops to address the first man he meets; both then make their entrances into the foe's city; and while Krishna enters Duryodhana's court (where his dealings are with kings), the fetal comes to the forum or market place (where his dealings are with a people).

There is, however, more to link Krishna's gradual advance and successive refusals with the theme of the three steps. The text, by a strange recurrence at each of the last two stops, suggests as much itself. Having entered Dhrtarastra's \* palace (just after arriving in the city), Krishna "stepped over [or crossed] three enclosures" (*tisrah\* kaksya\* vyatikramya*; 87,12a); and again, entering Duryodhana's palace, he "stepped over three enclosures unimpeded by gatemen" (*tasya kaksya\* vyatikramya tisro dvahsthairavaritah\**; 89,2cd). In all of Krishna's comings and goings, only on one other occasion does he follow this procedure of crossing three enclosures (*tvaritya\* ... tisrah\* kaksya\**; 2:19,28ab). Here too he is entering the residence of a rival of Yudhisthira\* for world sovereignty, King Jarasandha\* of Magadha, although in this case Krishna is accompanied by Arjuna and Bhima\*, and their mission lacks even the pretense of peace making or diplomacy. *Kaksya\** can refer either to an enclosure inside a palace (a court or chamber) or outside (a wall); apparently the word has been used in the two *Udyogaparvan* instances first in the former sense and then in the latter. Most important, the passages in question seem to present, by their double employ of the words *tisro vyatikramya*, "having stepped

over three," a clear double reminder of Visnu \* Trivikrama, Visnu\* of the Three Steps.<sup>53</sup>

### The Third Step and the First Theophany

So far, then, Krishna's actions recall those of the Pater Patratus (and suggest those of Amairgen as well) both in terms of motive and procedure. With regard to Visnu\*, in two of the three cases cited earlier where there are structural discontinuities between the Vedic three steps and his three steps as the Dwarf, Krishna's mission recalls the former. Krishna steps *into* the Kuru territory rather *than from within it outward*. He opens the space of which Duryodhana will not yield so much as is covered by the point of a needle<sup>54</sup> for the Pandavas\* to conquer in a just war rather than conquering it himself. One may thus suggest that the transposition has Vedic and parao-Vedic roots traceable to Indo-European themes.

The third discontinuity between the two myths of the three steps points to parallels with the Vamana\* myth: Krishna does not open up a new territory for the Pandavas\*; rather, as does Vamana\* for the Devas, he helps restore to them what was formerly theirs. Here it is an Indian, and perhaps post-Vedic, mythic theme that provides the model for the epic struggle: the cyclical round of reversals and triumphs that marks the conflict between the Devas and Asuras. In a fashion similar to this, not only do the Pandavas\* and the Kurus reverse their

<sup>53</sup> Dumézil, "Les Pas de Krsna\* et l'exploit d'Arjuna," *OS*, V (1956), 183-88, sees Visnu's\* three steps transposed into the epic scenes where Krishna takes three "initiatives" (twice stepping forth from Arjuna's chariot) to inspire Arjuna against Bhishma\*. I think it is quite possible to have two transpositions of this multivalent theme. This other case, however, is the more fictionalized of the two and the further removed from a significant parallel context.

<sup>54</sup> Krishna demands half the kingdom back for the Pandavas\*, or at least five towns, but Duryodhana says that while he lives, the Pandavas\* shall not have so much of "our land" (*bhumernah\**) as might be procured by the sharp point of a needle (5: 125,26).

fortunes in the dice game and the great battle on earth, but in the *Svargaparvan* in heaven and hell as well.<sup>55</sup>

Correspondences also occur between the Vamana \* myth and the mission of Krishna in certain matters of detail. First, there is the theme of the bound demon. From epic texts on, the Asuras in the Vamana\* myth are championed by one figure, usually King Bali, and as early as the *Mahabharata*\* there is reference to what in Puranic\* texts is clearly the result of Bali's encounter with Visnu\* the Dwarf. Indra, on a tour of the domain which the Dwarf had presumably won for (or returned to) him we are told that Bali was formerly a sovereign but is now divested of "prosperity" finds Bali in a cave by the seashore (12:220,22) "bound with Varuna\* nooses" (*baddhasca\* varunaih\* pasair\**; 220,18). This theme, which one finds in Scandinavia in connection with Loki, and which is well known elsewhere,<sup>56</sup> seems to appear in India only in connection with Bali. Thus Namuci (12:219,3) and Prahlada\* (12:215,8) are bound in the set of scenes just cited where Indra encounters Bali and other past sovereigns; and, in a sort of inversion, it is Bali's son Bana\* who has Krishna's grandson Aniruddha bound, thus precipitating a great war between the forces of Krishna and Siva\*.<sup>57</sup> In the main narrative of the epic, the theme occurs only once, in the passage, or series of passages, that we have discussed: amidst plans and counterplans, Krishna urges that Duryodhana be bound over to the Pandavas\* as the demons had been bound with the nooses of Dharma and Varuna\*. The fact that neither Krishna nor Duryodhana is actually bound is a small matter. The epic restructures mythic themes in accord with

55 cf. above, n. 33.

56 Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1955), I, 191-92, cites Scandinavian, Irish, Lettish and Lithuanian, Persian, Babylonian, and Christian parallels, but none from India. For a further comparison of Loki and Duryodhana (and Ahriman!) easily relatable to this one, see Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Getmains, essai sur la formation de la religion scandinave*, Collection "Mythes et Religions," XXXVIII (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 99.

57 See VP 5,32-33, especially 33,9.



its own pace and to suit its own ends. The allusion itself, especially from Krishna's own mouth, is transparent.

The second point, however, is the more crucial: the matter of the theophany itself. For if the wide strides of the Vedic god imply a great manifestation, it is only when he grows from the stature of a dwarf to that of a being who encompasses the three worlds that the nature of this manifestation as an expansion becomes explicit. Moreover, in what must be regarded as one of the earlier tellings of the myth even though it occurs only in the Northern recension of the *Mahabharata*\* (*Aranyakaparvan*\*, Appendix I, No. 27, lines 64-82), it is said that after the Dwarf reveals his "divine, marvelous form" (line 78),<sup>58</sup> "the gods thereby became manifest and the universe was called Vaisnava\*" (*tena devah\* pradurasanvaisnavam\* cocyate jagat*; line 82.). These are both prominent features in the court theophany of Krishna. Having entered seemingly alone, he "expands" so as to become "everything" a procedure which now seems to be reflected in the description of his theophany as *rddhimat*\*, "possessing growth or increase." And out of his person not only do the gods "become manifest," but human heroes as well, his own kinsmen and the Pandavas\* a theme which one may relate to the description of the theophany as *citra*, "variegated."

The Vamana\* myth thus shows how closely, in the case of Krishna, the theme of binding is linked to the theophany. If Krishna cannot "expand" from the form of a dwarf, he can expand from a position where, as the foolish Duryodhana sees it, he appears alone and capable of being constricted. Indeed, the connection is implied in the words, cited earlier, of Dhrtarastra\*: "Like the wind, difficult to seize with the hand, like the moon, hard to touch with the hand, like the earth, hard to bear on the head,<sup>59</sup> Krishna is difficult to seize by force."

<sup>58</sup> In some Puranic\* texts, it is called his *Visvarupa*\*; see Tripathi, *Vamana-Legende*\*, pp. 80 and 239.

<sup>59</sup> It is tempting to compare this with the tradition that with his third step, Visnu\* steps on Bali's head, but this does not appear earlier than in the *Bhagavata\* Purana*\*.

The Vamana \* myth thus clarifies Krishna's court theophany by its combination of these themes, but there is a larger integration still possible if one takes up Dumézil's\* hint and looks at Krishna as a "veritable fetial." Let us recall the maneuvers that brought the Pater Patratus to the point where we left him: having approached the non-Roman territory in three stages and repeated his demands for satisfaction of wrongs, he waited thirty-three days and then declared war. Now Livy continues:

. . . he declares war thus: "Hear Jupiter, and thou Janus Quirinus, and hear all ye heavenly gods, and ye, gods of earth, and ye, of the lower world; I call you to witness that this people" naming whatever people it is "is unjust [*iniustum*], does not make just reparation. But of these matters we will take counsel of the elders in our country, how we may obtain our right [*ius nostrum*]." Then the messenger returns to Rome.<sup>60</sup>

One could note further similarities in the Pater Patratus' deliberations, upon his return, with the *rex* and Senators, and in those of Krishna, upon his return, with Yudhisthira\* and his allies. Both concern the fact that war can now be waged which, in Livy's terms, is "just and righteous" (*puro pioque*).<sup>61</sup> In any case, the scenario is now complete: in Rome, a priest takes the "three steps" and represents all the gods<sup>62</sup> by invoking them. In India, the ambiguous, omnivalent, and in some respects not unpriestly<sup>63</sup> figure of Krishna takes the "three steps"

<sup>60</sup>Livy 1. 32, 9-10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.72, 8) shortens this but retains the essential: "He called both the celestial and infernal gods to witness and went away."

<sup>61</sup>Livy 1. 32, 12; cf. *Mbh.* 5: 149,41, where Krishna, summarizing his efforts to Yudhisthira\*, says that by trying to make peace, his and the Pandavas'\* debt to dharma is gone, satisfied (*dharmasya gatamanrnyam*\*).

<sup>62</sup>From what I can tell, it is unusual that the Roman gods are all invoked like this, but this matter requires further study.

<sup>63</sup>Already we have seen in Chapter 4, where he protects the Rajasuya\*, that Krishna is connected with the sacrifice (see especially Chapter 4, n. 29); he is also preceded in his role of ambassador by Drupada's *purohita*, "chaplain" (5:20-21), and, in the upcoming "sacrifice of battle," it is said that he will be the *adhvaryu*, the main administering priest (5: 139,29).

and represents all the gods by being them. One need not search far for the differences in theology that would sustain such different modes of divine representation. In one case, it is the specialist priest who on the strength of invocation can channel the totality of divine power to the service of Rome; in the other, it is Visnu \* immanent in human form as well as in the universe who, through his capacity to manifest his own divinity, can reveal how the totality of divine power is maintained at the service of the Pandavas\*, of dharma, and of the three worlds.

Krishna's two theophanies thus not only relate to each other, but to the theme of the three steps. The first theophany seems to be an Indian reinterpretation of an archaic gesture, Indo-Roman insofar as it concerns a mode of giving divine sanction to war at the moment when the ambassador realizes its inevitability, and probably, taking into account the one step, three stops, and theophany (see above, n. 45) of the Irish Amaigen, Indo-European. The second theophany, however, even though juxtaposed with the first in several significant ways, calls to mind not Indo-European or even Vedic themes, but rather what are usually thought of, despite their frequency in the epic, as Puranic\* ones. These considerations should allow us to reflect on a few matters concerning the *Mahabharata*\* and two of its most prominent contemporary critics. First, even though the *Gita*\* evokes the more recent mythology and cosmology, I have tried to suggest by examining the two theophanies together that the *Gita*\* should be seen as a coherent part of the epic, not simply as one of its "didactic" portions. Second, by drawing from both ancient and recent myths, I have tried to show how the epic narrative itself has been structured in part to bridge the gap between Vedic and Puranic\* mythologies, conserving the former (and conserving pre-Vedic themes as well) and embracing it within the new "universe of *bhakti*"<sup>64</sup> of the great gods of epic and Puranic\* Hinduism.

64 Biardeau, EMH, 3, P. 84.

Finally, one facet of what some have condescendingly called the "leisurely pace" of the *Mahabharata* \* is its device of presenting countless *darsanas*\*, perspectives, on the drama that forms its core. I have tried to suggest here, although in Part Three I will steer a middle course between them, that the Indo-European perspective of Dumézil and the Puranic\*, one might say "Hindu," perspective of Biardeau are both valid, and that, to borrow from a Samkhya\* similitude, they may at some points be as necessary to each other, in making a way through the *Mahabharata*\* forest, as the blind man and the lame.

If you like this book, buy it!

PART THREE  
WORLD SOVEREIGNTY

If you like this book, buy it!

## Chapter 7

### Sri \*and the Source of Sovereignty

Having followed Krishna through his prewar appearances, we come now to the great battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas\* in which he helps the latter attain the "sovereignty of the world." Before we take up Krishna's involvement in the actual battle scenes, we must learn what is meant by "sovereignty." Indian mythology in general, and the *Mahabharata*\* in particular, associate sovereignty with the goddess Sri-Laksmi\*,<sup>1</sup> a figure whose importance for understanding Krishna is nicely summarized by the Pandavas\*, who at one point say to their cousin and counselor: "Surely you are not a leader of those on whom Laksmi\* has turned away her face" (2:18,10; *na hi tvamagratastesam\* yesam\* laksmih\* paranmukhi\**).

Much has been written about Sri,<sup>2</sup> but a number of issues deserve further attention. First is the question of origins. Both Gonda and Jaiswal agree that she is a "pre-Aryan fertility goddess";<sup>3</sup> in contrast, although some connection with fertility

1 Although Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, pp. 88-89, tries to show separate origins for their names and identities, I am not convinced this has much significance, at least for the *Mahabharata*\*.

2 Disagreement over the original meaning of the word *sri*\* is found between Hermann Oldenberg, "Die vedischen Worte für 'schön' und 'Schönheit' und das vedische Schönheitsgefühl," *NKGWG*, pp. 35ff. ("beauty"), and Jan Gonda, *Early Visnuism*\*, pp. 178-81 and 204-7 ("prosperity"). Both Gonda, pp. 212-31, and Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, pp. 89-109, provide useful accounts of the development of her iconography, mythology, and ritual. For further bibliography, see below.

3 Gonda, *Early Visnuism*\* p. 213; cf. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 109.

is never under dispute, her connection with kingship has prompted Alexander H. Krappe to include her among a number of Indo-European goddesses and heroines who bestow royal fortune.<sup>4</sup> Second, the question must be raised whether Sri \* has a coherent mythology of her own, perhaps quite ancient, or whether her mythology is always to be reduced to patterns established by other goddesses, be they connected with fertility or some other "feminine" resource. And third, how do these matters bear on Sri's\* epic incarnation as Krsna-Draupadi\*

### Sri's\* Transpositions

It has long been argued that Sri's\* affiliations with Visnu\* are not her earliest. According to Hopkins, "It is a late epic trait to make her exclusively Visnu's\* (she is also Dharma's wife)."<sup>5</sup> Jaiswal insists that Sri's\* position as Visnu's\* consort "is the latest feature of her legends in the *Mahabharata*\*, "<sup>6</sup> their union having been achieved at "the beginning of the Gupta period" (320 A.D).<sup>7</sup> Gonda concurs: "This stage is not reached before the younger parts of the *Mahabharata*\*."<sup>8</sup>

The Critical Edition of the *Mahabharata*\* reveals that some of the recent redactors of the epic probably saw Sri's\* different affiliations as something of an embarrassment. In one of the so-called "dictionaries of incarnations"<sup>9</sup> which enumerate the demonic and divine origins of long lists of epic characters, the closing verses tell about some of the women. First mentioned

4 Alexander H. Krappe, "The Sovereignty of Erin," *AJP*, LXIII (1942), 444-54; on Sri-Laksmi\*, see p. 450. Others have picked up on this comparison; see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On the Loathly Bride," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 392-93; Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 73-76; Dumézil, *ME*, II, 342.

5 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 208; see also Isidore Scheftelowitz, "Srisukta\*," *ZDMG*, LXXV (1921), 43.

6 Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 100; see also pp. 16, 79.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 79; see also pp. 16, 100-5; cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography: No. 2, Sri-Laksmi\* *Eastern Art*, I (1928-1929), 177.

8 Gonda, *Early Visnuism*,\* p. 223.

9 The term is Dumézil's: *ME*, I, 209.

are the sixteen thousand Apsarases who took birth as Krishna's harem (1:61,93-94). Then comes a *sloka* \* that at a certain point was altered.<sup>10</sup> Originally, as the reconstituted Critical text has it (61,95):

A portion [*bhaga* \*] of Sri\* became incarnate, on the earth's surface,  
in Drupada's family, a faultless maiden from the center of the sacrificial altar [*vedi* \*].

Between the two lines an amendment was inserted to read as follows:

A portion of Sri\* became incarnate, on the earth's surface, in the family of Bhismaka\*, in the person of the chaste Rukmini\*.

The faultless Draupadi\*, however, was born from a portion of Saci\* in Drupada's family. . . [566\*]

The interpolation thus makes Draupadi\*, "endowed with every mark [*laksana* \*] . . . [and] a charmer of the hearts of five Indras among men" (*purusendra*-\*; 61,97), a portion of Indra's wife Saci\*, and thereby allows Visnu's\* incarnation Krishna to find his partner in an incarnation of Sri\*.

The identifications of Sri\* with Rukmini\* and of Draupadi\* with Saci\* probably are recent, although this does not mean that the association of Sri\* with Visnu\* is equally late. What one finds on the mythic or theological level need not be duplicated exactly on the epic level. As I tried to show in Chapters 3 and 4, Draupadi's\* actions are often ambiguous; seemingly, they point to a double affiliation on the mythic level of Sri\* with both Visnu\* and Indra. But such ambiguities have gone unappreciated by those who see only a late connection of Sri\* with Visnu\* and, correspondingly, an early relation between Draupadi\* and Saci\*. <sup>11</sup>

10 The interpolation occurs in several scripts, including all but one in Devanagari\*.

11 Biardeau seems to want it both ways: although the interpolated verse is "supplementary," it makes little difference whom Draupadi\* incarnates, "for, in her function as Indra's wife, Saci\* also participates in the nature of Sri\*" (my translation); "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 40. This solves little.



In writing *Mythe et épopée*, I, Dumézil did not rely consistently on the Critical Edition; this helps to explain his acceptance of the authenticity of the interpolated passage along with its identifications.<sup>12</sup> The alternative, he says, would cause a "discordance which a western mind would easily turn into vaudeville, since Visnu \* is actually incarnated in . . . Krishna, and the encounters between Krishna, Draupadi\*, and the latter's five husbands are very frequent.<sup>13</sup> The "oriental mind," except in interpolations like the one just mentioned, has handled this differently, as shown by a passage from the *Anusasanaparvan*\*. The speaker is Sri\*, addressing Rukmini\* herself:

In my embodied form [*sarirabhuta*\*], single-heartedly [*ekamana*\*], I dwell with my entire spirit [*sarvena*\* *bhavana*\*] in Narayana\*; surely in him is dharma penetrated to the fullest, piety [*brahmanyata*\*], and also agreeableness [*priyatvam*\*]. Might I not explain here, O Lady [*devi*], that I do not dwell [elsewhere] in my embodied form [*naham*\* *sarirena*\* *vasami*\*]. But in that person [especially kings, for example, the Pandavas\*] in whom I dwell in spirit [*bhavana*\*], he increases in dharma, fame [*yasas*\*], *artha*, and *kama*\*. [13:11,19-20]

The passage, from this inflated *parvan*, may be "late" by epic standards, and it does not explicitly link the "spiritual" form with Sri's\* "portion" Draupadi\*. But it does indicate an attentiveness of the epic poets to different modes of activity on different levels, in particular what we might differentiate here as the theological or mythical and the heroic or "human."

For Dumézil, however, in the "original" transposition the overlap between the theological and epic levels must have been exact,<sup>14</sup> and he buttresses his view by an elaborate reconstruc-

<sup>12</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 118 and n. 1; cf. Gonda, *Early Visnuism*\*, p. 230, also accepting this version.

<sup>13</sup> *ME*, I, 118 (my translation).

<sup>14</sup> See my remarks in a review of *ME*, I, "Dumézil: Epic in the Balance," *HRJ*, IX (1969), 92, arguing that "epic need not be a carbon copy of myth"; see also above, Chapter 1 at n. 36.

tion of the transposition into three phases.<sup>15</sup> In brief, he argues that the original figure behind Draupadi \* was a variety of the Indo-Iranian goddess Armaiti, Anahita\*, Sarasvati\*, Vac\* who complements the male gods or Entities concerned with the three functions in a relation similar to that between Draupadi\* and her five husbands. Drawing from his interpretation of a myth from the *Markandeya\* Purana\** (which will be discussed below) and on the interpolated passage just cited, he proposes that the first goddess connected with Draupadi\* to have this trifunctional theology superimposed upon her was Indra's own wife, Saci\* or Indrani\*. Then, "intermediary" between the theological and epic "causalities," Dumézil sees a myth concerning Sri\* (the myth of the five former Indras<sup>16</sup>) and a "romanesque" (fictionalized) legend as being more or less fabricated by the poets to justify the polyandric marriage in narrative form.<sup>17</sup>

My inclination is to take the epic as seriously as possible in its linking of Sir\* with Draupadi\*. But Dumézil will only allow that, as a "choice" of a figure on whom to superimpose the theology of the Indo-Iranian trivalent goddess, the poets got by all right with Sri\*, as she "is not badly adapted to the situation," being also the subject of old speculations connected with the three functions.<sup>18</sup> I believe, however, that from the moment of her literary debut in the Brahmanas\*,<sup>19</sup> there are significant differences in the ways that Sir\* and the Indo-Iranian trivalent goddesses interact with the functions. A closer examination of Sri\* herself is needed: her theology, her myths, her symbols and settings.

<sup>15</sup>ME, I, 116.

<sup>16</sup> See above, Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>17</sup>ME, I, 110.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Her first appearances as a personified figure, in addition to the Brahmana\* texts, occur in VS 31,22 (named with Laksmi\* as a wife of Purusa\*probably Narayana\*) and in the *Srisukta\**, the first fifteen verses of which constitute the earliest text eulogizing Sri\* and date, according to Scheftelowitz, "Srisukta\*," p. 41, from the Brahmana\* period.

## Sri \* and the Three Functions

A good starting point is a most interesting passage referred to by Dumézil: *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 13,2,6,1 -7.20 The text, from the long thirteenth *kanda\** on the performance of the royal horse sacrifice (Asvamedha\*), finds the horse back from his eleven months of wandering and facing his last trip, the one to the sacrificial stake. At this point (following Dumézil's summary) three queens, in descending order of dignity, make three successive unctions on parts of the horse's body, which thus assure the king, in succession, of *tejas* ("spiritual force" or "majesty"), *indriyam* ("physical force"), and *pasu\** (cattle) the latter "having more social importance than 'beauty' in the third function.<sup>21</sup> But there is something more.<sup>22</sup> The Asvamedha\* itself involves risks to the sacrificer. During his year-long *diksa\** in the horse's absence, the king has been abandoned by "the sacrifice," that is, by the horse (13,2,6,2). For the time of this absence, the three qualities just mentioned and one other also leave the king: "Indeed, fiery mettle [*tejas*] and energy [*indri-yam*], cattle [*pasu\**] and prosperity [*sri\**] depart from him who offers the Asvamedha\*" (3).<sup>23</sup> When the three queens confer the three virtues on the horse (4-6), these qualities may return to the king. It would seem that the queens have acted as repositories for them during the absence of the horse, or of "the sacrifice." And the queens are themselves identified with the fourth quality mentioned in the stanza just cited: "It is the wives that anoint (the horse), for they to wit, (many) wives are a form

20 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 118; *ME*, II, 35:2.

21 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 118 (my translation). The English equivalents for these "qualities" or "virtues" are always problematic. *Tejas* in particular varies according to context. Fuller attention to these terms will be given in Chapter 8.

22 Dumézil takes note of the added term himself in *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 225.

23 Here and elsewhere, I follow the translation of Julius Eggeling, trans. and ed., *Satapatha\* Brahmana\**, SBE, XII, XXVI, XLI, XLIII, and XLIV (1882-1900; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966).

of prosperity [or: a form (*rupam* \*) of Sri\*]: it is thus prosperity he [the horse] confers on him (the sacrificer), and neither *tejas*, nor *indriyam*, nor cattle, nor *sir*\* pass away from him" (7).<sup>24</sup>

A debate over capital or lower-case letters for *sri*\* should be discouraged: the two meanings would by this time have been interchangeable. The important point is that the trifunctional virtues are part of a wider drama. Briefly, (1) Sri\* is connected with royalty; (2) she is specifically concerned with a formulation of royal virtues; (3) her "trivalence" does not lie so much in incorporating these virtues (her "forms" or representatives, the queens, are by no means saintly or strong) as in being able to confer them, actually transfer them (through the sacrificial horse to the king); and (4) *sir*\* or Sri\* may be said to "follow" the virtues, to be an additional and special member. Not only do the three "trifunctional" virtues abandon and return to the king, but so does Sri\*: "Indeed, that glory (*sri*\*), royal power, passes away from him who performs the Asvamedha\*" (*SB*\* 13,1,9,1); and, just like the other virtues, returns being "the top of royal power" (13,2,9,7).

Let us examine each of these points in turn to see if they hold up where the concept *sri*\*, or figure of Sri\*, appears elsewhere in the Brahmanas\*.

(1) These early ritual texts include the claim that a sovereign is wedded to Sri\*.<sup>25</sup> In a modification of the new and full moon sacrifices (the *daksayana*\*; *SB*\* 2,4,4,1ff.), apparently worked out for a royal family called the Daksyanas\*,<sup>26</sup> the sacrificerlike Prajapati\* who, desiring *praja*\* ("progeny"), sacrificed to obtain Prosperity (*sir*\*; stanza 1) obtains "generative power and prosperity" (*prajati*\*, *sri*\*; 4). In fact, having performed this sacrifice, "thereby Sri\* is (wedded) to him without a rival and undisturbed" (6). This no doubt implies that either his wives (as in

24 Parentheses are Eggeling's, brackets are mine.

25 See Jan Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (reprinted from *Numen*; Leiden: Brill, 1966 and 1969), p. 46.

26 Eggeling, trans., *SB*\*, SBE, XII, 374.

the previous passage) or his kingdom (*rastram* \*) itself<sup>27</sup> is an embodiment of Sri\*.

(2) As to her preoccupation, specifically, with royal virtues,<sup>28</sup> the Brahmanas\* again present further information. The Mitravinda\* sacrifice (*SB*\* 11,4,3,1ff.), in which the sacrificer "finds Mitra" (stanza 20) who is here connected with *ksatram*\* ("nobility," probably royal power), has its mythological setting in an account of the birth of Sri\*. Born from the austerities of Prajapati\*,<sup>29</sup> the gods "set their minds on her" (stanza 1). Then, in a strange moment the gods are usually, as in the case of Usas\* or Vac\* (see n. 29), more inclined to protect their sisters from their father's incestuous designs<sup>30</sup> the gods desire to kill her and dispossess her of her qualities. Prajapati\* stops them, however, by letting them know that one can take from a woman while leaving her alive! So the gods each claim an appropriate share: "Agni then took her food, Soma her royal power [*rajyam*\*], Varuna\* her universal sovereignty [*samrajyam*\*], Mitra her noble rank [*ksatram*\*], Indra her power [*balam*], Brhaspati\* her holy lustre [*brahmavarcasam*], Savitr\* her kingdom [*rastram*\*], Pusan\* her fortune [*bhaga*], Sarasvati\* her plentifulness [*pusti*\*], and Tvastr\* her forms or manifestations [*rupani*\*]" (stanza 3). Thus despoiled, she complains to Prajapati\*, who tells her: "Do thou ask it back from them by sacrifice" (4). She then makes a distinct offering to each god (5), and they all appear before her. Reciting their names forward and backward (6-7), and then

<sup>27</sup> Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, p. 136, citing *Aitareya Brahmana*\* passages identifying Sri\* with *rastram*\*.

<sup>28</sup> Gonda, *Early Visnism*\*, pp. 182 and 186, refers to the "virtues" as "power substances"; see also his *Some Observations on the Relations between "Gods" and "Powers" in the Veda a propos of the Phrase Sunuh\** *Sahasah*\* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957). His term is more "magical," mine which I will stick to more "ethical."

<sup>29</sup> Like other prominent goddesses in the Brahmanas\*, Usas\* and Vac\*; see Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, pp. 20-23.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

invoking them one at a time (8-17), she implores them for the return of her qualities.

Clearly the virtues involved include those that are royal, even though the declared purpose of the sacrifice is to "find Mitra." The list of ten deities and ten qualities would appear resistant to trifunctional analysis, but when the ritual orientation of the Brahmana \* text is considered, several concordances with typical trifunctional lists suggest themselves.<sup>31</sup> Agni and Soma, connected with the sacrifice, fall easily into place as additions superimposed on the first level.<sup>32</sup> Brhaspati's\* position next to Indra probably reflects the ancient Vedic pairing of these two divinities<sup>33</sup> and the predictable priestly concern that Indra not stand alone.<sup>34</sup> In fact, a similar principle is found in certain trifunctional passages which place *brahmavarcasam*, "brahmic" or "holy luster," alongside second-function virtues. Thus, according to *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 11,4,4,11: "If he [the sacrificer] think, 'There has been that which was disconnected in my sacrifice,' let him believe, 'That makes for my prosperity [*sri\**]; Prosperity, surrounded by splendor [*tejas*], fame [*yasas\**], and holy lustre [*brahmavarcasam*], will accrue to me." And, in a passage (*TS* 7,1,8,2) where the goddess *Sraddha\**, "Faith" or "Confidence," plays much the same role for a rsi\* as *Sri\** does for a king: "Atri had *Sraddha\** for divinity [*sraddhadeva\**]. When sacrificing, the four vigors [*catvari\* viryani\**] did not come to him: spiritual force [*tejas*], physical force [*indriyam*], holy lustre

31 Cf. *RV\** 10,125,1-3, where *Vac\**, referring to herself as the "queen" (*rastri\**), announces that she "sustains" (*bibharmi*) not only the "canonical" deities (see below, n. 34), but Agni, Soma, *Tvstr\**, *Pusan\**, and *Bhaga*.

32 Cf. the place of Agni and Soma in *SB\** 1,6,3,15, discussed below.

33 See Harms-Peter Schmidt, *Brhaspati\* und Indra: Untersuchungen zur vedisehen Mythologie und Kulturgeschichte* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968); Charles Drekmeier, *Kingship and Community in Early India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 26-43.

34 Again, see *RV\** 10,125,1, the famous verse where *Vac\** says: "I sustain *Varuna\** and *Mitra*, *Indra* and *Agni*, and the pair of *Asvins\**."

[*brahmavarcasam*], and proper food [*annadyam* \*]." Then, presumably with the support of his "Confidence" in the sacrifice, Atri sings a four-part hymn to Soma and obtains the "vigors." Finally on the level of the third function, where the goddess Sarasvati\* maintains a logical rapport with "plentifulness," the proliferation of additional deities Savitr\*, Pusan\*, Tvastr\* also finds a partial explanation in the Brahmana\* literature. *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 7,2,2,12, citing *Vajasaneyi-Samhita\** 12,72, adds Pusan\* directly to the five "canonical" gods (see n. 34), just as Sri's\* "forms," which Tvastr\* appropriates, usually range themselves in the province of the third function.<sup>35</sup> Savitr\*, for his part, bestows gifts. It is interesting that all the deities connected here with the third function are (excepting Sarasvati\*) Adityas\*, unlike the unincluded Asvins\*. Sri\*, it seems, will concern herself only with the most sovereign deities (the Adityas\*) and with the deities connected with the sacrifice (Agni, Soma [who is also termed Raja\*], and Brhaspati\*) in accord with the Brahmanas'\* sacrificial orientation.

It is quite likely, then, that Sri\*, in a different way from the "trivalent" goddesses Sarasvati\* or Vac\*, does bear a close relationship to deities who represent the three functions. One difference can be attributed to the ritualism of the Brahmana\* texts, but the second is directly connected to the specific gift which Sri\* bestows: royalty. Adityas\* replace the Asvins\*.<sup>36</sup> So, too, the Asvins'\* epic sons Nakula and Sahadeva will "actually" be Indras. Yet it is not so much the different divinities that hold the tripartite structure together in its relation to Sri\* as the virtues with which these gods are connected. Here the trifunctional meanings are transparent enough on the third (forms, plentifulness, good fortune, kingdom [that is, subjects] and

<sup>35</sup> In the present passage, good "forms" in cattle are referred to (stanza 17); see above on royal wives as a "form" of Sri\*.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Mbh.* 12:217,41: Bali tells Indra, referring to his former sovereignty and relation with Sri\*: "Singly I bore the energies [*tejamsi*\*] of all twelve of the illustrious Adityas\*."

second (power) levels. The first level contains surprises. But in relation to Sri's \* concern with royalty, it is significant for the Brahmana\* literature that Mitra be associated with *ksatram\** rather than Indra and that Varuna\* represent the universal sovereignty (*samrajyam\**), which Sri\* may than bestow. On this level it appears most clearly, especially considering Soma's association with *rajyam\**, that Sri\*in contrast to the trivalent goddessesconcerns herself specifically with virtues of royalty.

(3) The third pointthat Sri's\* trivalence does not so much lie in incorporating the virtues as in conferring or transferring themwould seem to be endangered by the myth just cited. To be sure, the gods take these qualities from Sri\* (their first impulse is to do so by killing her, surely implying some notion that she "incorporates" them); and to Sri\* they restore them. But there is never a question of her putting the virtues into effect on her own, whether to defend or to regain them. Rather, she wins everything back by sacrifice and formula. Sri\* is then a repository for those virtues specifically connected with sovereignty which, in accord with the general outlook of the Brahmanas\*, can be conferred or transferred, through the medium of the sacrifice, to othershere to "the gods," elsewhere, as we have seen, to a king, to Sri's\* choice.<sup>37</sup> Thus, where she does incorporate an assortment of virtues, they are important not as a measure of her own stature but as a complement to the virtues of her royal counterpart(s). On this account, then, her relation to the three functions stands in marked contrast to the trivalence of the Indo-Iranian goddesses discussed by Dumézil, for instance Aredvi Sura\* Anahita\* ("The Humid, the Strong, the Immaculate") or Sarasvati\* who, along with her third-function affiliations, is also called *vrtraghni\** ("[female] Slayer of Vrtra\*");

37 A devotionalized form of this tendency occurs in *Sriukta\** 10, part of this text's "early" portion (see above, n. 19), where one prays that Sri\* may *bestow* various virtues: "May we attain our heart's wish and intention and truth of speech [*vacas\* satyam*]; may Sri\* allot me the form of cattle and of food [*pasunam\* rupam\* annasya*] as well as fame [*yasas\**]."



*RV* \* 6:61,7) and *dhinam\* avitri\** ("auxiliary of pious thoughts"; *RV*\* 6:61,4).38

(4) Finally comes the manner in which *sri\**, as a virtue or a goddess, follows after the other virtues. Actually, the *Asvamedha\** passage cited at the beginning of this section is the best *Brahmana\** illustration, but there is an interesting passage (referred to in n. 32), in which *sri\** rounds out the other qualities. Let us also note the significant context. After Indra slew the divine artisan *Tvastr's\** tricephalic son *Visvarupa\** (*SB*\* 1,6,3,2), *Tvastr\** sought revenge by creating Indra's arch foe *Vrtra\**. The latter was born from the combination of Soma poured into the fire (*Agni*) and "came to be possessed of *Agni* and Soma, of all sciences [*vidyas\**], all glory [*yasas\**], all nourishment [*annadyam\**], all prosperity [*sri\**; 8]." Indra then cajoled *Agni* and Soma into coming over to him (13), and "after them went forth all the gods (*devas\**), all the sciences, all *yasas\**, all nourishment, all *sri\**: thus... Indra became what Indra now is" (15).

This myth bears certain resemblances to the much more clearly structured myth of *Markandeya\* Purana\** 5, which Dumézil finds so satisfying and which I will discuss below. There again Indra's virtues are bound up with his conquests of *Visvarupa\** and *Vrtra\** and his accession to world sovereignty. The virtues in the *Puranic\** myth are unmistakably trifunctional, and here too such an interpretation can be proposed with prosperity and nourishment on the third level, *yasas\** (fame or glory) on the second, and *devas\** and *vidyas\** on the first. The two latter terms present the only stumbling blocks, but it seems that the authors have aligned *devas\**, the *Devasin* particular *Agni* and Soma (stanza 8) with the sacrificial ordering of the cosmos and *vidyas\** with the principles of the "scientific" ordering of the sacrifice itself. Whereas in the *Markandeya\** myth, Indra, after the restoration of his virtues, is joined by his "great wife" (*Saci\**, *Sri\** see below), here the last of the virtues to come to him is his

38 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 103-7.

*sri* \*. However, the pattern of *Sri*\*, as a goddess, following the other virtues will have its clearest expressions in the *Mahabharata*\*.

Thus, despite *Sri*'s\* connection with trifunctional groups of virtues and her importance to kings, the Brahmanas\* give us no royal mythology to connect these two concerns. In the epic, the myth most frequently used to show *Sri*'s\* involvement with the virtues and with kings has Brahmana\* antecedents. But in the Brahmanas\*, the myth is told about other goddesses than *Sri*\*: *Apas*\*, *Bhumi*\*,<sup>39</sup> *Daksina*\*,<sup>40</sup> *Vedi*\* (*TS* 6,2,7-8), and above all *Vac*\*. The latter, whose capacity to make "choices" is already recognized in the *Rg*\* *Veda*,<sup>41</sup> is, in the Brahmanas\*, a much sought-after figure who must frequently choose between two classes of beings. In their earliest form, the conflicts in these stories are probably most consistently represented in the Indo-Iranian opposition between the *Devas* and *Asuras*, an opposition which echoes through the Brahmanas\* no less than the epics and Puranas\*. *Vac*\* is one of a vast number of blessings (usually female) that the gods must win over from their adversaries, and several *Satapatha*\* *Brahmana*\* passages tell how she comes over to the gods (whether by fair means or foul).<sup>42</sup> The common theme is that the goddess' chosen ones, inevitably the *Devas*, have triumphed on a winner-take-all basis.

To make matters as simple as possible, I will follow the hints of Gösta Johnsen and Dumézil<sup>43</sup> and refer to this scenario as the "*Svayamvara*\* mythologem," for just as in the *Svayamvara*\*?,

39 See Gösta Johnsen, "Varuna\* and Dhrtarastra\*," *[I]*, IX (1965-1966), 225, n. 47, mentioning the *Bhumi*\* and *Apas*\* passages.

40 Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, p. 32, n. 1.

41 See *RV*\* 10,71,4: "Many a one who sees [*pasyan*\*] has not perceived [*dadarsa*\*] *Vac*\*, and many a one who hears has not heard her. But to another she has betaken herself [*tanvam*\* *sasre*] like an amorous, finely dressed wife to her husband."

42 See the fundamental discussion by Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, pp. 31-39.

43 Johnsen, "Varuna\* and Dhrtarastra\*," pp. 254-55, remarking on the seeming nonhistoricity of an actual *Svayamvara*\* marriage rite, and Dumézil, *ME*, I, 122.

at least in its name,<sup>44</sup> the emphasis is on a feminine figure, goddess rather than heroine, "choosing" her partner (or partners)<sup>45</sup> amidst a wooing contest. It is this mythologem that the epic poets found of the widest use in accounting for the relationship between the two concerns of the Brahmanic \* Sri\*: her interests in virtues and in kings.

### Sri\* and Her Choices

In the *Mahabharata*\*, the most concentrated assemblage of myths connected with Sri\* is found in the *Santiparvan*\*. A good deal of the material in this open-ended book is probably fairly late by epic standards, but there are reasons to suspect that the myths concerning Sri\* contain old themes and material. As Dumézil says of one of them,<sup>46</sup> they were probably not invented by the epic poets.

The first account is structured according to the familiar theme of the virtues and the next (which actually comprises four accounts) is held together mainly by the theme of Sri's\* inconstancy. This latter motif is not connected with Sri\* in the Brahmanas\*, but as it develops it is not unrelated to the theme of the virtues.

(1) Advised by the divine chaplain Brhaspati\* that the only way he can gain world sovereignty from the Daitya-Asura Prahlada\* is to go to him disguised as a brahmin, become his

<sup>44</sup> Jean Przyluski, "Le Prologue-cadre des *Mille et une nuits* et le thème du *svayamvara*\*, " *JA*, CCV (1924), 109-10, and Marie Delcourt, "The Legend of Sarpedon and the Saga of the Archer," *HRJ*, II (1962), 40, are of the opinion that the *Svayamvara*\* has nothing of "self-choice" but the name. There is, however, a tradition that Draupadi\* does "choose," at least negatively, when she refuses to accept Karna\* as a suitor. The CE has valid grounds for rejecting this passage (see 1:178,17 and 1827\*), but it accords well with other passages concerning Draupadi\* and Karna\*.

<sup>45</sup> In the Brahmanas\*, Vac\* goes over to the Devas, not to Indra in particular; but probably he is the chief beneficiary. In the epic, Sri\*, like Draupadi\*, chooses just one husband: Indra or Arjuna; but in each case, the beneficiaries are not only these two, but the gods in general or the Pandavas\*. As to her relations with the Asuras, see the following section.

<sup>46</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 122.

disciple, and ask for his behavior (*sila* \*; 12:124,42), Indra carries out-these instructions to the letter. Honor bound to grant all wishes of brahmins, the virtuous Prahlada\* reluctantly agrees to part with this most precious commodity. "And while he was thinking,...an embodied energy [*tejas*], having the form of a shadow, abandoned his body. Prahlada\* asked that great form, 'Who are you?' It answered, 'Surely I am [your] behavior [*sila*\*]; abandoned by you I am leaving. I will dwell blamelessly, O king, in that best of brahmins [Indra]" (12:124,45-47ab). "Behavior's" departure is followed by the exodus of other virtues, each one explaining to Prahlada\* that it must go after its predecessor. Thus, coming after (1) *sila*\* are: (2) dharma (also called a *tejas*), (3) *satya*, "truth" ("blazing up with *tejas*"), (4) *vrttam*\*, "activity," and (5) *balam*, "strength." Last but not least:

A goddess made of effulgence [*prabhamayi*\* *devi*\*] came out from his body. The chief[*indra*] of the Daityas asked her [who she was]. So she said, "Sri\* I dwelt happily, O hero, in you who are truly mighty [*tvayi satyaparakrame*\*].<sup>47</sup> Abandoned by you, I will leave ...."

Then the fear of the high-souled Prahlada\* became visible, and he asked her besides: "Where are you going, O Lotus Dweller? Surely you are a goddess devoted to truth, the supreme goddess of the world. Who is that best of brahmins? I wish to know the truth."

Sri\* said, "This *brahmacarin*\* who was instructed by you is Sakra\*. You are robbed by him, O splendid one, of that sovereignty [*aisvaryam*\*] which was yours in the triple world. Surely it is by *sila*\* that all the worlds were subdued by you, O virtuous one. Knowing this, your *sila*\* was stolen by Mahendra .... Just like dharma and *satya*, *vrttam*\* and *balam*, so do I have my root in *sila*\*, O one of great wisdom. Never doubt it" [12:124,54-60]

<sup>47</sup> I follow Ganguli-Roy and Monier-Williams (s.v. *satya*) here, although if *satyaparakrama*\* could be taken as a *dvandva* used adjectivally (a rarity according to William Dwight Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1889; repr. 1960], 2d ed., sec. 193b), the passage would make more sense: "I dwelt happily in you [when you were] possessed of truth and might," that is, two of the virtues (*balam* = *parakrama*\*) he has just lost.

A few observations will indicate some of the significance of this passage, so reminiscent, in the exodus of virtues, of *Satapatha \* Brahmana\** 1,6,3,1-15.<sup>48</sup> First, it is striking that the initial three virtues to leave Prahlada\*, and only these three, are characterized by their *tejas*, a virtue consistently represented in the Brahmanas\* as one of the first function. Here, too, the virtues which *tejas* characterizes seemingly fall into the same range. *Sila\**, however, is clearly differentiated from the other two, being the root (*mula\**) of all the virtues and a general requirement for association with Sri\*.<sup>49</sup> *Satya* and dharma, a pair found frequently in the epic, present problems that I will reserve for the next chapter; but there is little doubt that even in their ordinary meaning "truth" and "justice" they are qualities connected with sovereignty. From this point on, the trifunctional list of virtues follows in descending order. *Vrttam\** has to do with activity, even "good deeds" as Ganguli-Roy translate it; and *balam* signifies sheer physical force. On the level of the second function, the latter constitute a pair that would seem to parallel the two warrior types analyzed by Dumézil: *vrttam\**-Arjuna-Achilles; *balam*-Bhima\*-Heracles.<sup>50</sup> The third function's pattern appeared before in *Satapatha\** 11,4,4,11.<sup>51</sup> Sri\* subsumes it. As a virtue she rounds out the list, and as a goddess of all the virtues "she" is the only one who bears an epithet of divinity she follows where the others have gone.

I might also mention two points where this myth runs parallel to prominent epic themes, showing how patterns from diverse portions of the epic reinforce each other. First, there is a strong

48 See above (4) following n. 38.

49 For a similar concept, cf. below, n. 57, where *Vrtti\** (Character, Conduct) is the *puroga\** of all the goddesses associated with Sri\*; cf. also *Mbh.* 17:3 where Yudhisthira\*, upon entering heaven, is joined with "prosperity" (*sri\**; 8-9) and covers the *lokas* with his *tejas*, *yasas\**, and perfection of conduct (*vrttasampada\**; 27).

50 On the two warrior types, see Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 5, 59, 82-93. Arjuna is the epic's model for virtuous activity (*pravrtti\**), and Bhima\* incarnates *balam* at birth (1:114,8 etc.).

51 See above following n. 34.

hint that the most crucial of all these "virtues," even more crucial than *sila* \*, is Sri\*, the only one whose departure brings fear (*bhayam*) to Prahlada's\* face. This final blow to Prahlada's\* *aisvaryam*\* is reminiscent of the hopelessness which overcomes the Pandavas\* at the loss of Draupadi\*, Yudhisthira's\* last stake, in the dice game.<sup>52</sup> Second, the brahmin disguise which Indra assumes to win Sri\* is the same as that which the Pandavas\* assume when they win Draupadi\*. As Biardeau says, the latter disguise indicates the unification, in Arjuna (and his brothers), of both the *brahman* and *ksatra*\* powers.<sup>53</sup> One might say, in addition, that both the myth and the epic point to a unification of these "two powers" with the third-function themes represented by Sri\* and Draupadi\*.

This resonant but rather schematic narrative gives an account of Sri's\* departure from Prahlada's\* body, but tells little if anything about her coming to Indra. The gap is soon filled.

(2) *Santiparvan*\* 215 to 221 finds Bhisma\* telling Yudhisthira\* about further incidents in the career of Indra. On each of four occasions the chief of the gods encounters a former foe Prahlada\*, Bali, Namuci, and Bali again who has been "abandoned by Sri\*," but who, made wiser by defeat, confronts Indra with the most unsettling truths about the precariousness of his sovereignty. From Bali, Indra learns both times that dispassion comes from the insight that everything results from Time (*kala*\*; 217,5-59; 220,21-87). In the first meeting with Bali, Sri\* herself tells Indra: "Neither the Creator nor the Ordainer (*dhatr*\*, *vidhatr*\*) governs me; it is Time alone which causes my goings-about" (*paryayan*\*; 218,10).

The second of the meetings with Bali informs us the most about Sri's\* movements. The account opens by referring to the tradition that Bali sustained his defeat "when the [three] worlds were bestridden by Visnu\*," thus making Indra king of the gods

<sup>52</sup> See Johnsen, "Varuna\* and Dhrtarastra\*," p. 254 and, in agreement, Dumézil, *ME*, I, 118.

<sup>53</sup> See above, Chapter 3, n. 4.

(220,7). This reference to a "higher" divine entity than Indra is not the only one in this passage, and henceforth at least one of the two main gods Visnu \* and Siva\* will be present in most of the myths we discuss.

As king of the gods, then, but as yet (apparently) without Sri\*, Indra sets out with all the classes of gods in train. Touring the worlds, he chances (?) on Bali in a seaside mountain cave (220, 11), and the two hold their lengthy talk on the all-powerfulness of Time. But now, instead of Sri\* coming directly to Bali's home, as she does in the first meeting, her appearance demands a new setting.

We are now introduced to Narada\*, one of Visnu's\* constant and most devoted *bhaktas*, with his ability to "rove at will through the three worlds" (221,5). "On a certain daybreak, rising up and wishing to perform pure ablutions, he went to the Ganges where it issued from the immovable pass [ ? *dhruvadvara*\*], and plunged in" (221,6). The compound in question presents several possibilities. As the Ganguli-Roy translation says (with Dutt apparently following): "The commentator [Nilakantha\*] is silent. Probably a Himalayan pass. The vernacular translators think it is the region of the Pole-star that is intended. Dhruva is a name of Brahman [Brahma\*] the Creator. It may mean, therefore, the river as it issues out of Brahman's *loka* or region. The Puranic myth is that issuing from the foot of Visnu\*, the stream enters the kamandalu of Brahman and thence [goes] to earth."<sup>54</sup> It could also be simply the same as Gangadvara\*, an epic name for the present Hardwar; but I think Ganguli is right in supposing that the context implies someplace more Himalayan. The term, however, seems to refer more to a mythological spot than to any of the venerable "sources" of the Ganges visited by pilgrims: Gomukh near Gangotri, Badrinath on the Bhagirathi\* tributary, or Kedarnath on the Mandakini\*. But whether an "immovable Pass," a specific "Dhruva pass," a "gate of Brahma\*," or an old name for a pilgrimage spot, one

54 Ganguli-Roy, trans., *Mahabharata*, IX: *Santi Parva*, 156, n. 2.

is certain that the waters are pure, probably purer than anywhere else since Narada \*?the literal translation of whose name is "Water-Giver"55was free to go wherever he chose. In fact, this is the crucial point. Indra's encounter with Sri\* will occur at a spot where the Ganga's\* waters are purest, the river's earthly source. It is probably no accident that this is the spot at which other mythsone of which I will turn to shortlylocate their meetings.56

For what one might call no apparent reason, Indra too has come to this very same bank (*tiram\**; 221,7). There the two of them, the god and the rsi\*, perform their ablutions and recitations and listen to the meritorious narratives of the attendant *devarsis\**. Then, at sunrise, just as they are standing to sing the Sun god's praises, they see in the sky (*akase\**) a light to the west equal to that of the sun. This is Sri\*, seated on Visnu's\* chariot, looking like the solar disc, attended by numerous Apsarases, and illumining the three worlds with her unrivaled brightness (221,11-12). When Indra, as usual (cf. 12:218,1-8), fails to recognize her, she introduces herself by a total of sixteen names57 and tells Indra that she has come over to him because

55 See Gonda, *Early Visnuism*, p. 221.

56 Cf. *Vam\**. P. 50,12-18: after Sri\* goes over to Bali (49,15), Indra goes to Brahms and asks: "In what place may I win great prosperity [*udaya*] in a short time?" The answer: "in the world of mortals" (*martye*). Indra then goes to a bank of the Mahanadi\* ("Great River"), a name frequently applied to the Ganges, although also to other rivers (see s.v., Böhtlink and Roth). Here the Ganges is almost certainly meant. For one thing, Mahanadi\* is referred to as "daughter of the divine sage" (*surarsikanya\**; 18), probably Bhagiratha\*. Where Indra goes, the river flows "back to Himalaya\* in the guise of water" (18). And Mahanadi\* is where King Gaya performed many sacrifices (15 and 16): according to the *Mahabharata\**, Gaya's sacrifices were performed at Brahmasaras, a *tirtha\** where all rivers take their rise (*samudbheda*; 3:93, 12), a spot further (according to Sörensen's *Index*) placed on the Ganges (13:25,1726 = CE 13:26,40?), but also on the Payosni\* (3:121,9-14).

57 12:221,20-22; cf. 218,7-8 where she has five names. Of the sixteen, four *Sraddha\** (Faith), *Dhrti\** (Constancy), *Vijiti* (Victory), and *Sannati* (Humility) are names found among the eight goddesses (the "foremost" [*puroga\**] being *Vrtti\** [Conduct]) who, "distinguished from but dependent on her" (221,81), accompany Sri\* to Indra (82).



of the declining morals of the Asuras. The account concludes with a sort of golden age that begins when Indra, Sri\*, and Narada\* return to heaven and rejoin the gods who have assembled to greet them "at a pure and revered spot" (*sucāu\* cabhyarcite\* dese\**; 221,86).

Whatever the peculiarities of these two accounts, the first of which ends quite differently,<sup>58</sup> it is still true that Sri\* is operating largely within the same self-choice mythologem that earlier pertained primarily to Vac\*. One might object that Sri's\* choices take her from one Asura (at a time) to the single figure of Indra while Vac\* moves from class to class. But this difference is more apparent than real: as Sri\* says in the second account, because the Asuras were initially highly virtuous, "I dwelt with them for many yugas, from [the time of] the creation of creatures" (*prajasarga\**; 221,48). We have, in fact, seen her associated with three successive generations of Asura chiefs: with Prahlada\*, Virocana, and Bali. And, as the second version indicates, the gods all gathered to welcome her when she comes with Indra and Narada\* to heaven.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, as regards the "free choice" element of the Svayamvara\* theme, she says in the first account that "Time alone causes [her] goings-about" (218,10), and, in the second, she tells Indra more pointedly: "I have come to you of my own accord" (*mam\* svayamanupraptam\**; 221,80)<sup>60</sup> Thus neither her affiliation in the second account with Visnu\* nor in the first with the rhythm of Time which *Bhagavad Gita\** 11,32 identifies with Visnu\* but which here is

58 Sri\* tells Indra that she will dwell in him always if he divides her into four portions in accord with the Vedas (12:218,19) one portion each to Earth, Ocean, Fire, and Brahmins.

59 See also above, n. 45.

60 Sri's\* autonomy is instructively compared with the cautionary words of the Sun's daughter Tapati\*; refusing the *gandharva\** mode of marriage which requires only mutual consent, she tells her suitor, King Samvarana\*, to ask her father, explaining: "I am not my own mistress [*nahamisatmano\**]; . . . I am not mistress of [my] body; . . . surely women are never independent" (*na svatantra\* hi yositah\**; 1: 161, 14-16).

regarded as more fundamental than "Creator or Ordainer" does anything to undercut her freedom to bestow her favor as shoe will.

These \* epic passages thus present us with a far more elaborate royal mythology concerning Sri\* than is found in the priestly books of the Brahmanas\*. With it, there are certain new developments and certain basic continuities. On the one hand, Sri's\* meanderings, in accord with nothing unless it be the rhythm of Time, give her a coloring unreported in the Brahmanas\*: she is unfaithful to those she favors. Bali pointedly reminds Indra of this twice, once in each episode:

This Royal Prosperity [*rajasri\**] which you have obtained and which you consider to be incomparable formerly dwelt in me. Contrary to that [?], she does not remain in one place [*naisa\* hyekatra tisthati\**]. Indeed, she has dwelt in thousands of Indras who were superior to you. Fickle [*lola\**], having abandoned me, she has come to you....Do not brag, O Sakra\*. You should become tranquil. [If you] go on in this way, having abandoned you she will quickly go to another. [217,57-59]

From delusion [*mohat\**], you long for this Royal Prosperity [*rajasri*]. Imagined to be stable [*sthira*], she is not so for you, nor for us [*na casmakam\**], nor for others. Passing over many others, she now dwells in you. Having remained in you for a certain time, O Vasava\* [she will prove to be] inconstant [*cañcala*]. Like a cow abandoning one drinking hole, she will go again to another. [220,44-46]

As Coomaraswamy points out, this theme of fickleness later reaches such a height that "she is described as so unstable that 'even in a picture she moves,' and if she clings to Narayana\*, it is only that she may enjoy His constant changes of form (*vyuhas\** and *avataras\**)!"<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography: Sri-Lakmi\*" (see above, n. 7), P. 178; cf. the *Anusasanaparvan\** passage ( 11,19-20) cited at the beginning of this chapter.

On the other hand, there is one unbroken continuity in Sri's \* behavior: her movements are related to lists of royal virtues. In the epic, a trifunctional order is often lost (as in the first passage below) or obscured (as in the second), especially when Sri\* announces the virtues herself and declares them to be a requirement for association with her:

I dwell in truth, gift, vow, austerity, strength, and virtue. [218,12]62

I dwell in the vans and on the banners of victorious kings [*rajnam\* vijayamananam\**] of virtuous dispositions [*dharmasilanam\**], as in their dominions and cities. I always dwell in an Indra among men, one appearing (2) like a conqueror [*jitakasini*], a hero [*sure\**], unretreating in battles, O slayer of Bala. Ever do I dwell in one (1) constant in dharma [*dharmanitye*], of great intelligence [*mahabuddhau\**], pious [*brahmanyē*], humble [*prasrite\**], and (3) liberally disposed [*danasile\**]. Formerly I dwelt with the Asuras, bound by *satya* and dharma, but having seen them assume adverse natures, I have left them to reside in you. [221,23-26; probable functional traits numbered in parentheses]

But there are instances where a trifunctional ordering is apparent, especially when Sri\* is referred to in the third person. Indeed, this is most prominently the case in certain passages that show her to be independent of any requirements the three functions might be thought to impose upon her. In such cases the virtues are not positive requirements but qualities which in themselves without Sri\* are negative, which put no hold on her freedom to choose, to be fickle, and to move on in accord with the rhythm of Time. So it is that Bali, persisting with his insight that Time is Sri's\* only regulative principle, illustrates how the one, like the other, moves on irrespective of the virtues: "One who is possessed of great learning [*vidya\**] and one of little learning, one possessed of strength [*balam*] and one of little strength, one who is beautiful [*darsaniya\**] and one who is misshapen [*virupa\**], one of good fortune [*bhaga*] and one of ill

62*satye sthitasmi\* dane\* ca vrata tapasi caiva hi / parakrame\* ca dharme ca.*

fortuneTime, which is profound [*gambhira* \*], sweeps them all away by its own energy [*tejas*]" (217,18-19). The context leaves little doubt that Bali is referring to Sri\* as well as to Time.

A parallel passage makes this even clearer. As Vidura tells Dhrtarastra\* during the long, sleepless night that the latter spends dreading the prospects of war: "Surely Sri\* does not approach [*upa-srp*\*: "for intercourse"; M-W] out of fear one who is exceedingly respectable [*arya*\*, "of noble family"], one who is an excessive donor [*datr*\*], one who is a superhero [*sura*\*], one of superlative vows [*vrata*], or one claiming wisdom [*prajna*\*]" (5:39,50).<sup>63</sup> One might say that the three functions are stable while Sri\* is not. Indeed, the trifunctional character of both of these lists of virtues should be clear, the only problem being *arya*\*, "respectable," "of noble family." This and other matters with respect to specific virtues will be discussed in the next chapter. It is curious that the most trifunctional arrangements of virtues are found in passages that treat Sri\* as inconstant, perhaps indicating that if the trifunctional order is an archaic feature, then so is this inconstancy.<sup>64</sup> Or, since Sri's\* fickleness coincides with a "pessimistic" view of Time not usually associated with the Brahmanas\*, perhaps this "pessimism," preserving the archaic structure in short formulas, has reoriented the meaning of the virtues by pointing up the insufficiency of "merits" (to use the word which catches better than "virtues" the present turn of meaning) in the face of the fickle whimsbetter called the "grace" of the goddess Sri\*. That such pessimism was at least the message drawn from these passages, if not their preservative, is clear from an interpolation

63 *atyaryamatidataramatisuramativratam\* / prajnabhimaninam\* caiva srir\* bhayannopasarpati\**.

64 This theme may surface first with Vac\* who, swayed by the gods' playing of the *vina*\*, is said in *SB*\* 3,2,4,3-6 to choose them "vainly" (*mogham*) over the hymn-singing Gandharvas. See also the figure of Apala\*, "the Unprotected," a Rg\* Vedic goddess sometimes identified with Sri\* (first by Coomaraswamy, "Loathly Bride," p. 393), who comes to Indra "having hatred for her husband" (*patidvis*\*: *RV*\* 8,91,4).

made in many Northern manuscripts immediately after the words of Vidura: "Nor [does Sri \* dwell] in one of excessive virtues [*atigunavat\**], nor one without virtues [*nirguna\**]; she does not desire [a number of] virtues [*gunan\**], nor does she become attached to the absence of virtues [*nairgunya\**]. Mad like a blind cow, Sri\* abides most anywhere" (*Udyogaparvan*, 257\*). The cow simile had certainly caught on.

Sri\* and Draupadi\*

Returning to a central problem: how seriously are we to take the epic's insistence that it is Sri\* who is incarnate in Draupadi\*? Before I analyze the myths and legends that account for Draupadi's\* divine antecedents, let us recall what Dumézil regards as the second stage of this transposition. The trivalent theology of the Indo-Iranian goddess provides the first stage, which is grafted onto Indra's wife originally not Sri\* but Indrani\* or Saci\* who, remaining unique, takes human form to rejoin her husband, who is essentially one but in appearance five. Does Sri\* really need these figures to back her up?

Two prominent myths and one legend tell of Draupadi's\* divine identity. The legend and one of the myths were mentioned in Chapter 3, and the myth again in Chapter 4. There they were examined in connection with Siva\*, Visnu-Narayana\*, Vyasa\*, and Krishna, with comment stimulated chiefly by the insights of Biardeau. Now, keeping these earlier results in mind, we must face the questions raised by Dumézil.

(1) The popular legend<sup>65</sup> tells the story of the overanxious maiden Draupadi\* in a former life whose repeated prayers to Siva\* for a husband result in her obtaining five husbands, one for each entreaty. The two versions in the Critical Edition, both told by Vyasa\*, are much the same, differing only in a few matters of phraseology.

65 See above, Chapter 3, n. 8.

According to Vyasa \*, there once dwelt in a hermitage a certain unnamed rsi\* with an equally unnamed "daughter [kanya\*]<sup>66</sup> of slender waist, fair lips, fair brows, and endowed with every virtue" (*sarvagunanvita\**; 157,667). Though beautiful and chaste (*rupavati\* sati\**; 7), she was unmarried, and to get a husband she prayed to Mahadeva\* "over and over again: 'I desire a husband endowed with every virtue'" (*patim\* sarvagunopetamicchamiti\* punah\* punah\**; 10). honorific descriptions will be discussed later.

(2) Fortunately, with the "first" myth, which Dumézil takes to be the oldest, I can be brief since Dumézil has twice produced translations of the text and commentaries upon it.<sup>68</sup> The passage, from the fifth section of the *Markandeya\* Purana\**, is structured by the theme of the three sins of the warrior.<sup>69</sup> First, guilty of brahminicide, Indra's *tejas* ("spiritual force") abandons him and goes over to the god Dharma; second, guilty of breaking a warrior's agreement, his *balam* ("physical force") leaves and goes to Vayu\*; and third, having violated the brahmani\* Ahalya\*, his *rupam\** ("beauty") leaves him for the Asvins\*. At the request of the Earth, who is oppressed by incarnated demons, the same gods incarnate these portions of *Indra* in Yudhisthira\*, Bhima\*, and the Pandava\* Twins respectively, while Indra donates a portion of his own, the remainder of his *viryam\** ("vigor, heroism"), to account for the "central" Pandava\*? Arjuna. Dumézil has discussed these relocations of Indra's virtues admirably. Let us simply recall that this scene

<sup>66</sup> South Indian vernacular versions of the epic alter the story: Draupadi\* in a previous birth was named Nalayini; married to a rsi\*-leper, she served him dutifully until, pleased, he assumed a comely form and they enjoyed sex. But when he renounced conjugal life she grew angry, and he cursed her to have five husbands. Here we have not an overanxious maiden but a sex-starved wife; see M. V. Subramanian, *Vyasa and Variations: The Maha-bharata Story* (Madras: Higginbothams, 1967), p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> This description does not occur in the second version (1:189,41-49).

<sup>68</sup> Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 74-76; *ME*, I, 113-16.

<sup>69</sup> See below, Chapters 9 and 10.

bears a resemblance to *Satapatha \* Brahmana\** 1,6,3,1 - 16 (see above, after n. 38) and proceed to the crucial conclusion: "In these five ways did the divine performer of a hundred sacrifices [Indra] incarnate himself. His highly fortunate wife [*mahabhaga\* patni\**] came out of the fire as Krsna\*. Krsna\* was the wife of Sakra\* and of none else" (*sakrasyaikasya\* sa\* patni\* krsna\* nanyasya\* kasyacit*; *Mark. P.* 5,24-25).<sup>70</sup>

Dumézil, of course, sees these verses as referring to Saci\*, and as disclosing a stage of the tradition preceding that in which Draupadi\* is connected with Sri\*.<sup>71</sup> Gonda, on the other hand, agrees with the identification, but reverses the order of precedence, saying that the passage "altered" the *Mahabharata\** version (which I will turn to next) "by declaring that it was Indra's own wife who became incarnate as Draupadi\*, without mentioning her name;...it is highly improbable that Sri\* is meant here."<sup>72</sup> It seems to me that Gonda comes the closest to representing the tenor of the *Markandeya\** passage, which is one in a series of four attempting to resolve difficult questions raised by the epic, and thus presumably raised *after* the epic. But if the *Markandeya\* Purana\** has sought to amend the epic tradition by substituting Saci\* for Sri\*, it has not made its intent clear. *Mahabhaga\** could easily describe Sri\*. As the narrative progresses, one sees that it is not so much a matter for the goddess in question of following Indra in person as of following his virtues, one of Sri's\* oldest traits. Perhaps, in placing first emphasis on clearing Draupadi\* of the charge of polyandry, the passage tones down the issue of which goddess figures behind her. Whether it be Sri\* or Saci\*, the passage is a postepic effort to smooth out one of the epic's trouble spots. There is no reason to suppose that Indrani\* or Saci\* plays any role in a second or "intermediate" stage in the construction of the transposition,

<sup>70</sup> From Manmatha Nath Dutt, trans., *A Prose English Translation of Markandeya\* Purana\** (Calcutta: Dass, 1897), p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> *ME*, I, 121-22.

<sup>72</sup> Gonda, *Early Visnuism*, p. 225.

or even in connection with Draupadi's \* favoritism for Arjuna.<sup>73</sup> In Sri's\* relation to Indra and in particular to the virtues both matters can be accounted for. As to the nonappearance of Siva\* and for that matter of Visnu\*, these can also be easily explained if the myth is viewed as a late effort to make a tight argument for the clearance of Draupadi's\* name. If Sri\* is removed from the drama, this eliminates the need for any "approval" on the part of her consort Visnu\*; and if the marriage is a thoroughly dharmic act, Siva\* need not intervene as instigator of the adharmic activity.<sup>74</sup> Their nonappearance is not a sign that the *Markandeya\* Purana\** myth is the more ancient.

(3) Certainly the *Markandeya\** myth, despite its admirably clear structure, gives no new specifics about either Sri\* or Suci\*. The myth of the five former Indras, from the *Mahabharata\**, is far more accommodating. I discussed in Chapter 4 the parallel lines between this myth and the epic dice game. Here, however, the question arises whether Sri\* has a mythology of her own and whether the myth is an old one integrated into an Indian framework. Dumézil, for instance, speaks of a "Saivite\*" coloration of the account,"<sup>75</sup> and I have insisted in Chapter 3 that it is not just Siva\* but Visnu-Narayana\* who is involved. Indeed, it would be more appropriate to reject any sectarian interpretation and speak of a "Hindu coloration."

When Drupada hears of the Pandavas\*' polyandric marriage plans with his daughter, he ventures his opinion that the union would be adharmic (1:188,7-9). Vyasa\* then takes him aside to a private chamber. There the incarnation of Narayana\* makes two revelations of the identities of the proposed partners. The second is a version of the overanxious maiden story. The first is close enough to the *Markandeya\* Purana\** account for Dumézil to assume a connection between them.

<sup>73</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 121-22.

<sup>74</sup> See above, Chapter 3.

<sup>75</sup> *ME*, I, 111.



Once, when the gods had assembled to perform a great Soma sacrifice (*sattra*) in Naimisa \* forest, Yama became the officiant in charge of slaying the animals (the *samitra*\*; 1:189,1). With Yama thus preoccupied, there were no deaths in the world's human population. Disturbed at this loss of a distinction between the human and the divine, the gods complained to Prajapati\*, who promised that as soon as Yama's work was finished the king of the dead would make up for lost time. Satisfied, the gods returned to their *sattra*.

"This strange assembly," as Dumézil puts it,<sup>76</sup> now serves as the starting point for the central narrative. The "high-powered" (*mahabalah*\*) gods, with certain exceptions, find themselves beside the Ganga\*. There they see a golden lotus which has floated downstream (189,9). Wonder-struck (*vismita*) at the sight, the heroic (*sura*\*) Indra leaves the assembly and sets out alone to follow the river upstream. There "where the Ganga\* is perennially brought forth" (*yatra ganga\* satatam\* samprasuta*\*; 189, 10), that is, the same spot at least symbolically where we have seen Indra meet Sri\* before,<sup>77</sup> he sees a weeping young woman (*yosa\* rudati*\*) who has entered the "divine Ganga\*" (*gangam\* devim*\*) to bathe. Whenever her teardrops fall on the water, they turn into lotuses of gold (189,11). Beholding this marvel, Indra asks her who she is.

The answer is a promise: "You will know me here [*iha*], O Sakra\*; who I am and why, having little luck [*mandabhagya*\*], I weep.<sup>78</sup> Follow me." (189,13). Sri\* has gone unrecognized before, always on account of that awesome radiance which makes it impossible to distinguish one perfection of femininity from another: as Bali says to Indra, "I do not know whether she is an *asuri*\*, a *devi*\*, or a *manusi*\*" (12:218,4). But here Indra has

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> See above, at nn. 54-55.

<sup>78</sup> This promise (note the *iha*), and the mythological convergences discussed in the following, leave me unconvinced by J. A. B. van Buitenen's remark that "it does not become clear who she is"; van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*\*, I 465, note to 189, 10ff.

a better and more specific reason for failing to know her. Sri \* is appearing as her own opposite, one might almost say in disguise: *mandabhagya\**, literally "having an impoverished share," and weeping, she is the very antithesis of what one would expect if he were looking for the goddess of Prosperity whose "share," one might say, is indicated by her name.

Led by the tearful girl, Indra soon sees a sight now familiar: a handsome youth and another young woman, Siva\* (sometimes called the lord of tears) and his consort Parvati\*, seated not far off on a Himalayan mountain peak playing dice. Carelessly, Indra flings him a challenge, what may be no more than his standard, if boastful, form of address: "Know that this entire universe stands under my power. I am the lord" (*mamedam\* tvam\* viddhi visvam\* bhuvanam\* vase\* sthitam / iso\* 'hamasmiti\**; 189,15). Undisturbed, Siva\* continues his game, managing only a smile and a glance at the indignant Indra. The glance alone, however, is enough to leave Indra paralyzed, standing there "like a stake" (*sthanur\*-iva*; 189, 16), apparently a pun on one of Siva's\* names. And there Indra stands until the dice game is finished, at which point Siva\* decides to quell Indra's pride (*darpa*; 189,17).

This segment of the myth points toward one of the features that has led Dumézil to speak of a "Saivite coloration." As he says: "Indra's sin...is a lack of respect, an involuntary one, toward a superior god.... That cannot be old. The mythology of the Brahmanas\* certainly knows the sins of Indra. It has even drawn up inventories of them. No item is of this type."<sup>79</sup> This seems to suggest, in particular, that the theme of Indra's three sins has been submerged beneath a lesson in Siva's\* superiority.

We saw in Chapters 3 and 4, however, that Siva's\* part is well integrated with that of Sri\*. Let us now observe their roles more closely. Siva\* first tells the weeping girl to bring Indra to him. But "scarcely touched by her" (*sprstamatrastaya\**), Indra's limbs are all loosened (*srastairangaih\**), and he falls to the ground.

79 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 112.

This mysterious touch does not fulfill Siva's \* command to bring Indra to him and seems strange in the text. In fact, Siva\* seems to disregard its consequences when he tells the supposedly disabled Indra that "as your strength [*balam*] and heroism [*viryam*]\* are unlimited," Indra should remove a huge stone that covers a cave in a mountain peak and enter therein. Inside Indra joins four others who, like himself, are "of the splendor of Surya\*" (189, 19). Greatly distressed, he asks if he is to become like them, and Siva\*eyes widened in angeranswers: "Enter this cave, Satakratu\*; from folly [*balyal*]\* you have insulted me" (189, 21). Hearing these words, once again Indra's limbs are loosened, just as they were by the tearful Sri\* (189,22), and he shakes like a fig leaf in the wind.

Sri's\* touch is gratuitous, perhaps an anachronism in this myth; whatever its meaning, its effects are unrecorded. The theme of Indra's first contact (he does not recognize her) with Sri\* and the kingship she represents has, it seems, been reinterpreted as a lesson in divine priorities. The king of the gods learns that he is not the lord of the universe. One might say that Indra, lured by golden lotuses, has gone to find Prosperity, or Sovereignty, and has instead learned about their limitations.

Hoping for a change of heart, Indra turns to flattery. But Siva\* holds to his curse: "Here those of such behavior [*evamsila*]\*<sup>80</sup> as yours do not escape. Formerly even these were such as you. Therefore, having entered the cave all of you lie down [*sedhvam*]. Your escape shall no doubt be as follows: may you each enter a human womb. There, having performed irresistible [*? unfeasible; avisahya*] karman and having slain many other men, you shall again regain the much-valued world of Indra" (24-26).

Accepting these impositions, the four former Indras (*purvendrah*\*) speak for themselves as well as for "our" Indra, the fifth, when they ask only that they may be fathered by the gods

80 See above, following n. 46 (*sila*\* in the Prahlada\* episode).

Dharma, Vayu \*, Maghavat (a name for Indra), and the Asvins\* (27). "Our" Indra seems to solve the difficulty of how he could both be imprisoned and free, as Maghavat, to engender a human offspring, by adding: "By my heroism [*viryam\**] I shall create from myself a *purusa\** to be the fifth of these for the sake of this task."81

Siva\* then agrees to this set of proposals, "and he also appointed that young woman, desired by the world [*lokakanta\**], Sri\* herself, to be their wife among men" (189,29). Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 3, Visnu-Narayana\* gives his approval, and the way is thus prepared for the births of the Pandavas\*, of Draupadi\*, and with Visnu\* contributing his black and white hair of Krishna and Balarama\* (31).

This is the end of the myth as presented by Vyasa\*, but one must take into account the ensuing events fully to interpret it. Having concluded his exposition, Vyasa\* grants Drupada a celestial eye (*divyam\* caksuh\**) with which to see the Pandavas\* and Draupadi\* in their "meritorious bodies of old" (189,35). Presumably this would be the way they saw each other, in particular the way that Indra saw Sri\*, when, as she had promised him, he would come to know her. Yet when this was, we do not know; probably the marriage itself is the fulfillment of the promise. "Then he [Drupada] saw them [the Pandavas\*] as celestials, garlanded with golden diadems, each resembling Sakra\*, having the color of Pavaka\* [Agni] or Aditya\* [the Sun], their chaplets tied, of delightful form, youthful, broadchested and tall as palmyra trees, exceedingly adorned with dustless celestial robes and the most excellent beautiful garlands, like so many Tri-aksas\* [Rudras], Vasus, or celestial Adityas\* endowed with every virtue" (*sarvagunopapannan\**; 189,37-38). Wonder-struck, Drupada turns to his daughter, and, having admired her Srilike\* beauty, he regards her as "worthy to be

81 Note that *viryam\** is the same virtue that stabilizes the *Mark\**. *P.* version, where it is also the last accounted for and the only one which Indra must contribute by choice.

their wife for her beauty [*rupam* \*], majesty [*tejas*], and fame [*yasas*\*]."82

This conclusion sharpens our focus on a theme observed in the story of the overanxious maiden, which I will pursue more thoroughly in the next chapter. Being like the Adityas\*, Sri-Draupadi's\* husbands are *sarvagunopapanna*\*, "endowed with every virtue." Most important, Sri\* (or Draupadi\* seen as Sri\*) is the Indras' (or the Pandavas\* seen as Indras) suitable partner because of her *rupam*\* (why should it not be listed first in her case, especially as Drupada had just noticed it?), her *tejas*, and her *yasas*\*. Each of these virtues has appeared on its appropriate functional level in the preceding discussion. In contrast to the trivalent goddesses, Sri\* claims the second-function virtue of fame rather than one connected with strength. I have translated *tejas*, as "majesty" in this context, but it is the same term that has occupied the first rank in the Brahmanas\*, in the downfall of Prahlada\*, and in the birth of Yudhisthira\* from Dharma.

Dumézil thinks this myth has undergone a "clumsy Saivite\* retouching."83 But, as we have seen, it is not just a matter of Siva\*, and Dumézil overlooks some of the more peculiar features of the myth. As to the roles of Siva\* and Narayana\*, although I have adopted the term "Hindu coloration," I do not mean to confine this to a late or even "postepic" period. As I began to stress in Chapters 3 and 4 and shall re-emphasize in Part 3, I believe that oppositions and relations between Visnu\* and Siva\* are too thoroughly ingrained into the epic to be automatically explained away as interpolations. The activities of these deities seem rather to have been worked into the epic in an early, formative period of the poem's construction. When an

82 189,39: *rupatejoyasobhih\* patnimrddham\**; cf. the marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara\*, where Draupadi\* "surpassed all the beautiful women there by her form, fame, and beauty" (*sarvascabhyabhavatkrsna\* rupena\* yasasa\* sriya\**; 4:67,30).

83ME, I, 113. Although it is well integrated into the rest of the epic (see above, Chapter 4), Dumézil argues that the theme of "the multiple Indras" cannot be early and that the fundamental theme is that of the three sins; but on this, see Chapters 9 and 10 below.

Indian myth or legend is articulated through roles played by Visnu \* and/or Siva\*, it is sometimes possible to see that India has preserved ancient traditions and themes by linking them with these divinities. As Dumézil has shown, something along these lines seems to have happened, probably very early, with the Sisupala\* legend.<sup>84</sup> It is now time to see whether the same may be said of this myth concerning Sri\*.

### The Source of Sovereignty

With all its oddities and "colorations," the myth of Sri\* and the five Indras is the *only* myth in which Sri\* does something of her own, under her own name, not done by any other goddess. Comparing this myth with traditions about Sri's\* analogue in Irish tradition, a figure with whom she has often been compared before<sup>85</sup> the goddess Flaith or Flaith Érenn (Sovereignty [of Ireland]) results in some surprising parallels. Here follows a condensation of the two oldest versions of the Flaith legend.<sup>86</sup>

(1) When King Daire was told that a "son of Daire" named Lugaid would attain Ireland's Sovereignty, he gave each of his five sons this name. At the assembly of Telltown, where his sons had come to race horses, Daire learned from a Druid that "a fawn with a golden lustre" would enter the assembly and that whichever son caught it would rule. When the fawn came "into the assembly," Daire's sons pursued it until it was finally caught by Lugaid Laigde. Then snow fell, and one son went for shelter, finding a house occupied by "a huge old woman,

<sup>84</sup> See *ME*, II, 91.

<sup>85</sup> Coomaraswamy, "Loathly Bride," pp. 391-404; Krappe, "Sovereignty of Erin," pp. 448-52; Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 73-76; Dumézil, *ME*, II, 342.

<sup>86</sup> Both legends are from portions of the "Book of Ballymote," a manuscript from the fourteenth century, but containing much older material; Krappe has summarized them in "Sovereignty of Erin," pp. 444-45 and 448-49. I mainly follow his summaries, but also quote from the texts as translated by (for Lugaid Laigde) Whitley Stokes and Ernst Windisch, *Irische Texte*, III (Leipzig: Herzel, 1897), 316-23, sec. 70, and (for Niall) Whitley Stokes, "The Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedón," *Revue Celtique*, XXIV (1903), 190-207; cf. Dumézil, *ME*, II, 335-36.

...her spears of teeth outside her head, and great, old, foul, faded things upon her." Refusing to lie with her on the bed she offered, he was told he had thus severed himself from "sovereignty." After three more brothers came and went with the same events, Lugaid Laigde went and said, "I will sleep alone with thee." Having followed her to the bed, to his astonishment "it seemed to him that the radiance of her face was the sun rising in the month of May.... Then he mingled in love with her. 'Auspicious is your journey,' said she, 'I am the sovranity, and the kingship of Erin will be obtained by thee.'" The other brothers then came and all feasted "on the freshest of food and the oldest of ale."

(2) Eochaid Muigmedón, king of Ireland, had four sons by the "witch-queen" Mongfind, and one, Niall, by a captive Saxon princess. In a test to see which of them was fittest to rule, they were told by a wizard to go on a hunt. When they stopped, they cooked what they had caught and became thirsty. Fergus, the first to volunteer, "went seeking for water, till he chanced on a well" guarded by a hideous hag who would let him drink only for a kiss. This he, and two more sons of Mongfind, refused to do and they got no water; then the fourth son, Fiachra, gave her only the barest brush of a kiss, and in return got a brief moment of kingship. Last of all Niall came for water and consented to kiss and "lie with" the hag, who then turned into a beautiful woman. Asked who she was, she answered "I am Sovereignty," and told him to establish "seniority" over his brothers.

Setting these two Irish variants beside the myth of Indra and Sri \*, and recalling Indra's second meeting with Bali (B),<sup>87</sup> the parallels are obvious, especially if the myth's main narrative (1-6) and sequel ([7]-[8]) are differentiated from the problematic opening scene (A)<sup>88</sup> and the "Hindu colorations" (B-H).

<sup>87</sup> See above, n. 56 and preceding text.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Dumézil, *ME*, I, 112-13, also detaching this scene.

*Indra and Sri \**

A. The gods undergo their initial difficulties with Yama in which the world order is undermined.

1. The gods assemble at the grand sacrifice in the forest.
2. While assembled, the gods see a golden lotus drifting down the Ganges.
3. Indra, being a hero (*sura\**), sets out alone to find out where it came from.
4. The lotuses lead Indra to the source of the Ganges, where he has been before (with Narada\* [B]), as, presumably, have the four other Indras before him.
5. Presumably like the former Indras, "our" Indra sees a young woman who is not her "better self," weeping and "having little luck." He does not know who she is.
- B. She takes him before Siva\*.
- C. Indra boasts to the higher god
- D. Siva\* paralyzes Indra with his glance.
- E. Siva\* tells the weeper to bring Indra to him (which she never does).
6. Scarcely touched by her, Indra's limbs are "loosened" and he falls to the ground.
- F. Ignoring this, Siva\* tells Indra to remove a rock from a cave.
- G. Told to enter, Indra's limbs are loosened again by Siva's\* words.
- H. Siva\*, with Narayana's\* collusion, determines the fate of the five Indras and of Sri\* to be born in human wombs.

*Lugaid (L), Niall (N), and Flaith*

1. The brothers assemble for a test of who should be sovereign: quest for the fawn (L), hunt (N).
2. A fawn of golden luster passes through the assembly (L); all enter the forest (L and N) to chase it (L).
3. Lugaid Laigde alone succeeds in capturing and eating the fawn (L).
4. Niall is the last of all his brothers to go after water, to a well (N); Lugaid Laigde is the last of his brothers to seek shelter in a house where, in special abundance, there is ale for the asking (L).
5. Like their brothers, Niall meets a horrible hag at the well (N), Lugaid at the house (L). She is not recognized.
6. Niall must kiss and lie with her (N); Lugaid must lie with her (L).



*Indra and Sri \**

[7] The Panadavas\* are revealed to Drupada as Indras, "kings."

[8] Draupadi\* is revealed to Drupada, either as she would have looked when, as Sri\*, she fulfilled her promise to Indra that the latter would "know" her, or else as she looks now, fulfilling the promise through the marriage itself.

[9] Draupadi\* becomes the Pandavas'\* wife-in-common (no connection with Yudhisthira's\* seniority). Sri\* comes with Indra and Narada\* to heaven where the gods meet her in a "pure and revered spot," beginning a golden age under Indra's sovereignty (B).

*Lugaid (L), Niall (N), and Flaith*

7 The obligation for kingship is thus met (N and L).

8. The former hag reveals herself as the Sovereignty of Ireland (N and L).

9. The water (N), or the ale (L), is shared by all the brothers, but sovereignty has been given to only one.

Thus, beyond the roles of Siva\* and Narayana\* may be an archaic Indo-Irish, perhaps Indo-European,<sup>89</sup> myth or legend of sovereignty; but there are difficulties. First, the results of the "first contacts" with Sri\* and Flaith (item 6) are entirely different, and if there is a connection, it must result from the Indian story's postponement of her self-disclosure until after things are straightened out with Siva\*. Second, in the Irish stories the group that goes into the forest is identical with the one that benefits from the final disclosure, but the Indian story presents a disjunction. On the one hand, there are the gods who sacrifice in Naimisa\* forest, from among whom our Indra, *unlike* the

89 cf. Ferdowsi's "ancient legend" (Levy, *Epic of Kings*, pp. 81-83) in which three Pahlavans\* and other knights hunt game and come upon a "ravishing maid." Though beautiful at the start, she has entered the forest "weeping tears of blood," her father having beaten her. In fact she is a Turanian princess, and her "coming over" to Iran reminds one of myths about Vac\* and Sri\*. The Pahlavans\* argue over her and take her to Shah Kavus\* for arbitration. The latter recognizes her for the prize she is with intriguing words: "This is a mountain doe, truly a heart ravishing gazelle; but game appropriate only to the highest," and marries her himself.

Irish brothers, is the only one to set out. On the other hand, there is the group of the five Indras, four of whom, *like* the four brothers who precede Niall and Lugaid on their searches, have preceded our Indra to the watery "source" of Sovereignty. The disjunction in the Indian story is difficult to explain. Perhaps the Indian authors would not imagine other gods to have preceded Indra and been turned back by failure. Or perhaps the four "former" Indras are the ones who did precede him. The fact of the disjunction, in any case, accords well with the general impressions, first, that the forest assembly is detachable and, second, that the theme of the previous Indras is anomalous.<sup>90</sup> Finally, Sri \* herself is never described as loathsome. Moreover, within the context of the epic's myth, the reason she gives for her tearsthe loss of her former husbandsis not unsatisfactory. As Coomaraswamy has pointed out, however, Sri\* does have her unattractive opposite selves: Alaksmi\*, Kalakanni\*.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, if he is right in seeing the Vedic and Brahmanic\* Apala\* as a precursor of Sri\*, there is a precedent for Indra having a "loathly bride" who is transformed not at his touch, but by a series of operations in which the god removes her reptilian skin by drawing her through three different holes in his chariot and thus making her "sun-skinned."<sup>92</sup>

These differences and possible transformations are no less striking than the fundamental unity of outline. Moreover, the Indian and Irish accounts introduce a number of symbols that

<sup>90</sup> See above, n. 83; as argued there, the theme of the five Indras is not necessarily late. In fact, an effort to explain it along Puranic\* lines is an interpolation; see *Adiparvan\** 1916\*, following 1:189,28, where at least two (Santi\*, Sibi\*) and probably three (if Rtadhama\* = Ritudhama\*) of the four former Indras are given names which come to be those of the Indras of the fourteen Manvantaras (see *VP* 3,1).

<sup>91</sup> Coomaraswamy, "Loathly Bride," p. 395.

<sup>92</sup> *RV\** 8,91; see Coomaraswamy, "Loathly Bride," and Hanns Oertel, "Contributions from the *Jaiminiya\** *Brahmana\** to the History of Brahmaha\* Literature," pt. 2, "Indra Cures Apala\*," *JAOS*, XVIII (1897), 26-31, giving Brahmanic\* commentaries along with Sayana's\*.

are connected with sovereignty, some of which seem to be Indo-Irish and perhaps Indo-European. I have suggested that the golden lotus is an Indianization of the theme of the animal, usually wild and golden, that symbolizes and shows the way to Sovereignty.<sup>93</sup> Actually, the deer is not un-Indian. The royal deer hunt has altered many a royal destiny (Yayati\*, Samvarana\*, Samtanu\*, Pandu\*, Rama\* Dasaratha\*), although often adversely; and, as Jaiswal tells us, "the *Sri-sukta*\* calls her [Sri\*] *harini*\*, of the form of a deer, and on some Kuninda\* coins of the first century B.C. she appears with a deer by her side."<sup>94</sup> Again, in both the Irish and Indian traditions there are two liquids connected with sovereignty: water and beer, water and *soma*. In Ireland, Sovereignty, in addition to her place by the well, is depicted "wearing a golden crown and seated on a crystal throne, having before her a vat of red liquor, from which she pours a draught into a gold cup which she hands to each successive king of Ireland."<sup>95</sup> And in India, Sri\*, with her affinity for the pure waters at the source of the Ganges, may have her prototype in Apala\* who, as "a maiden coming down to the water" (*kanya\* var avayati\**), finds some *soma* (*RV\** 8,911), masticates it in what Dumézil takes as an archaic fashion,<sup>96</sup> and transmits it to Indra by mouth in fact, according to the Brahmana\* commentary (can this be the other side of Sir's\* paralyzing touch?), by a kiss.<sup>97</sup>

These Indo-Irish themes and symbols would seem to allow extension of the number of traditions that stem from a common

93 See above, n. 89; on this theme, Krappe, "Sovereignty of Erin," pp. 446-48, 450, assumes an Indo-European origin; Dumézil, *ME*, II, 336, rejects his Greek and Iranian examples.

94 Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 91.

95 T. F. O'Rahilly, "On the Origin of the Names *Érainn* and *Ériu*," *Ériu*, XIV (1943), 14.

96 Dumézil, *ME*, II, 342.

97 Oertel, "Indra Cures Apala\*," p. 27 (Satyana's\* *itihasa\** commentary on *RV\** 8,91) and p. 30 (quoting *JB* 1,220).

royal heritage<sup>98</sup> to include the myths of Sri \* and Flaith. So far, however, our views of the epic passage and the Indo-Irish correspondence have been shaped by this comparison alone. Actually, there are traditions that would seem to be intermediary between the Sri\* and Flaith stories, which will allow us to draw the correspondences more tightly together.

The first comes from a province that, to my knowledge, Indo-European comparativists have so far left untouched. This is Ceylon, an island whose major language, Singhalese, is Indo-European, but whose religious traditions, shaped by Buddhism, have seemed an unlikely preservative for Indo-European themes. My focus is on a royal legend related only loosely to Buddhism and connected much more revealingly with Hindu themes. It is the legend of Vijaya ("Victory," a frequent name for Arjuna), the island's first king.<sup>99</sup>

Vijaya's antecedents place his story in the category of "first king" legends.<sup>100</sup> His grandfather was a lion (the king of beasts; *Mahavamsa*\* 6,3) and his mother a woman, and their children both bore the epithet "Lion" in their names: a son Sihabahu\* ("Lion-armed" as his "hands and feet were formed like a lion's"; 6,10) and Sihasivali\*, their daughter. These children marry and found a city called Sihapura\* in a kingdom called Lala\*; and they have sixteen sets of twin sons, Vijaya being the older of the eldest pair. He becomes prince regent, but he "was

<sup>98</sup> See Dumézil, *ME*, II, 316-77 (Madhavi\* and Medb), especially p. 364, and on Indo-European \*reg-\* as the prototype for Irish *rí*, Sanskrit *raj*\*, and Latin *rex*, see *Archaic Roman Religion*, pp. 16-17, 577; see also D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, O'Donnell Lectures, 1967-1968 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> See Wilhelm Geiger, trans., assisted by Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Mahavamsa\* or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, Pali Text Society (London: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, Amen Corner, E. C., 1912), pp. 53-58; and Geiger, ed., *The Mahavamsa\**, Pali Text Society (same publishing data as above, 1908), for the Pali text.

<sup>100</sup> See Dumézil, *ME*, II, pt. 3, and below, Chapter 8.

of evil conduct and his followers were even (like himself), and many intolerable deeds of violence were done by them." The people prevailed upon the king to rebuke them. "But all fell out again as before, the second and yet a third time; and the angered people said to the king: 'kill thy son'" (6,39-44). One would love to know what these "three sins" of Vijaya were.

Vijaya and his followers, seven hundred men, are then punished: the hair is shaved off half their heads,<sup>101</sup> and they are exiled to the sea, their children and wives also departing but in separate boats. The two groups land on separate islands, the men thus being without their women and children. Their final destiny is Lanka\* (Ceylon). Here the story is linked with Buddhism: Vijaya "landed in Lanka\* . . . on the day that the Tathagata\* lay down between the two twinlike sala-trees to pass into nibbana\*" (6,46). But connections with figures of Hindu provenance are more immediately significant. As the Buddha lies in his final position, he tells Indra to protect Vijaya in Ceylon so that Buddhism may ultimately flourish there. Hearing this, "Indra handed over the guardianship of Lanka\* to the god who is in color like the lotus" (*devass' uppalavannassa\* Lanka-rakkam\* samappayi*; 7,5). Geiger identifies this guardian as Visnu\*, the allusion being "to the color of the BLUE lotus (*uppala*)."<sup>102</sup> Just as Visnu-Narayana\* "approves" or even "arranges"<sup>103</sup> the union of Sri\* and Indra (or Sri\* and the five Indras), Visnu\* now helps bring about the marriage of Vijaya. First, accepting Indra's directive, Visnu\* comes to Lanka\*, where he takes on the disguise of an ascetic. When Vijaya comes before him with his men, Visnu\* promises them that "no dangers will arise," sprinkles water on them, and ties a protective thread about their hands. Then, disappearing into the air, he gives way to a Yakkhini\* (Sanskrit Yaksini\*) who, in the form of a bitch, passes

<sup>101</sup> Geiger, trans., *Mahavamsa\**, p. 53, n. 1, says: "The shaving of the hair signifies loss of freedom."

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55, n. 2.

<sup>103</sup> See above, Chapter 3.

before them (7,6-9). For men who have just set foot on an unknown terrain, it seems that a female dog is more alluring than a deer:

One [of Vijaya's men] went after her, although he was forbidden by the prince (for he thought), "Only where there is a village are dogs to be found." Her mistress, a yakkhini \* named Kuvanna\*, sat there [where Vijaya's man followed the bitch] at the foot of a tree spinning, as a woman-hermit [*tapasi\**] might.

When the man saw the pond [near the tree] and the woman hermit sitting there, he bathed there and drank and taking shoots of lotuses and water in lotus-leaves he came forth again. And she said to him: "Stay! thou art my prey! Then the man stood there as if fast bound. But because of the power of the magic thread she could not devour him.... Then the yakkhini\* seized him, and hurled him who cried aloud into a chasm [*tam gahetva\* surungayam\* ravantam yakkhini\* khipi*]. And there in like manner she hurled (all) the seven hundred one by one after him.

And when they all did not return fear came on Vijaya; armed,... he set out, and when he beheld the beautiful pond [*pokkharanim\* subham*; note its prominent lotuses cited above], where he saw no footstep of any man coming forth, but saw that woman-hermit [*tapasim\**] there, he thought: "Surely my men have been seized by this woman." And he said to her, "Lady, hast thou seen my men?" "What dost thou want with thy people, prince?" she answered. "Drink thou and bathe."

Then it was clear to him: "This is surely a yakkhini\*, she knows my rank," and swiftly, uttering his name, he came at her drawing his bow. He caught the yakkhini\* in the noose about the neck, and seizing her hair with his left hand he lifted his sword in the right and cried: "Slave! give me back my men, or I slay thee!" Then tormented with fear the yakkhini\* prayed him for her life. "Spare my life, sir, I will give thee a kingdom [*rajjam dassami\* te aham*] and do thee a woman's service and other service as thou wilt." [7,10-22]

Vijaya makes her return his men and provide food for them. The men prepare the food, and Kuvanna\* eats first, at which she was well pleased.

...and assuming the lovely form of a sixteen-year-old maiden she approached the prince adorned with all the ornaments.<sup>104</sup> At the foot of a tree she made a beautiful bed, well-covered around with a tent, and adorned with a canopy. And seeing this, the king's son, looking forward to the time to come, took her to him as his spouse and lay (with her) blissfully on that bed; and all his men encamped around the tent. [7,26-29]

From here on the story veers sharply from anything in the other traditions we have discussed,<sup>105</sup> but the parallels that have emerged to this point are sufficient to guarantee some connection.

A number of themes here help us to draw the Indian and Irish stories of Sri \* and Flaith much closer together. As in the myth of Sri\* and the five Indras, Visnu\* has a background role. In one case, the god "approves" the marriage and Vyasa\*, an ascetic "portion" of the god on earth, is the medium by which the Pandavas\* are directed to Draupadi-Sri\*; in the other, the god assumes the form of an ascetic to protect Vijaya and his men and prepare the way for their meeting with the Yakkhini\* Kuvanna\*. Then too, just as Indra has his limbs loosened and his body paralyzed before he is told to enter a cave and join the four former Indras, so Vijaya's men "stood there as if fast bound" before being thrown into a "chasm." In fact, this parallel can solve an earlier quandary: unlike Sri\*, whose limb-loosening touch is superfluous and who yields to Siva\* when it comes to the paralyzing of Indra and the command that Indra join his predecessors in the cave, Kuvanna\* is able to do all these things by herself. The Irish stories offer no parallel to

104 *solasavassikam\* rupam\* mapayitva\* manoharam\*  
rajaputtam\* upaganchi\* sabbabharanabhusita\* ( 26 -27).*

105 On the Vijaya story, see Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas\** (2 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1928 and 1931), I, 13-14, and Nancy E. Falk, "Wilderness and Kingship in Ancient South Asia," *HRJ*, XIII (1973), 2-3; also 15 (failing to disclose her source for the parallel) on a scene, discussed below, from the *Mahabharata\**.

this dangerous side of the bestower of sovereignty, but the Ceylonese legend may be the most coherent version of an ancient Indian theme. In both the Ceylonese and Indian accounts, the contact with Sovereignty seems to hold inherent dangers for those who are rash or unequipped to deal with its burdens and benefits.

Seemingly, however, neither the Ceylonese nor the Indian account borrows directly from the other. In other respects, the Ceylonese and the Irish accounts are much closer to each other than either is to the myth of Sri \*. For one thing, the theme of the "loathly bride," so famous in the Irish accounts, emerges far more clearly in the Ceylonese legend than in the Indian myth. Just as the Irish Flaith turns from hag to beauty, Kuvanna\* the Yakkhini\* is transformed from a *tapasi*\*an identity which no doubt connotes ragged clothes, unkempt appearance, emaciated physique to the loveliest of young maidens. Second, the story linking the bitch and the Yakkhini\* in some ways resembles Flaith and the fawn more than Sri\* and the lotus, the latter two being connected principally by their golden color. In both the Irish and Ceylonese examples it is an unexpected animalcurious and alluring for different reasons that leads the heroes (in this case, Niall and his brothers, not the five Luguids) to the unpredictable maiden by the water. And finally, the Ceylonese and Irish legends are much more clearly concerned with the matter of the bestowal of kingship: *rajjam dassami\* te aham*, says Kuvanna\*, where Sri\* only promises, for some time in the indefinite future, that Indra will come to "know" her.

Thus, as suggested earlier, the Ceylonese story seems to be an intermediary between the Flaith and Sri\* myths, probably containing more archaic features than the latter but bearing many of the same themes. It is also close, especially on one point, to another legend which would seem to have a similar intermediary status. This one comes from the *Mahabharata*\* and concerns none other than the Pandavas\*.



One might expect that if the myth of Sri \* and the five Indras is an ancient parallel to the Irish and Ceylonese legends, the epic poets would have had the Pandavas\* and King Yudhisthira\* in particular, not Arjunawin Draupadi\*, Sri's\* portion on earth, in a similar scene. Obviously they do not, as Draupadi\* is won in the Svayamvara\*. It seems fair to say that the poets have taken this "secondary" myth of Sri\* the "Svayamvara\* mythologem" which she shares with so many other goddesses as their model rather than the older myth that finds her by the water, by the "source" of Sovereignty. Instead of using this latter myth as a model for Draupadi's\* marriage, the poets satisfied themselves by linking it to the marriage as a background myth. But if the Pandavas\* do not win their bride in such a scene, they do find themselves in an unmistakably similar situation. It occurs in the *Yaksaproana\** section of the *Aranyakaparvan\**.

Toward the end of their forest exile, the Pandavas\* and their wife enter the picturesque Dvaita forest (3:295,2-3). There, "for the sake of a brahmin, they underwent a great affliction whose consequence was happiness" (295,6). Their trial begins when the brahmin, "in great distress," rushes up to them with the news that the continuity of his Agnihotra has been threatened by a "great deer" (*mahamrga\**) which, in butting about near his hermitage, has caught the brahmin's two rubbing sticks (*arani\**) in its antlers and bounded off into the forest (295,8-9). "Quickly tracking down that great deer by its footprints, may you Pandavas\* bring them [the rubbing sticks] back" (2,95, 10).

It is soon made clear that this is no ordinary deer: "Seeing the deer nearby, those great chariot warriors released barbs, javelins, and darts, but were unable to pierce it. And while they were so striving, the deer became invisible [*nadrsyata\**]. And not seeing it, fatigued and pained, those high-spirited ones approached a *nyagrodha* tree, deep in the forest, and sat down in its cool shade wearied by hunger and thirst" (*ksutpipasaparitan\*-\**

*gah* \*; 295,13-15). Similarly, Niall and his brothers were "athirst and in great drouth" after eating the deer which Niall, unlike the Pandavas\*, managed to capture. Success of the hunt, however, may not be crucial. The central matter is that the animal (or flower) be mysterious and alluring, a device to draw the heroes into forested or uncertain terrain and, in the two cases just cited, to make them thirsty.

Choosing from among his wearied brothers, Yudhisthira\* tells Nakula to look around for water (196,6). Soon Nakula arrives at a lake of "pure water" (*vimalam*\* *toyam*; 296,11). But a voice from the sky warns him against drinking: "Do not commit this rash act, O child; I have first claim to this lake. Having answered my questions, then may you drink and carry" (12). Nakula drinks, however, and falls dead, as do Sahadeva, Arjuna, and Bhima\*, in turn, each after failing to heed the same warning from the disembodied voice (14-38).

Finally, when Yudhisthira\* arrives on the scene, he sees his brothers "fallen like the Lokapalas\* at the end of the yuga" (297,1). Realizing that there is something uncanny about their deaths (no weapon marks, no corpse-like pallor), he asks who is responsible, and the voice from the sky introduces itself as a crane living off tiny fish (297,11). He too is warned not to drink the water before answering its questions. But when Yudhisthira\* ridicules the idea that a bird could have slain his brothers, the voice turns into that of a Yaksa\* (297,18). Seeing his strangeness, Yudhisthira\* agrees to try to answer the Yaksa's\* questions, and these nineteen riddles (according to the Critical Edition), each with four parts constitutes the long *Yaksaprasna*\* section (297,23-24) of this episode and ostensibly its *raison d'être*.<sup>106</sup>

Yudhisthira\* is able to answer all the questions correctly, and the Yaksa\* allows him to choose from among his brothers just

<sup>106</sup> On the riddles in this scene, see Durga Bhagwat, *The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore, and Literature* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), pp. 10-11 and p. 74, n. 16.

one who can be restored to life. Yudhisthira \* selects Nakula (297,66), giving as his reason that both of his father's wives should have one living son (72-73). Thanks to this dharmic choice, the Yaksha\* grants that all the brothers may be revived. In a moment they rise up, their thirst and hunger gone (298,1). Yudhisthira\* then asks the Yaksha\* once again who he really is, and this time he reveals himself as Dharma, Yudhisthira's\* own father. Dharma gives two reasons for his behavior: he has "come here desiring to see you" (298,6) and "to examine you" (*jijnasustvam\**; 10). Satisfied, Dharma offers Yudhisthira\* a choice of boons, and Yudhisthira\* chooses three, each with its implications.

(1) First, Yudhisthira\* asks that the brahmin might have back his firesticks from the thieving deer to continue his Agnihotra. Dharma's answer solves a problem that appears elsewhere: "The firesticks of that brahmin that were borne away were carried off by me, having the antlers of a deer [several recensions: having the form of a deer], for the sake of examining you" (*hrtam\* maya\* mrgavesena\* [mrgarupena\*] kaunteya jijnasartham\* tava*; 298,13 and notes). And further on, Dharma repeats that the sticks were carried away "by me in deer form" (*maya\* . . . mrgarupena\**; 20). Such double symbolism has intrigued Krappe and Dumézil; the alluring deer and the figure by the water are identical, in this case both being forms taken by Dharma.<sup>107</sup> We have seen similar solutions elsewhere: the bitch that takes Vijaya's man to Kuvanna\* is the latter's attendant; Sri\*, who once appears in deer form and also with a deer beside her,<sup>108</sup> allures Indra by her own tears; and in a case which Dumézil handles beautifully, the Indian heroine Madhavi\*, also a bestower of kingship, adopts the ascetic "deer-faring" mode of life (*mrgacgrini\**; *Mbh.* 5:118,7)<sup>109</sup> To this one may now add the

107 For Krappe, see above, n. 93; for Dumézil, below, n. 109.

108 See above, n. 94.

109 Dumézil, *ME*, II, 324 and 342; for more on Madhavi\*, see below, Chapter 8.

words of Shah Kavus \*, cited above:110 "This [girl] is a mountain doe, truly a heart-ravishing gazelle; but game appropriate only to the highest." What the convergence signifies in the present instance is quite clear' the epic poets have looked behind the cooperative interplay of the symbols of sovereignty for the underlying principledharma that sustains it.

(2) Yudhisthira's\* second boon is Dharma's assurance that the Pandavas\* and Draupadi\* will pass their thirteenth year in exile unrecognized (298,15), thus fulfilling the terms of their wager with Duryodhana. If not world sovereignty, this boon confers a prize that is still tantamount to a share of kingship, for by completing the year incognito, Yudhisthira\* expects to fulfill the requirements for a return to his throne at Indraprastha.

(3) Urging Yudhisthira\* to choose again, Dharma says: "May you accept a third boon, O son, that is unequaled and great [*varamapratimam\* raahat*]; surely you are sprung from me, O king, and Vidura shares a portion of me" (*mamamsabhak\**; 298,21). After briefly demurring, Yudhisthira\* asks: "May I always conquer covetousness, delusion, and greed, O lord, and may my mind be ever devoted to giving, austerity, and truth" (*dane\* tapasi satye*; 298,23).

There is nothing trifunctional about these qualities, although, as I will argue in the next chapter, the ideal royal virtues often take on an increasing "yogic" or "Upanisadic\*" flavor. More important, for now, is Dharma's answer. Not only does Yudhisthira\* have these qualities; he has them in accordance with a particular formula the one by which the over-anxious maiden, Draupadi\* in a former life, requested a perfect husband and which describes the Adityatlike\* Pandavas\* as her suitable partners when they are revealed to her father as the five former Indras. "You are by your own nature [*svabhavenasi\**] endowed with every virtue [*upapanno gunaih\* sarvaih\**], O son of Pandu\*, and, moreover, you are the lord Dharma [*bhavandharmah\**]; what you have asked for shall be yours" (298,24). As we

110 See above, n. 89.

will see, this is a royal formula; once again, Yudhisthira \* receives a boon that is tantamount to "sovereignty."

There can be little doubt that this legend about the Pandavas\* is, like the Ceylonese Vijaya legend, a link between the stories about Sri\* and Flaith. First, it shares with the Vijaya legend the substitution of a Yaksa\*, male this time, for Sri\*<sup>111</sup> the choice of sex in the epic story no doubt being dictated by the identification of the deer and the figure by the lake with Dharma, a figure with whom Yudhisthira\* is identified rather than one he might marry. Then, on the Indian side, the Pandava\* story gives added evidence of themes that Ireland does not know. Contact with the figure by the lake, or the source of the Ganges, holds grave dangers for those unsuited to sovereignty: just as the five Indras are ordered into a cave and Vijaya's men hurled into a chasm, so Yudhisthira\* finds his brothers "fallen like the Lokapalas\*." But in its basic outlines, the Pandava\* story is, like the Vijaya legend, far more similar to the legends from Ireland: the "great deer," the figure by the "pure water," and especially the underlying theme of the test, this time by riddles, of Yudhisthira's\* worthiness, all find their analogues in the stories of Niall and Lugaid Laigde.

Finally, not only have we been able to show that Sri\* has an ancient mythology of her own, but that this myth has survived, on the epic plane, without her. No doubt the "borrowed" myth of the Svayamvara\* has taken its place in Sri's\* biography and has provided the model for Draupadi's\* union with the Pandavas\*, and in particular with Arjuna. For just as this "central" Pandava\* wins Draupadi\* for his brothers, Indra is the chief of the gods whom Sri\* "chooses" in the epic's renditions

<sup>111</sup> See Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas\**, II, pp. 4 and 13, for connections between Sri-Laksmi\* and Yaksas\*; I, p. 11 for connections of both with prosperity; II, pp. 4, 13-19, and 61 for connections of both with *soma* and waters. See also Falk, "Wilderness and Kingship," suggesting a number of symbolic links between Yaksas\* and the attainment of kingship.

of the "Svayamvara \* mythologem." But insofar as the true sovereignty is Yudhisthira's\*, it is fittingly promised him in a variant of an ancient legend, one that has its closest analogues in Irish and Ceylonese traditions and in the very myth that is told when the Pandavas\* are about to take Draupadi\*, Sri\* incarnate, as their common wife.

If you like this book, buy it!

## Chapter 8 The Royal Virtues

In the course of examining the myths and legends related to the figures of Sri \* and Draupadi\*, repeated references have been made to the notion of "virtues": *gunas*\* or *dharmas*. In many instances specific sets are singled out, often in what appear to be trifunctional arrangements. This unwieldy and diffuse problem nonetheless bears on many matters: on our understanding of Sri\* and Draupadi\*, on the epic "sins"opposite the virtueswhich I will take up in the next chapters, and on the whole question of sovereignty.

The themes from such myths, legends, and rituals as those discussed in the last chapter must be drawn together with the extensive epic material concerning dharmic formulas. To do this, however, it must first be recognized that the *Mahabharata*\* is open-ended as a source on ethical matters. Seeking some clarity, many scholars have separated the "narrative" from the "didactic" elements and viewed all moral pronouncements as one or another variety of Brahminical interpolation. I do not think it is that simple: questions of virtue and sin are part and parcel of the epic narrative. The problem is to understand how certain basic virtues and vices, often recognizable by their relations to other moral qualities and thus by their places in structures and formulas, enter into the fabric of the story. Determining such values will not, of course, rule out speaking of didactic intrusions and extensions. But it will not be simply ??atter of explaining epic morality as a Brahminical veneer over a "heroic" core. The situation is too fluid: probably from its earliest Indian tellings, virtues of different types have

found reflection in the story; and the story has probably continued to suggest different dharmic formulations to poets of different periods.

## Inflations

One line along which epic morality has been rethought by the poets is that suggested by the Upanisads \*. Although scholars have commonly overlooked the ethical pronouncements of the Upanisadic\* sages and depicted their state as one beyond good and evil, the Upanisads\* do exalt certain types of behavior, certain virtues. The knower of the Self creates worlds of refuge for all other creatures (*BAUp.* 1,4,15(end)-16), worlds penetrated by the thunder-spoken qualities of *dama*, *dana*\*, and *daya*\*control, giving, and compassion (*BAUp.* 5,2,1-3)- There is also what Hajime Nakamura calls a "fondness for negative expression."<sup>1</sup> The central negative virtue is *ahimsa*\*, "non-harming" or "nonkilling." With these qualities, the Upanisads\* introduce the new idea of "universal virtues," *sadharana*\* *dharma*s, virtues applying to all "worlds." Such trends may certainly be identified as post-Brahmanic\*. As P. V. Kane says, "The reason for cultivating such virtues as *daya*\*, *ahimsa*\* is based upon the philosophical doctrine of the Self."<sup>2</sup> Thus even knowledge and truth (*satya*) are virtues which come to have special Upanisadic\* significance.

These tendencies have their parallels and counterparts in Buddhism;<sup>3</sup> the influences of these two traditions have combined with a popular acceptance of yoga to produce what we could call a yogic expansion of epic virtues. This appears in certain passages of counsel, which range from the sententious and commonplace to the subtle and sublime. Vidura, for

<sup>1</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan*, Philip Wiener, trans. (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964), pp. 52-57,85.

<sup>2</sup> Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*\*, II, 7.

<sup>3</sup> On Buddhist virtues in the epic enumerations, see P. V. Kane, "The Two Epics," *ABORI*, XLVII (1966), 23.



instance, tells Dhrtarastra \*: "Truly, these six *gunas*\* should not be forsaken by any man: truth, giving, nonidleness [*analasyam*\*], nonenvy [*anasuya*\*], forbearance, and firmness" (5:33,69). In what is probably the most inflated passage in the epic, Bhishma\* tells Yudhisthira\* that proper royal conduct involves "thirty-six virtues [*gunas*\*] related to thirty-six other virtues; accomplishing those virtues [*gunan*\*], one possessed of virtues [*gunopeta*\*] should obtain merit [*gunam*\*]" (12:71,2). The list is an incoherent mélange.

Also showing a yogic influence is a process of infinitization of virtues. Certain figures Arjuna (5:94,41) and Karna\* (1:126,5), Krishna\* (5:94,36-41; 7:10,39) and Asvatthaman\* (5:164,10) are said to have "uncountable virtues" (*asamkhyeyaguna*\* or the equivalent). This tendency seems to imply a yogic definition of these heroes' theological identities. In the cases of Krishna and Asvatthaman\*, such terminology describes the figures who incarnate Visnu-Naryana\* and Siva\*. Similarly, Arjuna benefits from such an assessment where he is identified as the incarnation of Nara. Thus when Parasurama\* tells how Nara and Narayana\* humiliated the tyrant Dambhodbhava (5:94,29-41), he comments: "Very great was that feat achieved of old by Nara; [but] Narayana\* then became superior in consequence of his many more virtues [or qualities]" (*gunaih\* subahubhih\* srestha*\*; 36). And, with transparent but also transcendental logic, he adds: "Countless are the virtues of Partha\* [Arjuna-Nara], [but] superior to him is Janardana\*" (*asamkhyeya\* gunah\* parthe tadvisisto\* janardanah*\*; 41). Elsewhere it is said that in Krishna "there exists an abundance of virtues forever" (*guna-sampat-sada-eva*\*; 5:47,81), and it seems likely that these descriptions refer not only to ascetic merits but to the doctrine of Saguna\* Brahman, "*brahman* with qualities."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that all theological formulations run to infinity. One can think of the "six powers" or "shares" (*bhaga*) of Visnu-Krishna\* as represented in VP 6,5,74-76: lordship (*aisvaryam*\*), dharma, *yasas*\*, *sri*\*, knowledge (*jnana*\*), and nonattachment (*vairagyam*\*); see Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 36.

These inflationary processes in the epic are particularly apparent in descriptions of the Pandavas \*, whose basic trifunctional character, as a group, need not be doubted. In recalling her sons, for instance, Kunti\*, along with evoking such functional traits as Yudhisthira's\* truth and virtue, Bhima's\* strength and speed, Arjuna's prowess, Sahadeva's obedience and youth, and Nakula's beauty and taste for comfort, also praises the Pandavas\* for such Upanisadic\* qualities as restraint (Yudhisthira\* and Arjuna), compassion (Yudhisthira\* and Sahadeva), patience (Arjuna), and modesty (Sahadeva; 5:88,18-41).

The Pandavas\*, however, bring us closer to the epic's central dharmic concepts: a phrase which will bear some explanation. As the *Mahabharata*\* tells of a struggle for sovereignty (the Pandavas\* being former Indras), it is natural that the virtues of royalty are a central dharmic issue. So it is on many planes: in exhortatory enumerations of virtues, in discursive teachings like the *Rajadharma*\* section of the *Santiparvan*\*, and in various narrative ramifications. I do not mean that other ethical concepts found in the epic are necessarily peripheral or that they are unrelated to the royal virtues; but they must not be confused with them. One will think especially of the four Purusarthas\*, "aims of human life," and the various virtues or duties ascribed to the four *varnas*\*. In both cases the Pandavas\* are bound up with these classifications, and there is no question of regarding them as noncentral to the epic's ethical content. However, none of these sets of "virtues" can be reduced to any other. Dumézil has shown how the themes of dharma, *artha*, and *kama*\* are articulated through the structure of the Pandavas\*;<sup>5</sup> but this is not because these Purusarthas\* serve to define the Pandavas\* in relationship to the three functions or to kingship.

As to caste, it is a special duty of the king which Krishna says Yudhisthira\* will fulfill (5:29,20-24) to protect the four orders and stimulate them to fulfill their "duties." But royal

<sup>5</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 94-98.

virtues and caste duties are not interchangeable. In fact, the systematization of particular virtues for each caste seems to have been a gradual process. When Bhishma \* defends Krishna's right to the highest honors in the Sisupala\* episode, he cites Krishna's many *gunas*\* (2:35,12), and in particular his knowledge and immeasurable strength (18). In contrast, he says, others deserve honor only for single virtues: brahmins for knowledge (*jnana*\*) and ksatriyas\* for strength (*balam*; 17). As an indication that the *varnas*\* supply only a loose model for classifying virtues, numerous manuscripts interpolate an honor due to *vaisyas*\* for being "rich in wealth" (*dhanyadhanavat*\*) and to *sudras*\* according to their age (*janmatas*; 2,357\*). Similarly, a relatively broad rearrangement of traditional ethical material seems to lie behind *Bhagavad Gita*\* 18, 42-44, where Krishna describes the "natural-born actions" (*karma svabhavajam*) that are "distinguished according to the Strands [*gunas*"] that spring from the innate nature" of the four *varnas*\* (18, 41-42). In this passage, it is only the last two classes that have actual "actions" attributed to them: agriculture, cattle tending, commerce (*vaisyas*\*), and service (*sudras*\*; 18, 44). In contrast, the first two classes have virtues. In fact, several of the qualities attributed to ksatriyas\* *tejas*, *sauryam*\* ("heroism"), *danam*\* ("generosity"; 18,43) are ones which are elsewhere used in trifunctional lists to emphasize royalty. And the various Upanisadic\* and yogic qualities calm, (self-)control (*dama*), austerities (*tapas*), patience are for the most part attributed to brahmins (41). Such considerations make it extremely unlikely that the caste system, at least in its Indian form, could have served as the model for the classification of the royal virtues. This is not to say that the variety of formulas expressing royal qualities has not been continually reinforced by the caste system. But the conceptual or ideological structure cannot be reduced to the social structure.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This crucial methodological point is also made by Dumézil in *ME*, I, 15.

In relation to this last passage, by central dharmic teachings, I also do not exclude the emphasis on action, *karman*, which finds its fullest expression in the *Gita* \*. This doctrine, which has a long prehistory, has also been transformed in the epic by yoga; and it finds its most fitting disciple and exemplar in the person not of the king, but of the warrior-yogi Arjuna.<sup>7</sup> Thus, whereas it is Yudhisthira's\* royal duty to balance every virtue and weigh every action, his *ksatriya*\* mother and wife, and Krishna and Arjuna as well, can rebuke him for his often exasperating indecision. The warrior Arjuna can say to the king: "Even abandoned by every virtue [*sarvairapi gunairhino*\*], one possessed of heroism [*viryam*\*] may overcome his foes; even united with every virtue, without heroism [*nirviryah*\*], what will one do? Surely, in prowess [*parakrame*\*] all the virtues exist in an elemental state" (2:15,9-10ab). Action, or heroism (*viryam*\*, *sauryam*\*cf. *Gita*\* 18, 43), springs essentially from the warrior's nature. But for the king it must be integrated among qualities of other dimensions.

"All the Virtues"

In speaking of the epic's central ethical or dharmic focus, I am thus addressing a concern which relates to, and extends into, all the areas just discussed, but which carries along the main thrust of the narrative: the "just" claim to sovereignty of Yudhisthira\*, the Dharmaraja\*, son and "King of Dharma."<sup>8</sup> In this and the next three chapters, I will try to show that to appreciate Yudhisthira's\* dramatic role, one must look beyond the passages that describe his virtues in basically yogic or Upanisadic\* terms.

<sup>7</sup> See above, Chapter 6 at n. 2, and Biardeau, *Clefs*, p. 95, using the term "*guerrier yogin*."

<sup>8</sup> Biardeau, *Clefs*, p. 96, prefers the translation "*roi-dharma*" to "*roi du dharma*," as also, apparently, does van Buitenen, who refers to "King Dharma" in "The Sabhaparvan\*," p. 70.

Foregoing discussions have made it clear that one of the key formulas connected with royal virtues is the one that describes a person as "endowed with all the virtues" (such as *sarvagunopeta*\*, *sarvagunasampanna*\*, *sarvadharmopapanna*). It is a phrase used frequently with reference to Yudhisthira\*, especially in contexts which have to do with his fitness to be king. Thus we have seen it when Dharma, having shed his Yaksha\* disguise, promises Yudhisthira\* he shall have more than just the specific qualities he requests.<sup>9</sup> And most important, it occurs when Krishna, invited to Indraprastha to advise Yudhisthira\* on whether to perform the Rajasuya\*, declares his support of Yudhisthira\* for the title of *samraj*\*, "universal monarch," because he is endowed with "every virtue" (*sarvaigunair*\*; 2:13,1; cf. 30, 23).

It is curious that these epithets, which concern moral wholeness, are sometimes interchangeable with another mode of distinguishing excellence. Note the following parallelism. In the passage discussed in the last section in which Kunti\* describes the Pandavas\*, she refers to Yudhisthira\* as a king "endowed with every virtue, who should even be the king of the triple world" (*raja*\* *sarvagunopetastrailokyasyapi*\* *yo bhavet*; 5:88,21). Similarly, Vidura says he is a king "endowed with laksanas\*", who should even be the king of the triple world" (*raja*\* *laksanasampannastrailokyasyapi*\* *yo bhavet*; 5: 34,81). By the substitution of one formula for the other, virtues are interchangeable with "physical marks." The *Mahabharata*\* does not tell a great deal about Yudhisthira's\* physical features, other than that he is light-complexioned,<sup>10</sup> of "prominent" or "formidable nose" (*pracandaghona*\*; 3:254,7; cf. 1:180,20; 15:32,5), and large-armed (*pinabahu*\*; 3:118,10). At least in the latter case, the mark is probably royal.<sup>11</sup> In other cases,

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 7, following n. 110.

<sup>10</sup> See above, Chapter 2, n. 5.

<sup>11</sup> See Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, pp. 5,108-9, citing instances describing Nala.

however, physical marks and moral excellences clearly seem to complement each other. Krishna, for instance, is described as *sarvagunasampannam* \* *srivatsakrtalakshanam*\*, "endowed with every virtue and having the mark made by the Srivatsa\*" on his breast (5:81,36). And Karna\* is a "tiger of the splendor of the Sun, marked by every divine mark [*divyalakshanalakshita*\*], with earrings and armor" (1:127,15), whose death Yudhishthira\* mourns by saying, "born of Surya\*, endowed with every virtue (*sarvagunopeta*\*), formerly cast in the water" (12:1,22). Such a duplicate way of distinguishing a "great man," especially a "king of dharma," is with little stretching of the term also found in Buddhism, where the Buddha is recognized both by his thirty-two major and eighty subsidiary *lakshanas*\* and by his perfection in the six *paramitas*\*.<sup>12</sup> No doubt such double characterizations are very ancient. One is reminded of Angelo Brelich's discussion of the "moral and physical monstrosities" of the Greek heroes.<sup>13</sup> It would seem, at least from Indian examples, that the two types of disfigurements are balanced by combinations of "moral and physical perfections."

There is, then, a notion of wholeness, soundness, or perfection which includes both the physical and moral dimensions of certain epic characters. Moreover, at least with regard to the moral dimension, the epic clearly uses the phrase "endowed with all the virtues" almost exclusively with reference to royalty. First, regarding dynasties, Krishna can tell Dhrtarastra\* that the Kuru family line (*kulam*) is "today the best among all royal dynasties, furnished with knowledge and [good] behavior [*vrttam*\*] and endowed with all the virtues" (*sarvaih*\* *samuditam*\* *gunaih*\*; 5:93,5). Similarly, according to the opening of the *Adiparvan*\*, royal races are endowed with virtues (*mahatsu rajavamsesu*\* *gunaih*\* *samuditesu*\*; 1:1,164), while the virtues of their kings are celebrated in *puranas*\* (legends "of old") by the most venerable *kavis* or bards (1:1,181-2). Nearly all the main

12 See above, n. 3.

13 See above, Chapter 1.

figures through whom the Kuru line is perpetuated are at one point or another given this accolade. Among the line's ancestors are Yayati\* (5:120,18) and his sons (thus including his successor Puru\*; I:70,31), and probably Bharata (*gunopeta*\*; 1:68,2). Within the context of the epic's dynastic crises are Bhishma\* (12:50,28-29; cf. 1:93,44-45) and Karna\* (12:1,22), both of whom are potential Kuru kings; Yudhishthira\*, the Pandavas\* as a group (all "Indras among men"; 5:35,67;89,2614), Abhimanyu (7:33,8-10), and Pariksit\* (1:45, 14). In this second cluster, the only "royal" omissions seem (barring oversights) to be Pandu\* and Dhrtarastra\*; and this may be significant, as these two are the only ones marked by physical defects: their paleness and blindness.

Outside of royal usages, the phrase seems rare. The only instances I have observed in the epic concern Janamejaya's snake sacrifice (1:49,26), various species of birds (1:60,57), Kubera's horses (3:158,24), and Brahma\* (8:24,105). As to those who are not kings or potential heirs, but whose virtues are praised, it is notable that the terms usually differ. Vidura, for instance, is frequently *sarvadharmavid*, "knowledgeable about every virtue" (see 1:126,28; 133,18), in his role as an expositor of dharma. But the virtues are his to recognize rather than to possess.

The link with royalty obviously does not pertain solely to the males. As we saw in the last chapter and shall stress again, the notion of "all the virtues" is connected with Draupadi\*. Kunti\* too is omnivirtuous in a way that bears upon her royal status. As Krishna says, consoling her in her knowledge that her sons Karna\* and the Pandavas\* will engage in mortal combat:

What hair-parter [woman] is there like you in the *lokas*, O aunt, daughter of an heroic king, admitted [by marriage] to the race of

14 Also, see above, Chapter 7, at n. 67, citing 1:157,10 and 189,43 (Pandavas\* in overanxious maiden story) and 189,38 (myth of the five Indras).

Ajamidha \*, high-born, highly married, transplanted [like a lotus] from lake to lake, all-auspicious mistress [*isvari\* sarvakalyani\**], adored by your husband, hero-bearing and wife of a hero [*virasur-virapatni\**], endowed with every virtue [*sarvaih\* samudita\* gunaih\**], endowed with great wisdom, it behoves you to bear both joy and sorrow. [5:88,90-92]

Similarly, one finds "all the virtues" in Sakuntala\* (1:68,10), and again, within the context of the dynastic crisis, not only in Draupadi\* and Kunti\*, but in Satyawati\* (1:57,54), and in Amba\*, Ambika\*, and Ambalika\* (1:96,45). Thus from Satyawati\* on, nearly all the women brought into the dynastic line the only exceptions appear to be Madri\* and Uttara\* come with a full complement of virtues. Finally, outside the dynasty, the story of Nala and Damayanti\* provides a close parallel. Just as Nala is "possessed of the desirable virtues" (*upapanno gunairistaih\**; 3:50,1), Damayanti\* "became celebrated throughout the world for her beauty [*rupam\**], majesty [*tejas*], fame [*yasas\**], prosperity [*sri\**], and good fortune" (*saubhagyam*; 3:50,10). In fact, "repeatedly hearing of each other's virtues [*gunan\**], they conceived for each other an attachment not born of sight" (*adrstakamo\**; 50,16).<sup>15</sup> The virtues, then, are at the core of the narrative and remain there as a theme throughout.

It is thus apparent that the royal virtues must be found *in full* in both sexes. Only where the virtues of a lineage are found in its brides can there be a guarantee of omnivirtuous heirs. When disruptions and crises occur, the epic seems to suggest two possible solutions. One is to call upon gods, or incarnations of gods, to sire suitable sons. The other, which will occupy us now, is to find some sort of intermediary, some special figure whose function it is to provide a mechanism whereby the difficulties, whatever they are, can be overcome.

<sup>15</sup> On the "love of the unseen one" theme, see the interesting but rather tenuous comparisons of Myles Dillon, "The Archaism of the Irish Tradition," Reprints from the American Committee for Irish Studies (1947; University of Chicago reprint, 1969), pp. 11-12.



## The Royal Virtues and the Three Functions

Although the phrase "endowed with every virtue" is primarily a royal epithet, the epic never explains this term not even in the *Rajadharma* \* section of the *Santiparvan* \* by any list, long or short, of particular virtues. One is thus left to the task of reconstruction.

The material will not allow one to insist that any single set of individual virtues forms the original "endowment." There are too many combinations. First, the various processes of "inflation" have created many new virtues and changed the meanings of others. Second, if one assumes a basic structure rather than an original combination, variations within and upon that structure would naturally be expected.

Although a number of authors have dealt with particular virtues, 16 only Dumézil has examined the tendency to group them in significant combinations. Gonda in particular has shown a reluctance to deal with any more than one "power substance" at a time. 17 Let us now attempt an overview of such combinations as they occur in the epic in connection with royalty. Thanks to Dumézil's study, 18 King Yayati \*

16 For Gonda's discussion of "power substances," see above, Chapter 7, n. 28, and his "Gods" and "Powers," pp. 43 -44, 58-62; also *idem*, *Ancient-Indian ojas, Latin \*augos and the Indo-European Nouns -es/-os* (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij., 1952). On *satya*, "truth," see most recently W. Norman Brown, "Duty as Truth in Ancient India," *PAPS*, CXVI (1972), 252-68, with bibliography, p. 252, n. 1; also Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, pp. 114, 163-67, and Dumézil, *ME*, II, 289-91. On *tejas*, see Biarreau, *EPHE*, LXXIX, 145. For other terms and further discussion, see below.

17 Gonda attributes the instances of "triads relevant to one of the three functions" to no more than a "stylistic tendency" ("Some Observations on Dumézil's View of Indo-European Mythology," *Mnemosyne*, IV [1960], 7-8). Thus he overlooks possible trifunctional features of some of the passages he cites, such as: "If a man's sacrificial post sprouts leaves his *tejas*, *indriyam*, *viryam*\*, food, children, and cattle recede from him" (*PB* 9,10,7; see "Gods" and "Powers," p. 60).

18 Dumézil, *ME*, II, pt. 3, 243-377.

emerges, along with the other characters in his legend, as the figure most indispensable to the discussion.

Although Yayati\* is only the fifth or sixth member of the Lunar Dynasty (of which Kuru will be a later member), Dumézil shows that he is an example, perhaps India's earliest, of what Arthur Christensen was the first to designate as a "first king."<sup>19</sup> Kings of this "type" are involved with the origins of institutions, in particular with the partition of the earth (which in one episode of his story Yayati\* distributes among his five sons), with the establishment of the central line of succession (which Yayati\*, in the same episode, allots to his loyal son Puru\*), and with the foundation of the social classes. In Yayati's\* case, in the second part of his legend, his rapport is not so much with the classes, or with their origin (the *Purusa\** *Sukta\** accounts for this), as with the royal virtues that a king must have to epitomize the qualities needed for the proper working of all the classes and of society as a whole.

Let us now summarize some features of Dumézil's study. The second part of Yayati's\* story concerns his daughter Madhavi\* (who figures in a most compelling comparison) and, through her, his four grandsons. Madhavi's\* name is equivalent to that of the Irish heroine (or heroines, there being two of them) called Medb, meaning, in both cases, "the Intoxicating."<sup>20</sup> Both princesses are daughters of the "central" or "high" king of their lands. Moreover, there is a sequence in the stories of Madhavi\* and Medb of Connacht where each marries four kings in turn and thereby assures that a certain set of virtues is perpetuated. Not unlike Sri\*,<sup>21</sup> Medb of Connacht sets up a requirement that each suitor, and thus rival for the

<sup>19</sup> See above, Chapter 7, n. 98, and Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens*, Archives d'Etudes Orientales, XIV, pt. 1 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1917); pt. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1934).

<sup>20</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 329-30.

<sup>21</sup> See above, Chapter 7, following n. 63.

central sovereignty which she bestows, must be "without jealousy, without fear, and without niggardliness,"<sup>22</sup> or, in other words, he must be just,<sup>23</sup> brave, and generous. Medb displays these qualities herself<sup>24</sup> and apparently finds them though not for long in each of her successive husbands. With Madhavi\*, the tale of the virtues concerns not her husbands so much as the sons she has by them, ultimately for her father. But the Indo-Irish comparisons do not end here. Medb of Connacht has a sister, perhaps a double, named Clothru, and she has a son who, like Madhavi's\* four, is born apparently for her royal father's sake. His name is Lugaid-Red-Stripes, his body divided by stripes into three zones, suggesting the possibility that he was in origin a representative of the synthesis of the three functions.<sup>25</sup>

However one takes this last point, the main substance of Dumézil's comparison shows at least that the story of Yayati\*, Madhavi\*, and the latter's four sons is an Indian version of an extremely old legend. It is important enough to summarize it as it bears upon the question of the royal virtues.<sup>26</sup> Reputed to have fabulous wealth (*dhanam*; 5:112,2), Yayati\* is approached by a brahmin named Galava\* who has incurred an imposing debt to his guru Visvamitra\*. He must bring his

<sup>22</sup> See Dumézil, *ME*, II, 337-38; Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 130-31; and Thomas Kinsella, trans., *The Tain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), P. 53; see also above, Chapter 1, nn. 29 and 30.

<sup>23</sup> For the trifunctional interpretation, approvingly quoted by Dumézil (*ME*, II, 337-38), see Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 130-31: jealousy, the only problem, is interpreted as the vice opposed to the administration of royal justice. In support of this interpretation, see also *ME*, II, 339, on Medb's ability to maintain order "without jealousy!" among the fifteen hundred princes who form her entourage.

<sup>24</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 339.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 350-53.

<sup>26</sup> The text of this portion of the Yayati\* legend is found at *Mbh.* 5:104-21. The story of Yayati\* and his sons, plus another version of the rescue by his grandsons, is found at 1:71-88; in this latter text, Madhavi\* is not mentioned.

master eight hundred horses, all lunar white and each with one black ear. Yayati \* doesn't have the horses and his wealth has diminished; but he cannot refuse to give alms.

"Therefore," he says, "take this daughter of mine, one who causes four lineages to stand, this one resembling a child of the gods, a promptress of every virtue, always sought after by Gods, men, and Asuras."

*tasmaccaturnam\* vamsanam\* sthapayitri\* suta\* mama*

*iyam\* surasutaprakhya\* sarvadharmopacayini\**

*sada\* devamanusyanamasuranam\* ... / kanksita\* [5:113, 11-12]*

These words present a curiosity which I will return to. For the moment, Galava\* is assured that the princess is worth far more than what he needs and sets off with her to obtain the horses.

Galava\* first takes Madhavi\* to King Haryasva\* of Ayodhya\* and offers her to him for the bride price of the eight hundred horses. This king, however, has only two hundred, which he will gladly exchange for the opportunity of having Madhavi\* bear him a single son. Ever compliant but rarely assertive, Madhavi\* for once interrupts: in her youth, a brahmin had granted her the boon of retaining her virginity after childbirths; she can thus make up the sum of eight hundred horses by bearing sons to four kings in succession (5:114, 10-13). Her offer is accepted, and although it turns out that only six hundred of the horses are still in existence, Galava's\* guru, none other than the royal ksatriya\*-turned-brahmin Visvamitra\*, agrees to accept Madhavi\* in lieu of the full payment so that he can father the fourth child himself. Galava\* finally receives her back, a virgin for the fourth time, and as he returns her to Yayati\*, his words to her yield what Dumézil has called the "trifunctional key" to the story:<sup>27</sup> "To you is born a son who is a lord of gifts [*danapati\**], another who is a hero [*sura\**],

27 Dumézil, *ME*, II, 323.

another devoted to truth and virtue [*satyadharmarata*], and yet another who is a great sacrificer [*yajvan*]. Now go, O excellent woman, by these sons your father is saved [*taritas* \*], as also four kings, and myself" (117,21-22).

Madhavi\* passes from the scene for a while, choosing the Forest (*vana*, masc.; 118,5) as her final husband and adopting, as was mentioned in the last chapter, the peculiar ascetic mode of life of the "deer-farer" (*mrgacarini*\*; 118,7). The stage is again Yayati's\*, and from here on, the *Adiparvan*\* and *Udyogaparvan* present parallel, but varying accounts. Yayati\* has ascended to heaven, where he dwells as a *rajarsi*\*. There he is sustained, according to the *Adiparvan*\*, because for thousands of years he had amassed virtues in areas that correspond to the three functions: truth, conquests, and gifts (1:88,21-24).<sup>28</sup> One day, due to an outburst of pride, he is expelled. By good fortune, however, he is able to guide his fall toward the spot where his four grandsons are performing a Vajapeya\* sacrifice. Withholding his identity, Yayati\* tells them that he has fallen from heaven because of the loss of his merits (*punya*\*; 5:119,7), and, together, the four grandsons each now a king in his own right make the following offer: "From all of us [*sarvesam*\* *nah*\*] ... [take] the fruit of our sacrifices and our virtue" (*kratuphalam*\* *dharmasca*\*; 5:119,18). Yayati\* at first demurs but is soon persuaded, in the *Adiparvan*\* by the sudden appearance of five celestial chariots which arrive to take him and his grandsons to heaven,<sup>29</sup> in the *Udyogaparvan* by the reappearance of Madhavi\* and Galava\* who offer, in addition to the merits of the grandsons, one-half and one-eighth of their own. Yayati\* is thus refurnished. In the *Udyogaparvan*, "adorned with virtues" (*gunopeta*\*; 120,2), his course is turned around. He reascends to heaven, propelled by the transparently trifunctional words of his grandsons.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>29</sup> See Dumézil's remarks, *ibid.*, pp. 359-60, and above, Chapter 4, n. 22.

First to speak is the youngest, Vasumanas, the "lord of gifts" (*danapati* \*; 12,3),<sup>30</sup> who offers Yayati\* "whatever fruit comes from the conduct of giving" (*danasila*\*) and the fruit also of his "patience" and "depositing" (*adhana* \*; 120,4-5). Second, Pratardana, "that bull among ksatriyas\*", "devoted to battle" (*yuddhaparayanah*\*), says Yayati\* may have whatever "fame" (*yasas*\*) has attached to his "virtue of power" (*ksatradharma*\*) and whatever fruit attaches to the word "hero" (*vira* \*; 6-7). Third, the "intelligent" (*dhiman*\*) Sibi\*, citing his own infallible truth, his own allegiance to truth, and the truth that the gods Dharma, Agni, and Indra are near to him, intones three times (one for each of the "verifications"), with a "sweet invocation" (*madhura* \* *giram*): "by that truth ascend to heaven" (*tena satyena kham* \* *vraja*; 8-11). And finally Astaka\*, knowledgeable about dharma (*dharmavid*), offers the fruit of his thousands of sacrifices (*kratavah*\*) and adds, citing the truth that nothing has been spared in these ceremonies: "by that truth [*tena satyena*] ascend to heaven" (13-14). Then speaking jointly to consolidate their gifts into a synthesis, the four utter a formula now familiar, showing that together the virtues they have offered constitute a totality:

Endowed with the attributes of royal virtue, possessed of every virtue and attribute,  
We are your daughter's sons, O king. Ascend to heaven, O lord of earth.  
*rajadharmagunopetah* \* *sarvadharmagunanvitah* \*  
*dauhitraste* \* *vayam* \* *rajandivamaroha* \* *parthiva* \*. [120, 18]

<sup>30</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 273, argues, I think convincingly, that while in the epic "giving" denotes generosity with alms, it probably has its "essence" in the more basic notion of "wealth" which he connects with the third function. Given such a transformation, the epic meaning would seem to reflect an Upanisadic\* (or perhaps Buddhist) re-evaluation; *dana*\* is also praised in the *Rg*\* *Veda*: see Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking*, p. 84. On the element *vasu*- in the name connoting "material goods," see *ME*, II, 273.

The grandsons' offerings are in close accord with the virtues mentioned in the "trifunctional key." Certain difficulties pertain to the virtues of the first function, which is represented doubly, but in a combination different from pairings found elsewhere in Indian divisions of the first function. Second, Dumézil has remarked that Astaka's \* closing words "by that truth ascend to heaven" are borrowed "against our expectation" from the "truthful" Sibi\*. Dumézil attempts to resolve this problem by detaching *satya* ("truth") from the other virtues: "We have before us the merits of the three functions and, above them, the more important merits of veracity, the absence of lying." He sees the importance of this dominant virtue as deriving from an Indo-Iranian concept, one with its roots well displayed in the Yayati\* legend and its partial Iranian counterpart, the legend of Yima. This is the opposition *rta\*/druh\**, *asha (arta)/druj*, that is, between the "arranged" and "ordered" truth and the lie.<sup>31</sup>

This ancient notion of "truth" is no doubt at play in the Yayati\* story, but insofar as *satya* is used in this present scene, it has a more immediate, although perhaps even more ancient, significance. *Satya* operates on two levels. In terms of identifying Sibi\*, it is his special virtue and thus a first-function virtue in its own right. But in the phrase *tena satyena*, "by that truth," it operates as what W. Norman Brown and others have called an "Act of Truth."<sup>32</sup> In brief, an "act of truth" can reverse the law of *karman* and reverse natural processes. But it can be performed only by that rare being,

whether deity or man, who does his duty perfectly, that is, fulfills his obligations under the *Rta*\*.... Such a being may be said to be

31 Dumézil, *ME*, II, 274-92; quotes at pp. 279 and 290. From this standpoint, pride (Yayati's\* sin) is a form of lying (Yima's sin), of denying the true order of things.

32 See above, n. 16; there are also Irish parallels; see Myles Dillon, "Archaism of the Irish Tradition," pp. 3-7; *idem*, "The Hindu Act of Truth in Celtic Tradition," *MP*, XLIV (1947), 137-40.

*satyá* (adjective) "true" or to have *satyīm* (neuter noun) "Truth." He is *ánuvrata* "true to duty" and is *rtavan* \* ["observing or conserving the Rta\*"] or *satyádharman* "having Truth as his principle." ... When a person fulfills his duty perfectly, he gains this power; for he has observed the Rta\*, has met his obligations under it. He is one with the Sat; he is *satya*, that is, true in a complete sense and can "control" the Sat, for he and the Sat are one.<sup>33</sup>

On the point under question, Brown remarks that "this phrase (*tena satyena*) is a common formulaic item in the Act of Truth." And, as an indication of its antiquity and diffusion, he is able to cite examples from the *Rg\* Veda* (1:21,5), from the story of Nala and Damayanti\*, and from Buddhist literature.<sup>34</sup> In fact, as we shall see shortly, the *Mahabharata\** supplies another instance, a far more pivotal one, of the use of this formula, again relating an "act of truth" to an assortment of significant virtues and acts. So it seems that *satya*, in its epic contexts, must be viewed as both a virtue and a quality which can put other virtues or "duties" into effect. Thus, whereas Astaka\* cites the truth of his perseverance in sacrifices, Sibi\* can cite the truth of his truthfulness.

The Yayati\* legend thus provides the clearest, and probably the oldest, narrative on the composition of a full assemblage of royal virtues. Representing "all the virtues," the identities and the donations of the four grandsons are structured according to the three functions. Once again, let us reiterate that the structure is more basic than any one set of royal qualities, as can be seen in other texts which describe Yayati\*. His legend has given him wide recognition as an exemplar of royal qualities. In one case, Somadatta (a brother of the Pandavas'\* great grandfather Samtanu\*) is described as an "old man thriving with every virtue [*vrddhamrddham\* gunaih\* sarvair*], like Yayati\*, son of Nahusa\*" (7:132,6). More specifically, a

<sup>33</sup> Brown, "Duty as Truth," pp. 261-62; brackets are mine, quoting Brown's definition, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 264 and n. 30, pp. 255-56.



trifunctional structure may sometimes be discerned in references to Yayati \*. In a passage from Asvaghosa's\* *Buddhacarita* (2,11) mentioned by Dumézil,<sup>35</sup> the virtues that flourished in the realm of King Suddhodana at the time of his son Siddhartha's\* birth are identified with those that thrived in the model kingdom of Yayati\*: "At that time in his realm, as in that of King Yayati\* son of Nahusa\*, no one was disrespectful toward kinsmen [*nagauravo\* bandhusu\**], nor ungenerous [*na ... adata\**], nor unobservant of religious obligations [*na ... avrato*], nor untruthful [*na ... anrtiko\**], nor given to hurt [*na himsrah\**]." <sup>36</sup> Although these are society's virtues rather than the king's, and although they are not given consecutively, one may still propose that a trifunctional complement of royal virtues provided the model: (first function) observance of obligations and truthfulness (cf. Astaka\* and Sibi\*); (second) noncruelty, feasibly a Buddhist reformulation of the warrior function; and (third) generosity (cf. Vasumanas) and perhaps respect for kinsmen.<sup>37</sup> Finally, again from the *Mahabharata*\*, one finds Samjaya\* trying to instill in Dhrtarastra\* the fortitude to bear the bad news of battle by recalling the ancient *rajarsi's\** example:

In prosperity, lineage, fame, asceticism, and learning, the good now regard you to be like Yayati\*, son of Nahusa\*.

*sriya\* kulena yasasa\* tapasa\* ca srutena\* ca*

*tvamadya\* santo manyante yayatimiva\* nahusam\**. [8:5,27]

Here, in ascendant order, is the third-function quality "prosperity" along with "family, lineage," the latter being a virtue (cf. "respect for kinsmen" in the *Buddhacarita*) that will demand further discussion; then "fame, glory," the ksatriya's\* great

<sup>35</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 360; he does not suggest a trifunctional interpretation here.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Edward Hamilton Johnston, ed. and trans., *The Buddhacarita, or, Acts of the Buddha*, I, Sanskrit text, II, Translation and notes (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1935 and 1936), II, 22.

<sup>37</sup> "Respectfulness" is a Vaisya\* trait sometimes identified with Nakula and/or Sahadeva (for example, 7:33,6); see Wikander, "Nakula et Sahadeva," *OS*, VI (1957), 70.

aspiration; and finally two matters of spirit and mind, *tapas* and learning.

Yayati's \* legend and renown thus give an excellent base from which to seek a wider sample of royal virtue inventories. In addition to those which, in the last chapter, we found connected with Sri\* and Draupadi\*, there are the following. First is a passage which requires treatment at some length and then a number of passages which can be summarized.

The culminating scene in Krishna's participation in the affairs of the Pandavas\* and Kurus is his revival of the royal baby Pariksit\*, son of Abhimanyu. Krishna's role involves an activation of certain virtues. Should Pariksit\* remain stillborn, the Kuru line will have ended. But Krishna has promised to revive the child (10:16,15) and is reminded of this by his sister Subhadra\*, the dead child's grandmother. Her words are almost as significant a "key" as those of Galava\* to Madhavi\*: "Surely, O Kesava\*, you have a soul of dharma [*dharmatma\**], are truthful [*satyavan\**], and have true valor [*satyavikramah\**]. It [behoves] you to make this word [his promise] conform to *rtā\**" (*tam\* vacamrtam\**; 14:66,16). The virtues which Subhadra\* attributes to her brother thus range themselves within the first and second functions: (1) dharma and *satya*; and (2) true or real valor, *vikrama*. And we soon see that she knows him well, for it is these qualities, and actions related to them, that Krishna makes operative in the miracle that follows. He "withdraws" (*sam-hr\**; 14:68,16) the weapon that afflicts the child, and then, "causing the entire universe to hear" (*sarvam\* visravayanjagat\**; 17), he says:

18. I do not speak falsely [*na bravimy\* ... mithya\**], O Uttara\*; it shall be true [*satyametadbhavisyati*]: I shall cause this one to live in the sight of all embodied creatures [*pasyatam\* sarvadehinam\**].

19. Never before has anything been spoken falsely [*mithya\**] by me, even in indifferent matters; and I have never turned back in battle [*na ca yuddhe paravrttas\**]; accordingly, may this one live [*tatha\* samjivatamayam\**].

20. As dharma and brahmins above all [*brahmanasca* \* *visesatah* \*] are dear to me, may this son of Abhimanyu, born dead, live accordingly [*tatha* \*].

21. As I have never brought about hostility [*virodha*] with Vijaya [Arjuna], by that truth [*tena satyena*] may this child live.

22. As *satya* and dharma are forever established in me, accordingly [*tatha* \*] let this dead child born of Abhimanyu live.

23. Kamsa\* and Kesin\* were righteously [*dharmena*] slain by me, by that truth [*tena satyena*] let this child return to life. [14:68,18-23]

Through these words the child comes to life (24).

There is, as one can see, a cadence here. After summoning his truthfulness (*sloka*\* 18), Krishna alternates between calling upon his second-function and first-function qualities. In *slokas*\* 19, 21, and 23, he mentions virtues relative to his career as a ksatriya\* prince: he has "never turned back in battle," he has "never brought about hostility" with his inseparable friend Arjuna, and he has "righteously" slain his foes Kamsa\* and Kesin\*. On the other hand, in *slokas*\* 20 and 22, Krishna mentions his affinities with dharma and brahmins and then with dharma and *satya*. *Satya* operates on the same double level as in the story of Yayati\*. It is one of Krishna's virtues, yet it also serves as the basis for an "act of truth." 38 Moreover, the "act of truth" itself involves not the first-function qualities but the second. In *sloka*\* 19, Krishna's never having "turned back in battle" is substantiated, activated, by his never having spoken falsely. And then, all the more pointedly, in the last two "second-function *slokas*\*" Krishna activates his relation with Arjuna and his "righteous" conquests by the "common formulaic item" *tena satyena* (*slokas*\* 21 and 23). Let us now recall the words of Subhadra\*, according to whom Krishna has *satya*, dharma, and true valor as the virtues relevant to his promise.

38 Dhairyabala P. Vora, *Evolution of Morals in the Epics* (Bombay: Bhatkal, 1959), P. 219, observes correctly that "Krsna\* revives the still born child ... by the power of his truthful character." I would only add that "truth," though basic, is not the only quality involved.

By "valor" especially, or more precisely by the related second-function achievements, Krishna is able to put his "truth" into "action." His word thus "conforms to *rta* \*."

It will not do, however, to say that Krishna uses only his second-function traits in this act of truth. Perhaps the formula *tena satyena* occurs on this level because his second-function achievements, some of them rather ambiguous, must be "verified" (*tena satyena*) and "justified" (*dharmena*) by the virtues of the first function. Actually, the whole speech constitutes the act of truth. Rather than drawing from one dimension, Krishna draws on at least two, more or less in the same fashion as the grandsons of Yayati\* draw on all three functional areas. From these two cases, it would seem that an act of truth involving the destiny of a king requires the activation of virtues from each of the three functions. Yet it must be admitted that Krishna makes no mention of any virtue or activity that has reference to the third function. For the present, this problem must be left unsolved.

More briefly, other enumerations of royal virtues include the following:

(1) In Chapter 10, I will attempt to show that Salya\*, king of Madra, is a special symbolic representative of kingship. When he is nominated to lead the Kuru army, it is with this royal character clearly in mind: "This one, with [his] lineage [*kulam*], heroism [*viryam*\*], energy [*tejas*], fame [*yasas*\*], and prosperity [*sri*\*], is endowed with every virtue" (*sarvagunair\* samuditah\**; 9:5,18).<sup>39</sup>

(2) Opposite this, when Salya\* is slain by Yudhisthira\*, the latter's troops acclaim him "firm in truth [*satyadhrti*\*], one whose foes are conquered [*jitamitra*\*]; today [with Salya's\* death] King Duryodhana has been divested of blazing royal prosperity" (*hino diptaya\* nrpatisriya\**; 9:18,14).

<sup>39</sup> The ordering of these virtues is apparently pyramidal, with *tejas*, first function, at top center (head?), *viryam*\* and *yadas*\* at the sides (arms?), and *kulam* and *sri*\* suggestively at the base.

(3) Bhishma \*, having fallen in battle and lying on his bed of arrows, urges Karna\*, whom he had till then always degraded, to unite with the Pandavas\* and end hostilities: "I know your vigor [*viryam\**] in battle, so hard for foes to bear, your regard for brahmins [or piety; *brahmanyata\**], your heroism [*sauryam\**], and your superior conduct in giving" (*dane\* ca paramam\* gatim*; 6:117,12). The last three qualities remind us that Karna\*, like Bhishma\* himself, is a potential king.

(4) When Bhishma\* introduces Yudhisthira\* to the subject of *rajadharma\**, the "duty of kings," he begins by breaking the subject down into four topics: attendance on gods and brahmins, truth (*satya*) exertion (*utthana\**), and the maintenance of prosperity (*sri\**; 12:56,12-20).

(5) At a point where Arjuna's identity, as father of Abhimanyu and grandfather of Pariksit\*, is defined by his role in continuing the Kuru line with its virtues intact, he is prised trifunctionally: for his "learning [*srutam\**], prowess [*vikrama\**], and prosperity" (*sri\**; 7:33,10).

(6) Pariksit\* is himself celebrated as "prosperous, truth-speaking, and of firm fortitude" (*sriman-satyavag-drdhavikramah\**; 1:45,11).

(7) Then there is a formulaic *sloka\** describing the ideal king, occurring twice with only the slightest variation: "Having obtained kingship, a virtuous [monarch] should win over some by gift, some by might, and others by sweet speech" (*danenanyam\* balenanyam\* tatha\* sunrtayaparam\** [or *anyam\* sunrtaya\* gira\**]; 5: 130,27 and, variant in brackets, 12:76,31).40

(8) Paralleling this royal program in a more active form, we are told that "Three sounds never ceased in the abode of [King] Dilipa\*: the sound of [Vedic] recitation, the sound of the bowstring, and the words 'let it be given'" (*diyatam\**; 12:29,72).

40*Sunrta\** as a substantive, or *sunrta\* gir*, where it is used adjectivally, may evoke a derivation from *su-rta\**, "good and true" (Monier-Williams). As the next citation (no. 8) shows, it probably evokes the sound of Vedic recitation.

(9) To these descriptions of kings should now be added one concerning a queen. Having notices in Chapter 7 that a trifunctional characterization of Draupadi \* placed her third-function trait, *rupam\** ("beauty"), first, before *tejas* and *yasas\**,<sup>41</sup> we may now recall a description of Damayanti\*: "celebrated throughout the world for her beauty [*rupam\**], majesty [*tejas*], fame [*yasas\**], prosperity [*sri\**], and good fortune" (*saubhagyam*; 3:50,10).<sup>42</sup> The introduction by beauty is followed by the same first- and second-function qualities as Draupadi's\* and then the indication of still further amplitude in the third.

(10) Finally, in a passage that is not royal on the human level but which nonetheless concerns *aisvaryam\**, "lordship" or "sovereignty," on the divine, Uma\* tells Siva\* he deserves a share in Daksa's\* sacrifice because of his *tejas*, *yasas\**, and *sri\** (12:274,27).

### The Virtues of the Functions

It seems beyond dispute that these passages, along with those cited in the previous chapter, demonstrate a predilection for trifunctional groupings of royal virtues, whether these be in triads, tetrads, or pentads. The examples have, of course, been selected with their trifunctional design in mind, and no doubt more could be found. To discuss the composition of these groupings in more detail, however, it will be helpful to have all the variants before us. The following table presents them in the order they have been discussed in the last two chapters.

Chapter 7	1st function	2d function	3d function
1. SB* 13,2,6,1-7	<i>tejas</i>	<i>indriyam</i>	<i>pasu*</i> ( <i>sri*</i> )
2. 2,4,4,4			<i>prajati*</i> <i>sir*</i>
3. 11,4,3,3*	<i>samrajyam*</i> <i>ksatram*</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>rupani*</i> <i>rastram*</i> <i>bhaga pusti*</i>
4. 11,4,4,1*	<i>tejas</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>sri*</i>

<sup>41</sup> See above, Chapter 7, at n. 82, citing 1:189,39.

<sup>42</sup> See above, before n. 15.

Chapter 7	1st function	2d function	3d function
5. TS 7,1,8,2*	<i>tejas</i>	<i>indriyam</i>	<i>annadyarn *</i>
6. SB* 1,6,3,8-15	<i>devas* vidyas*</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>annadyam* sri*</i>
7. Mbh. 12:124, 45-60	<i>dharma satya (= tejas)</i>	<i>vrttam* balam</i>	<i>sri*</i>
8. 12:217,18-19	<i>vidya*</i>	<i>balam</i>	<i>darsaniya* bhaga</i>
9. 5:39,50	<i>prajna* vrata</i>	<i>sura*</i>	<i>datr* arya*</i>
10. Mark*. P. 5	<i>tejas</i>	<i>balam viryam*</i>	<i>rupam*</i>
11. Mbh. 1:189,39	<i>tejas</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>rupam*</i>
Chapter 8	1st function	2d function	3d function
12. Mbh. 5:117, 21-22	<i>satya (-dharma) yajvan</i>	<i>sura*</i>	<i>dana(pati)*</i>
13. 1:88,21-24	<i>satya</i>	conquests	<i>danam*</i>
14. 5:120,3-14	<i>satya kratu + dharma</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>danam* ksama*</i>
15. Buddhacar. 2,11	<i>vrata na anrtika*</i>	<i>ksatradharma* vira*</i>	<i>danam* (? gauravo bandhusu*)</i>
16. Mbh. 8:5,27	<i>srutam* tapas</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>kulam sri*</i>
17. 14:66,16	<i>dharma satya</i>	<i>vikrama</i>	
18. 14:68,17-24	truthfulness	no turning back in battle	
	fondness for dharma and brahmins	no <i>virodha</i> with Arjuna	
19. 9:5,18	<i>satya dharma</i>	slew foes righteously	
20. 9:18,14	<i>tejas</i>	<i>viryam* yasas*</i>	<i>sri* kulam</i>
21. 6:17,12	<i>satya(dhrti)*</i>	<i>jitamitra*</i>	foe's <i>sri*</i> lost
22. 12:56,12-20	<i>brahmanyata*</i>	<i>sauryam*</i>	<i>danam*</i>
	serves gods and brahmins	<i>utthanam*</i>	<i>sri*</i>
23. 7:33,10	<i>satya</i>		
24. 1:45,10	<i>srutam*</i>	<i>vikrama</i>	<i>sri*</i>
25. 5:130,27 etc.	<i>satya(vag)*</i>	<i>(drdha)vikrama*</i>	<i>sri*</i>
26. 12:29,72	<i>sunrta* (gir)</i>	<i>balam</i>	<i>danam*</i>
27. 3:50,10	<i>svadhyayaghosa*</i>	<i>jyaghosa*</i>	<i>diyatam*</i>
	<i>tejas</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>rupam* sri*</i>
			<i>saubhagyam</i>
28. 12:274,27	<i>tejas</i>	<i>yasas*</i>	<i>sri*</i>

\* In these instances I omit *brahmavarcasa*, which consistently follows the second-function virtue as its "priestly" complement.

It is, of course, to be understood that related classifications of virtues or "power substances" could be found in other texts. I have stuck, however, primarily to the *Mahabharata*\* and called upon other texts only where they provide variants on figures who have an epic career: Draupadi-Sri\*, the Pandavas\*, and Yayati\*. We may now look at these variants more closely, proceeding function by function. One suggestive line of investigation will be to observe how certain virtues occur primarily in combinations while others occur, within their "function," primarily alone.

(1) *First function*. The table shows that *tejas* appears most often (eight times) without any other virtue as its counterpart. The parenthetic case (no. 7) where Prahlada's\* *satya*, dharma, and *sila*\* go over to Indra refers to each of these virtues as a *tejas* and thus makes them not separate virtues but "forms" or "manifestations" of *tejas*. Gonda has protested Dumézil's designation of *tejas* as a first-function virtue, calling it "an oft-mentioned quality not only of representatives of the first function, but also of kings and warriors"<sup>43</sup> but these terms can easily be met in the context of our present discussion, where we encounter *tejas* as a first-function royal virtue.<sup>44</sup>

The other virtues mostly occur in pairs. At first sight there seem to be four main classes of these "coupling" virtues: (a) those concerning truthfulness (*satya*, *na anrtika*\*, occurring eleven times, seven in pairs); (b) righteousness (dharma; seven times, all in pairs); (c) knowledge (*vidya*\*, *prajna*\*, *srutam*\*; five times, three in pairs); and (d) sacrificial activity and piety (*devas*\*, *yajvan*, *kratu*, *brahmanyata*\*, fondness for brahmins, service of gods and brahmins, *sunrta*\* *gir*, *svadhyayaghosa*\*; eight times, five in pairs). Only one other virtue appears more than once. This is *vrata*, and the two times it does occur, it appears in combinations. Not, however, a virtue that stands completely

<sup>43</sup> Gonda, "Some Observations on Dumézil's Views," p. 11 (see above, n. 31); for Dumézil, see *ME*, I, 118, and *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Thus the ksatriya\* of *Gita*\* 18,43 (see above, before n. 6) possesses *tejas*, but alongside such other virtues as *sauryam*\* and *danam*\*.



alone, *vrata* refers not only to vowkeeping but to the observance of religious obligations, and it is thus most closely related to the fourth and second of the classes just mentioned, that is, to sacrificial duties and especially to dharma. In this second case, a parallel has been demonstrated between *vratá* and *dhárman* in Rg \* Vedic texts, and the term *vratá* has been found most closely connected in the *Veda* with deities of the "first function": with Varuna\* especially, but also with Mitra and, secondarily, with the Adityas\* and with kingship.<sup>45</sup>

With these remarks in mind, let us turn to the only pattern of pairing that occurs with any obvious frequency, that of *satya* and dharma (occurring three or four [no. 14] times). Clearly dharma is an elastic and imperialistic term in the epic, but as denoting righteousness in attitude and behavior, it is thoroughly bound up especially in the ideology of kingship with piety and the performance of sacrifices. Thus if dharma can be correlated with the sacrificial virtues, as well as with the ancient meaning of *vrata*, a pattern begins to emerge. For, just as truthfulness, *satya*, occurs with dharma in three or four of its seven pairings, so it occurs two or three times (no. 14 aligns *satya* with both dharma and sacrificial dedication) with the sacrificial virtues and once with *vrata*. Thus in all seven of its pairings, *satya* stands opposite a virtue identifiable with dharma.

Meanwhile, if there is a dependable correlation between the sacrificial virtues and dharma in their juxtaposition with *satya*, so there is a complementary pattern in the case of the remaining class of virtues, those concerned with knowledge. For where these are paired with other virtues, they are usually like *satya* set alongside the sacrificial virtues. Here the evidence is more limited and uncertain, but in two of the

<sup>45</sup> See Hanns-Peter Schmidt, *Vedisch vratá und awestisch urvata\** (Hamburg: Cram, De Gruyter, 1958), pp. 90-91, 14-16, 52-54, 143-44; see also Brown, "Duty as Truth," p. 61; and Gonda, *The Vedic God Mitra* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 8-10 and 100, n. 3.

three instances mentioned, "knowledge" is set beside *devas* \* (no. 6), that is, probably sacrificial divine worship, and beside *vrata* (no. 9) the remaining instance being a combination with the irreducible *tapas* (no. 16).

It thus seems that there is a fundamental dichotomy where the first-function virtues are mentioned in pairs. On one side *satya* is the basic term, occasionally giving way to a form of sacred knowledge. Possibly this is to be seen as an Upanisadic\* extension of the fundamental notion of truth: that is, that truth and the "knowledge" of it are one. And on the other is dharma, recalling and reflected in the virtues of sacrificial action, piety, and vows. It is this dichotomy, with the several terms indicating it, that is found in the characterizations of Sibi\* and Astaka\* in the Yayati\* legend (nos. 12 and 14), in the *Buddhacarita*'s description of Yayati\* (no. 15), and also in the "act of truth" by which Krishna revives Pariksit\* (nos. 17 and 18 [conclusion]). Here I would point out, first, that although Dumézil has said that the qualities ascribed to Sibi\* and Astaka\* are not found elsewhere in Indian divisions within the first function, there are cases where the two Vedic gods of this function Mitra and Varuna\* are defined by them. For instance, the Rajasuya\*, one of the great royal rituals, provides a list of eight "divine instigators" or "quickeners" (*devasu*\*) of kingship in which the two gods are referred to as *Mitra Satya* and *Varuna\** *Dharmapati*.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although these associations do not seem to point to a consistent set of correlations between the two gods and these particular virtues,<sup>47</sup> one can at least say that the latter are not irreconcilable with the theology of the "dual sovereigns." Second, if, despite the small

46 See Heestermann, *Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 70, and *SB*\* 5,3,3,8-9; for parallel passages and discussion, see Gonda, *Vedic God Mitra*, pp. 62-66.

47 For example, see Lévi, *Doctrine du sacrifice*, pp. 156-67, on Varuna\* and *satya* in the Brahmanas\*. See also Wikander's and Dumézil's position that Dharma substitutes for Mitra as the divinity incarnate in Yudhisthira\*.

number of references, one can regard *vrata* as related primarily to dharma, or "vows" as related to "duty," we have a fact of capital importance for our forthcoming discussion of the epic's sins.

(2) *Second function.* On the warrior level there are fewer difficulties. *Yasas* \* appears, like *tejas*, primarily alone (six times out of eight). Pairings of the second-function virtues, unlike those of the first function, are infrequent. But in most of the cases where they do occur, they juxtapose *balam* (raw "strength") with some more chivalric or domesticated virtue like *viryam*\* ("heroism, energy") or *vrttam*\* ("activity, occupation"). Although the evidence here is limited (two cases, one concerning the Pandavas\* [no. 10; cf. no. 7]), one is still inclined to suppose that these bipartitions are modeled after the same second-function division that distinguishes the Herakles-Vayu-Bhima\* type from the Achilles-Indra-Arjuna type<sup>48</sup> Otherwise, the second function has been prone to characterization by single virtues which fall into several clusters. Thus, after *yasas*\*, virtues of strength (*indriyam* [?], *balam*, *vikrama*) occur nine times, seven singly; of heroism (*sura-sauryam*\*, *vira-viryam*\*) six times, three singly plus "no turning back in battle"; of conquest or victory two times, both singly; virtues involving honorable relations with other ksatriyas\* (no *virodha* with Arjuna) occur one or two (? "slew foes righteously") times; virtues connected with the duty to act (*vrttam*\*, *utthanam*\*) occur twice; and the virtue of not harming (*na himsrah*\*) occurs once. Perhaps no one second-function virtue was able to keep pace with the changing ideologies of kingship and warfare. Nonetheless, several of these types of virtues will, like *vrata*, bear further watching in our discussion of the epic sins.

(3) *Third function.* On this level, by far the most frequent entry is *sri*\*, occurring thirteen times, seven singly. In fact, one is struck by the frequency of *sri*'s\* associations with *tejas* and *yasas*\* (nos. 4,19,27,28; see also Chapter 7, n. 49). Perhaps

48 See above, Chapter 7, n. 50.

this is a fundamental triad or a set any one or all of which may define its function in royal terms.<sup>49</sup> Next to *sri* \* is *danam*\* and its etymological affiliates (nos. 9 and 26), occurring eight times, four singly. Then come virtues having to do with beauty or "form" (*rupam*\*, *darsaniya*\*), occurring five times, three of these in pairs or sets. One striking fact is that *sri*\* rarely occurs with virtues of either of these other types, perhaps because *sri*\*, in its two meanings, can well account for both: as "prosperity" partially covering *danam*\* and as "beauty" fully covering *rupam*\* (here no. 27 provides the one exception, in the description of the overample endowments of Damayanti\*). In terms of mythology, we are thus brought back to a point made in the last chapter. The goddess of Sovereignty and Prosperity, Sri\* herself, "rounds out" and completes the royal virtues on the level of the third function, being represented in the virtue which she herself incarnates.

Nonetheless, while this mythology relates to much in the area of the third function, there are other virtues that seem to reflect this function's open-endedness toward what Dumézil calls "le nombre,"<sup>50</sup> toward multiplicity. Thus there are the early Brahmanic\* references to material goods such as food (*annadyam*\*) and cattle (*pasu*\*), to nourishment (*pusti*\*), and to the populace of a kingdom (*rastram*\*); and in addition there are references to good fortune (*bhaga*, *saubhagyam*), to creative or generative power (*prajati*\*), and to continuity or purity of race, family, or lineage (*kulam*, *arya*\*)all of which, in this latter case, converge when it comes to kingship. The list, in other words, is heterogeneous. It does not seem to reflect any third-function mythology other than that of Sri\*. There is, however, one other possibility connected with the virtues stressing

49 On *sri*\* as a "symbol and insignia of royalty," see M-W, s.v. See Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas*\*, II, 28, on *tejas* and *yasas*\* as similar to the Iranian *xvarenh*, "royal glory" (also connected with the three functions; see Dumézil, *ME*, II, 282-89).

50 See Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p. 7.

continuity and purity of race and lineage. As Wikander has noted, Sahadeva, the youngest Pandava \*, is a sort of "stay-at-home" (*casanier*), ever close to Yudhisthira\*, and the true representative among his brothers of the Aryan domestic family and its purity, being twice the carrier and handler of Fire (Agni) for his brothers.<sup>51</sup>

These convergences of legend and formula may now lead us to some reflections. In the discussion of the Yayati\* legend, when Yayati\* offers his daughter Madhavi\* to Galava\* to help him obtain the eight hundred peculiar horses, he refers to her as "a promptress of every virtue" (*sarvadharmopacayini*\*; 5:113,11). This epithet, which defines Madhavi\* at the very beginning of her story, is complemented by a similar description at the end. When she appears from the forest to offer half of her own merits to Yayati\*, and thus to seal the bargain between her father and her sons, she says: "I am your daughter Madhavi\*, O king, faring as a deer [*mrgacarini*\*]; by me too is virtue prompted [*mayapyupacito*\* *dharmas*]; accept then half of mine" (5:119,24).

I have used the word "prompt" here for *upa-ci-*, retaining it from the Ganguli-Roy translation of the passage introducing Madhavi\*.<sup>52</sup> For *upacayin*\*, Monier-Williams gives the meanings "causing to increase" or "succeed"; and for *upa-ci-*, the meanings "gather together," "heap together," "increase," and "strengthen." The whole range of meanings is suggestive for Madhavi's\* role with respect to the "virtues." The Critical Edition shows that if the verb and its derivatives, used consistently for Madhavi\*, are representative of the text at its oldest, an inordinate number of emendations are made in the introductory description (on the contrary, no variants are

51 See Wikander, "Nakula et Sahadeva," p. 87 on Sahadeva as "*casanier*," and pp. 73 and 89 on Sahadeva and Fire; on the latter, see 3:143,14 (protecting the Pandavas'\* Agnihotra) and 2:61,6.

52 Ganguli-Roy, trans., *Mahabharata*, IV: *Udyoga Parva*, 234.

cited for the second usage). Thus, for *-upacayini* \* ("a promptress"; 5:113,11), other manuscripts introduce *-upacarini* \* ("one who attends upon"), *-padini* \* (? "one footed in"), *-pravadini* \* ("one who declares"), and several commentators cite *-apacayini* \* ("gatherer"). For *-dharmopacayini* \* ("promptress of virtues"), one text introduces the bland *-dharmarthadayini* \* ("producer of dharma and *artha*"). And finally, several manuscripts insert a whole extra line (455\*) including the added description, or "correction," making Madhavi\* *sarvadharmapradayini* \* ("a bestower of every virtue") or *sarvadharmappravadini* \* ("a declarer of every virtue"). From so many variants, it would seem that the original term has been obscured or forgotten, with varying degrees of misrepresentation. Madhavi\* certainly does not "gather" or "declare" the virtues (she says very little), nor does she produce dharma and *artha*. We thus seem to have here an old way of referring to a peculiar rapport with the royal virtues that would seem especially suited for a royal heroine. At least in the case of Madhavi\*, it is clearly her sex, and moreover her repeated virginity, that makes it possible for her to be "one who causes four lineages to stand, ... a promptress of every virtue."

In the main story of the *Mahabharata*\*, just one heroine, Draupadi\*, shares a number of the characteristics of Madhavi\*: an identification with Sri\*, multiple husbands, and a return to virginity after each childbirth. But in each of these areas, the differences are as great and as obvious as the similarities.<sup>53</sup> They identify the two heroines only as broadly similar figures and indicate no common legend or mythological prototype. But within the similarities lies one general point at which their legends converge. Both are rescuers of royal lineages. Madhavi\* saves four royal lines when she "prompts" the virtues that appear in her sons, and again, she rescues her father's heritage of royal virtues when she "prompts" the restoration that sends

<sup>53</sup> See *ME*, II, 363: unlike Draupadi\*, Madhavi\* remains perpetually a virgin, wedded not to humans but to the Forest.

him back to heaven. Draupadi \*, on the other hand, rescues the Pandavas\*, and thus the "true" descent of the Kuru line, when they have lost everything at the game of dice in the *Sabhaparvan*\*.<sup>54</sup> This very scene, the dice game, provides the frame of reference for a message concerning Draupadi\* which Kunti\* sends, through Krishna, to the twins. Urging these two more gentle of the Pandavas\* to avenge the humiliation of Draupadi\* in the *sabha*\* by the use of force and the practice of *ksatradharma*\*, Kunti\* says: "While you were looking on, Panicali\*, a promptress of every virtue [*sarvadharmopacayini*]\* was addressed with harsh words. Who can endure this?" (5:135,15).

Draupadi\*, then, shares this epithet with Madhavi\* and, to my knowledge after considerable checking with no one else. Here, too, there is evidence of misunderstanding or tampering: thus we have *-dharmopacayini*\* ("gathering every virtue"), *-karmopacayini*\* ("prompting every action"), and in some versions (followed by Ganguli-Roy), the original term is kept, but applied to the twins (*sarvadharmopacayinam*\*) rather than Draupadi\*!<sup>55</sup>

It thus seems likely that the epithet records an early conception of the virtues connected with a feminine incarnation of "sovereignty," whether Madhavi-Medh\*<sup>56</sup> or Sri-Draupadi\*. Perhaps the use of dharmas for "virtues" is earlier than its rival, *gunas*\*, although this does not seem provable. The important point is that the virtues "prompted" by these heroines whether *dharmas* or *gunas*\* are trifunctional and are "prompted" at junctures that are critical for the continuity of royal lineages and destinies. Indeed, they are most critical for figures who represent the kingship of the "central" Kuru dynasty, insofar as, in one case, they ultimately concern the salvation of Yayati\* and, in the other, the origin and rescue of the Pandavas\*.

<sup>54</sup> See above, Chapter 4 and n. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Ganguli-Roy, *Mahabharata*, IV: *Udyoga Parva*, 275.

<sup>56</sup> On Medh, see above, n. 22: she may certainly be said to "prompt" the virtues of nonjealousy (?justice), bravery, and generosity.

Finally, it is quite possible that these "promptings" are the epic counterparts of themes and mechanisms that were at one point also found in rituals. One cannot, of course, reconstruct rituals from myths and legends. As Dumézil says, special royal rituals may lie behind the name Medb (with its connotation of "intoxicating drink"), but they are ones which "it would be as easy as it would be vain to imagine."<sup>57</sup> In the case of India, however, we have already noticed that the Asvamedha \* involves a transfer of royal virtues from the horse to the king by three queens, all "forms of Sri\*."<sup>58</sup> So it is not a question of trying to reconstruct an ancient royal ritual, but of observing a number of mythic and epic themes which may, at some point, have held ritual implications.

In several stories, special figures, of sacred or priestly status, facilitate the liaisons between the female personifications of sovereignty and their royal male partners. In the Yayati\* legend, it is the brahmin Galava\* who leads Madhavi\* from one royal bed to the next. And in a myth from the *Santiparvan*\*,<sup>59</sup> the brahmin-rsi\* Narada\* ("Water-Giver") is present to perform ablutions with Indra at the purest spot (probably the source) of the Ganges just before Indra is united with Sri\*. In the main narrative of the *Mahabharata*\* in one of its strangest passages is a similar episode.

When Krishna is on his "peace" embassy to Hastinapura\*, having found Duryodhana intractable, he visits the latter's greatest ally, Karna\*, to sound him out on some last-ditch proposals. Disclosing to Karna\* that he is "legally" (*dharmatas*) a "Pandava\*" (son of Pandu\*),<sup>60</sup> Krishna urges him to make his identity known and declare his seniority over his "brothers." The latter, Krishna promises, will then embrace his feet, as

<sup>57</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 340.

<sup>58</sup> See above, Chapter 7, at n. 23.

<sup>59</sup> See above, Chapter 7, after n. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Karna\* is a son of either the *kanina*\* ("born of a young woman") or *sahodha*\* ("brought with" a woman at marriage) type (5:138,8-9), having been born to Kunti\* in her youth, before her marriage to Pandu\*. Thus, as said earlier, Karna\* is a potential king.



will Abhimanyu, the sons of Draupadi \*, and the Pandavas'\* allies (5:138, 12-13). But in addition, Krishna makes a second promise that is psychologically fantastic, defying what we know from several other incidents, especially the Svayamvara\* and the dice game.<sup>61</sup> If Karna\* reveals his identity, says Krishna, he can prepare to be installed as king; "and, during the sixth period, Draupadi\* will come to you" (*sasthe\* ca tvam\* tatha\* kale\* draupadyupagamisyati*; 138,15). The Ganguli-Roy translation is surely right in following this with a parenthetic "as a wife."<sup>62</sup> There are but two real differences between this and the other passages cited: first, one has difficulty imagining Draupadi\* complying;<sup>63</sup> and second, Karna\*, unlike the partners of Madhavi\* and the "chosen ones" of Sri\*, is uninterested. The mysterious transferal is only proposed, and the proposal is kept secret.

There are, to be sure, mythological overtones to this passage. Some of these are echoed in a follow-up speech made to Karna\*

61 On Draupadi\* and Karna\* at the Svayamvara\*, see above, Chapter 7, n. 44; in the dice game Karna\* insults her, calling her multiple marriage adharmic (2:61,34-6) and herself a slave (*dasi\**; 61,81).

62 Ganguli-Roy, trans., *Mahabharata*, IV: *Udyoga Parva*, 279; Krishna explicitly promises Karna\* union with Draupadi\* in the *Andhra Mahabharatam*; see Subramanian, *Vyasa and Variations*, p. 201; but it would have to be implied even if one takes *sasthe\* kale\** as "meal-time": see M-W, pp. 278 and 110. The commentator Nilakantha\* is silent. See also Georg Buhler and Johann Kirste, "Indian Studies, No. II: Contributions to the History of the *Mahabharata\**," *SKAWW, Philosophisch-Historische Classe*, vol. CXXVII, Abhandlung XI (1892), 19, discussing an alternate reading from Kumarila's\* *Tantravarttika\**: "It is for this reason [because Draupadi\* is an incarnation of Sri\*] that Vasudeva\* says to Karna\*: 'And on the sixth day [*ahani*] Draupadi\* will serve thee.' For how else could a person, whose word is authoritative, speak thus?" Although Bühler and Kirste view the variant as the original, it is surely a substitution that reveals some considerable postepic embarrassment at Krishna's behavior.

63 Krishna's suggestion is of a different order from extratextual stories which speak of a secret attachment of Draupadi\* for Karna\*even making the one sin which stops her from reaching heaven (which the traditional text says was a "partiality for Arjuna"; 17:2,6)that she harbored a desire for Karna\*. I have several times heard such stories, in both Maharashtra and Tamilnadu.

by Kunti \*, his mother: "Acquired formerly by Arjuna [*arjunenarjitam\**], greedily seized by the wicked snatching it away from the sons of Dhrtarastra\*, enjoy that prosperity belonging to Yudhisthira\*" (*bhuhksva\* yaudhisthiram\* sriyam\**; 5:143,8). This *sri\** which Kunti\* speaks of must certainly refer, even if not solely, to Draupadi\*. Moreover, when Draupadi\* was "acquired by Arjuna" as a bride, it was Kunti's\* fateful words that united her with her four other sons as well. In fact, the present words to Karna\* seem unmistakably reminiscent of the earlier words concerning Draupadi\*. Thinking her sons had returned home with edible alms (*bhiksa\**; 1:182,1), she told them: "May you all enjoy [it (her)] together" (*bhunkteti\* sametya sarve*; 182,2).<sup>64</sup> In each passage, the use of the root *bhuj*, "eat, enjoy," carries a sexual overtone.<sup>65</sup> Do we not honor the poets most if we assume that these coincidences all concerning words of Kunti\* to her sons about Draupadi\* are "real" and intended?

As suggested in earlier chapters, the relationship of Draupadi\*, Sri\* incarnate, to Visnu's\* *avatara\**, Krishna, is full of ambiguities: identical names, a coded language, and, at times, the sense that while she is "in essence" and "in intention" united with him, she is forever provisionally preoccupied with others. Taking this intimate but noncommittal relationship into account, one cannot escape the impression that Krishnawhom we have seen elsewhere in archaic priestly roles<sup>66</sup> is, at least in the present scene, Draupadi's\* Galava\*. He is implicitly empowered (and we may assume that he anticipates Karna's\* negative response) to facilitate, as a go-between or

<sup>64</sup> Some Southern texts give *bhunksvadhvamiti\* pramadat\**.

<sup>65</sup> As insisted to me by Robert Goldman.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. also the matchmaker role of the famous brahmin Vasistha\*, *purohita* to the Pandavas'\* ancestors at the time of King Samvarana\*, who went to the Sun to obtain permission for the king to marry the Sun's daughter Tapati\* (1:162,12-163,9; and see above, Chapter 7, n. 60); similarly, Drupada's *purohita* (presumably the same as will later precede Krishna as prewar envoy for the Pandavas\*; see above, Chapter 6, n. 63) serves as messenger and go-between in arranging Draupadi's\* marriage with the Pandavas\* (1:185,14-15).

royal matchmaker, what amounts to a transfer of sovereignty. Moreover, there is a passage which confirms a role for Krishna in maintaining the standards and the mechanisms of kingship. In the first meeting between Krishna and the Pandavas \* at the beginning of the forest exile, Draupadi\* herself, in the mythologically allusive exchange that she and Krishna have, says to him:

Of Rajarsis\* who are of meritorious acts, unretreating in battle, and endowed with every virtue, you are the refuge [or way], O best of men.

*rajarsinam\* punyakrtamahavesvanivartinam\**

*sarvadharmopapannanam\* tvam\* gatih\* purusvttama\** [3:13,49]

Krishna is thus the "refuge" of every "omnivirtuous" monarch, or claimant to the sovereignty which Draupadi\*, as Sri\* incarnate, represents "on earth."

## Chapter 9 Sins of the Sovereign

The last two chapters have provided a framework within which to interpret the virtues that enhance the royal figure of Yudhishthira \*. Despite much variation and considerable inflation, a consistent trifunctional theme has been detected. Now for the countertheme. Underlying the discussion will be two assumptions, familiar from the opening\* chapter. First, it is the nature of epic (treating as it does of human "psychology" and "destiny") to open vistas on the nature of sin and virtue; second, the two virtue and sin must be studied and interpreted through their relation to each other.

Probably no facet of the *Mahabharata*\* has elicited more varied comment than the Pandavas'\* and Krishna's involvement in numerous sins.<sup>1</sup> I will not attempt to discuss every incident, but I will try to place some of them in a new perspective by examining their "motive": the goal of sovereignty. The brief begins with the "legal precedents" set by certain famous moments in the career of the divine sovereign, Indra.

### The Sins of Indra

The theme before us is one which Dumézil has explored from different angles: "the three sins of the warrior," that is, a series of sins against the three functions. Dumézil's discussion of this

<sup>1</sup> See, most prominently, Holtzmann (elder), *Indische Sagen*, II, vii, and Holtzmann (younger), *Mahabharata\* und seine Theile*, I, 80-84; E. W. Hopkins, "The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India, as Represented by the Sanskrit Epic," *JAOS*, XIII (1899), 58-65; Held, *Ethnological Study*, pp. 172-75, 304; Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 256-59.

mythologem has undergone several refinements. His original comparisons concerned the "cadre," or "frame," of three "sins" and three "losses," culminating in an annihilation of the sinner, which he discovered in the legends of the Scandinavian Starkadr-Starcatherus, the Greek Heracles, and in the mythology of Indra.<sup>2</sup> More recently, however, he retains only the first two figures and adds two more heroes: the *Mahabharata*'s \* Sisupala\*, and, possibly in protracted form, the Roman warrior king Tullus Hostilius.<sup>3</sup> The total picture has thus been greatly sharpened, in particular by the discussion of Sisupala\*. But Indra has perhaps been dropped too quickly. According to Dumézil, "It now seems probable that it [the Indra myth] is a question of a secondary application, of an artificial extension into mythology, of the epic theme."<sup>4</sup> Dumézil thus bases his view on a distinction drawn between myth and epic, with the theme of the three sins having originally pertained to the latter: "Indra's sins are matters of mythology, those of Starkadr and of Heracles [and of Sisupala\*] are matters of epic."<sup>5</sup>

It does not seem likely that any evidence will emerge to dispute the historical side of these judgments. No Indo-European figure of myth, no warrior god, other than Indra, has been found to commit a trifunctional assortment of significantly interrelated sins. Thus, as a mythical theme, Indra's three sins may well be an Indian invention. But this does not mean that one must follow Dumézil in regarding Indra's three sins as an "artificial extension" of the epic theme. There is no way to account for Indra borrowing, or copying, the sins of Sisupala\*, or, for that matter, of assuming the sins from an earlier form of the legend. Nonetheless, the one myth which

<sup>2</sup> Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 65-104 (from the original French of 1956).

<sup>3</sup> On Sisupala\*, see Dumézil, *ME*, II, 66-68; *Mbh.* 2:42,7-11 (his sins); and above, Chapter 4, n. 2; on Tullus Hostilius, see *ME*, II, 358-59.

<sup>4</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 129-30 (my translation).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20 (my translation).

attributes to Indra three successive sins against the three functions does seem to be an "artificial extension" of something. This is the myth of *Markandeya \* Purana\** 5, discussed in Chapter 7,6 in which Indra's three sins result in the losses of his *tejas*, *balam*, *viryam\**, and *rupam\**, and ultimately in the births of the Pandavas\*. It was argued in Chapter 7 that this myth represents an "artificial" attempt to clear Draupadi\* of the polyandry charge. But here, in speaking of an "artificial extension," I have in mind not a continuation of a heroic tradition like the Sisupala\* legend, but an artificial treatment, in the sense of synthetic and eclectic, of earlier traditions about the sins and punishments of Indra.

On this subject, I am much in debt to Dumézil. He has shown that while "Indra has no criminal record in the *Rg\* Veda*,"<sup>7</sup> the Brahmanas\* provide extensive lists of Indra's misdeeds, usually mentioning one or more of those which come to be included in more complete renditions. *Aitareya Brahmana\** 7,28, for instance, has Indra commit his first two sins against the same two figures Visvarupa\* and Vrtra\* as *Markandeya\** 5; and *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 1,6,3,-17 provides a detailed narrative of this same sequence. According to the latter passage, also discussed in Chapter 7,8 Indra first slew the three-headed Visvarupa\*, son of Tvastr\*. Furious, Tvastr\* created Vrtra\*, and as the latter developed, he "came to be possessed of Agni and Soma, of all sciences [*vidyas\**], all glory [*yasas\**], all nourishment [*annadyam\**], all prosperity" (*sri\**; 8). In order for Indra again to become "what Indra now is," it was necessary that all the divinities (*devas\**) and each of the above qualities return to him (15), after which Indra slew Vrtra\* (16-17). As

6 See Chapter 7, following n. 68.

7 Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 65-68; he maintains this against the otherwise very valuable study of Hanns Oertel, "Contributions from the Jaiminiya\* Brahmana\* to the History of Brahmana\* Literature," 2d ser., pt. 3, "Indrasya kilbisani\*," *JAOS*, XIX (1908), 118-25.

8 See Chapter 7, following n. 38.

suggested earlier, these losses and recoveries probably have a tripartite structure, like those in *Markandeya* \* 5. But they are all connected in this passage with just one incident, the slaying of Vrtra\*, which the passage does not actually speak of as a sin.

Not until the *Markandeya*\* 5 account is all this systematized to include not only the trifunctional losses and recoveries, but the concurrence of each loss with a sin against the corresponding function. Moreover, this myth provides the first mention of Indra's violation of the brahmani\* Ahalya\* (a story long known) in a list of Indra's sins, and thus the first ascription of this episode to the zone of the third function.<sup>9</sup> To recapitulate briefly, first Indra slays the brahmin Visvarupa\*, losing his *tejas*; second, breaking a warrior's agreement to "friendship" (*sakhyam*), he slays Vrtra\* and loses his *balam*; and third, violating Ahalya\*, he loses his *rupam*\*.<sup>10</sup>

As I argued that this myth offers an "artificial" reinterpretation of Draupadi's\* polyandry, I must now suggest that it has rearranged certain traditional, albeit entirely Indian, material concerning Indra's sins. Once again, there is a more coherent myth within the *Mahabharata*\* itself, one dealing not with three sins and the births of the Pandavas\*, but, as probably already reflected in *Satapatha*\* *Brahmana*\* 1,6,3, two sins, a series of losses, and a final restoration of Indra to sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> In the epic, the version of this myth that is contextually most important occurs in the *Udyogaparvan* (5:9-18), with another complete version told in the *Santiparvan*\* (12:329,17-41) and numerous spinoffs elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> As will be suggested mainly through footnotes, there are reasons to regard the *Udyogaparvan*

9 On the Ahalya\* story, see Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 70.

10 See above, Chapter 7, at n. 68, and the note.

11 See also *JB* 2,134 (cited by Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 69).

12 For further discussion, see Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 124-27 (possible Indo-Iranian features [not concerning the sins and losses] of the myth); Holtzmann (younger), "Indra nach den Vorstellungen des Mahabharata\*," *ZDMG*, XXXII (1878), 305-11; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 129-32.

version as the more ancient treatment of the sequence, which concerns three great threats to Indra's throne.

(1) "From hatred of Indra" (*indradrohat* \*), Tvastr\*, by his great *tapas*, created a son having three heads: Visvarupa\*, who "longed for Indra's seat" (*endram\* sa prarthayatsthanam\**; 5:9,3-4).<sup>13</sup> Visvarupa\* was a brahmin, who read the Vedas with one of his three mouths and was "intent upon a life of religious practices and austerities"; he was also a threat to Indra because of his "unlimited *tejas*" (9,7). In order to deprive Visvarupa\* of this "energy," Indra ordered the Apsarases to try to tempt him; but he would not be distracted. Indra then "decided on a weapon" his *vajra* (9,20) to destroy Visvarupa\*.<sup>14</sup> However, after killing him the chief of the celestials found no peace (*sarman\**) and felt himself scorched by Visvarupa's\* *tejas* (*dipitastasya\* tejasa\**; 9,24). Though Indra soon returned to heaven as king, his sin of killing a brahminone who threatened him especially by his *tejas* was yet to be atoned for.

(2) Enraged that Indra had slain his son "who had committed no offense at all," Tvastr\*, again by *tapas*, created Vrtra\* to kill Indra. In their first fight, Indra was swallowed by Vrtra\*. But Vrtra\* was made to yawn, and Indra escaped, only to retreat from his foe, who was "endowed with strength" (*balasamanvita*; 9,50). In distress, the gods, led by Indra, repaired to Visnu\*, who told them: "I shall tell you a contrivance [*upayam\* vaksyami\**] whereby he shall be annihilated. ... Adopt toward him a conciliatory policy ... ; remaining

<sup>13</sup> This theme of rivalry for the sovereignty is not found in 12:329, where Indra's opposition turns on Visvarupa's\* change from *purohita* of the gods to that of the Asuras (18-23).

<sup>14</sup> In 12:329, Indra obtains advice from Brahma\* (24-25) and help from Visnu\*, who pervades the *vajra* by which Indra kills Visvarupa\* (27). This version ascribes the origin of the *vajra* to Dadhica's\* bones (25) and is thus oriented to show, as it concludes, that Indra was able to overcome a brahmin foe only by having access to another brahmin's (Dadhica's\*) "energy" (*brahmatejas*; 41).



invisible, I shall enter Indra's thunderbolt" (5:10, 10-13).

The rsis \* then went to Vrtra\* and said: "Let there be eternal friendship [*sakhyam\* bhavatu ... nityada\**] between you and Indra" (10,19). Then they delivered a sermon on *sakhyam* and declared what a faithful "friend" Indra would be (10,23-26). Vrtra\* agreed on the condition that "Indra himself or the gods do not kill me by what is dry, or wet; by a stone, or by wood; by a weapon [*sastrena\**] or by a missile [*vajrena\**]; in the daytime, or at night" (10,29). Thus an accord was reached, but Indra passed his time searching for a "loophole" (*randhram*; 10,32). Then, one evening (neither night nor day), seeing Vrtra\* by the seashore (neither land nor sea?), Indra saw his opportunity, and, "bearing Visnu\* in mind, he beheld at that instant in the sea a mass of froth [*phena*] as large as a hill. And he said, 'this is neither wet, nor dry....' And he threw the mass of froth, blended with his thunderbolt, at Vrtra\*. And Visnu\*, having entered within the froth, put an end to Vrtra's\* life" (10,35-39).

Soon, however, after much rejoicing, Indra became "overpowered by falsehood" (*anrtenabhibhuta\**; 10,42), that is, by the sin of not keeping his agreement with Vrtra\*; and he was also "overpowered by the brahminicide" (*abhibhutasca\* ... brahmahatyaya\**; 10,42) of killing Visvarupa\*.15 Departing from his throne, "bereft of his senses and consciousness and overpowered by his own sins" (*abhibhutah\* svakalmasaih\**; 10,43), he could not be recognized. "And he lay concealed in the water, just like a writhing snake" (43).16

(3) Without a king for the divine throne, the gods sought out the "handsome" (*sriman\**; 5:11,1) Nahusa\*, a human being and, by dynastic reckonings, the father of Yayati\*. Addressing him, "O lord of earth, be our king" (*raja\* no bhava parthiva\**), the gods convinced him to "protect the kingdom in heaven"

15 This differentiation between the two sins is not made in 12:329; there it is the sin of brahminicide doubled (*tasyam\* dvaidhibhutayam\* brahmavadhyayam\**; 28) that causes Indra, out of fear, to enter the lotus stalk.

16 Cf. *JB* 2,234: when Agni succeeds in purifying Indra of his sins by sacrifice, Indra, "as a serpent would get rid of its skin, ... got rid of all his evil."

(*pahi \* rajyam\* trivistape\**; 11,2-4). But having assumed power, Nahusa\*, till then "always of virtuous soul, fell into a sensuous turn of mind" (*dharmatma\* satatam bhutva\* kamatma\* samapadyata*; 11,8). He surrounded himself with Apsarases and numerous enjoyments (9-12). But his voluptuous existence soon brought him to commit a most critical error, in fact, a sin: he coveted Saci\*,<sup>17</sup> Indra's wife.

In fear and distress, Saci\* sought protection from Brhaspati\*, the gods' chaplain, who promised to reunite her with Indra. Nahusa\* was outraged at Saci's\* refusal, and the gods and rsis\* attempted to pacify him, urging him to "turn back his inclination from the sin of outraging another's wife" (12,4). Then, most intriguingly in this context, Nahusa\* reminded them that "Ahalya\* of spotless fame, the wife of a rsi\*, was outraged by Indra while her husband was still alive" (12,6). Nahusa\* thus convinced the gods and rsis\* to bring Saci\* to him, but Brhaspati\* refused to abandon one who had come to him for refuge (12,26). After some deliberation, it was agreed that Saci\* should go and beseech Nahusa\* for a delay, which Nahusa\* granted, in which to make up her mind and to learn what had become of Indra (13,4-5). Returning to Brhaspati\*, she then went with all the gods to seek the advice of Visnu\*, who said that Indra would be absolved of his sins and would regain his kingdom when he performed a horse sacrifice (13,13). The gods then found Indra (it is not told how<sup>18</sup>) and performed a horse sacrifice (*asvamedha\**; 13,26) for him. Visnu\* then "distributed [*vibhajya*] the sin of brahminicide [the foremost sin] among trees, rivers, mountains, earth, and women" (13,27), and Indra became "free of sin" (*putapapma\**; 13,28).<sup>19</sup>

17 12:329 condenses the enjoyment theme to the essentials: *sarvam\* mam\* sakropabhuktam\* upasthitamrte\* sacim\**; "everything enjoyed by Indra is obtained by me except Saci\*" (31).

18 Cf. the smoother, and thus probably later, 12:329,40: they learn Indra's whereabouts from Saci\*, who gets Indra to come forth from the lotus stalk.

19 See Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 130-31. 12:329,41 has no parallel role for Visnu\*.

The account continues at some length, but Nahusa's \* fall is finally occasioned by a device: Indra tells Saci\* to inform Nahusa\* that she will yield to him if he will have his vehicle borne by the celestial rsis\* (15,9-13). While being carried one day, Nahusa\* uttered an untruth and touched one of his bearers, Agastya, on the head with his foot. "At this ... he became divested of power and good looks" (*nihsrikas\**; 17, 12).

The connection between this continuous mythical narrative and the *Markandeya\** *Purana's\** division of the three sins of Indra among the three functions should be apparent. Whereas in the *Markandeya\** account Indra loses his *tejas* after conquering *Visvarupa\**, and his *balam* after conquering *Vrtra\**, in this epic narrative his opponents are characterized by just these attributes. *Visvarupa\** has "unlimited *tejas*" (*amitatejas*), and *Vrtra\** is "endowed with strength" (*balasamanvita*), as well as with honor in the contract that Indra breaks. But the myth of the three sins finds no such parallels in the third episode. Instead, there are inversions. First, rather than being committed by Indra, a sin, or an affront, is committed against him, or more exactly against his wife. And this sin, or at least its intent, is the stated equivalent of the third-function sin committed by Indra, and in the present context even attributed to him: the violation of *Ahalya\**. In fact, just as in the *Markandeya\** account of Indra's third sin, Indra is marked by the loss of his beauty (*rupam\**), so Nahusa\* falls "without his beauty" (*nihsrikas\**) in consequence of his attempt to seduce Saci\*. Furthermore, in both of the third-function episodes and in contrast to the first two episodes which concern only gods and Asuras the sin concerns a sexual transgression between gods and humans, but again inverted: in one case, Indra violates the brahmani\* *Ahalya\**; in the other, Nahusa\*, a man, covets the divine Saci\*. Nahusa's\* status as a human king will be discussed later. His voluptuous, sensuous turn makes his reign representative of the third function: here not as a level against which Indra sins, but as a level no longer accessible to Indra. The epic gives us, then, an account of two

sins of Indra, with a third sin committed against rather than by him, ultimately allowing him to regain his throne.

Yudhisthira \* the Sinner

In the epic narrative the first person (aside from Krishna who is involved in nearly every misdeed) who might be expected to continue the sins of Indra would be Indra's son Arjuna. But Arjuna is not helpful when it comes to committing sins. As Dumezil\* puts it, Arjuna, "the son or partial incarnation of Indra, ... has all this god's qualities and in addition a certain refinement, and sometimes a self-control, which are sadly lacking in his model."<sup>20</sup> Arjuna may have a guilty hand in the deaths of Bhagadatta, his father's "friend" (7:28, 18; 29,1; 168,27), of Bhurisravas\*, Jayadratha, Bhisma\*, Karna\*, and Duryodhana; or he may be charged with one sin too much pride in his heroism (17:2,21) which makes him temporarily experience Hell at the end of the epic. But next to every other hero (except perhaps the twins), Arjuna stands as the very model of decency and purity, surely the most frequent recipient of the epithet "sinless one" (*anagha*) and of such titles as "he of unstained" or "of pure deeds" (*aklistakarman*\*; 3:39, 1; *visuddhakarman*\*; 3:161,29). Nor is it just a matter of epithets and titles, for several episodes portray Arjuna in this shining light.<sup>21</sup>

One might propose several explanations for this discontinuity between myth and epic. Surely one factor is that Arjuna's mystical identity with Krishna, his status as the "warrior yogi" who learns in the Gita\* before the battle that he must fight with detachment, makes actual sins inconceivable. As Walter Ruben has perceived, the *Gita's*\* ethic of desireless action, or of action for another's sake, justifies the "sins," and this would

<sup>20</sup> Dumezil\*, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> See 4:67,2-9 (refusal to marry Uttara\*), 7:164,69-70 (refusal to lie to Drona\*), and, interpolated, *Aranyakaparvan*\*, App. 1, no. 6 (refusal to be seduced by Urvashi\*).

apply not only to Krishna but to Arjuna.<sup>22</sup> But the most important factor is that Indra's sins are committed not as "warrior sins" but as "sins of a sovereign." This means that the Indian myths do not allow one to apply an otherwise most useful distinction set up by Dumézil \* between the single "sin of the sovereign" (usually a form of lying or pride, as with Yayati\*) and the "three sins of the warrior."<sup>23</sup> In the myths concerning Indra, the two categories merge. Though Indra's sins are close to, and in the *Markandeya*\* account even identical with, the warrior pattern, he is never totally destroyed by them like Sisupala\* and the latter's European legendary counterparts.<sup>24</sup> Rather, Indra commits his sins as a sovereign, with sovereignty as the end ever held in sight. This motive does not apply to Arjuna or for that matter to any of the triple sinners of legend who are in general servants of, and spokesmen for, sovereigns rather than sovereigns themselves.

The setting of Indra's sins is thus the perennial contention between the Devas and the Asuras, one aspect of which was noticed earlier. In the epic transposition of the theme of the "three steps," the one feature that ties in Krishna's maneuvers with the Vamana\* myth the more recent, post-Vedic, rendition of the three steps theme is that Krishna helps the Pandavas\* regain what was formerly theirs.<sup>25</sup> The conflict between the Devas and Asuras over universal sovereignty is marked by a recurring pattern of reversals and triumphs. The same, on the epic level, is true of the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas\*. The figure analogous to Indra, the "sovereign sinner" whose sins are part of such a seesaw

22 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 256; it would not apply to Yudhisthira\* or Duryodhana, whose motive is sovereignty.

23 See *ME*, 11, 356-57.

24 See *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 43 (Tullus), 88 (Starcatherus), and 101 (Heracles); and see p. 69 on the "optimistic" character of the end of the Indra myths.

25 See above, Chapter 6, from n. 35 to end of chapter.

drama, is not Arjuna but another of the "five Indras among men": Yudhisthira\*.

Let us concern ourselves with the questions of Yudhisthira's\* complicity and "motivation" and reserve discussion of his particular sins for the next chapter. Nowhere are these matters more in evidence than in a scene after the battle, where Yudhisthira\*, in a sort of *mea culpa*, renounces all desire to rule and expresses the wish to perform acts of penance.

First he recalls the fall of Bhishma\* (12:27,4-13): "He on whose limbs I used to roll about in sport, that son of Ganga\* has been caused by me, covetous of sovereignty [or kingship;26 *maya\* rajyalubdhena\**], to fall" (4). The responsibility is not lessened or contradicted by further reference to the parts played in slaying Bhishma\* by Arjuna and Sikhandin\*, for over and over Yudhisthira\* claims the fault as his own, his words culminating in the lament: "He by whom we were reared as youths, by whom we were protected, has been caused to be slain by me, covetous of sovereignty, sinful, a slayer of gurus, stupefied, all for the sake of short-lived sovereignty" (*sa maya\* rajyalubdhena\* papena\*> gurughatina/alpakalasya\* rajyasya\* krte\* mudhena\* ghatitah\**; 13).

Next he recalls the death of Drona\* (12:27,14-17): "And the *acarya\**, the great bowman revered by all kingshaving approached [me] in battle, he was addressed falsely by [my] sinful [self] concerning his son" (*mithya\* papenoktah\* sutam\* prati\**; 14). He recounts briefly the details of his own lie, laments that he hypocritically "resorted to the garb of truth" (*satyakan-cukamasthaya\**; 17), and asks: "What *lokas* shall I now obtain having performed such a cruel act" (*karma darunam\**; 16-17)? This lie, indeed, is consistently represented as Yudhisthira's most explicit sin, the one which, at the end of the epic, makes

26 I will use the word "sovereignty" to cover Yudhisthira's\* aspirations, whether it translates *rajyam\** or *aisvaryam\**. Both are used interchangeably in this regard.

him see Hell with his brothers (18:3,14). It will be discussed further.

Then, in just one *sloka* \*, he recalls the death of Karna\*, fully admitting his personal guilt: "And having caused Karna\*, unretreating in battle, my eldest brother, exceedingly fierce, to be slain, who is there that is more a sinner [*papakrttamah* \*] than I" (18)?

And finally, Yudhisthira laments the deaths of the Pandavas\*' children. First he takes the blame for the death of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu, accepting the sin of "lineage destruction" (*jnatighatin* \*; 12:27,3) through the symbolism of a violation of youth, sexuality, and fertility: "And Abhimanyu who was like a lion born in the fields, a youthc covetous [*lubdha*], I caused him to penetrate that array protected by Drona\*. Since then I have not been able to look Arjuna ... or Krishna in the face, [being] like one who commits the offense of slaying an embryo" (*kilbisi* \*i> *brunaha* \* *yatha* \*; 27,19-20). In this same connection, mentioning no special fault of his own, he also laments the deaths of the five sons of Draupadi\*, comparing her loss to that of the earth (*prthivi* \*) deprived of her five mountains (21), a simile seemingly reflected in his words of summary: "This am I, a doer of evil [*agaskarah* \*], sinful [*papah* \*], a destroyer of the earth" (*prthivinasakarakah* \*; 27, 22).

This confession presents much intriguing symbolism that I will discuss later, but there is one more scene from before rather than after the battle which sheds considerable light on Yudhisthira's\* involvements. It falls into place directly after that other "preparation" (*udyoga*) for battle in which, after Arjuna and Duryodhana have both come to Krishna's bedside, it is determined that the latter will side with the Pandavas\*.<sup>27</sup> In one scene we see how Arjuna and Krishna will work together; in the next we see how Yudhisthira\* works alone.

27 See above, Chapter 5, at n. 1.

Hearing that war is likely, Salya \*the king of Madra and brother of Madri\*, Nakula and Sahadeva's mother<sup>28</sup> sets out with his troops to join forces with the Pandavas\*. But when Duryodhana learns of this, he has groups of festive halls or pavilions (*sabhas*\*) built to welcome him. We thus see Salya\* in a circumstance identical with one in which we earlier saw Krishna, for each has his progress to Hastinapura\* halted by such *sabhas*\* which Duryodhana and, in Krishna's case, Dhrtarastra\* have constructed to put them under obligation to the Kurus.<sup>29</sup> We will see contrasts and juxtapositions elsewhere between Krishna and Salya\*, but in these present scenes, Krishna is beyond temptation, "not even looking" at the *sabhas*\*, while Salya's\* response reveals a most significant flaw in his character: "There [at the most splendid *sabha*\*], preoccupied with sense-enjoyments [*visayairyuktah*\*] that were beautiful and fit for beings superior to men [*atimanusaih*\*], he thought himself to be extraordinary and despised Indra [*avamene puramdaram*\*]. And that bull among ksatriyas\*, thrilled [*prahrstah*\*], then asked the servants: 'Which of Yudhisthira's\* men built these *sabhas*\*? ... They deserve to be rewarded'" (5:8,9-10). At this point out of the wings comes Duryodhana and claims the reward for himself: that Salya\* be "the leader of my entire army."<sup>30</sup> Salya\* is bound by his own sensually motivated generosity. But upon agreeing to Duryodhana's terms, he still insists on visiting the Pandavas\*, and when he arrives and tells of his new employ, Yudhisthira\* wastes no time in responding:

28 Probably one key to the proximity of these episodes is that both Krishna and Salya\* are related to the Pandavas\* through the latter's mothers, the two maternal alliances\* being thus dealt with consecutively.

29 For the scene involving Krishna, see above, Chapter 6, following n. 49.

30 *Sarvasenapraneta*\*; this is curious, for Salya\* is the last marshal, not the first; one might align this with Ruben's notion that the fight with Salya\* was perhaps the original single battle of the great war (see *Krishna*, p. 231); but Duryodhana probably just anticipates that Salya\* will eventually be his *senapati*\*.



It is well done .... Fortunately, there is only one thing that I wish done by you, O lord of the earth. Here you are the equal of Vasudeva \* in battle. When the duel between Karna\* and Arjuna occurs, there is no doubt that Karna's\* driving will be done by you. On that occasion, if you wish me well, Arjuna is to be protected by you and the destruction of Karna's\* energy [*tejovadhas*] is to be achieved, producing our victory. Even though this surely ought not to be done, you should do it [*akartavyamapi hyetatkartumarhasi*],<sup>31</sup> O uncle. [5:8,25- 27]

Salya's\* alleged parity with Krishna draws no comment. The former simply agrees, point by point, without hesitation, to do Yudhisthira's\* bidding. But then his words take a surprising turn. Referring sympathetically to the hardships suffered by the Pandavas\*, he predicts that they will "have their end in happiness" (8,35). Then, referring to the "great suffering" (*mahadduhkham*\*) once experienced by Indra and his wife, he makes the point that even the gods must sometimes endure misery (36-37). When Yudhisthira\* asks how Indra and his wife suffered, Salya\* launches into the "history" of Indra's sins that was met in the first part of this chapter: the trilogy of Indra's sin-ridden conflicts with Visvarupa\*, Vrtra\*, and Nahusa\*.

The question now is whether there is a significant connection between the myth and its place in the epic. Certainly Salya's\* initial reasons for reciting it are unrevealing and would be more suitable if the Pandavas\* were still "miserable" in the forest. The Indra cycle, as we have seen, is more than just a tale of "woes"; it is, in its various forms, a tale of increasing defamation through flawed triumphs leading to a temporary loss of heaven's throne and a final restoration. Fortunately, when Salya\* has concluded his narrative, he gives another, much more satisfactory reason for its telling:

31 Some Northern manuscripts insert this concluding admission of immoral intent a second time, just before the actual request; see *Udyogaparvan* 62\*, after 5:8,25.

Even so, you will obtain sovereignty [*rajyam* \*] as did Sakra\*, having slain Vrtra .... The ill-behaved Nahusa\*, that brahmin hater, was overthrown by Agastya's curse and ruined for endless years. So too your wicked-souled foes Karna\* and Duryodhana to begin with will quickly meet with destruction. Then will you enjoy the earth [*medinim*\*; "she having fatness or fertility"], bounded by the ocean, together with your brothers and Draupadi\* .... This story of Indra's victory, of status equal to the Veda, should be heard by a king desirous of victory when his armies have been arrayed. Thus do I have you hear of victory, O best of victors. [*upakhyanamidam\* sakravijayam\* vedasammitam\* / rajna\* vyudhesvanikesu\* srotavyam\* jayamicchata\* // tasmatsamsravayami\* tvam\* vijayam\* jayatam\* vara*; 5:18, 12-17]

It is most important to stress that, as the "preparations" for the battle begin, it is just after the Dharmaraja\* has proposed his first "improper" (*akartavya*) act that he hears a recital of the full story of Indra's tainted victories. This can hardly be fortuitous: the poets have seen the rapports between the myth and the epic and have juxtaposed the two of them. Let us also note that it is Salya\* who forecasts Yudhishthira's\* enjoyment of the earth. Indeed, one is pointed toward a matter of considerable irony. Salya\*, the narrator of Indra's conquests, is one of the chief figures Yudhishthira\* will have to overcome.

## Chapter 10

### The Deaths of the Four Marshals

The *Mahabharata*\* war is the scene of numerous questionable acts which the text does not hesitate to call sins.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all are committed by heroes on the Pandava\* side, and the guiding hand seems almost always to be that of Krishna.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, in one set of incidents, a definite and consistent series of involvements by two figures: Krishna and Yudhishthira\*. This is the series that provides the very scansion of the epic war: the deaths of the four *senapatis*\*, "armylords" or "marshals," of the Kaurava side, the deaths of the four figures who give their names to the four battle *parvans*. Let us now take them up one at a time.

#### Death of Bhishma\*

Deep in the night after the ninth day on which Bhishma\* has played havoc with the Pandava\* troops, the latter take counsel

1 Against this usage (rather unconvincingly), see Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 257-58, and above, Chapter 9, n. 22.

2 Outside of the four episodes discussed below, which have their own interior coherence, the main cluster occurs in the *Dronaparvan*\* and includes Krishna's most audacious and miraculous tricks: stepping in front of Bhagadatta's Vaisnava\* weapon to turn it into a garland of flowers (7:28, 18); urging Arjuna to cut off Bhurishravas'\* arms from an unseen position to protect Satyaki\* (7:117,47-118,2); making it appear that the sun has set so that Arjuna can kill Jayadratha (7:121); and tricking Karna\* into using the weapon he had saved for Arjuna to kill Ghatotkaca\* (7: 154). Each episode has an atmosphere of its own and seems to have been developed as an independent narrative.

with their allies. After some deliberation, Yudhisthira \* turns to Krishna for advice "not incompatible with our dharma" (*svadharmasyavirodhena*\*; 6: 103, 24). Krishna's answer is the first mention of this episode's dominant theme, and it comes up in connection with the question of *svadharma*. It concerns the intricate matter of fulfilling one's vows. First Krishna offers, in effect, to go against his word, his vow to participate in the battle only as a noncombatant: "Command me, O Pandava\*; out of friendship [*sauhardad*]\* I will fight with Bhishma\*.... I will slay Bhishma\* in battle if Arjuna does not wish to do so" (103,28-29). Second, indicating that this matter of vows is of deepening complexity, he adds: "What was formerly vowed [*pratijnatam*]\* by Arjuna at Upaplavya in the presence of Uluka\*'I will slay the son of Ganga'\* [Bhishma\*]that vow [*vacas*] of the intelligent Partha\* is to be kept [*pariraksyam*] by me. Permitted by Partha\*, no doubt it will be accomplished by me. Or else, as this burden is but moderate for Arjuna in battle, he will slay Bhishma\* [himself]" (103,35-37).

In answer, Yudhisthira\* will not, of course, cause others to break their vows: "I cannot bear out of regard for my own goal to make you untruthful [*tvamanrtam*]\*; not fighting, give assistance as you have promised" (103,43). Far better than making others break their vows is getting them to keep them. Says Yudhisthira\*: "A certain agreement [*samaya*] was made with Bhishma\* by me...: 'For your sake I will advise, but I will not fight in any way .... ' Surely he is my giver of sovereignty as well as of counsel [*sa hi rajyasya\* me data\* mantrasyaiva ca*], O Madhava\*" (103,44-45). Yudhisthira\* thus recalls a scene just before the war. Crossing the lines and "taking leave of his superiors" (*gurunanumanya*\*; 6:41,17 and 18), he had asked the latter Bhishma\*, Drona\*, Kṛpa\*, and Salya\*for their blessings and, in the case of the first two, the means to conquer them.<sup>3</sup> To this second request, Bhishma\* had replied: "It is not yet time

3 Hopkins, "Ruling Caste," p. 200, n. 3, and Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 1, 317, n. 2, all too easily take this scene as an interpolation.

for my death. Come to me again" (41,43). By keeping Bhishma\* to this invitation, or "agreement," it will be possible to bring about his death. Thus it is no accident that in the remainder of his speech Yudhishthira\* places a high value on Bhishma's\* celebrated penchant for keeping vows:4 "Therefore, O Ma-dhusudana\*, together with you we shall all, once again approaching Devavrata ['He whose Vow is Godly'; see n. 4], ask after the means of his own death .... He will speak words to our advantage, and do so truly [*tathyam*] ...; as he will say, O Krishna, so shall I do in battle. Of firm vow[s] [*dhrtavrata*\*5], he is our giver of victory and counsel" (103,45-48).

Krishna's response continuing to accent the interplay of personal commitments has an air of shrewdness: "What you say is always pleasing to me, O long-armed one. Devavrata Bhishma\*, active, would scorch [us] by a mere glance .... He will be able to speak the truth [*satyam*], especially if asked by you" (103,50-51). Krishna thus puts Yudhishthira\* into a position where an aspect of his own omnivirtuous character becomes the means to an unvirtuous act. But the aspect in question is not as clearly delineated as it will be in later incidents. We have just seen that in talking about vows, truth (*satya*) can serve as the virtue which links Bhishma\* and Yudhishthira\*.

4 Born with the names Gangadatta\* or Gangeya\* (as the son of Ganga\*) and Devavrata ("Divine Vow"; 1:90,50), his most popular name, Bhishma\* ("The Terrible"), reflects what the name Devavrata had anticipated; for, to satisfy his father Samtanu's\* desires for more sons and a second wife, "Devavrata" provided assurance that this wife's sons would have no rivals to the throne by undertaking the divinely acclaimed "terrible" (*bhishma*\*) vows of renouncing his own title to the throne and of adopting the celibate *brahmacharya* mode of life (1:94,77-94). In gratitude, Samtanu\* granted him the boon of "death at his own will" (*svacchandamaranam*\*; 94), that is, indefinite postponement of death.

5 In the *Rg*\* *Veda* the epithet *dhrtavrata*\* is attached to Varuna\* and to Mitravaruna\*; see *RV*\* 1:25,6 and 10; 1:44,14; 8:25,2 and 8, and Gonda, *Vedic God Mitra*, pp. 2 and 29, Schmidt, *Vedisch* *vrata*\*, pp. 52-54. Gonda's words (p. 10) that the *vrata*\* relates to "'rules of conduct,' 'observances,' and 'institutions'" and is not primarily "a verbal affair" are worthy of note; but where the *vrata* is personal and expressed orally, I see no reason to reject the translation "vow."

This does not mean, however, that the vow is to be reduced to a form of truth; rather, the latter virtue is the former's guarantee: one's vows and personal "rules of conduct" (see n. 5) are fulfilled if one is truthful to them. Yudhisthira \*, however, is not like Arjuna renowned for his vows in a way that might complement Bhishma\*. But they do share a virtue, one being its incarnation and the other, especially after the war, its leading authority: the virtue of dharma. And, as suggested earlier, there are reasons to regard the vow (*vrata*) as a specialization of this more general quality.<sup>6</sup>

With this correlation in mind, the scene upon the Pandavas'\* return visit to Bhishma's\* tent gains in depth of meaning. Greeted profusely by Bhishma\*, "Yudhisthira\* the son of Dharma, depressed at heart [*dinatma\**], said: 'O thou conversant with dharma (*dharmajna\**), how shall we conquer?'" (103,57-58). And once again, he asks how Bhishma\* might be slain. On the first visit Bhishma\* had responded to this question elliptically: "I do not see him [*tam*], O Kaunteya, who might conquer me while I am fighting in a challenge not any man [*pumankascid\**], not even Satakratu\* [Indra] himself" (6:41,41).<sup>7</sup> While shows no signs of reading between the lines, it is likely that Bhishma\* is tipping him off that no "male being" (*pums\**) may slay him. On the second visit, Yudhisthira\* seems to have picked up this apparent riddle when he says: "A slayer of elephant riders, chariot riders, horsemen, and foot soldiers [*narasvara-thanaganam\* hantaram\**], O slayer of hostile heroes, what man [*puman\**] is there able to slay you?" (103,62). This might be phrased: "As you are invincible by *men* from each of the four divisions of the army, what *man* can kill you?"<sup>8</sup> It thus seems, from this and a number of other exchanges between Yudhisthira\* and

<sup>6</sup> See above, Chapter 8, at n. 45.

<sup>7</sup> See also the variants to 6:41,43: Bhishma\* saying in the CE that he knows no "enemy," *satrum\**, who can slay him, but many manuscripts retaining what is here the more specific *tam*, the masculine pronoun.

<sup>8</sup> Ganguli-Roy (*Mahabharata*, V: *Bhishma Parva*, 290) has "cars, steeds, men, and elephants"; though grammatically correct, it overlooks the absurdity of slaying "cars."

authorities on dharma, that one of his royal functions is to decipher the often riddlelike character of "subtle [*sukhma*\*] dharma." The exchange with Bhishma\* is thus the third in a series of incidents involving what might be called royal dharmic riddles.<sup>9</sup> This would include not only the riddle test of Yudhisthira\* by the Yaksha\*, Dharma incarnate.<sup>10</sup> When the Pandavas\* are on their way to the lacquer house, Vidura, another incarnation of Dharma, tells Yudhisthira\* of the trap Duryodhana has set for them, communicating with Yudhisthira\* through a series of riddles that only the two of them can understand (1:133,18-29). Moreover, in all of these cases, Yudhisthira\* is able to "save" his brothers.

So far, then, the drama of the vows has developed through three phases: first, Krishna's promptings recalling his and Arjuna's vows; second, Yudhisthira's\* reflections, recalling the vows of Bhishma\*; and third, Yudhisthira's\* confrontation of Bhishma\*, with whom he has a special dharmic rapport, to fulfill an earlier vow or promise. Bhishma's\* answer leads to a fourth phase. The only way to slay the unslayable Bhishma\* will be through one of his own vows. On certain conditions, which he lays down with precision, he would be indisposed to fight:

With [literally, "in"] one who has abandoned his weapon or fallen down, with one whose standard or armor is loosed, with one who is fleeing or terrified, or who says "I am yours," with women or with one having a woman's name [*striyam\* strinamadheye\* ca*], with one who is maimed or who has but one son, with one who has not produced offspring [*? aprasute\**] or who is disagreeable to look at[with these] battle is not pleasing to me [*na yuddham\* rocate mama*]. [103,72-73]

There is nothing unusual in this list, echoing other guidelines for fair combat,<sup>11</sup> except for the references to women. On this

<sup>9</sup> On kings and riddles, cf. the riddle exchanges (*brahmodyas*) at the end of the Asvamedha\*, mostly between the various priests (*SB\** 13,5,2, 11-22), but the last one asked of the *adhvaryu* by the royal sacrificer (3).

<sup>10</sup> See above, Chapter 7, at n. 106.

<sup>11</sup> See Hopkins, "Ruling Caste," p. 228.

point Bhishma\* has more to say: "Listen, O Partha\*, to this resolution [or vow; *samkalpam\**] of mine, formerly thought out. Having seen an inauspicious sign [or "banner"; *amangalyadhvajam\**; cf. 103,78], I will never fight" (103,74). Bhishma\* makes it explicit that, in particular, his "resolution" concerns the "inauspicious sign" of one who was "formerly a woman, afterwards a man" (*stri\* purvam\* pascatpums\**; 103,76), that is, the Pancala\* prince Sikhandin\*.12

From here on, as Bhishma\* maps out his own death, the final phase of this episode is one of deepening irony. First, Bhishma\* hints at the reversals in virtues that his proposed "means of death" will involve for the two principal Pandavas\*. As for Indra's son: "Let Arjuna, coated in mail, heroic in battle [*samare surah\**], having placed Sikhandin\* before him, attack me quickly with arrows" (103,77). As for Dharma's son (resorting here not to the Critical Edition but to several Devanagari\* manuscripts13): "Do this, O Kaunteya, as indicated, O thou of excellent vows [*svvrata*]; then will you conquer the assembled Dhartarastras\* in battle" (103,82). Despite his overall allegiance to dharma, Yudhisthira\* uses vows only in a way that he will later judge to be sinful;14 and Arjuna will not show much heroism having to fight from behind another's back.

The last touch is then applied by Krishna. When the "sinless" Arjuna, "burning with grief and feeling shame" (*duhkhasamtaptah\* savridam\**; 84), rejects the part assigned him, Krishna draws everything full circle: "Having formerly vowed

12 See 5:170ff; Sikhandin\* was in his previous life the princess Amba\* of Kasi\*, one of three sisters whom Bhishma\* abducted from their Svayamvara\* to be his half-brother Vicitravirya's\* wives; but as Amba\* had chosen another man, King Salva\* (see Chapter 4), she was allowed to leave and go to him. When he would not accept a once-abducted woman, however, she became an ascetic and obtained a boon from Siva\* enabling her to be reborn as a man so as to exact her revenge against Bhishma\*.

13 The CE reads *yathoktam\* vacanam mama for yathoktam mama svvrata*, the latter seemingly an insightful variant or alteration.

14 This would seem to be the unspecified sin referred to and lamented in his *mea culpa*; see above, Chapter 9, at and following n. 26.



Bhisma's \* death in battle [*pratijnaya\* vadham ... pura bhismasya\* samyuge\**], O Jisnu\*, firm in the duty of a ksatriya\* [*ksatradharme\* sthitah\**], how can you not kill him?" (103,90). Not only is the link drawn once again between vows and dharma; we are taken back to the first phase of this drama where Krishna had offered to break his own vow in order to fulfill Arjuna's vow for him.

In summary, Yudhisthira\* appears guilty of a misuse of the vow.

#### Death of Drona\*

On the fifth day of Drona's\* marshalship, the Pandavas\*, seeing the great carnage brought on by Drona's\* prowess and Arjuna's reluctance to oppose him, despair of victory. Krishna then confers with Arjuna on how to get Drona\* to lay aside his weapons: "Casting aside virtue [*dharmamutsrjya\**], ... let a device be adopted for victory" (*asthiyatam\* jaye yogo*; 7:164,68). Someone, he says, should tell Drona\* that Asvatthaman\*, his son, has fallen; then he will desist. Although Arjuna does not approve of this advice, everyone else does, and Yudhisthira\* accepts it "with difficulty" (*krcchrena\**; 164,70). This is reminiscent of the behavior of these two in the slaying of Bhisma\*: Arjuna "grieved and ashamed," Yudhisthira\* grieved but calculating. Bhima\* then slays a terrible elephant named Asvatthaman\* and announces treacherously that someone with that name has fallen. But Drona\*, not believing Bhima\*, continues to fight. Then a host of famous Rsis\* descends toward Drona\* to discourage him from further fighting. Twice urging him to lay down his weapons, their main argument is that he has overstepped the boundaries of caste:15 "You are fighting unrighteously [*adharmatas*]. This is the time for your death .... Henceforth you should not perform this most cruel karman

15 The argument is repeated by Bhima\* (7:165,28-32), and upon hearing it again (along with Yudhisthira's\* confirmation of Asvatthaman's\* death) Drona\* lays down his arms. It is raised again by Dhrstadyumna\* (7: 168,23-24) to justify his part in the killing, especially in the words, "fallen off from his *svadharma*, he took up *ksatradharma\**" (24).

again. Knowing the Vedas and Vedangas \* and having the virtue of truth as your chief object [*satyadharmaparasya*], especially being a brahmin, this [fighting] is not suitable for you" (164,89-92). Hearing these words, which call attention to Drona's\* allegiance to "truth," Drona\* cheerlessly asks Yudhisthira\* whether Asvatthaman\* has been slain or not, for, according to the narrator Samjaya\*: "Drona\* had firm knowledge [*sthira\* buddhir*] that Yudhisthira\* would not speak an untruth [*anrtam\**], even for the sake of the sovereignty of the three worlds [*trayanamapi\* lokanamaisvaryarthe\**]. Therefore he asked him especially, and no one else, for in this Pandava\*, beginning with childhood, Drona\* surely had his hope for truth" (*satyasa\**; 164,95-96).

As we saw in Chapters 7 and 8, this "sovereignty over the three worlds" is often (and sometimes by Krishna) said to require certain virtues. This seems to be Drona's\* assumption here (as it will also be Arjuna's), and he is attentive above all to the virtue of "truth." But in Krishna the opposite assumption now seems to be operative: sovereignty also requires sins. Thus he tells Yudhisthira\* that a lie is his only course: "Save us from Drona\*. Untruth may be better than truth [*satyajjyayo\* 'nrtam\* bhavet*]. By telling an untruth for the saving of life, untruth does not touch one" (*na sprsyate\* 'nrtah\*>*; 98-99). Bhima\* also tells Yudhisthira\* that he is known "in the world of men as one who is truthful" (*satyavanhi\* nrloke\**; 104); and, after some deliberation, Yudhisthira\* is ready: "Sunk in the fear of untruth [*atathyabhaye mange*] but clinging to victory [*jaye sakto*], Yudhisthira\* said to him [Drona\*] inaudibly [*avyaktam*]: 'An elephant is slain.'<sup>16</sup> Before this his chariot had remained four fingers above the earth, but when he said this his vehicle touched the earth" (*tasya purvam\* rathah\* prthvyascaturangula\* uttarah\* / babhuvaivam\* tu*

16 Ganguli-Roy (VI, 448): "Yudhishtira distinctly said that Asvatthaman was dead, adding indistinctly the word elephant"; thus drawing from the later description of the episode by Krpa\* (165,115-16), no doubt fairly, for Yudhisthira\* has certainly conveyed to Drona\* the first part of this message even if the text records only the qualification.

*tenokte tasya vahasprsanmahim* \*; 106-7). Soon, after more bloodshed, Drona\* lays down his weapons, seats himself on his chariot where he devotes himself to yoga, and tranquilly ascends to Brahmaloaka before the head is cut from his lifeless body by his determined adversary, the Pancala\* prince Dhrstadyumna\* (165,33-47).

This illustrates the main point: that, similar to the way that he caused Bhishma's\* death by a misuse of the vow, Yudhisthira\* slays Drona\* by a misuse of the truth in this case an actual lie. But, most intriguing and equally significant is the amplification of this episode in its retelling and immediate aftermath.

The first to retell it is Krpa\*, Drona's\* brother-in-law and fellow fighting brahmin, who must break the news to Asvatthaman\*. On the whole he is quite "accurate," repeating certain of Samjaya's\* phrases almost word for word.<sup>17</sup> However, in one point he adds and in another he subtracts. Yudhisthira's\* lie is given a fuller treatment; not only is its inaudible part cited (see note 16), but the "loudly" spoken part is given as well: "He for whose sake you bear weapons and looking upon whom you live, your ever-cherished son Asvatthaman\* has been overthrown" (165,16). Thus the lie appears in a much starker and more "disagreeable" form, evoking the leave-taking scene before the war in which Drona\* tells Yudhisthira\* how he may be conquered: "I shall abandon my weapon in battle having heard something very disagreeable" (*sumahadapriyam*; 6:41,61). One gets the impression that Drona\* stops fighting in grief not so much for his son but because, as one who is "clear-sighted into the nature of the world" (*lokatattvavicaksanah*\*; 165, 119), he has at last heard these "greatly disagreeable" (*mahadapriyam*; 165,117) words. As to his omission, Krpa\* leaves out the visit of the Rsis\* and the ascent to Brahmaloaka the latter with significant repercussions.

When Asvatthaman\* reacts, the focus of blame begins to shift. Having heard not only about Yudhisthira's\* lie but about

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 164,68 and 165,110; 164,70 and 165,112; 164, 106 and 165,115.

Dhrstadyumna's \* dastardly act of seizing Drona's\* hair and cutting off his head, thinking that the latter is not merely an indignity (*paribhava*; 166,24) but the physical cause of Drona's\* death,<sup>18</sup> he wavers between blaming the one and blaming the other. His first words are undoubtedly as scathing a repudiation of Yudhisthira\* as one will find: "How my father was slain by wretches [*ksudrair*\*] when he had put down his weapons, how a sin [*papam*\*] was perpetrated by one bearing the banner of virtue [*dharmadhvajavata*\*],<sup>19</sup> this is known to me; I have heard about the dishonorable act of the very mischievous son of Dharma" (*anaryam*\* *sunrsamsasya*\* *dharmaputrasya*; 166, 19). Nowhere is the ambiguity of his status as Dharmaraja\* more apparent. But Asvatthaman's\* disgust with Yudhisthira\* is overshadowed by his rage at Dhrstadyumna\*, leading him to utter the fateful vow that will result in the latter's death (106,28-29).

The compass of blame turns back one more time toward Yudhisthira\* and then jumps wildly in all directions as a quarrel breaks out among the Pandavas\* and their allies over the responsibility for this and other sins. In Arjuna's speech the blame swings toward Yudhisthira\*, and here we have the reaction of the most sin-conscious of all the Pandavas\* to Yudhisthira's\* most glaring sin. His insights do not disappoint us. For one thing, in leveling the brunt of the blame at Yudhisthira\*, Arjuna sees his brother's sin against the background of the royal virtues: "The guru was attended upon falsely by you for the sake of sovereignty [*mithya*\* *bhavata*\*

18 The CE clears up a source of confusion here: Drona's ascent, says Sarmjaya\*, was seen by only five men: "I myself, Arjuna, the brahmin Krpa\*, son of Saradvat, Krishna, and Yudhisthira\*" (165,42-43). It was not observed by Asvatthaman\* (*bharadvajasya*\* *catmaja*\*), whom many Northern manuscripts substitute for Krpa\*. One can only wonder at Krpa's\* silence; he lets Asvatthaman\* think that Drona\* has gone (merely) to *viraloka*\*, "the world of heroes" (166,22).

19 See Ganguli-Roy (VI, 400, n. 1): "Dharmadhvajin, literally means a person bearing the standard of virtue; hence, a hypocrite, sanctimoniously talking only virtue and morality but acting differently"; cf. Hopkins, "Ruling Caste," p. 246.

*rajyakaranat* \*]; indeed, by being conversant with dharma [*dharmnajnena* \* *sata* \*], very great is the adharma you performed. [Thinking:] 'This son of Pandu\* is endowed with every virtue [*sarvadharmopapanno*] and is my disciple; he will not speak falsely,' he put his trust in you" (167,33-34). This, in effect, verifies the assumption I attributed to Drona\* earlier: that Drona\* would expect the virtue of "truth" in an omnivirtuous pretender to world sovereignty and that he could rely on him for its exercise. Moreover, Arjuna is adept at detecting oppositions. Not only has Yudhisthira\* used dharma to perform adharma; more specifically, Arjuna charges Yudhisthira\* with "untruth in the garb of truth" (*satyakancukam* \* ... *anrtam* \*; 35).

Most intriguing, Arjuna is convinced that this sin and these oppositions affect not only Yudhisthira\* but all the brothers. He thus accepts the guilt even while protesting his own innocence: "Surely while I was crying out vehemently, eagerly longing for the guru, having discarded his own dharma [*avakirya* \* *svadharmam*] the disciple slew the guru. When the greater part of our life is gone and only the shortest time remains, now this great injustice [*adharma* ... *mahan* \*] has caused even its [the remainder's] disfigurement" (*vikara* \*; 167,41-42). Again: "Harm was done to this old guru, ever our benefactor, by ourselves [*asmabhih* \*], dishonorable and of trifling insight, for the sake of sovereignty" (167,47).

Such admissions point to a delicate balance: just as "all the virtues" (which, Arjuna says, Drona\* ascribed to Yudhisthira\* in this very scene) are to be found not only in Yudhisthira\* singly but in the Pandavas\* collectively, so too is there a sharing of the royal sins. Both are intertwined with the symbolism of sovereignty, and this symbolismas we have seen as far back as our discussions of Sri\* and Draupadi\*is shared by the king with his brothers. All are "Indras among men."

#### Death of Karna\*

One of the factors leading to the death of the third Kuru marshal, Karna\*, was outlined at the end of Chapter 9:

Yudhisthira's \* scheme to have Salya\* destroy Karna's\* "energy" (*tejovadhas*; 5:8,27 and 6:41,81) in battle. From this, an important measure of the responsibility for Karna's\* death belongs to Yudhisthira\*. In fact, thinking at one point that Karna\* is dead, Yudhisthira\* exults at the elimination of this most personally troubling of all his foes:

Thirteen years have passed through which, terrified [*bhita*\*], O Dhanamjaya\*, I obtained neither sleep at night nor comfort [*sukham*] by day. Filled with hatred for him, I burn [*tasya dvesena*\* *samyuktah*\* *paridahye*] .... My time has passed reflecting on how I might destroy Karna\* in battle. Waking and sleeping, O son for Kunti\*, I always see Karna\*; indeed, this universe has everywhere become Karna\* [*tatra tatraiva karnabhutamidam*\* *jagat*]. Truly, wherever I go, terrified by Karna\*, O Dhanamjaya\*, there I surely behold Karna\* before me. [8:46,16-20]

But to fix the motive and place the blame does not clarify the nature of the crime. For this we must examine the repercussions of Yudhisthira's\* scheme, that is, the favor he exacted from Salya\*.

On the morning of the second and last day of Karna's\* marshalship, after a frustrating first day, Duryodhana and Karna\* agree (as Yudhisthira\* had foreseen) that the latter's only chance against Arjuna will be to have Salya\* as his charioteer (8,22). Finally persuaded, Salya\* is thus provided with the occasion to begin the "destruction of Karna's\* energy" as the two set out for the crucial duel. This he does, first by scorning, one might even say "satirizing,"<sup>20</sup> Karna's\* courage and eagerness to fight (8:27,18-27). Karna's\* answer is the first articulation of the theme around which this episode revolves and which stems directly from Yudhisthira's\* intrigues: "Relying on my

<sup>20</sup> His rebukes culminate in a series of comparisons: Karna\* is to Arjuna as a jackal to a lion, a mouse to a cat, as falsehood to truth, as poison to *amrta*\* (8:27,50-52); see Donald Ward's "On the Poets and Poetry of the Indo-Europeans," *JIES*, I (1973), 127-44, on the archaic character of satire and invective verse (think of the *suta*\*, "charioteer," as bard!) in Indo-European societies.

own vigor [*viryam* \*], I am seeking Arjuna in battle. But you, an enemy with the face of a friend [*mitramukhah* \*  
*satruh* \*], seek to terrify me" (27,28). The death of Karna\* will involve a betrayal of friendship.

When Salya's\* rebukes become still more stinging, Karna\* says that he is prepared for whatever may happen and begins to trade insults of his own:

You are evil-natured, foolish, unskilled in great battles. Overcome with fear, out of terror you utter such nonsense. Or you are praising them for some other reason, O you who are born in a bad country [*kudesaja* \*]. Having slain them in battle, I will certainly slay you together with all your kinsmen. O you who are born in a sinful country [*papadesaja* \*], you mean-minded low defiler of the ksatriya\* class [*durbuddhe ksudra* \**ksatriyapamsana* \*], having become a friend [*suhrd* \*], why, like an enemy, do you frighten me with the two Krsnas\*? [8:27,66-68]

Two aspects of the theme of friendship have surfaced here, which it will be best to treat separately: the evocation of the two Krsnas\* and the references to the wickedness of Salya's\* homeland.

First, it is to the credit of Walter Ruben to have noticed that this "insult contest between Salya\* as charioteer and Karna\*" is "a caricature-like counterpart to the *Bhagavad Gita*\*.<sup>21</sup> Nowhere is this contrast more apparent than when Karna\* sets out with Salya\* supposedly the most skillful of charioteers at the reins, and the horses tumble to the ground (8:26,36). Throughout the episode are consistent references to parallels and contrasts between the relationship of Arjuna and Krishna and that of Karna\* and Salya\*. Indeed, Krishna and Salya\* have been observed as a pair before: both maternal relatives of the Pandavas\*, and each responding differently to the elaborate *sabhas*\* constructed by the Kauravas to win them over or impress them.<sup>22</sup> Now it is another comparison, made by Karna\*, that

<sup>21</sup> Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 221, n. 11.

<sup>22</sup> See above, Chapter 9, at and following n. 27.

tells us why Karna \* himself requests Duryodhana to assign Salya\* as his driver: "Surely Salya\* is superior to Krishna and surely I am superior to Arjuna. As [Krishna] knows horsemanship..., even so does Salya\* .... As there is no bow-bearer equal to myself with weapons, so there is no one equal to Salya\* in the guiding of horses" (8:22,53-56). Using these lines of flattery, Duryodhana at last gets Salya\* to agree (23,48-50). And finally, as they are about to fight, each warrior asks his driver what he would do should his companion die. While Salya\* says he will slay both Krishna and Arjuna (74), Krishna says smilingly that if such a thing should occur it would mean the "overturning of the world" (*lokaparyasanam*), and adds, only as a sort of afterthought, that he would slay both Karna\* and Salya\* (77).

If there is a lesson in these contrasts, it would seem to be that Arjuna and Krishna's success will be related to their true friendship, while Karna\* and Salya's\* failure will be related to their false friendship. The friendship of Arjuna and Krishna thus merits some attention. Here, it is not solely a matter of their mystical identity as Nara and Narayana\*.<sup>23</sup> Rather, we are concerned with a specific social or dharmic bond. In the beginning of Chapter 6, I sought to differentiate levels of Krishna's self-disclosure in the *Gita*\*: first, in the fourth chapter, having to do with dharma and the yuga structure; and second, in the

23 Since I discuss Arjuna and Krishna's relationship mainly through their identifications as Indra's son and Visnu's\* *avatara*\*, a few words are due on their other identification: whereas the Indra-Visnu\* transposition can be traced to the *Rg*\* *Veda*, the Nara-Narayana\* identification seems rooted in more recent themes. Narayana\* appears first in name in *SB*\* 12,3,4 and 13,6,1 and then not again (unmentioned in Upanisads\*) until the epic. Biardeau has offered the most convincing discussion (EMH, 1, pp. 33-37; 2, pp. 68-80; 3, pp. 48-56; *Clefs*, pp. 156, 224), seeing the god Purusa-Narayana\* of *SB*\* as the model for the pair Nara-Narayana\* (*purusa*\* = *nara* in the epic); see also van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*\*, I, xxi and 435, n. 1.0. Guesses at Narayana's\* origins do not inspire confidence; see R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism*\*, *Saivism*\*, and *Minor Religious Systems* (1913; repr. Benares: Indo-logical Book House, 1965), pp. 35-38; L. B. Keny, "The Origin of Narayana\*," *ABORI*, XXII (1942), 250-56; Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, pp. 32-51.



eleventh chapter where Krishna discloses himself as Kala \* (Time), with *moksa\**, *bhakti*, and the kalpa structure. Recalling that at the end of the eleventh chapter, Krishna says he reveals his universal form only to his *bhaktas* (11,54), let us now note why he tells Arjuna of his role concerning the maintenance of dharma from yuga to yuga:

This very same by Me to thee today,  
This ancient discipline, is proclaimed.  
Thou art my devotee and friend [*bhakto 'si me sakha\* ca*], that is why;  
For this is a supreme secret. [4,3]

Friendship (*sakhyam*) is thus a suitable relationship for understanding Krishna's dharmic role, but, as Arjuna says, it is not adequate to carry the devotional appreciation of Krishna in his universal form. Thus, after the theophany, Arjuna apologizes for his earlier familiarity with Krishna, that is, as he puts it, for:

Whatever I said rashly, thinking thee my boon companion [*sakhe 'ti matva\**],  
Calling Thee "Krsna\*, Yadava\*, Companion (*sakhe*) !" [ 11,41 ]

Arjuna is, of course, forgiven his familiarities, and he stands as the exemplar of both of these relationships to Krishna: those of *sakhi* and *bhakta*, the former implying a variety of social and dharmic relations,<sup>24</sup> the latter a means to salvation. In fact, the *Gita\** seems to reserve the word *sakhi* solely for the "companionship" of Arjuna and Krishna and to use other terms where "friendship" is discussed more generally.<sup>25</sup> The term, however, is one with a "prehistory." As seen in Chapter 9, it describes the relationship between Indra and Vrtra\*, or, in variants, between Indra and Namuci.<sup>26</sup> Karna\* uses it, although not

24 Cf. Ganguli-Roy (*Mahabharata*, XII: *Asvamedha Parva*, 166, n. 1): "Draupadi was always styled by Krisha as his 'sakhi' or 'friend.'"

25 For *sakhi*, see also 11,44; for other terms (*suhrd\**, *mitra*, *bandhu*), see 5,27; 6,9; 9,18; 14,25.

26 Although the epic passages discussed in Chapter 9 tell of Indra breaking "friendship" with Vrtra\*, the story is first told about Indra and Namuci;

(Footnote continued on next page)

exclusively, to address Salya \*. And, with some likely Indo-European parallels, it provides a key term in Dumézil's analysis of the typical sinthe breaking of a "friendship" or warrior pactcommitted, as it was by Indra, against the second function. As Dumézil puts it: "The translation 'friendship' is inadequate, but it is difficult to establish with precision the variety of social relationship which the word *sakhi* probably from the same root as the Latin *socius* signifies."27

It seems, then, that the poets have found in the "insult contest" between Karna\* and Salyatogether on a chariot before their crucial battlea perfect counterpart to the exemplary communication between Arjuna and Krishna in the *Gita*\*. One friend offers encouragement, the other discouragement. Against such a background of contrasts concerning two warriors and their charioteers the *Mahabharata*\* amplifies the theme of friendship to its fullest extent.

Turning back to the insult contest, we can afford to be much briefer on the second matter raised by Karna's\* first denunciationthe wickedness of Salya's\* homelandfor it will claim our attention later. Karna\* sees this baseness as the very reason why "true" friendship with Salya\* is impossible: "Madrakas are always injurers of friends [*mitradhrun*]; whoever hates us, he is a Madraka. There is, in a Madraka of mean speech, the lowest of men, no friendship" (or "alliance," "association": *samgatam*\*; 8:27,73; cf. 83-84). And then friendship (*sauhardam*\*, *samgatam*\*) is discussed (27,79-83) alongside ritual purity (*saucam*\*; 80), with the analogy drawn that friendship with a "fickle" or "dirty"28 Madras is as much a degradation as the failure to observe caste rules in sacrifices.

(Footnote continued from previous page)

see Maurice Bloomfield, "The Story of Indra and Namuci: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Veda," pt. 1, *JAOS*, XV (1893), 152-63; Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 78. It seems that in some respects the "Encloser" (*vrtra*\*) and the "Nonreleaser" (*na-muci*) became interchangeable.

27 Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 20.

28 The CE (8:27,80) favors *sacapalah*\* ("fickle") over *sada\* malah*\* ("ever dirt"), but the latter is widely used, North and South.

Karna \*, however, continues still further with this surgery of "friendship." Other figures are involved: "I am the dear friend [*priyah\* sakha\**] of the intelligent son of Dhrtarastra\* [Duryodhana]. Surely my life-breaths [*pranah\**] and whatever wealth is mine exist for his sake. Evidently you have been consigned by the Pandavas\*, you offspring of a sinful land, since you have behaved toward us in every way like a foe" (*amitravat*; 27,94-95). The fabric of "friendships" which holds this episode together is thus further complicated. One might put Karna's\* position into the following formula: for his own true friend, he must fight against a pair of true friends and thus face death by letting a false friend live. As he says himself, concluding his first denunciation of Salya\*: "Out of regard for a friend [*mitrapratiksya\**], for Duryodhana's sake, and so as not to endure blame for these three reasons [I let] you live" (27,102). But more than this, Karna\* is the tragic model of true, loyal friendship,<sup>29</sup> even though Salya\*, claiming to speak as a friend (*suhrd\**; 28,2), holds his loyalty up to ridicule. Through his dedication to Duryodhana, Karna\* can answer Salya\* with authoritative words on friendship:

Surely friendship is seven-paced [*saptapadam\* hi mitram*].<sup>30</sup>... Duryodhana has come to battle himself. Desiring success for his sake, I long for him where there is no singleness of purpose [*? tamabhyesye yatra naikantyamasti\**]. Friendship [*mitram*] consists of making fat [*mider*], gladdening [*nandater*], or pleasing [*priyater\**], or protecting [*samtrayater\**], or rejoicing [*modater*];... and all this, no less, is mine in

29 Just before the battle, Karna\* tells Krishna: "I will do nothing disagreeable to the son of Dhrtarastra\*; know me surely to have abandoned life desiring Duryodhana's welfare" (6:41,87).

30 There does not seem to be any numerical correlation with what follows. On the "seven-paced friendship," see also 3:246,35 and 281,22; 13:51,35 and 105,8 (the word for "friend" being consistently *mitra*). According to Ganguli-Roy (*Mahabharata*, XI, 189, n. 1): "The sense... is that if the righteous meet and exchange seven words (or walk each other for only seven steps), they become friends." Cf. the seven steps in the Hindu marriage rite.

Duryodhana. Enmity consists of destruction, punishment, putting down, crushing, swelling [? with pride; *svayater* \*], or even by weakening the will through repeatedly visiting misfortune. And, in general, all this is in you toward me. [29,21-25]

Karna\* and Duryodhana's friendship dates back to their first encounter (1:126,38). And in several manuscripts, from both North and South, it is "through the condition of friendship" (*sakhibhavena*\*) that Duryodhana is finally able to prevail upon Karna\* to stop the insult contest.<sup>31</sup>

This suffices to demonstrate that the theme of friendship is central to the events leading to the death of the third *senapati*\*. There also is evidence of a most baffling nature that the epic's poets (or at least some of its redactors) saw a definite link between this episode and Indra's triumph over Vrtra\* or Namuci. The uncertainty lies in the surprising fact that all but one of the references to such a connection occur only in the Northern recension. I will thus refer to this one instance first, as it provides the Critical Edition's only support for this causeway between myth and epic.

After Karna\* has had some initial success in baffling Arjuna's weapons, Bhima\* and Krishna take turns addressing Arjuna (8:65,14-21). Both urge him to recover his "firmness" (*dhrti*\*; 18 and 20), and both, in effect, offer him the service of their weapons. Bhima\* volunteers to do the job himself with his mace (*gada*\*; 15); and then Krishna, observing that Arjuna is not winning the fight with his usual independent flair, proposes: "Cut off the head of this foe, putting forth strength, with this razor-edged Sudarsana\* [Krishna's *cakra*], entrusted by me [to you], as Sakra\* with his *vajra* [cut off the head] of the foe Namuci" (*anena ... ksuranemina*\*. . . *maya\* nistrstena\* sudarsanena\* vajrena\* sakro\* namucerivareh*\*; 65, 18-19). These invitations to rely on others' weapons are, of course, rejected by Arjuna, who calls upon his own resources (23). But the comparison reminds

<sup>31</sup>*Karnaparvan*\*, 401\*, line 7, following 8:30,86.

us that Arjuna will rely on Krishna here just as Indra relied on others,<sup>32</sup> and in Salya's \* *Udyogaparvan* account specifically upon Visnu\* (who enters Indra's "weapon," the frothy *vajra*; 5:10,39),<sup>33</sup> in his disloyal dealings with Vrtra\* and Namuci.

To be sure, this convergence of themes concerning the reinforcement of Indra and Arjuna's weapons is not enough to go on. The battle scenes abound in descriptions comparing heroic opponents to Indra and his foes, and in this particular duel comparisons are made to Indra's combats with many other enemies besides Namuci and Vrtra\*.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as a glance at Sørensen's *Index* will show, the description of Arjuna and Karna's\* duel that appears in the Northern recension "Vulgate" includes five out of the forty-two references to Vrtra\* that occur in all the four battle *parvans* and four of the ten references that are made in the same immense span to Namuci. The latter, at least, is a significant statistic, inviting a closer look at the strange, apparently intrusive references that occur only in the Northern recension.<sup>35</sup> They are given here in order and in brief.

First, Krishna warns Arjuna of Karna's\* approach: "Slay Karna\*, O mighty-armed one, as Vrtrahan\* [Indra, "Slayer of Vrtra\*"] [slew] Namuci. Let good fortune [*sreyas*\*] be yours, O Partha\*; obtain victory in battle" (Appendix I, no. 36, 11. 31-32 = Calcutta Edition 8:86,4363). Second, when Karna's\* chariot wheel is engulfed by the earth and Arjuna is reluctant to slay him at a disadvantage, Krishna mocks such chivalry: "When he is able, the *suta*'s\* son [Karna\*] will encounter you

32 In *SB*\* 12,7,3,3 (cf. *RV*\* 10,131,4-5), Indra gets his help from the Asvins\* and Saravati\*; see Bloomfield, "Indra and Namuci," pp. 147,151,153-60, and 162; and Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, p. 31.

33 See above, Chapter 9, at n. 14; Gonda's atmospheric interpretation is unconvincing: *Early Visnuism*, p. 38.

34 Arjuna and Karna\* are compared to Indra and Bali (8:63,5; 65,5), Indra and Sambara\* (63,19 and 63; 64,8), Indra and Jambha (64,11), and Indra and Bala (66,30).

35 The only Southern exception, one in Telegu script referred to as T2, is described by P. L. Vaidya (ed., CE, *Karnaparvan*\*, "Introduction," p. xviii) as "showing signs of the influence of the N recension."

as before. Strike this one as Hari [Visnu-Krishna \*36] struck Namuci" (*vidhya tvam enam\* namucim\* yatha\* harih\**; App. I, no. 41, 11. 19-20 = Calcutta Edition 8:90,4700). When Arjuna finally slays the disabled Karna\*, the narrator's comparison is still pointed, though this time referring not to Namuci but to Vrtra\*: "Then Arjuna removed [Karna's\*] head as Indra [removed] Vrtra's\* with the *vajra*" (*tato 'rjunasya siro\* jahara\* vrtrasya\* vajrena\* yatha\* mahendrah\**; 8,1159\* = Calcutta Edition 8:91,4798). And finally, at the beginning of the last *adhyaya\** of the *parvan*, Krishna launches the Pandavas\*' victory celebration with an embrace of Arjuna and the most mystifying words of all:37 "Slain by the destroyer of Bala was Vrtra\*, by you Karna\* [*hato balabhida\* vrtrastvaya\* karno\**], O Dhanamjaya\*. Men shall talk of just [one] death for Karna\* and Vrtra\* [*vadham\* vai karnavrtrabhyam\* kathayisyanti manavah\**].38 Vrtra\* was slain in battle by the much-splendored [*bhuritejasa\**] bearer of the *vajra*; by you, then, was Karna\* slain with bow and sharp arrows" (8:69,2-3).

What is one to make of these consistencies? All of the passages cited except for the first are exclusively Northern, although it might be argued that the last and most crucial passage is ancient and that the Southern recension has replaced it with a different ending (see note 37). But to account for all the passages, perhaps one must suppose that at some comparatively recent date, the Northern redactors seized upon the initial allusion, the only one definitely common to North and South, and extended it in order to make some point. But what point? Considering that in all but one case the speaker is Krishna, we may be encouraged to look for a meaning that is "divinely

36 One Devanagari\* text, as if seeking to standardize, has *yathendrah\** rather than *yatha\* harih\**. One wonders whether it is not Visnu\* concealed in Indra's *vajra* that the poetor Krishnahas in mind.

37 The CE includes this Northern ending by default; the Southern recension has a wholly different concluding *adhyaya\**.

38 Cf. Ganguli-Roy (*Mahabharata*, VII: *Karna Parva*, 292): "Men will talk (in the same breath) of the slaughter of Karna and Vritra." Note the use of the compound dual.

known," mythical and secret. Although there is more than one possibility,<sup>39</sup> it is most likely that the true point of Krishna's insistence that "men shall talk of just one death for Karna \* and Vrtra\*" is that each was undone by the same device: a violation of friendship encouraged and reinforced by his opponent's closest "friend."

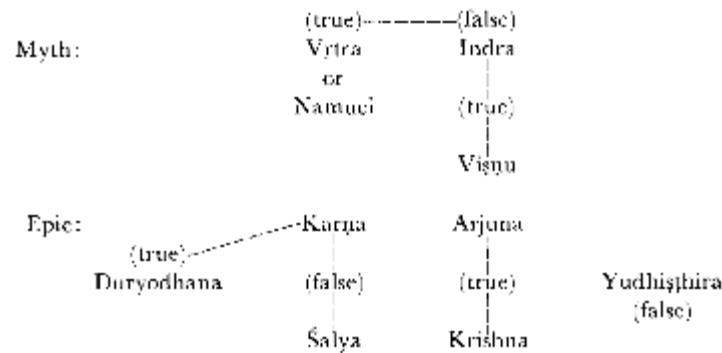
As is well known, in the *Rg\* Veda*, Visnu\* is Indra's "intimate friend" (*índrasya yujyah\* sakha\**; *RV\** 1,22,19), his frequent ally against Vrtra\*; and in one celebrated passage, when Indra is about to slay Vrtra\*, he says: "Friend Visnu\*, stride out widely" (*sákhe visno\* vitaram\* ví kramasva*; 4,19,11).<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in the *Mahabharata's\** *Udyogaparvan* account, Visnu\* helps Indra by entering the foam of the waters which Indra combines with his *vajra*. No doubt this is the point where the Vrtra\* cycle fuses with the Namuci cycle: Indra's friendship with Visnu\* coming from the former, his broken friendship coming from the latter. In any case, it seems that on the epic plane Indra's role has been divided between the two most prominent of the *Mahabharata's\** "Indras among men."

On the one hand, just as Indra is helped by his "friend" Visnu\* to kill Vrtra\*, Arjuna is helped by his "friend" Krishna to kill Karna\*. Indeed, the accounts contain a similar pattern concerning the reinforcement of the two warriors' weapons. Arjuna does not use the *cakra* proffered by Krishna, whereas Indra does use the reinforced *vajra*. But it seems that Arjuna's weapons have taken effect only after Krishna has spoken, that is, after they have been reinforced by his words.

<sup>39</sup> Both Karna\* and Namuci have a rapport with Surya\*: Karna\* is Surya's\* son; Namuci's falling out with Indra, according to certain versions, began when, "terrified by Vasava\*, Namuci entered a ray of the sun [*suryarasmim\**]; then Indra made friendship [*sakhyam*] and an agreement [*samayam*] with him" (*Mbh.* 9:42,29; cf. *MS* 4,3,4 and Bloomfield, "Indra and Namuci," p. 147). On sun-storm imagery in the Karna-Arjuna\* duel, see Dumézil, *ME*, I, 131,135-38.

<sup>40</sup> See Arthur A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, Vol. III, I A (Strassburg, 1897), 39-40

On the other hand, Indra's sin of a breach of friendship is not Arjuna's; it is Yudhisthira's \*. If Bhisma\* has been slain by a misuse of the vow and Drona\* by a misuse of the truth, Karna\* has been slain by a misuse of friendship. The latter theme has had both distant mythical echoes and more recent devotional amplifications. But at bottom it is still Yudhisthira's\* fault that has brought it all about, for it is he who urged Salya\* to destroy Karna's\* "energy," an act involving a betrayal of "friendship" which Yudhisthira\* himself admitted "ought not to be done" (*akartavyam*).<sup>41</sup> One might thus draw the following representation of what has occurred on the two planes of myth and epic:



If Duryodhana stands behind the false friends as a true friend, Yudhisthira\* stands behind the true friends as a false friend, not only of Karna\* but of Salya\*. Once again, Arjuna remains "pure."

When it is Salya's\* turn to be named *senapati*\*, there is a final touch of irony; as Duryodhana puts it: "The time has come, O you who are devoted to friends, when among friends wise men examine carefully for friendship or enmity" (... *mitranam\* mitravatsala / yatra mitramamitram\* va\* pariksante\* budha\* janah\**; 9:5,23). Salya\* is thus put to the test of friendship and fatefully

<sup>41</sup> See above, Chapter 9.



accepts. But this is a reflection of the symbolism of Karna's \* fall; the symbolism of Salya's\* lies elsewhere.

# Death of Salya\*

Salya\* is related symbolically to the earth, as shown by the poets' description of the symbols on the banners (*dhvaj*s) of the heroes (7:80,2-29): "On the standard-top of Salya\*, king of Madra, like the tip of a flame [*agnisikhamiva*\*], we beheld a golden furrow [*sitam*\*], incomparable and splendid" (7:80,18). Although this emblem is mentioned just once, its significance is not to be underestimated.<sup>42</sup> Salya\* stands out from the rest not only by his earth-related emblem, but by being the only warrior to bear a feminine device on his banner.<sup>43</sup>

As one might expect, this is likely to be a very rich symbolism, first because it is the Earth's distressher complaint to the gods that she was being oppressed by an overpopulation of incarnated Asuras (1:58)that has led to the incarnation of the gods on earth and to the entire war. One underlying fact relates Salya\* to her: he has been cast in the part of the one king *outside the central Kuru kingdom* who represents "all the other kings of the earth." This claim finds support in the following three passages, two of which were cited in Chapter 8. First, when Salya\* is selected by Asvatthaman\* to be the fourth marshal, his royal nature is emphasized in the familiarbut unusual for those outside the Kuru lineformulaic way: "This one, with [his] lineage [*kulam*], heroism [*viryam*], majesty [*tejas*],

<sup>42</sup> Such passages are not to be treated lightly; cf. Bhisma's\* evaluation of the prowess of each hero in the "tale of the *rathas* and *atirathas*" (5:162,17-169,13) and the description of the colors of the heroes' horses (7:22). One might call them visual aids. On the *dhvaja*, see F. B. J. Kuiper, review of J. Duchesne-Guillemin's *Symbols and Values in Zoroastrianism*, *IIJ*, XI (1968-1969), 153-57.

<sup>43</sup> Sita\*, "furrow," is not only a feminine word but a term connoting feminine imagery. The father of the *Ramayana's*\* Sita\*, who was born from a furrow, is called the "plough-bannered" (*siradhvaja*\*); see Jaiswal, *Origin and Development*, p. 127.

fame [*yasas* \*], and prosperity [*sri*\*], is endowed with every virtue; let Salya\* be our leader" (9:5,18). Second, Salya's\* death is linked with Duryodhana's loss of his royal *sri*\*. At Salya's\* death, the Pandavas\* rejoice that "Duryodhana has today been abandoned by his blazing royal prosperity" (*hino\* diptaya\* nrpatisriya\**; 9:18,14),<sup>44</sup> and acclaim: "Who other than Yudhisthira\* son of Prtha\*, whose protector is Hrsikesa\* [Krishna]ever the refuge of dharma and fame [*dharmayasonidhih\**]ever conquer Bhisma\*, Drona\*, and Karna\*, and even the king of the Madras as also other heroic kings by hundreds and thousands?" (*tathan-yannrpatinviransataso\* 'tha sahasrasah\**; 18,26-27). Finally, this way of referring to Salya\* as the index to the other kings is found when Sisupala\* berates Bhisma\* and the Pandavas\* for honoring Krishna as the most worthy person present at Yudhisthira's\* Rajasuya\*: "Why do you not praise the rulers of the earth, Salya\* and so forth ?" (*salyadin\* api kasmata\* tvam\* stausi\* vasudhadhipan\**; 2:41,13). Salya\* thus rounds out the four *senapatis*\* as the figure heading the countless rajas\* of the earth. In this light, it is not so strange that with his fall, Duryodhana's *sri*\* abandons him even while he is alive; for all the earth's kings are no longer there to sustain Duryodhana as sovereign and yield to him the earth's "prosperity."

One feature differentiates Salya's\* death from those of the other marshals, as observed by Walter Ruben. Salya\* is slain by Yudhisthira\* alone; and the victory is achieved "in righteous combat."<sup>45</sup> According to Ruben, this was evidence that the original war took place without Krishna, but Krishna is not so easily set aside. When Yudhisthira\* hears the shouts of acclamation at Salya's\* installation, he asks Krishna what to do. Once again, Krishna gives the advice which is to achieve the immediate end, only this time Yudhisthira\* is to be the sole agent in carrying it out. There are two key points in Krishna's

44 For these two passages, see Chapter 8.

45 Ruben, *Krishna*, p. 284 (my translation); Ruben's "in ehrlichem Kampf" probably translates *dharmye...yuddhe* of 9:16,55.

rather long speech (9:6,24-37). First, he stresses twice the continuity between Salva \* and the other marshals, but in contrary directions: in one case Salva\* is compared favorably with the others (26), in the other unfavorably: "Having crossed the Bhishma\*, Karna\*, and Drona\* ocean,... do not, with your troopshaving encountered Salva\*sink in a cow-track" (*gospadam\**; 36). Such contradictions point to an ambiguity in Salva's\* character and also dignify him as a worthy opponent for Yudhisthira\*, who has never showed himself to be the greatest of fighters. Second, and more important, it is Krishna who puts Yudhisthira\* to the task that Ruben would have him do entirely on his own: "I do not find a well-matched opponent [*pratiyoddharam\**] for him [Salva\*] in battle except you, O tiger among men, of prowess equal to a tiger's; in the heavenly world and in this entire world, there is no man other than you who would be able to slay the angered king of the Madras" (30-31).

In what sense is Salva\* such a "well-matched opponent" (*pratiyoddhr\**) ? One does well to note that in a list where suitable "shares" (*bhaga\**) are delegated to the Pandava\* warriors, only in Yudhisthira's\* case is some qualification expressed: "The share of Pandu's\* eldest son will be the mighty king of the Madras, although some tell us that these two are considered uneven" (*visamau\**; 5:56,13). The matter of their being "well-matched" yet "uneven" is unresolved, but Yudhisthira\* seems to have regarded Krishna's words as being very weighty. When Salva\* at first gets the best of the fighting, Yudhisthira\* asks: "How, verily, can these important words [*vaco mahat*] of Madhava's\* become true" (9:12,35)? When he finally decides he must take matters into his own hands as Krishna had prompted, his reflections translate *pratiyoddhr\** into the very suggestive term *bhāga*, "share," which occurred in the passage concerning the appointments of personal opponents. Speaking to his brothers and Krishna, Yudhisthira\* says: "Bhisma\*, Drona\*, Karna\* and the other rulers of the earth who were energetic for the sake of the Kauravas have all gone to their

If you like this book, buy it!

death in battle. Each according to his share, each according to his strength [*yathabhagam* \* *yathotsaham*\*], you have fought in manly fashion. One share remains. This is mine: the great chariot-warrior Salya\*" (*bhago*\* *'vasista*\* *eko* *'yam*\* *mama salyo*\* *maharathah*\*; 9:15,16-17). We have already anticipated what this "share" consists of in the present context.<sup>46</sup> As the two kings fight, other warriors, watching the progress of their fight, could not tell "whether the son of Prtha\*, having slain the king of Madra, would enjoy the earth [*vasumdharam*\*], or whether Salya\*, having slain the son of Pandu\*, would give the earth [*dadyat*\*... *gam*\*] to Duryodhana" (15,58-59). Yudhisthira's\* "share," in the person of Salya\*, will be the earth.

The combat takes place in two stages, the end of the first marked by the fall of Salya's\* "furrowed" banner (15,64). Then, after Salya\* recovers the initiative for awhile, Yudhisthira\* recalls Krishna's words: "And, having reflected that his share was still remaining [*bhagamathavasistam*\* *smrtva*\*], his mind was firmly set on the death of Salya\* as had been counseled by the younger brother of Indra [Krishna]" (16,37). At this point, Yudhisthira\* takes up the special dart (*sakti*\*) he had just called to mind<sup>47</sup> and slays Salya\* with it. In describing the latter's fall the poets have given their most careful attention to the themes under discussion. The notion of "shares," for instance, is probably bound up with the double insistence that Yudhisthira\* is performing a sort of sacrifice in which Salya\* is likened to the fire which at first blazes up (16,48) and is then extinguished (55). Most revealing is the resonant description of the end of King Salya's\* affair with the earth:

Having spread his arms, he fell from his chariot to the earth [*gam*\*] with his armor cut away .... Having spread his arms, facing toward

<sup>46</sup> For more on this and related terms, see below, Chapters 13 and 14.

<sup>47</sup> It is given a long description (16,38-47): created by Tvastr\* for Siva\*, it had been long worshiped by the Pandavas\* (43-44). In connection with Salya\*, the only point of interest is that it was "unerringly fatal to haters of brahmins" (45), a theme I will discuss below.

the Dharmaraja \*, the king of Madra fell on the earth [*bhumau\**] like a tall Indra-banner. Then, all his mangled limbs bathed in blood, it was as if that bull among men was risen up to be the earth, out of love [*pratyudgata iva premna\* bhumya\**].<sup>48</sup> A lover to his dear beloved, as if fallen on her breast [*priyaya\* kantaya\* kantah\* patamana\* ivorasi*], that lord, having for a long time enjoyed the earth [*vasumatim\**] like a dear loved one [*priyam\* kantamiva\**], clinging to her with all his limbs, was like one who was sleeping [*sarvairangaih\* samaslisya\* prasupta iva so 'bhavat*]. [16,49-54]

The position, as another passage tells, betokens the fall of a king. In Krishna's words: "The lords of the earth, slain for the earth's sake, having embraced the earth with their limbs like a dear beloved, are sleeping" (*prthiviam\* prthivihetoh\* prthivipatayo\* hatah\* / prthivimupaguhyangaih\* suptah\* kantamiva\* priyam\**; *Dronaparvan\**, App. I, No. 17, 11. 14-15).

It is by now evident that this figure who has been tricked by his taste for luxury into taking Duryodhana's side,<sup>49</sup> whose death has deprived Duryodhana of his *sri\**, and whose body finally mingles with the earth, is consistently evoking themes of the third function. The terms used for the earth in her relationship to Salya\* seem, to a marked degree, ones which emphasize such symbolism. Earth is the "cow" (*go*; 9:15,59; 16,49-51: "the earth [as the milk-cow of kings]," Monier-Williams) a term that gives depth to Krishna's counsel not to "sink, having encountered Salya\*, in a cow-track" (*gospadam\**).<sup>50</sup> Earth is Vasumdhara\*, the "bearer of riches" (9:15,58), and Vasumati\*, "the possessor of riches" (16,54). Or, when Salya\* moves his troops, it is as Medini\*, "she having fatness," that the earth "seems to tremble" (5:8,5). These are not exceptional terms for the earth, but they underline the relationship between the earth and the king in the direction of third-function themes. The embrace with the earth at Salya's\* death even calls to mind aspects of the mythology of Sri-Laksmi\*. As he lies clasping

48 Or "it was as if the earth, out of love, rose up to meet him."

49 See above, Chapter 9, following n. 29.

50 On cow similes and sovereignty, cf. Chapter 7, following n. 64.

his beloved earth with outstretched arms,<sup>51</sup> the last words to describe him strike a deep chord: "His heart split by that dart and his standard and weapons scattered, even altogether stilled [*samsantam* \*], *laksmi*\* did not desert the lord of the Madras" (*madresam*\* *laksmirnaiva*\* *vyamuñcata*; 16,56). I would prefer not to translate *laksmi*\* here, for, although the meanings "beauty" (Ganguli-Roy)<sup>52</sup> or "fortune" are no doubt involved, the associations of royalty with Sri-Laksmi\* give the passage a depth that should not be lost.

At this point, one may ask: what has all this to do with sins? In fact, at least on the surface, and as Ruben saw so clearly, Yudhisthira\* fighting "singly" (*eko*; 15,50) and "in righteous combat" does not sin in slaying Salya\*. Though one might certainly raise eyebrows at his behavior (and probably Krishna's complicity) in claiming as his "share" the foe with whom he had laid the secret scheme to slay Karna\*, any suspicions that he is wiping out the evidence are apparently unfounded: the *Mahabharata*\*, remarkably, never raises the possibility. Moreover, the poets take great pains to give an official respectability to Yudhisthira's\* triumph. In the passage describing Salya's\* death embrace, it is said that he lay "slain by Dharma's son of righteous soul in righteous combat" (*dharmye dharmatmana*\* *yuddhe nihato dharmasununa*\*; 16,55). Yet one cannot help but ask, what with all these puns and this highly stylized claim to virtue, whether the poets speak with true praise or heavy irony.

In any case, Yudhisthira\* is not the only sovereign to have questionable dealings with his foes. In the last chapter I discussed the *Mahabharata*'s\* (indeed, Salya's\*) reorientation of the mythology of the sins of Indra. There we saw how the epic accounts are close in basic outline to myths from the Brahmanas\* in their treatment of Indra's first two sins, against Visvarupa\* and Vrtra\*, and how the epic accounts differ from a later, more "artificial," *Markandeya*\* *Purana*\* myth in their handling of the third-function sequel to these sins. First, the *Mahabharata*\* has

<sup>51</sup> On "long arms" and royalty, see above, Chapter 8 at n. 11.

<sup>52</sup> *Mahabharata*, VII; *Salya Parva*, 50.

Indra commit no third-function sin like the violation of Ahalya\*; rather, he is sinned against in the same fashion, by Nahusa\* who covets his wife. Second, this third episode is the only one in which Indra is challenged by a human king. These differences in the epic's myth, or myths, help to give us an account, not of the annihilation of the warrior god through three sins, but of the restoration of the not-so-perfect divine sovereign to his throne. On the level of heroic action, the epic story is oriented in the same direction, and it seems that the epic poets have worked, or perhaps reworked, mythic and epic material into recognizably complementary patterns.

Salya\*, as indicated, is the beloved of the earth, and we have so far seen little indication that he may have violated her, "Yudhisthira's\* earth," in any way that might run parallel to Nahusa's\* ill intent toward Saci\*. Admittedly, no strict parallel will be found. But when one examines the mythic and epic scenes within the context of the third function, their divergent plots will show their reliance on a common store of themes and symbols. We have already noticed a certain ambiguity in Salya's\* character. Not surprisingly, it is bound up with his relationship to the earth. For its most complete expression, we must turn back to the "insult exchange" between Salya\* and Karna\*.

In Karna's\* tirade Salya\* is frequently the recipient of epithets like *papadesaja\**, "born in a sinful country." Karna\* charges the people of Salya's\* land not only with the subversion of friendship, but, in two very long speeches (8:27,71-91 and 30,9-82), with a whole host of sins. It would be fruitless to file all the charges, but their central thrust is illuminating.

In the first denunciation, friendship is related to the question of purity and in one phrase (which, though widely found, is not in the Critical Edition), Karna\* depicts the Madraka as "always dirt" (*sada\* malah\**).<sup>53</sup> But if the first speech does not generalize on the alleged Madraka character to any great

<sup>53</sup> See above, n. 28.

extent, the sins it records are all breaches of the orthopraxy demanded by brahminical society. People of all ages and sexes mingle freely (27,75-76), impure food and incoherent speech are common (77-78), and, most notoriously, Madraka women (76 and 85-90) are wanton, drunk, mercenary, "pass urine like camels and asses" (86), and are "very shameless, hairy, gluttonous, and impure" (*asaucas* \*; 89). These, says Karna\*, are *mleccha* (barbaric) traits and practices (91); and especially as they concern women, they are tied in most intimately with Salya's\* birth: "Being the son of one of these, how can a Madraka speak of dharma" (85)?

Looking outside the insult exchange, some corroboration for these charges can no doubt be found in Madraka "family practice" (*kuladharmā*) which Salya\* upholds in marrying his sister Madri\* to Pandu\* by selling her. Dumézil, in calling attention to this "matrimonial practice 'unworthy' of ksatriyas\*, reserved for vaisyas\*," argues that these traits bear further relation to the quasi-vaisya\* character of Nakula and Sahadeva, Madri's\* sons.<sup>54</sup> Karna's\* first speech, however, is only a sort of warm-up. There is no clear formulation of what underlies the *adharma* and *asauca*\* ("impurity") of the Madraka. His second speech is more helpful.

At the outset, Karna\* bases his remarks according to the authority of a brahmin (8:30, 8-9) upon certain geographical considerations: "Those who are situated away from the Himavat and apart from the Ganga\*, Sarasvati\*, Yamuna\*, and also Kuruksetra\*; who are dwellers in the region of the five rivers with the Sindhu as the sixth one should avoid these Bahlikas\* who are impure [*asucin* \*] and beyond the pale of dharma" (*dharmabāhyān* \*; 8:30, 10-11). There have been various efforts to determine who the Bahlikas\* (apparent variant Bahikas\*) are and what their relationship is with the

<sup>54</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 73-76, quote on p. 75; he thinks the CE is unjudicious in rejecting the marriage episode, it bring the *lectio difficilior* and without alternative. He modifies this stance, however, in *ME*, II, 12.



Madrakas,<sup>55</sup> but they are regarded here as Salya's \* subjects. This geographical partitioning of the pure and the impure is reinforced several times, but nowhere more forcefully than in the notion that the inhabitants of Bahlika\* country do not descend from the original creation:

Where the five rivers flow, having just issued from the mountain, among those named Arattas\* and Bahlikas\* a respectable person [*arya*\*] should not dwell for even two days. Two Pisacas\* named Bahis ["Outsider"] and Hlika\* ["Ashamed"?] live on the Vipasa\* [one of the five rivers]. The offspring of these two are the Bahlikas\*; this creation is not Prajapati's\* [*bahisca\* nama\* hlikasca\* vipasayam\* pisacakau\* / tayorapatyam\* bahlika\* naisa\* srstih\* prajapateh\**]. [30,43-44]<sup>56</sup>

Such a notion of impurity as that which stands outside the categories of the divine creation certainly sits well with Mary Douglas' celebrated analysis of the impure in the Old Testament.<sup>57</sup>

If the impure is, in the general sense, that which is outside the ordered *arya* world, Karna's\* further specifications of the

<sup>55</sup> See Vaidya, ed., *Karnaparvan\**, "Critical Notes," p. 686: "Bahlika\* country did not form part of Aryavarta\*" and probably consisted of Madra and Pañcanada. He cites (p. 85) J. M. Chatterji, "Ahura-Mazda in the *Mahabharata\**," *Iran League Quarterly*, XIX (1948-1949), 50, who takes Madra as Media and Salya\* as a Persian king who performed his own sacrifices, Madrakas being called *rajayajakah\**, "those whose sacrificers are kings" (8:27,81; 30,70). A.D. Pusalker, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, I: *The Vedic Age*, A. K. Majumdar, ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1951), 263, doubts that Bahlika\*, "Outsider," implies Iranian. Most implausible, Robert Shafer, *Ethnography of Ancient India* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954), p. 141, links Bahlikas\* with Harappa\*. See also M-W, s.v. Bahlika\*.

<sup>56</sup> Vaidya, ed., *Karnaparvan\**, p. 687, notes that the names of the two Pisacas\* form a "very fanciful etymology .... So the Bahlikas\* are a Pisaca\* race, and not an Aryan\* race, which alone is propagated by Prajapati\*, the Creator." Shafer, *Ethnography of Ancient India*, p. 141, says: "I interpret this as meaning that they were the offspring of two devils." Bahis' sex cannot be determined.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 41-57, shows that what is consistently impure about the abominations of Leviticus is that they do not fit the divinely ordered "holy" categories of Genesis.

pure are equally interesting: "Among the Matsyas and those of the Kuru-Pancala \* countries, among the Naimisas\*, the Cedis, and others who are distinguished [*visistah\**], the good [*santah\**] uphold the ancient dharma; but not the Madras and the crooked people of the five rivers" (30,62-63). These verses would seem to recall the sacred geography, cited above, of the Ganga\*, Yamuna\*, Sarasvati\*, and Kuruksetra\* areas. They also suggest, first, that excepting the "Naimisas\*" who do not form one of the combatant kingdoms in the epic (elsewhere Naimisa\* is a forest), these "distinguished" and "good" peoples the Matsyas, Cedis, and Pancalas\* form the very core of the Pandava\* army. Second, the region which they broadly represent seems to evoke the idea of a "sacred center," one reminiscent of the central region, *madhyadesa\**, which, near the beginning of the Lunar Dynasty and long before Kuru, Yayati\* gave to his youngest son Puru\*, leaving the "outlying regions" to his four older sons (1:82,5).<sup>58</sup> Such a geography is in fact confirmed, despite the different interpretation, by Robert Shafer's study of the distribution of the epic's peoples.<sup>59</sup> One thus perceives that the symbolic geography of the battle of Kuruksetra\* represents a defense and a regeneration of the Center of the Earth by a reassertion of its purity, and its peoples' relative purity, over and against the periphery. This is not the only instance concerning the Pandavas\* where the purity of the Center comes into question. When Yudhisthira\* asks Krishna whether to perform a Rajasuya\*, Krishna, voicing his support of the ordered continuity of the Lunar Dynasty

58 See above, Chapter 8, following n. 18, and *ME*, II, 258-64; cf. also 1: 189,39, where Vasistha\* consecrates Puru's\* descendants "the one horn [*visanabhutam\**] of the entire wide earth" (van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*: I, 212, with n. 35, p. 455).

59 See Shafer, *Ethnography of Ancient India*, p. 48: "The Aryan strength was along the Yamuna\* and upper Ganges. The Pandavas\* received very little aid from the Indo-Aryans of the northwest"; supporting this, see Shafer's "map 2" (back of book), which he says makes clear "the concentration of Pandava\* forces about the central Ganges-Yamuna\* doab." Shafer's theory of a "great rebellion" is less reliable than his geographical reconstructions, which themselves must often be viewed cautiously.

(2:13,4-6), says that before Yudhisthira \* can assert his sovereignty, he must rid himself of Jarasamdha\*a figure also much bound up with symbolisms of impurity and adharm<sup>60</sup>who has established himself in "middle earth" (*avanim\* madhyamam\**; 13,7). But the symbolism of a great battle in which the center reasserts itself against the periphery also joins the growing list of *Mahabharata*\* themes which find striking parallels in Saxo Grammaticus' account of the Battle of Brávellir.<sup>61</sup> For in that battle too, as Saxo describes it, the ordered array of "firm and stout" Swedish and Norwegian soldiery led by the princes Ringo (in charge of the land forces) and Olo (in charge of the fleet) faces an army of "unmanly peoples," a mass of fickle offscourings," arrayed in support of their blind old uncle Haraldus Hyldetan and the Danes.<sup>62</sup>

Salya\*, then, is the king of a people who, at least for Karna\*, come from the impurest of all the decentralized lands; and as their king, according to a familiar notion, he is "the bearer of a one-sixth share of their merits and misdeeds" (9:30,63; cf. 30,27). Moreover, despite his lifelong love affair with the earth, he is named in one of the "dictionaries of incarnations" (1:61) as one of those Asuras, born into royal lineages, whom the earth had called upon the gods to overthrow.<sup>63</sup> This is the underside of his ambiguous character and of the ambiguities in the symbolism of the outlying kingdoms which he represents. Not only are such lands potential suppliers of wives, troops, and tribute to the rulers of the "central kingdom"; such contacts with the central realm are among the factors that involve the

<sup>60</sup> See Biardeau, *EPHE*, LXXIX, 142 (Jarasamdha\* intends an adharmic sacrifice of a hundred kings to Siva\*), and Dumézil, *ME*, II, 96-107.

<sup>61</sup> See above, Chapter 1, n. 87, and Chapter 5, following n. 16.

<sup>62</sup> See Elton, *Danish History*, pp. 476 and 478; the barbaric character of the Danish forces need not imply "an invasion by non-Scandinavians": see Kemp Malone, "Ubbo Frescius at Brávellir," *Studies in Heroic Legend and Current Speech* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959), p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> See Dumézil, *ME*, I, 75-76; he is the Asura Samhrada\*, younger brother of Pahrada\* (or Prahlada\*), and is referred to, in this context, as *bahlikapumgavah\**, "bull among Bahlikas\*" (1:61,6).

latter, and thus the whole earth, in the greatest menace imaginable: what the *Gita* \* calls "a languishing of dharma" (*dharmasya glanir*\*; 4,7; cf. 1,40-43), as well as what Karna\*. a is calling the danger of impurity.

In this connection Karna\* evokes the "master symbol" for Salva\* and his peoples, that of dirt, *malam*. To appreciate its aptness, however, requires that we recall the source of an earlier observation. As Mary Douglas says, quoting William James, dirt is "matter out of place."<sup>64</sup> Outside *madhyadesa*\*, outside even the Creation, ruled by an incarnated Asura, the Madras\* and Bahlikas\* are "people out of place" and dirt is their "natural" symbol. Not a great number of verses are devoted to this subject, but the key passages pile up toward the end of Karna's\* tirade as if in summation: "Begging is a ksatriya's\* dirt, untruth is a brahmin's dirt, Bahlikas\* are the dirt of the earth [*malam\* prthivya\* bahlikah\**], Madra women are the dirt of women" (*strinam\* madrastriyo malam*; 30,68). And again: "*Mlecchas* are the dirt of mankind [*manusanam\* malam\* mleccha\**]; rogues [*maustikah\**] are the dirt of *mlecchas*; eunuchs [*sandah\**] are the dirt of rogues; those whose sacrificial priests are warriors<sup>65</sup> are the dirt of eunuchs; and whatever dirt there is of Madrakas whose sacrificial priests are warriors, that dirt shall be yours if you do not release me" (30,70-71).<sup>66</sup> Finally, there is a *sloka*\* found throughout the Northern recension but not in the Southern which the Critical Edition naturally rejects. Nonetheless, it sums things up neatly: "On earth the Madraka is called the dirt of every region; and so too the Madra woman is called the dirt of all women" (*prthivyam\* sarvadesanam\* madrako*

<sup>64</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 35 and 164; see William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (first published 1902; New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. 116.

<sup>65</sup> See above, n. 55.

<sup>66</sup> Karna\* quotes a Raksasa\* for these two proverbs (*gathas\**) which are clearer than the story that connects them. The Raksasa\* seems to have plunged into the water to purify himself of Madraka defilement and has warned some unnamed king to unhand him lest he be polluted too. It is added that the Raksasas\*' words can be used as a "curative charm" (*bhesajam\**; 72)

*malamucyate / tatha \* strinam\* ca sarvasam\* madrika\* mala ucyate*; 397\* and 398\*, after 30,81).

How are we to understand this association, this symbol for the darker side of Salya's\* character? The passages themselves give the clue: "the Bahlika\* is the dirt *of the earth*"; "*on earth* the Madraka is called the dirt of every nation." Dirt falls within the context of the symbolism of the earth; it is earth's unregenerate side, her "matter out of place." In the concluding chapter of *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas offers a key with which to interpret this correlation within the larger context of the subject of Part Four: eschatology. Against the background of the epic's symbolic geography, which places the Madras, Bahlikas\*, and other Kaurava allies on the "outside" while the Pandavas\*' defense of the center becomes a climactic regeneration of *sauca\** and dharma, Douglas' hermeneutic of dirt as undifferentiated formlessness is most revealing:

In this final stage of total disintegration, dirt is utterly undifferentiated. Thus a cycle has been completed. Dirt was created by the differentiating activity of mind, it was a by-product of the creation of order. So it started from a state of non-differentiation; all through the process of differentiating its role was to threaten the distinctions made; finally it returns to its true indiscriminate character. Formlessness is therefore an apt symbol of beginning and growth as it is of decay.<sup>67</sup>

In the *Mahabharata\**, such a cycle has been completed: the cataclysm of battle has dissolved the impure world not into the primeval ocean, as will occur at the end of the kalpa, but, appropriately for the end of a yuga, into the earth.<sup>68</sup> Numerous are the descriptions of the earth, in the midst of battle, covered with rivers of gore bearing the dead to her own infernal

<sup>67</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 161.

<sup>68</sup> See Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Rosemary Sheed, trans. (Cleveland: World, 1963), p. 254, distinguishing the eschatological symbolisms of earth and water. As regards Eliade's point, Douglas is to be criticized for making a facile equation; see *Purity and Danger*, p. 161.

regions.<sup>69</sup> Through this battle, the earth is relieved of her burden. When she rises up to clasp Salya \* to her, it is the culminating scene not only of a love affair, but of a regeneration. In this moment impurity and purity, dirt and soil, earth's kings and earth herself, are one. Through his victory over Salya\*, the earth is now Yudhisthira's\* "share," given, even if only for a moment, anew.

Returning now to the *Mahabharata's*\* myth of the sins and restoration of Indra, there are features that comprise its final episode: the conflict with Nahusa\* that are analogous to this final episode of the Kuruksetra\* war.<sup>70</sup> Like Indra, Yudhisthira\* does not sin; rather, the adversaries of both commit sins within the area of the third function. More specifically, each has his mind turned by sense enjoyments and wealth, and each, in one way or another, sins by "despising Indra."<sup>71</sup> Their opponents' sins help give both Indra's and Yudhisthira's\* triumphs a look of comparative righteousness. For not only does Nahusa\* covet Indra's wife and Salya\* "defile" Yudhisthira's\* earth; not only is each associated with a third-function sin; but each is charged additionally with a total violation of dharma: Salya\* reaping the sins of his subjects, Nahusa\* offending the brahmin Agastya by touching his foot to his head. Finally, both the epic and mythic episodes hinge upon the opponent being a human king. This last point, however, calls for further examination, which I turn to now, of the four episodes discussed above and the underlying themes which link them together.

### The Four Marshals and the Symbolism of Sovereignty

Concerning the nature of the sins committed in the slayings of the four marshals, I have shown that the four episodes form a cohesively structured group. Not only do the slain give their

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, 6:66, 12; 7:13,9-18; 7,68,47-54; 8:33,45-70; 8:36; sometimes the blood and gore lend the earth an eerie beauty, as in 6:53,21-22.

<sup>70</sup> After this, the Kuru forces, without a marshal, are scattered.

<sup>71</sup> On Salya\*, see 5:8,9-10 o, cited in Chapter 9, following n. 29

names to the four battle *parvans*; not only do Yudhishthira \* and Krishna figure prominently at the deepest level of each misdeed; but the episodes refer to, recall, and reinforce each other at a number of levels.

To interpret their coherence, let us first turn to the moral dimension. As was argued earlier, sins and virtues can best be seen as complementary to each other. The shifting assortments of trifunctional royal virtues, such as were discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, show a significant correlation with the sins committed, or engaged in, by Yudhishthira\*. On the first level, it will be recalled that *tejas*, an ancient first-function virtue, is often replaced by the pair *satya* and *dharma*, and, moreover, that *vrata*, the "vow," where it occurs, seems to function as a specialization of *dharma*.<sup>72</sup> As we have seen, Yudhishthira's\* first two sins are violations of the vow and of truth.

On the second level, the traditional virtues were seen to be such qualities as *yasas*\*, "fame," *balam*, "strength," and *viryam*\*, "courage." But we also observed that some lists focus on the quality of honorable relations with other *ksatriyas*\*.<sup>73</sup> Yudhishthira\*, at this level, is at the root of a complicated violation of friendship. Finally, on the third level, the most frequent virtues were *sri*\*, "prosperity," and *danam*\*, "generosity." As we have seen, on this level the sin, or sins, is not Yudhishthira's\* but Salya's\*, consisting, in general, of a violation or despoliation of the earth, and, in particular, of an oversensitivity to wealth, gifts, and sense enjoyments.

Thus, through the deaths of the four marshals, the epic illustrates a theme of moral decline and restoration within the framework of the three functions. Still within the moral dimension, however, another connecting link between the four episodes has been mentioned. Salya\*, like Nahusa\*, is a human king and, moreover, the only *senapati*\* who is a complete and legitimate king. Each of the others is what may be called an

<sup>72</sup> See beginning of this chapter and Chapter 8, above, n. 45.

<sup>73</sup> See above, Chapter 8, following n. 48.

incomplete or illegitimate *raja* \*. Bhishma\*, a potential king, would have ruled the Kurus were it not for his vows.<sup>74</sup> After Drona's\* fateful battle with the Pancala\* king Drupada, he becomes the ruler of half that kingdom even though he is a brahmin (1:128, 14-18). And Karna\*, like Bhishma\* a potential king of the Kurus, is also, thanks to his friendship with Duryodhana, made king of Anga\*, despite his status, in everyone's eyes, as the son of a *suta*\*, a mixed-caste charioteer (1:126,35-36).<sup>75</sup> In contrast with such flirtations with kingship, Salya\* is the only one born and consecrated a king within a "legitimate" line of succession. Like Nahusa\*, the last opponent of Indra, Salya\* is a king by descent; but neither is a legitimate challenger for the "stake" or "share" which his opponent seeks: the sovereignty of "middle earth," or the sovereignty of heaven.

Further in this direction, a third factor linking the four marshals is closely related to their royal or quasi-royal identities. Each of them is, in one way or another, of confused caste status. Bhishma\*, though a ksatriya\*, is a lifelong *brahmacarin*.\*<sup>76</sup> Drona\* , though a brahmin, is a foremost weapons expert. Karna\*, though a ksatriya\* by birth, is a mixed-caste *suta*\* by upbringing and by reputation. And Salya\*, though a ksatriya\*, is a "vaisya\*" (or even a *mleccha*) in his behavior and is said to perform his own sacrifices. Confusion of caste is, of course, one of the great horrors of the epic, of the *Gita*\* no less than of its "caricature," the insult exchange between Karna\* and Salya\*.<sup>77</sup> These indeterminate identifications appear to be either at, or very near, the root of the circumstances which bring each of

74 See above, n. 4; Bhishma\* is sometimes called "king," even "best of kings" (*rajasattama*\*; 12:54,15) by Krishna! In heaven (18:4,17) he is *bhismam*\* ... *nrpam*, the "kingly Bhishma\*."

75 See Chapter 8, at nn. 14 and 60; on the implausibility of Drona\* and Karna\* as actual kings, van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*\*: I, 12, points up the need to explain the *symbolic* character of these titles.

76 This does not necessarily imply brahmin caste status, but as a lifelong commitment it does involve the neglect of numerous ksatriya\* duties.

77 Cf. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 53, on prohibitions against "mixing" and "confusion" (*tebhl*) in Leviticus.



the marshals to his final fall. This is explicit in Drona's \* case, for, when he continues to fight after he has heard the lie, the Rsis\* tell him that he is "fighting unrighteously, ... especially being a brahmin" (7:164,89-92). But it is also true that if Bhishma\* falls because of the complicated fabric of his "terrible" vows, it is the *brahmacarya* vow which holds this fabric together. Karna's\* mixed status encourages the Pandavas\*' and Draupadi's\* contempt for him (a contempt nurtured by Krishna) and sustains his own tragic resentment which leads inevitably to his death. Salya\*, according to Karna\*, is a "mean-minded low defiler of the ksatriya\* class" (8:27,68) who dies having made one "ksatriya\*" agreement to violate another.

In sum, from the Pandavas\*' perspective, there is a kind of moral justification for killing these flawed foes. Each violates the ordered hierarchy of caste. Thus each is guilty, albeit in the first three cases as an unwilling victim of fate, of endangering the fabric of dharma. Logically, their chief antagonist is Yudhisthira\*, the Dharmaraja\*, who emerges as a true champion of dharma, one who, out of necessity, has faced its intricacies and burdens so as to preserve its essence. For it is Yudhisthira's\* *royal* dharma that he must seek to rule; and the intricacies result from it being a time for *apaddharma*\*, for practices allowable in times of distress. He has, in other words, violated dharma, or at least sustained it in a precarious balance, in order finally to uphold it. The key to this whole matter is the "righteous combat" (9:16,65) in which Yudhisthira\* slays Salya\*. No doubt the words are two-edged, but on the just side Yudhisthira\* is the righteous victor over the most impure and adharmic of all his foes. Indeed, with his triumph, and with the triumph of the Pandavas\* in general, despite his violation of first- and second-function virtues, the rehabilitation is one of the structure of the three functions itself, over and against the forces of impurity, adharma, disorder, chaos.<sup>78</sup>

78 On this point, cf. Biardeau, EMH, 2, Appendice, p. 104: "The unstructured group of the Kauravas symbolizes the society that is disorderly and literally sunk into chaos: their victory would signify the earth's return

(Footnote continued on next page)

The four marshals reflect upon each other in their symbolism on two more levels. And here we begin to move away from the dharmic and societal considerations to cosmological ones. In Chapter 2, we observed at one point that a special color symbolism applies to the four *varnas* \* and the four yugas: the sequence white, red, yellow, and black.<sup>79</sup> The same colors seem to have been held consistently in mind regarding the four marshals.

The most obvious color associations are those of Bhishma\*. Just before the Kuruksetra\* war, before the *Gita*\*, we see him thus: "The aged Bhishma\* was in the van of the entire army, having a white umbrella, white bow and conch, white headgear, with a white banner, white horses, having the appearance of a white mountain" (6:20,9).<sup>80</sup> Right after this Drona\* is described as having red steeds (*sonairhayaih*\*; 6:20, 11 ), elsewhere "great red steeds" (*sona\* brhanto\* 'svah\**; 7:8, 15; cf. 7:7,10). Karna\* is usually thought of with his natural-born golden mail and earrings (3:292,5) like those of his father Surya\* (3:290,5), but the epic draws no sharp distinction between gold and yellow: when Kunti\* invokes Surya\* to father Karna\*, the god appears before her "yellow as honey" (*madhupinga\**; 3:290,8). Although Salva\* draws no color descriptions, his connection is with the "black" earth<sup>81</sup> and with dirt.

If one cannot be certain whether to relate this "descent by color" to the structures of society (the *varnas*\*) or to those of time (the yugas), there can be little doubt that the four marshals articulate an elaborate spatial symbolism. First, recalling that

(Footnote continued from previous page)

to chaos" (my translation); also Wikander, "Eschatologie," pp. 86-87, making much the same point.

<sup>79</sup> See above, Chapter 2, following n. 10.

<sup>80</sup> See also 5:179, 10-14, mentioning six white articles which Bhishma\* wears in his fight with Parasurama\*; also 6:16,40; however, Drona\* also wears white, as in 1:24,17-18. Several manuscripts, mostly from the North but one from the Southern recension, describe a very long battle between Bhishma\* and a son of Virata\* named Sveta\*, "White" (*Bhishmaparvan\**, Appendix I, No. 4); no doubt the colors are significant in this duel, making "Sveta\*" one of Bhishma's\* "shares."

<sup>81</sup> On the earth and blackness, see Biardeau, cited above, Chapter 2, n. 25.

when Salya \* fell, "it was as if the earth, out of love, rose to meet him," it suddenly becomes clear that in each of the other episodes, indeed at their very conclusions, the earth has likewise undergone a dramatic change in position vis-à-vis the heroes. The *Bhismaparvan*\* ends with Bhisms\*, on his bed of arrows, not touching the earth at all (*dharanim\* nasprsat\**; 6:114,84) as if his character had remained "elevated," like that of his foes, especially Arjuna who (recalling Indra?) brings forth fresh pure water from the earth herself with one of his arrows so that Bhisma\* may wash his wounds and slake his thirst (6:116,19-23).<sup>82</sup> The *Dronaparvan*\* then provides the point where this elevated position is lost, where the hero comes down to earth: when Yudhisthira\* lies, his chariot, until then provided with an air cushion of four fingers, "touched the earth" (*vahasprsanmahim\**; 7: 164, 107). Next, the *Karnaparvan*\* shows the earth taking the initiative, but with the heroes still on the descendent. In a passage in which Dumézil has found an important transposition from the *Rg\* Veda*,<sup>83</sup> the earth "swallows" Karna's\* chariot wheel (*agrasanmahi\* cakram*; 8:66,59), leading to his defeat. Thus when the earth rises, as it were, to clasp Salya\* to her, it is the culmination of a four-act drama.

One may thus find a sympathetic connection between the earth and the fall of the heroes. Yet the meaning of this four-part progression becomes clear only when it is seen against another spatial dimension. Not only are the four marshals a ladder of descent to the earth; they also seem to symbolize an ascent, or an access, to the "three worlds."<sup>84</sup> The final destinies of

82 cf. Yayati\*, not touching the earth on his fall from heaven; discussed by Dumézil, *ME*, II, 276.

83 Dumézil?, "Karna\* et les Pandav\*," pp. 60-66: in the *RV\**, Indra overcomes Surya\* by somehow disabling one of the wheels of the Sun god's chariot; see especially *RV\** 4:28,2: he "pressed the wheel downward" (see above, Chapter 1, n. 28).

84 It may also be significant that the four marshals approximate a four-directional location: Karna's\* Anga\* is east of Hastinapura\*, Drona's\* Ahicchatra\* is south (or southeast), Salya's\* Madra is west (or northwest),

(Footnote continued on next page)

Bhisma\* and Drona\*, after their deaths, are in the heavens: Bhisma\* returning as the Vasu Dyaus ("Heaven")<sup>85</sup> to the invisible heaven of the Vasus (13:153,44; cf. 154,5-7), Drona\* ascending to Brahmaloka (7:165,41). In contrast, Karna's\* destiny is to have his *tejas* re-enter the sun (8:67,27), which in the epic would seem to connote a residence in a lower realm.<sup>86</sup> And, once again, Salya's\* fate is to be embraced by the earth.<sup>87</sup> In other words, their essences conform to the three levels of the universe, or perhaps to a fourth if Brahmaloka refers to an absolute realm. This is the universe Yudhishthira\* has conquered, the last world of which the earth is not only the final stake of battle but an active agent in the victory she had sought. In this respect, it is interesting that in Brahmana\* texts, the earth, known as the ksatriya's\* *loka* (*SB*\* 11, 8,4,5; 12,8,3,5), is said to be the "most essential" (*rasatarna*) of the worlds (*SB*\* 9,1,2,36)<sup>88</sup> and the "foundation" (*pratistha*\*; *SB*\* 6,1,1,15; 6,7,3,4) from which to obtain the other worlds.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, as the heroes are drawn closer to the earth through sins (beginning with Yudhishthira's\* lie), the earth rises to meet them, finally claiming

(Footnote continued from previous page)

and Bhisma\*, though resident at Hastinapura\* itself, postpones his death until the sun reaches its "northern course" (*uttarayana*\*): one might even call him the "northern Kuru." See also 7:10,43 (marshals-yugas-lokas).

<sup>85</sup> See Dumezil\*, *ME*, I, 178-82.

<sup>86</sup> Traditionally the sun, Surya\*, is connected with heaven; see Jan Gonda, *Loka: World and Heaven in the Veda*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, AFD. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, LXXIII, no. 1 (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1966), 37 and 92. In the epic, however, Surya's\* appearances as Indra's opposite show him to be connected with the atmosphere, or at least with a level of the universe far closer to human affairs than the world of the Vasus and Brahmaloka; see Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 84,87-88.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Dumezil\*, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 142-43: in contrast to the Odinic hero who ascends heavenward, "the Vanic hero [the third-function hero] goes into a dissolution, is assimilated into the substance of the earth, in its most material form: food, drink"; see also *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>88</sup> For these and other citations, see Gonda, *Loka*, p. 37.

<sup>89</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 62; on the earth as *pratistha*\*, see further F. B. J. Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query," *HR*, X (1970), 110.

Salya \*, the most "dirt"-ridden of all, as her own. And in the process, with Yudhishthira\* as her champion in the "righteous battle" with Salya\*, the earth becomes a "firm support" for the "sovereignty of the triple world" which Yudhishthira\* had always "deserved"<sup>90</sup> and has now finally obtained.

The aggregate of the four marshals, and the four *parvans* bearing their names, thus present a complex ethical-societal time-space symbol. At the battle of Kuruksetra\*, the structures of time and space are condensed. In terms of time, all the epic's events occur at the end of a yuga (*yuganta*\*), a sort of "liminal" period in which these four figures and their *parvans* (literally "knots, joints"<sup>91</sup> seem to represent the sum of the yugas, as if all four yugas were potentially present at the point of transition. In terms of space, representatives of all the lands of the known world are present within the land of the "Center," where the deaths of their rulers in particular that of Salya\* symbolize the attainment by Yudhishthira\* of his "share," the earth, as a firm "support" for the establishment of his triple-world sovereignty, and the base for his ultimate attainment of heaven.

<sup>90</sup> See the passages (5:88, 21; 5:34,81) cited above, Chapter 8, following n. 9.

<sup>91</sup> The word *parvan* can also be used for "a period of time"; see Monier-Williams, S.V., and *Mbh.* 18:5,35.

# Chapter 11 Absolutions

The conquest of the three worlds is a perennial Indian symbol. Gonda links the theme most closely with the "soteriological theories" of the period of the Brahmanas.<sup>1</sup> According to *Satapatha \* Brahmana\** 12,8,2,32, "one might secure these three worlds by three victims."<sup>2</sup> Although the point will be discussed in Chapter 13, for the moment one may say that even in the Brahmanas\*, the taking of animal victims (*pasu\**) involves impurities and dangers which must be neutralized.<sup>3</sup> It is no different in the epic. The acquisition, or recovery, of the three worlds is achieved by triumphing over human victims, "shares," in a great "sacrifice of battle," where there are mechanisms to neutralize, or absolve, the sins which have been committed to attain sovereignty by means of such an uncompromising "ritual."

On this last point we return to Krishna. We saw in Chapter 6 how, before the war begins, Krishna provides a justification for it indeed a "just base" for conquest within the Kuru lands by going to Hastinapura\*. Now, within the war, he takes part in a series of episodes that from a certain standpoint are sins.

The first problem is to differentiate between "viewpoints" on this matter, and the best initial guideline is provided by the

1 Gonda, *Loka*, p. 44.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 62, citing also SB\* 6,7,2,13ff.

3 So, also, does the slaying of Visvarupa\*, in SB\* 1,2,3,1-5; see Dumézil\*, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 24-26.

insight of Walter Ruben that Krishna's involvements are not sins because, in conformity with his own ethics of the *Gita* \*, he acts not for his own ends, but for those of others.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that Krishna is beyond reproach. When Duryodhana falls, delivered a foul blow by Bhima's\* mace which he knows was prompted by Krishna, he blames Krishna for the deaths of Bhishma\*, Drona\*, Karna\*, and Bhurisravas\* (9:60,30-34), the latter seemingly a royal stand-in for the "righteously slain" Salya\*.<sup>5</sup> And when Gandhari\* sees her hundred sons slain on the battlefield, she charges Krishna with "overlooking" (*upa-iks-*\*; 11:25,36,38 and 40)<sup>6</sup> the destruction while being able to prevent it. But these insights are drawn from personal passions and attachments. There is no doubt that they capture the surface events and produce charges that any "secular" judge would honor in the courtroom. But they do not capture the essential. Indeed, there is some irony in the charge that Krishna "overlooks" or "is indifferent to" the heroes' fates. One thinks of his advice to Arjuna to cultivate "indifference" (*samyam, samatvam*; *Gita*\* 5, 18-19; 2,48; 4,22, etc.).

Ruben, however, takes us only this far, for Krishna's "innocence" does not automatically exculpate those whom he counsels. Yudhisthira\* in particular, contrary to Arjuna, falls outside the umbrella of the *Gita* \*. As we saw in Chapter 9, his own *mea culpa* stresses over and over that he has sinned out of the desire (*lubdha*) for short-lived sovereignty. Indeed, his sins have such impact that they affect his brothers: when he lies to Drona\*, Arjuna sees this "great injustice" as the "disfigurement" (*vikara*\*) of the remainder of their lives.<sup>7</sup>

But although Krishna is undoubtedly involved, the sins do not really affect him, unless it be with what the epic calls "shame" or "embarrassment." In the scene just mentioned

4 See above, Chapter 9, at n. 22 and the note.

5 For Bhurisravas\*' death, see above, Chapter 10, n. 2.

6Ganguli-Roy: "being indifferent to"; *Mahabharata*, VII: *Stree Parva*, 41.

7 See above, Chapter 10, above n. 15.

in which Duryodhana blames Krishna for the deaths of his major warriors, Duryodhana continues, after Krishna denounces him in turn, with a recitation of his own virtues. It is roughly trifunctional and reminiscent, in structure, of another bit of boastful self-praise by Yayati \*.8 Following each citation with the formulaic question: "Who is there having a better end than myself," Duryodhana marks off three areas of self-fulfillment:

[By] study [*adhitim\**], [by] donation according to prescription [*vidhivaddattam*], I have been ruler [*prasasta\**] of the earth with her seas ....9

What is sought by members of the ksatriya\* class reflecting on their *svadharma*, that end [*nidhanam*; death in battle]10 is obtained ....

Human shares [*manusa bhagah\**] worthy of the gods, difficult for kings to obtain, were obtained.11 [60,47-49]

These three areas of achievement, he says, have won him heaven, and his words are given sanction by a shower of heavenly flowers falling to melodies of the Gandharvas, Apsarases, and Siddhas (60,51-53). Momentarily, victory has turned to defeat, defeat to victory. Seeing this *puja\** of Duryodhana and "hearing that Bhishma\*, Drona\*, as well as Karna\* and Bhurisravas\* were slain unrighteously" (*adharmatah\**), the Pandavas\*, "headed by Vasudeva\*" (*vasudevapurogamah\**), became ashamed (*vridamupagaman\**; 60,54-55).

At this low point, the true end of the battle, Krishna begins to set things right. Before the battle, he had established the conditions for a dharmic victory by Yudhisthira\* and a yogic battle performance by Arjuna. Within the battle, while remaining "indifferent, .... aloof," he guided these two and

81:88,21-24; see above, Chapter 8, at n. 28.

9The first two achievements have to do with following specifically religious injunctions and the last with sovereigntyall connected with the first function.

10 This is the interpretation, surely correct, in Ganguli-Roy, *Mahabharata*, VII: *Salya Parva*, 181.

11 These shares presumably refer to Duryodhana's material position, his wealth, prosperity.



their brothers to a victory which nonetheless left them flawed and ashamed. Now, from two of the "three Krsna's" \*"Vasudeva\* and Vyasa\*we learn why these sins were necessary and how they can be absolved. In general, this may be called the "restorative" or "reconstructive" phase, carried out, as Biardeau has enabled us to anticipate, by the two incarnations of Visnu-Narayana\*.

First, with regard to the necessity of the sins, there is the justification by divine precedent, so contemptuously discounted as "late" by the younger Adolf Holtzmann.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, however, parallels drawn between mythic scenarios and epic events are often invaluable guidelines for cross-interpretation. In the present scene, after Krishna and the Pandavas\*' shame at the cosmic approval of Duryodhana, Krishna sets himself the task of restoring the good cheer of victory. First he admits that such formidable foes as Duryodhana has cited could not have been slain "in fair fight" (*rjuyuddhena\**); "therefore these stratagems were contrived by me" (*upaya\* vihita\* hyete maya\**; 60,57). Then, in reply to Duryodhana's specific charges, he says: "Surely these four were all highsouled and first-rate chariot warriors on earth; they could not have been slain righteously [*dharmatas*] even by the Lokapalas\* themselves" (59). So far, in substantiating the superiority of the foe and admitting his own part in three of the four episodes analyzed in the last chapter, Krishna would seem to have provided only further cause for humiliation. But now comes the justification: "Enemies of superior number are to be slain falsely [*mithyavadhas\**], as also by stratagems [*upayair\**]. This path [*marga\**] was formerly followed when the gods were slayers of the Asuras. A path followed by the good [*sadbhis*] may be trodden by all" (60,62).

This speech, concluded with an invitation to take a well-earned rest, fills the victors with delight. In it, Krishna has

12Holtzmann, *Mahabharata\* und seine Theile*, I, 84.

referred only to a general divine-asuric situation and has specified no particular mythic "stratagems." One cannot, however, help but think of the triumphs of Indra; indeed, in one of these, his triumph over Vrtra \*, we have seen Salya's\* epic account attribute his success to a "contrivance" (*upaya\**) proposed by Visnu\*.<sup>13</sup> One cannot, of course, insist that it is the *Udyogaparvan's* three-part sequence that Krishna has in mind. But, as we see from a second speech by Vyasa\*, such general references to the gods can hardly be imagined without Indra's involvement.

Addressing Yudhisthira\* who has just declared that he and his brothers can only expect to fall into Hell head downward (*narake... adhasirasah\**) for their sins ( 12 :33, 11 ), Vyasa\* calls to mind the former battle between the younger Devas and the older Asuras (12:34, 13) in which the gods, "having made the earth one ocean of blood" (*ekarnavam. mahim\* krtva\* rudhirena\* pariplutam\**), slew the Asuras and "obtained heaven" (*tridivam. lebhire;* 34, 14). One recalls here the younger-elder theme which the epic plays out in connection with Arjuna and Duryodhana at Krishna's bedside,<sup>14</sup> but is also reminded of the theme of conquering heaven having made the blood-bathed earth a firm foundation. In the battle which Vyasa\* is describing, having won the earth (15), the gods had to slay the Salavrka\* brahmins who, promoting adharma (18), sided with the Asuras (16-17).<sup>15</sup> Thus the gods committed the transgression of necessary brahminicide in a fashion reminiscent of the slaying of Drona\*. At this point Vyasa\* advises Yudhisthira\* to realize that "virtue sometimes takes the form of vice" (*adharmarupo\* dharmo;*

13 5: 10, 10; see above, Chapter 9, following n. 14.

14See above, beginning of Chapter 5.

15Certain Salavrka\* wolves are mentioned as figuring in Indra's sins in the Brahmanas\* (see *AB* 7,28; *JB* 2, 134; *Kaus\**. *Up.* 3,1), but there it is *to them* that he has "given" the Yatis. Perhaps, in a fashion similar to the handling of the Vrtra\* myth, the epic poets have "clarified" this ancient sin which probably always involved the murder of holy persons (the Yatis are presumably ascetics) into a direct brahminicide.

20) and that he has merely "followed the path formerly trodden by the gods" (*devaih \* puragatam\* margam\**; 21). Moreover, since he has acted "unwillingly, forced by the fault of another" (*paradosena\* karatah anicchamanah\**; 25), and is repentant, it will now be possible for him to achieve expiation (*prayascittam\**; 26) by performing an Asvamedha\*. The model Vyasa\* cites here is Indra, who presumably after the conquest just cited, performed his hundred sacrifices (thus the name Satakratu\*; 27). But one will recall that it is even more specifically after his flawed triumphs over Visvarupa\* and Vrtra\*, and the recovery of his throne from Nahusa\*, that Indra is again (?) absolved of his sins by an Asvamedha\* which he performs at the advice of Visnu\*.16

At this point a number of themes converge. First, with regard to the Asvamedha\*, although traditionally performed as a rite that gives proof to and expression of the highest sovereignty, it comes, in the epic, to be associated almost exclusively with expiation.17 Once again we meet with the collusion of Vyasa\* and Krishna. Having gotten permission from Vyasa\* to perform this sin-cleansing rite ( 14:70, 15-16),18 Yudhishthira\* addresses Krishna:

O mighty-armed one, may you now perform what I tell you, O Acyuta. The enjoyments we enjoy are acquired by your might, O delighter of the Yadus. Through prowess and intelligence, by you this earth has been conquered. Let yourself undergo the rites of initiation [*diksayasva\* tvam atmanam\**]. You are our highest guru. If you perform the sacrifice [*tvayistavati\**], O knower of dharma, I shall be

165:13, 13; see above, Chapter 9, at n. 18.

17One wonders whether the Brahmana\* authors have left unmentioned one of the inherent aspects of this rite, an expiatory function necessitated by the fact that the attainment of sovereignty would almost inevitably involve martial acts requiring expiation, or whether the epic authors have innovated.

18It seems that the smoke from the burnt marrow of the horse (14:91,4) and the bath at the conclusion of the rite (14:90, 13-14) are regarded as the features of the Asvamedha\* that are the most sin-cleansing.

free from sin [*vipapma* \*], O mighty one. Surely you are sacrifice, you are imperishable, you are all, you are dharma, you are Prajapati\* [*tvam\* hi yajno\* ksarah sarvastvam dharmastvam\* prajapatih\**]. [14: 70, 19-20]

I have several times referred to this identification of Krishna with the sacrifice and with Prajapati\*, and of Visnu\* with both of these as well.<sup>19</sup> In connection with Krishna, we now see that one of the most forceful expressions of this identification is made where it concerns expiation from sins.

Visnu\* performs a similar expiatory function in the Asvamedha\* that restores Indra to his throne. Not only, like "his" incarnation Vyasa\*, does he propose the rite, but, like his other incarnation Krishna, who will make Yudhisthira\* "free from sin," he "distributes the sin of brahminicide among trees, rivers, mountains, earth, and women" so as to make Indra "purified of sin" (*putapapma\**; 5:13,27-28). But our most important information comes from the Brahmanas\*. One best appreciates the implications of the identification of Krishna with the sacrifice (and with Prajapati\*) at a point concerning expiation in the well-known formula of the sacrificial texts: "Visnu\* is the sacrifice" (*yajno\* vai visnus\**; *SB\** 3,2, 1,38, etc).

Gonda, in discussing this formula, says that Vissnu\* "is not only the sacrifice or its life (cf. *SB\** 4,2,3, 10), he is also its guardian and protector:... Visnu\* guards that of the sacrifice which is badly sacrificed."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in the texts where this formula is used, or where related notions are aired, Visnu\* is identified with the sacrifice most frequently at points where his restorative power, his power to "atone," is at the very forefront of the authors' interests. Thus, not only does he "guard" or "protect" the rite (see *TS* 3, 1, 10,3; 6,2,9,2; cf. *SB\** 4,2,2,4) but "heals" the sacrificer who is ill ( *TS* 2,3, 11, 2,), maintains "continuity" ( *TS*

<sup>19</sup>On Krishna, Visnu\*, and Prajapati\*, see above, Chapter 5, nn. 4 and 5; for Krishna and other priestly roles, see Chapter 6 and n. 63 and Chapter 8, at n. 68 and following; see also *Gita\** 9, 16.

<sup>20</sup>Gonda, *Early Vissnuism\**, p. 79.

3,5,1,4), and "unites" the "broken" sacrifice (*TS* 3,2,5,3; cf. 6,1,4,4). But most interesting are the passages where Visnu\* is spoken of as the god who brings about "atonement" (*prayascitti\**; cf. *Mbh.* 12:34,26, cited just above<sup>21</sup> for sacrifices badly performed. For instance, we are told that should the *diksita\** (a person undergoing preparation for a religious ceremony) fail to confine his speech during the *diksa\** to appropriate mantras, the sacrifice abandons him: "In that case, then, let him mutter a *rk\**, or *yajus* addressed to Visnu\*, for Visnu\* is the sacrifice [*yajno\* vai visnus\**]; thereby he again gains hold of the sacrifice; and this is the atonement [*prayascittih\**] for that [transgression]" (*SB\** 3,2,1,38). These words are nearly echoed in *Satapatha\** 1,7,4,20, a passage we shall turn to in Chapter 12. But on the present topic, the most informative passage comes from the *Aitareya Brahmana\**, part of a long discussion of "penances" (*prayascitti\** again) which can be performed for various ritual mistakes. In particular, if the fire offering is spilled or boils over, after touching water one moves the right hand over what fell out and mutters this mantra:

"May a third go to heaven to the gods as a sacrifice; might I obtain thence wealth! May a third go to the air, to the Pitaras...; may a third go to the earth, to men .... "Then he mutters the Visnu-Varuna\* verse, *yayor ojasa\* sthabita\* rajamsi\** ("by whose force were established the spaces" *AV* 7,25,1). For Visnu\* watches over what is performed badly in the sacrifice, and Varuna\* over what is performed well [*visnur\* vai yajnasya\* duristam\* pati\* varuna svistam\**]. To appease both of them this penance (is appropriate). [7,5,2-4]<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup>See after n. 15; Vyasa\* uses the related neuter, *prayascittam\**.

<sup>22</sup>Martin Haug, trans., *The Aitareya Brahmanam of the Rig Veda*, vol. I (text) and vol. II (trans.) (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot; London: Trübner, 1863), I, 172, and II, .446-47. Unless he has a variant, Arthur Berriedale Keith, trans., *Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kausitaki\* Brahmanas\* of the Rigveda*, Harvard Oriental Series, XXV (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 292, errs in having Visnu\* guard the well-sacrificed, Varuna\* the ill-sacrificed (and also in having "me" for "men").

The line of thought seems to move from the commission of a ritual mistake, to the re-establishment of a proper relationship with the three worlds, to a verse honoring Visnu \* and Varuna\* for their parts in stabilizing these "spaces," thus achieving *prayascitti*\*. Varuna's\* role in "establishing" the "spaces" no doubt evokes his relation to the *rta*\* and thus implies the supervision of what is well "ordered" or "performed well." But Visnu's\* role of overseeing what is "performed badly" which would, after all, seem to explain the need for *prayascitti*\* seems to recall something else. As discussed in Chapter 6, from the Brahmanas\* on through the epics and Puranas\*, Visnu's\* three steps are taken to help recover for the gods what was once theirs, what, for one reason or another, they have lost. In other words, the steps have a restorative value. Moreover, by marking off the three zones, Visnu\* recreates an order, "establishes spaces"<sup>23</sup> which the gods, or the sacrificer, may then conquer.

In connection with the *Aitareya* passage, these last points are somewhat speculative. To confirm them, one would have to demonstrate that a connection has been drawn between Visnu's\* expiatory function and his three steps. As far as I know, the sacrificial texts are silent here. But the epic is not, or so it would seem from the words which Yudhisthira\*, after his *Santiparvan*\* laments and confessions, says to Krishna: "We have got back the kingdom and the earth stands under [our] sway. Through your grace, O you whose steps traversed the three worlds [*trilokagativikrama*], victory and foremost fame have been won, and we have not fallen off from dharma" (12:45,18-19). Yudhisthira's\* choice of this epithet certainly unusual for Krishnathus connects the strides with the establishment of sway over the earth, the attainment of victory and fame, and the maintenance of dharma, all through Krishna's grace.

We have thus moved from ritual faults to personal sins. Whereas in the Brahmanas\*, Visnu\* expiates the one, in the epic,

<sup>23</sup> Note that in the *AV* mantra cited in the *AB* passage, *rajas* is plural; according to M-W (S.V.), this usually signifies "three spaces," sometimes six.

Visnu \* and Krishna expiate the other,<sup>24</sup> that is, Visnu\* provides atonement for the sins of Indra, Krishna for those of Yudhisthira\*. This shift from sacrificial faults to moral faults is as smooth as the shift from sacrificial virtues to moral virtues in the mythology of Sri\*, and it is a transition that by no means implies a break in continuity. The moral defects by which Yudhisthira\* achieves the deaths of the four Kuru marshals are committed within a great sacrifice of battle, one which he has "performed badly." And the atonement which frees him from sin is achieved by the "king of rites" (*SB*\* 13,2,2,1), the Asvamedha\*, supervised by the *avatara*\* of the god who himself embodies the expiatory function of the sacrifice.

24 See *Gita*\* 18,66: "Abandoning all dharmas, go to me as your sole refuge; from all sins I shall release you; be not grieved" (*sarvadharmam\*parityajya mam\* ekam\* saranam\* vraja / aham\* tva\* sarvapapebhyo\* moksaisyami\* ma\* sucah\**) (my translation).

PART FOUR  
THE END OF AN AGE

If you like this book, buy it!



## Chapter 12

### Epic Eschatology

A curious fact about the Hindu tradition is that from Vedic through Puranic \* times there is no myth of a once-and-for-all end of the world. The "optimism" of the Vedas and the cyclical time of later Hinduism seem to make such a notion impossible. Yet within the cyclical view, the world does end over and over again. So it is with the great myth of the *pralaya* and, on a lesser scale, with the general myth of the "end of the yuga." And in loose connection with these official time schemes, numerous myths offer descriptions of world-ending destructions, cataclysmic reversals of the world order (such as most *avatara*\* myths, the Banasura\* myth, *tripuradahana*\*, and the destruction of Daksa's\* sacrifice).

In recent years, several scholars have raised suspicions that the *Mahabharata*\*, which tells about the end of the yuga previous to ours and involves an *avatara*\*, incorporates a variety of rich and perhaps very ancient, eschatological symbolism. Stig Wikander, in his comparisons of the *Mahabharata*\* with Iranian and Scandinavian myths and legends, has noticed that in both the Iranian and Indian epics there stands, over and against the differentiated forces of "good" (like the Pandavas\*), one dominating "demonic" figure Afrasiyab\* or Duryodhana who leads the otherwise undifferentiated forces of "evil." 1 As Wikander says, these epic figures correspond, in their leadership roles, to such mythical "demon"-leaders as the Scandinavian Loki and the Iranian Ahriman. This suggests to him

1. Wikander, "Eschatologie," p. 87.

that an Indo-European eschatology, known from the mythologies of Scandinavia and Iran, has also survived, transposed into epic, in Iran and India. However, although Scandinavian mythology yields a single leader of the demonic host in the person of Loki, the Scandinavian epic tradition closest to the *Mahabharata* \*the account of the Battle of Brávellir does not. Nor, as Dumézil points out, does the role of Odinn in the Scandinavian eschatological myth correspond to the same Odinn's role as the treacherous impersonator of Bruno at the Battle of Brávellir.<sup>2</sup>

These disjunctions raise questions which are as yet unsolved. If the Indo-Iranian epic parallels do result from mythic transpositions, perhaps the parallels between the *Mahabharata*\* and the Battle of Brávellir show us something of the older heroic story, not without eschatological or at least "age-ending" themes,<sup>3</sup> that these myths helped to reshape. But Duryodhana does not provide the only hint that eschatological themes have surfaced in the *Mahabharata*\*. Nor must one suppose that, during the story's presumably long history and development, only one eschatology has been "transposed" into it.

To date, besides Wikander, two authors have expressed their views on this subject, one pressing the Indo-European quest further, the other turning back to more recent periods in the traditions of India.

Dumézil and Biardeau

Notwithstanding the contribution of Wikander, Dumézil has gone farthest in examining Indo-European eschatologies for parallels to the *Mahabharata*\*. In fact, Wikander seems to accept Dumézil's analysis, as Dumézil does his. But although they do

2. Dumézil, *ME*, I, 257; on Bruno, see above, Chapter 5, at n. 17 and following.

3. See above, Chapter 10, at n. 61 and nn. 61-62: the Indo-Scandinavian epic parallels concerning the regeneration of the Center.

not contradict each other, neither has attempted to show how the two sets of results might support each other.<sup>4</sup>

Dumézil's work has proceeded in essentially two steps: first, in the chapter, "Le drame du monde," of his *Les Dieux des Germains*,<sup>5</sup> he has made the initial direct confrontation of the Indian drama with the Scandinavian myth of the Ragnarök, the "Doom of the Gods" (more commonly, but corruptly, Ragnarökr, "Twilight of the Gods"), and second, still loyal to his original conclusions and supposedly reinforcing them, he has, in *Mythe et épopée*, I, examined one additional episode from each traditionthe Scandinavian and the epicand proposed parallels for these.<sup>6</sup> Dumézil has in mind an ancient eschatological intrigue developing in three phases and found in both the *Mahabharata* \* and the myth of the Ragnarök: "It is thus, in outline, a cosmic conflict which takes place in three 'epochs': the rigged game [*jeu truqué*], by which Evil triumphs for a long time, removing from the scene the representatives of Good; the great battle in which the Good takes revenge, eliminating the Evil definitively; the government of the good."<sup>7</sup> Let us follow Dumézil's discussion of these three "époques" in the Scandinavian traditions<sup>8</sup> and then see whether he can justly point to a similar scansion in the *Mahabharata*\*.

(1) *Jeu truqué*. The drama of the world's end begins in the past, a precarious balance as the axis of their society having been established by the gods at the end of the war between the two divine groups, the Aesir and the Vanir.<sup>9</sup> The functional posts are manned by several gods: Odinn the magical sovereign

4. See Wikander, "Eschatologie," p. 87; Dumézil, *ME*, I, 255-57.

5. Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 78-105.

6. Thus, from the Ragnarök, parallels between Vidar's role and that of Visnu\* as the Dwarf (*ME*, I, 230-37); and, from the epic, allusions to intra-Indian parallels to the *Sauptikaparvan* (*ibid.*, pp. 213-18).

7. *Dieux des Germains*, p. 89, quoted in *ME*, I, 227 (my translation).

8. In opposition, see Edgar Polomé, "The Indo-European Component in Germanic Religion," in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, p. 64.

9. *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 3-39; I follow Dumézil here.

and patron of war, Thor the sole bearer of the thunderbolt, and Njordr and Freyr the givers of riches, pleasure, and peace. But no god, not even Odinn, offers any kind of high moral example: the world is without a Mitra. The gods "govern the world just as it is, on a moral level that is rather low and with little of the ideal."<sup>10</sup> There are, however, two sons of Odinn—Baldr and Hodr—who seem to make up for this lack. In Hodr and his role as the blind instrument of fate, Dumézil sees a continuation of certain aspects of "Bhaga the blind," the Vedic "minor sovereign god" subordinate to Mitra and Varuna \*, who is responsible for the apportionment of goods. And in Baldr, he sees a continuation of another important "minor sovereign," Aryaman, patron of the *arya*\* society.<sup>11</sup> The ideal is especially found in Baldr, and to show this Dumézil cites a passage, which we shall re-examine, from the *Gylfaginning* (The Beguiling of Gylfi) of Snorri Sturluson:<sup>12</sup>

He is the best of them and everyone sings his praises. He is so fair of face and bright that a splendor radiates from him, and there is one flower so white that it is likened to Baldr's brow; it is the whitest of all flowers [Turville-Petre: the Ox-eye daisy, or matricary<sup>13</sup>]. From that you can tell how beautiful his body is, and how bright his hair. He is the wisest of the gods, and the sweetest-spoken, and the most merciful, but it is a characteristic of his that *no judgment of his may be realized*.<sup>14</sup>

10. *ME*, I, 223 (my translation); see also the discussion of Tyr's "debasement," *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 66-76.

11. On Hodr and Baldr, see *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 98-99; *ME*, I, 227-28; on Hodr-Bhaga, cf. Polomé's skepticism, "Indo-European Component," p. 76, n. 56.

12. See *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 93-94; *ME*, I, 224.

13. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 106.

14. For Snorri, I quote from Jean I. Young, trans., *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1954), P. 51; for the italicized ending I follow the reading of Dumézil and Turville-Petre (see citations in nn. 12 and 13, and, with the text, Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, p. 184); Young mistranslates: "Once he has pronounced a judgment it can never be altered"; the verb in question, *haldast*, means rather "be held," "be made good," "be realized."

As Dumézil says, he represents a high ideal, the highest of all, no doubt, but a thwarted one not to be realized with the world as it is.

Then tragedy strikes. Baldr has dreams which indicate to him that his life is menaced, and when he tells the other gods, they seek to protect him. Frigg, Odinn's wife and Baldr's mother, obtains an oath from every object fire and water, metals, stones, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds, serpents that it will do Baldr no harm. The gods then take up the pastime of hurling objects at Baldr and delighting in his invulnerability. But they have failed to reckon on the maliciousness of Loki who, under disguise, obtains from Frigg the information that she has omitted to extract an oath from one plant, the mistletoe, which she regarded as too young.<sup>15</sup> Loki secures the plant and comes back with it to the assembly.

Now Hodr was standing on the outer edge of the circle of men because he was blind. Loki asked him: "Why aren't you throwing darts at Baldr?" He replied: "Because I can't see where Baldr is, and, another thing, I have no weapon." Then Loki said: "You go and do as the others are doing.... I will show you where he is standing; throw this twig at him." Hodr took the mistletoe and aimed it at Baldr as directed by Loki. The dart went right through him and he fell dead to the ground. This was the greatest misfortune ever to befall gods and men.<sup>16</sup>

This is the disastrous *jeu truqué*, rigged game, of the Scandinavian eschatological drama, the prelude to the "doom of the gods." There are, however, certain sequels that are of interest. When the gods recover from their shock, Frigg promises that her affection and favor can be won by the god who will ride to Hel to ask the demoness of that name, Loki's own daughter,

15. On the mistletoe and the discussion provoked by Sir James Frazer, see Jonathan Z. Smith, "When the Bough Breaks," *HRJ* XII (1972) 342-71; see also Polomé, "Indo-European Component," p. 75: "the plant of life that belongs to death, or better, of a life that is not granted to man."

16. Young, trans., *Prose Edda*, p. 81.

whether Baldr can somehow be ransomed. A son of Odinn, Hermod, does the honors, riding on Odinn's horse; but when he inquires if Baldr may ride back with him, Hel, "to see whether Baldr was loved as much as people said," devised a test:

"If everything in the world, both dead or alive, weeps for him, then he shall go back to the Aesir, but he shall remain with Hel if anyone objects or will not weep."... [Upon this good news] the Aesir sent messengers throughout the whole world to ask for Baldr to be wept out of Hel; and everything did that.... When the messengers were coming home, having made a good job of their errand, they met with a giantess sitting in a cave; she gave her name as Thokk. They asked her to weep Baldr out of Hel. She answered: "Thokk will weep dry tears... let Hel hold what she has." It is thought that the giantess there was Loki.<sup>17</sup>

Though Loki could not be slain at the site of Baldr's death since it was a sanctuary, he is finally caught and chained to a cave by the gods.<sup>18</sup> But the chains will someday break, and he will return at the head of his demonic offspring and various other minions of evil at the time of the Ragnarök.

(2) *The great battle of the Ragnarök*. No detailed discussion of the war is necessary. In a fashion similar to the climactic battle of the Zoroastrian tradition,<sup>19</sup> each god, including those connected with the three functions, faces off against a single formidable adversary; but in a fashion dissimilar to the Zoroastrian battle, most of the godseven taking their foes with themmeet their doom, the chief exception being Vidar,

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

18. Disagreeing on the "originality" of Loki's role, see Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 181-82, and Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 46 (ancient) and Polomé, "Indo-European Component," p. 64 (Snorri's fabrication along lines of ethical dualism); on the bound demon theme, see above, Chapter 6, at n. 56.

19. Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 83-84; *ME*, I, 221, n. 1; see *Bundahishn* 34,27-28 (Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, ed. and trans., *Zand-Akasiḥ \*: Iranian or Greater Bundahishn* [Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasna Sabha, 1956], pp. 191-92).

who steps forth to avenge Odinn and to save the world from being swallowed, that is, totally annihilated, by the Fenrir wolf.<sup>20</sup>

(3) "*Renaissance*." The "rebirth" thus made possible is multidimensionalcosmic, "political," individual:

At that time the earth will rise out of the sea and be green and fair.... Vidar and Vali [Baldr's avenger against Hodr] will be living,... and they will inhabit Idavoll where Asgard used to be. And the sons of Thor, Modi and Magni, will come there and possess Mjollnir [Thor's hammer]. After that Baldr and Hodr will come from Hel. They will sit down together and converse, calling to mind their hidden lore and talking about things that happened in the past.<sup>21</sup>

These two, both personally revived in some inexplicit manner, will head up the government of the renewed world in Odinn's hall (cf. *Voluspa* \*, 62). In this return of the "ideal" ruler, Dumézil sees Baldr's collaboration with Hodr as a continuation of their identities as minor sovereignsa pattern for which Dumézil then finds parallels in the *Mahabharata*\*.

Dumézil finds a similar three-phase drama in the *Mahabharata*\*, but not without evoking some questions. His arrangement of the epic drama seems designed mainly to bring into relief the two figures whom he identifies as further continuations of the "minor sovereigns": the blind king Dhrtarastra\* as a continuation of Bhaga and, more particularly, of Fate or Destiny; and Vidura as a transposition of Aryaman, the overseer of the integrity of the Bharata\* family, *kula*. Once again, let us take up the "three epochs" in order. Here, for each one, Dumézil gives a convenient summary in *Les Dieux des Getmains*:<sup>22</sup>

20. See above, n. 6. Dumézil compares this step with Visnu's\* three.

21. Young, *Prose Edda*, pp. 91-92.

22. Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 91-92; my translations (bracketed material is Dumézil's; the asterisks refer to the prototype figure for that role, whether a divinity by that name or not).

(1) *Jeu truqué*. "In the first decisive 'temps' of the action, Duryodhana [-demon] induces the blind Dhrtarastra \* [-\*Destiny], despite the warnings of Vidura [-\*Aryaman], to organize the game of dice in which, normally, Yudhishthira\* [-\*Mitra] would be invincible but in which, by the supernatural fixing of the dice, he will be defeated and, as a result, obliged to disappear for a long time." First, Dumézil is able to find certain parallels with the missile-throwing game of the Scandinavian gods. Each is a game in which tragedy occurs through some sort of treachery. In each case a blind personage (both, according to Dumézil, continuations of \*Bhaga) serves as an instrument of fate, impelled by a character of demonic stature. Both games end with the disappearance of an "ideal" figure who will return to rule only after a long time. Dumézil then discusses certain divergences which he attributes to changing conditions over long stretches of time and space. Some of these, however, seem rather marked. The character of the two games varies widely: Dhrtarastra\* is a blind accomplice, knowing full well what he is doing, whereas Hodr is innocent; Duryodhana rules after the dice game, whereas Loki is chained. But none of these "divergences" is more important than a fact which escapes mention in Dumézil's treatment. Whereas one can truly say of Baldr that he plays "complacently at the game of projectiles"<sup>23</sup> because everyone thinks him invulnerable, one cannot say that Yudhishthira\* "should fear nothing from the dice game, since he is the best of players."<sup>24</sup> He cannot be the best, for, as the deceitful gamester Sakuni\* says to Duryodhana, Yudhishthira\* is "fond of dicing, but he doesn't know how to cast" (*dyutapriyas\* ... na ca janati\* devitum*; 2:44,18). Nor does he have nothing to fear. On this point his most forceful statement concerns the invitation to the rematch after the disaster, or near disaster, of the

23. Dumézil, *ME*, I, 228 (my translation).

24. *Ibid.* (my translation).



first match: "This challenge to a game of dice comes from the command of the old [king]. Even knowing that it will cause destruction, I cannot get out of it" (2:67,4).

Yudhisthira \* and Baldr, then, are different sorts of "losers"; and one begins to suspect that it is not a matter of *divergences* in these games so much as real *differences*. Yudhisthira\* has already been a king whereas Baldr has not. Yudhisthira\* goes into exile, Baldr dies. These and the variances cited by Dumézil put enough strain on the comparison to make one question whether Baldr and Yudhisthira\*, who have so little in common other than their "ideal" character and "ideal" rule, should really be compared. Both represent an "ideal," but are there no other archaic ideals than those associated with Mitra and the "minor sovereigns"?

(2) *The great battle of the Mahabharata*\*. "In the second decisive 'temps,' Duryodhana [-Demon] mounts a formidable coalition against Yudhisthira\* [-\*Mitra] and his brothers and allies, and in the battle which follows, the Pandavas\* [-trifunctional gods incarnate] each kill an adversary of their own rank, including Duryodhana." All these points (except for a Scandinavian \*Mitra) have reasonably close parallels not only in the Scandinavian drama but in the Iranian, and once again detailed discussion is not needed. Here there truly seem to be divergences and different orientations, and Dumézil is attentive to these. Thus in Scandinavia most of the "good" gods die; in Iran the "good" Amesha Spentas triumph; and in India, though the "good" heroes triumph in the name of the gods, there are also "good" heroes who fight for the "bad" side. I will return to some of these problems.

(3) *"Renaissance."* "Finally, in the renovation which follows the crisis, the blind Dhrtarastra\* [-\*Destiny] and the just Vidura [-\*Aryaman], fully reconciled, back up the work which is most fully exemplified in the person of Yudhisthira\* [-\*Mitra]." This definition of the "renaissance," which, according to Dumézil, allows for direct parallels with the

return of Baldr (-\*Aryaman and -\*Mitra)<sup>25</sup> and Hodr (-\*Bhaga, "Blind Destiny"), again creates difficulties with his interpretation. Essentially, it is a matter of determining what constitutes the "reborn" world of the epic, and I doubt that Yudhishthira's \* postwar rule can be considered idyllic. Before the battle, the poets can refer to him gracefully as the *dharmaraja*\*, the ideal ruler;<sup>26</sup> but after the war, in which his sins are the most instrumental in attaining victory, he is the reluctant king of a decimated earth whose chief act is the performance of a sin-cleansing Asvamedha\*. To be sure, his postwar assistants include Dhrtarastra\* and Vidura, who may well be prolongations of Bhaga and Aryaman; but it seems extravagant to assign eschatologically significant roles to these two old counselors whose most important moments, after the battle, are their deaths.<sup>27</sup> The traditional Hindu view,<sup>28</sup> which is best followed here, links the beginning of the new age not to the rule of Yudhishthira\*, but rather to the rule which he and his counselors set up for Arjuna's grandson Pariksit\*. He will be an ideal ruler, but, like Baldr, the ruler of an attenuated age, retaining the ideal and the hope of a fresh beginning but without his glorious yet imperfect grandfathers (the trifunctionally arrayed Pandavas\*) just as Baldr must rule without the former gods (likewise trifunctionally arrayed), worthy of reverence yet "with little of the ideal."

Dumézil, however, has reached other conclusions on the question of Pariksit's\* birth which allow him, even while calling attention to it as a key eschatological theme, to set it apart. Beyond the eschatological intrigue in three phases, he sees "the rest of the epic, the episode of the embryo with its antecedents and consequences [the birth of Pariksit\*], the

25. See above, n. 11.

26. See especially 4:27,12-24 cited in *ME*, I, 152-54

27. See *ME*, I, 174-75.

28. The Kali yuga begins with the accession of Pariksit\*; see Pargiter, *Dynasties of the Kali Age*, p. x; it also ends (see *ibid.*) with the death of Krishna.

opposition of Krishna and Asvatthaman \*, and through them of Visnu\* and Siva\*, being perhaps a posterior adjunction or at least the considerable rehandling of a non-Saivite\* story which it would be vain to pretend to reconstitute."29 Thus this crucial scene, which Dumézil has so brilliantly brought into the open in *Mythe et épopée*, I, takes a back seat to the "three epochs" he had previously outlined in *Les dieux des Germains*. Of the three, only the battle, the most general of all, seems certain to pass as a common theme. The embryo episode, which is central to Biardeau's treatment of the epic crisis, will bear further scrutiny.

The alignment of the eschatological crisis of the epic with the Hindu myth of the *pralaya*, which has only begun to take shape in the ongoing studies of Madeleine Biardeau, was anticipated by Dumézil with regard to the opposition of Krishna and Asvatthaman\*, Visnu\* and Siva\*, over the fate of the embryo.30 But Dumézil drops the matter here, suggesting that this opposition "corresponds to a state of the mythology that is post-Vedic, late, already nearly Hindu."31 He finds no way in which these themes might be combined in an overarching model with the three-phase drama he considers older. Here, by introducing the *pralaya* as a possible structuring myth, Biardeau opens up a number of new perspectives.

Although she has yet to address herself directly to the episodes which make up the first and third "epochs" of Dumézil's scheme, she distrusts the Indo-European comparison: "The cosmic crisis which forms the intrigue of the epic does not have an exact analogue in the most ancient literature, whereas one can find its model in the Puranic\* accounts of the reabsorption and recreation of the world."32

29. *ME*, I, 230 (my translation); see also pp. 219-22.

30. Dumézil, *ME*, I, 219.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 220 (my translation).

32. Biardeau, *EPHE*, LXXVII, 169 (my translation).

Although Puranic \* tradition commonly distinguishes three types of *pralaya*, and even though the three form "a whole"<sup>33</sup> and are often narrated in sequence, it is the *naimittika-pralaya*, "the occasional reabsorption," which claims Biardeau's attention. There is no convincing reason to reject the *pralaya* as a "model" for the epic on the grounds that the myth is Puranic\* and "late." Biardeau speaks of the epic as being concerned more with the cycle of the yugas and the appearance of *avatars*\* and less with the kalpa cycle, which it leaves in the background.<sup>34</sup> But if the kalpa system is in the background, allusions to the *naimittika-pralaya* abound throughout in particular, as she convincingly shows, in the theophany of the *Bhagavad Gita*\*.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the epic gives a *pralaya* account of its own (3:186,56-78).

Biardeau shows that there are essentially three phases to the *pralaya*. First comes a terrible drought and the desiccation of the entire earth. In the second and third phases occurs what she calls the "double *pralaya*": first a "reabsorption" by Kalagnirudra\*<sup>36</sup> (Siva\*) of the three dead and desiccated worlds through yogic fire; and second, a "reabsorption" of the remains (ashes) and of all beings in the flood waters upon which Narayana\* (Visnu\*) reposes in his yogic sleep, thence to recreate the three worlds through Brahma\*. She detects this three-act drama beneath the surface of the *Mahabharata*\*.<sup>37</sup> Thus (1) the desiccation of the earth corresponds to the symbols and intrigues that set up the oppositions between the Pandavas\* and the Kauravas, between dharma and adharma, in the early books;<sup>38</sup>

33. Biardeau, EMH, 3, P. 33 (my translation).

34. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

35. See above, Chapter 6, at n. 2.

36. Variant: Kalagni\*, Kalarudra\*, or, in Vaisnava\* terms, Rudrarupijanardana\* (VP 6,3,30), *sughoramasivam\* raudram . . . pavakam\**; Mbh. 3:186,72].

37. Unfortunately, these correspondences are not yet set forth in any published work; I base the following summary on a letter from Biardeau of June 4, 1971.

38. Biardeau regards the role of Bhima\* in the house of lac episode as modeled on the Vayu\* of the *pralaya* (EPHE, LXXVIII, 157-58); the burning of

(Footnote continued on next page)

(2) the burning of the three worlds, presided over by Rudra-Siva \*, corresponds to the epic war which culminates in the extinction of the Kuru-Pandava\* line when Asvatthaman\* (possessed by Siva\*) destroys the last hope of its continuity the embryo in the womb of Uttara\*, wife of Arjuna's slain son Abhimanyu; and (3) the deluge and the recreation of the worlds correspond to the womb in which the embryo lies and Krishna's revival of the stillborn baby.

Biardeau is still investigating the parallels, so a hasty judgment on the confrontation of these two dramas should not be formed. But some impressions are worth expressing. Negatively, there are difficulties in accepting any close ties in the first two phases of the schema. As Biardeau notes in her letter (see n. 37), there is little symbolic correspondence between the desiccation of the earth and the signs and situations preceding the battle.<sup>39</sup> And in phase two, the burning of the three worlds presents no "dualistic" battle like that in the epic war or, for that matter, in the Scandinavian and Iranian myths of the end of the world. Nor is it possible to put the whole battle under Siva-Asvatthaman's\* sign, like the destructive phase of the *pralaya*. As Dumézil says, until the *Sauptikaparvan*, "the activity of Asvatthaman\* is very subordinate."<sup>40</sup> Keeping the divine

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Khandava\* forest as "a new figure of the war of destruction to come" (see above, Chapter 4, n. 1); more fragmentary, Jarasandha's\* imprisoning of the hundred kings as a "new image of the end of the world" (see above, Chapter 10, n. 60); Draupadi's\* polyandrous marriage, through Siva's\* involvement, as an eschatological destruction of rules "necessary to the renewal of the world" (see above, Chapter 3, n. 9); and Draupadi's\* refusal of Karna-Surya\* as a refusal of the solar hero "who symbolizes the conflagration of the world" ("Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 42, n. 2) (my translations).

39. Based on this comparison, Biardeau also proposes an answer to why there are "good" heroes on the "bad" side: Karna\* is the son of Surya\*, the sun which, "at the end of the cosmic cycle is narrowly associated with Siva\* in the task of destruction" (*EPHE*, LXXVIII, 152; also *EMH*, 3, P. 82 and n. 1; my translation). But this does not explain why incarnations of the Rudras and Maruts (Kṛpa\* and Kṛtavarma\*), of one of the Vasus (Bhisma\*), or of Brhaspati\* (Drona\*) should side with the Kurus.

40. Dumézil, *ME*, I, 214 (my translation).

and heroic planes of action distinct, it would be more correct to say that the battle itself, up to the *Sauptikaparvan*, is presided over by Krishna.

On the positive side, however, Biardeau indicates that *pralaya* imagery is frequently employed in descriptions of the epic action. A striking instance occurs in the third phase of her schema, when Subhadra \* pleads with her brother Krishna to revive the stillborn child: "Surely, just by wishing it you could revive the three worlds [*lokamstrinjivayethah*]\* if they were dead; what then of this cherished one born dead of your sister's son?" (14:66,17). For the most part, however, such *pralaya* imagery occurs in similes and metaphors, where it certainly does not serve to structure the epic drama. It would be more accurate to say that the *pralaya* mythology complements the epic story as a cosmological metaphor than to say that it lends form to the story as a background myth. It is true, as Biardeau points out, that in the *Gita*\*, Krishna refers to the *pralaya* as the backdrop against which Arjuna is to understand the cataclysmic battle to come; but this, as Krishna says, is a divine, one might say ultimate secret, delivered only to his dearest *bhakta* (see *Gita*\* 11,54). I will try to demonstrate that these sequences in the *Mahabharata*\* draw their basic structure not from this "universe of *bhakti*,"<sup>41</sup> but from other, no doubt older, mythic and ritual scenarios joined together and integrated not under the sign of the *pralaya* but under that of the Brahmanic\* sacrifice.

#### The Sauptikaparvan and the Destruction of Daksa's\* Sacrifice

One principle, suggested by the *Mahabharata*\* text itself, has proved valuable at several points: to examine whether there is some relation between the many myths narrated in the course of the text (usually regarded as interpolations or interruptions)

41. I use Biardeau's term here, which she uses (EMH, 3, especially, p. 84) to describe the cosmology of *pralaya* and *pratisarga*.

and the juncture in the narrative at which they are told.<sup>42</sup> Several fruitful paths have been opened up by comparing such myths with immediately foregoing or forthcoming incidents in the epic plot.<sup>43</sup> It seems likely that the texture of the epic has included a balance of didactic (including mythic) and narrative portions for as long as it has existed in India, and many of the interpretive myths seem to have conserved their place in the narrative for a long time. Nowhere does this seem more likely than at the end of the *Sauptikaparvan*. Asked there how Asvatthaman \* could have carried out his night raid, Krishna tells Yudhishthira\* that it was through the grace of Siva\*. "I know Mahadeva\* truly" (*tattvena*), he adds, "and also his various former deeds" (*puranani\* karmani\* vividhani\**; 10:17,8). The second deed he recites, the one he concludes with and links directly to the preceding events (10:18,24-26),<sup>44</sup> is Siva's\* destruction of the sacrifice of the gods (elsewhere of Daksa\*).<sup>45</sup>

42. This procedural principle was first articulated by Joseph Dahlmann, *Das Mahabharata\* als Epos und Rechtsbuch: Problem aus Altindiens Cultur- und Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin: Felix L. Dames, 1899), pp. 119-22.

43. See especially Chapter 7 (myth of Sri\* and the five Indras told after Draupadi's\* Svayamvara\*) and Chapters 9 and 10 (myth of Indra's sins told to Yudhishthira\* before the war).

44. In a just verdict, H. D. Velankar, ed., *Sauptikaparvan*, CE, "Introduction," p. xxix, refers to the first "former deed" a myth about the *lingam\** (10:17) as "rather extraneous." Critical studies of the *Sauptikaparvan* are few: in addition to Dumézil (see above, n. 6), see the "inversionist" views of Holtzmann (*Mahabharata\* und seine Theile*, II, 201-3) and the "solar myth" views of Ludwig ("Mythische grundlage des Mahabharata\*," p. 10) in which the night raid, brought on by the "Winter God" Siva\*, symbolizes the "last night-frost in spring"!

45. I will use the term Daksayajna\*, although Daksa\* does not appear in the "early" versions of the myth, by which I refer to those in the Brahmanas\* (see Bhattacharji, *Indian Theogony*, pp. 121-22) as well, it would seem, as the one at the end of the *Sauptikaparvan*; see also *Mbh.* 7:173,41 where Daksa\* gets only an interpolated line. Where Daksa\* does not appear, I put the term in quotes.

Recent studies of the Daksayajna\* myth include Bhattacharji, *Indian Theogony*, pp. 121-24; Jan Gonda, *Visnuism\* and Sivaism\*: A Comparison* (London: Athlone, 1970), pp. 133-35; Joe Bruce Long, "Siva's\* Heroic Feats Destruction of Daksa's\* Sacrifice," thesis chapter, University of

(Footnote continued on next page)

Krishna's cue should not be ignored, but to follow it means to face some new hurdles. Krishna's account of the myth does not present it in its full scope. Yet the events of the *parvan* often seem to reflect the fully developed myth. It would seem then that while the myth told at the end originally served to complement the events of the *parvan*, the *parvan* itself has been elaborated in the light of later versions of the myth. By following the course of the *Sauptika* itself episode by episode (I can unfortunately reduce it to no less than fourteen), let us see whether the myth (or the developing tradition of myths) of the destruction of Daksa's \* sacrifice can be read as its companion tale.

(1) *Absence of Krishna*. In a matter about which the epic tells us surprisingly little, Krishna, his kinsman Satyaki\*, and the five Pandavas\* have all conveniently absented themselves from the victory camp on the very evening of Asvatthaman's\* night raid. After plundering the Kuru camp for goods, servants, and other royal spoils (9:61,33), the victors rest until Krishna interrupts: "For the sake of acting auspiciously [*mangalarthaya*\*], we should stay outside the camp.' Having said, 'So be it,' all the Pandavas\*, as also Satyaki\*, went outside, together with Vasudeva\*, for the sake of acting auspiciously" (*mangalartha*\*; 9:61,35-36). While Krishna's words are mys-

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Chicago, kindly made available by the author; and Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology," *HRJ*, X (1971), 315-23. The texts cited are the following: along with 10:18, the *Mbh.* has four more versions: 7: 173,41-51;12:274;12:283V-284V (V = *Mahabharata*\* Vulgate); 12:330; 13:145,10-23 (close to 7:173); *HV* 3,22 (Gorakhpur: Gitapress\*, 1967-1968); *Vam*\*. P. 2-5 (S. M. Mukhopadhyaya et al., trans., A. S. Gupta, ed. [Benares: All India Kashiraj Trust, 1968]); *Bhag*\*. P. 4,2-7 (Gorakhpur: Gitapress\*, 1964-1965); *Linga*\* *Purana*\* 69 (Bareli: Samskrti-Samsthana\*, 1969); *Kurma*\* *Purana*\* 15 (R. S. Bhattacharya, ed. [Benares, 1968]); *Vayu*\* *Purana*\* (H. H. Wilson, trans., *Vishnu*\* *Purana*\*, pp. 53-60); *Siva*\* *Purana*\* 2,2 (*Satikhand*\*), 12-43 (P. L. Shastri, ed., trans. by a board of scholars, "Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology," I [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970]). See V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Puranic*\* *Index* (Madras: University of Madras, 1952), II, 38ff.



terious and refer only to some unexplained "welfare" (*man-gala* \*), the lack of explanation has been sensed in two Devanagari\* manuscripts, in which Krishna seems to refer to the role of the goddess as Kalaratri\*, the "Night of Time": "Where the goddess Victory is [*jayanti*\* *yatra devi*\*], however, do not go about there for long. This is my request, arranged at the beginning of battle" (9,380\*; following 9:61,35). This would seem appropriate, since Krishna did have Arjuna (likewise only in the Northern recension) honor Durga\* on the eve of battle (*Bhismaparvan*\*, Appendix I, n. 1), praising her not only as Victory (*vijaye jaye*; line 11) but as Bhadrakali\* and Mahakali\* (line 9). But within the *Sauptikaparvan*, Krishna makes way more for Siva\* than for the goddess.

More interesting than the reference to Devi\* is the implication that Krishna has arranged this exodus beforehand. Can the *sloka*\* be trusted here? The only other passage which bears on these events would seem at first to make it doubtful. Just after Krishna has urged that the night be spent outside the camp, the Pandavas\* send him off to Hastinapura\* to tell Dhrtarastra\* and Gandhari\*, as gently as possible, of their sons' deaths. There, having comforted them, Krishna gets up suddenly and begs their leave, explaining: "Evil has entered the mind of Drona's\* son; ... he has indicated the thought of slaying the Pandavas\* in the night" (9:61,68). Thus it would seem that Krishna does not have any foreknowledge of what will happen. But when he rejoins the Pandavas\* that very night, presumably not only to rescue them but to foil Asvatthaman's\* plan, he merely sits down and tells them what happened at the Kuru court. Here, where we know that he knows, he is troublingly silent. We are thus left with the impression that the added *sloka*\* is right, that Krishna has absented himself and the Pandavas\* by design.

In the Daksayajna\* myth, we find a variety of attitudes expressed in different versions about the roles of Visnu\* and Siva\*. Some do not mention Visnu\* at all, some not until the

end,<sup>46</sup> and some say that Daksa's \* rite was dedicated to Visnu\* (*Mbh.* 12:283,21 V; *Bhag\**. P. 4,2,34; *Kurma\** P. 15,23,24; *Siva\** P. 2,2,27,37-38). But all agree on one point: Visnu\* was not present when the sacrifice was destroyed. Some texts are quite explicit, although just as mysterious as the *Mahabharata\** is on the absence of Krishna. According to the *Kurma\**, "all the gods came for the sake of shares, Indra and so forth; but they did not see the god Isana\* or Narayana\* Hari" (15,21). Most pointedly, the *Bhagavata\** says: "Having formerly perceived exactly this [destruction], the lotus-born god [Brahma\*] and Narayana\*, the soul of all, did not go to the sacrifice" (4,5,3). Or Visnu\* may be present until the destruction takes place. Thus the *Vamana\** tells us: "Seeing Samkara\* with eyes reddened with anger, Hari retired from that place and stood concealed [*sthanadapakramya\** ... *antarhitah\** *sthitah\**] in Kubjamra\* [a *tirtha\**]" (5,1); and in the *Siva\**, Visnu\* is warned by a celestial voice to leave the sacrifice (2,2,31,34), which he does after a standoff fight with Siva's\* agent Virabhadra\* both he and Brahma\* going to their respective *lokas* (37,41-44) just before the destruction begins.

It is apparent that in these absences of Krishna and Visnu\* we are, on the levels of both myth and epic, confronted by a statement about the theological complementarity of Visnu\* and Siva\*.<sup>47</sup> But we must postpone discussion of this (see item 14 below) until we see what is made of it by the epic itself.

(2) *Celebrants and outsiders*. Asvatthaman\* and his two allies, Krpa\* and Krtavarman\*, have entered a forest near the camp just absented by Krishna, and there, as night sets in, Asvatthaman\* alone remains awake. Taking his cue (*upadesa\**) from a bird of prey which he sees massacre a flock of sleeping crows, he forms the plan which Krishna became aware of at Hastinapura\*: he will kill all the Pandavas\* and Pancalas\* while they

46. See Gonda, *Visnuism\* and Sivaism\**, p. 135, where he says the antagonism between Siva\* and Visnu\* is a late concern. Below I discuss a Brahmanic\* precursor.

47. See the analogous situation at the dice game, above, Chapter 4.

are sleeping.48 Awakened and hearing of this scheme, Krpa \* and Krtavarman\* are filled with shame, but in a series of exchanges they are persuaded. Of special interest is Asvatthaman's\* first response:

The Pancalas\* are roaring out, shouting, and laughing; filled with joy, they are blowing their conches in a hundred ways, and beating their drums. The tumultuous sound of their musical instruments, mingled with the blare of their conches, is frightful, and, borne by the wind, it fills up, as it were, all the points of the compass [*disah\* purayativa\**]. Very great is the sound heard from the neighing horses and the grunting elephants, and the lion-roar of the heroes. [10:1,59-61]

Having depicted this festive gathering with what one might call its world-wide repercussions, Asvatthaman\* turns, in sharp contrast, to the plight of himself and his fellows: "In this vast carnage, only we three remain.... I regard this as a reversal of Time" (*manye kalasya\* paryayam*; 63-64). This argument for the night raid thus centers on a pattern of reversals, juxtapositions: on one side is festivity, on the other embittered isolation; on one side inclusion, on the other exclusion.

Though the divine emotions may differ from the human anguish and pathos of the three Kuru survivors, the essential pattern holds. Siva\* is excluded from a celebration whose universal proportions only grow with the enlargement of the universe from text to text: if it is the gods alone who take part in some apparently early versions (Brahmanas\*; *Mbh.* 7: 173,50"the thirty"; 10:18), the Vulgate version in the *Mahabharata\** has the sacrifice shared in by the inhabitants of the three worlds (12:283,5-8V), and the *Vamana\* Purana\** extends this to the fourteen worlds (4,9). But, most crucial, Asvatthaman\*, like Siva\*, has heretofore been deprived of a "share." The very core of the Daksayajna\* myth is that Siva\* has been allowed no share (*bhaga\**) in the sacrifice. For Asvatthaman\* the matter is less obvious but no less important.

48. He does not know the Pandavas\* are absent; see also 9:65,33.

To clarify the sense in which Asvatthaman's \* share is still unclaimed involves discussing what is probably the fundamental symbolism shaping the *Mahabharata*\* war: that of the *ranayajna*\* (5:57,12; 154,4; cf. *sastrayajna*\*, 5:139,29, and description thereof), "the sacrifice of battle." Although a general analogy between war and sacrifice in the epic has been long recognized,<sup>49</sup> few of its implications have been worked out. One of these concerns the attainment of heaven: Yudhisthira\* assumes that it is heroes "who poured out their bodies into the [sacrificial] fire of battle" [*juhuvurye sarirani*\* *ranavahnau*\*; [18:2,2] who should obtain heaven, and Narada\* tells him that he sees Duryodhana there because the latter has fulfilled this requirement (18:1,14). A "heaven of heroes" (*viraloka*\*) finds a place in other Indo-European afterworlds,<sup>50</sup> but India's thoroughgoing articulation of the warrior's death as a sacrifice is probably unique.<sup>51</sup> A second implication concerns the epic's use of the terms *bhaga*\* and *amsa*\*, "share, portion."<sup>52</sup> Dumézil\* has pointed to the importance of these terms in connection with the incarnations of the "portions" of various gods on earth. But they are also used with the combined meaning, pertinent to both the sacrifice and the battlefield, of "victim." It is interesting to note who it is that determines such war- "shares." In one crucial instance Krishna delegates Salya\* as Yudhisthira's\* share.<sup>53</sup> But more generally the *senapati*\*, marshal, performs this task. For the Pandavas\* this position was filled throughout the entire war by the Pancala\* prince Dhrsta-

49. See Held, *Ethnological Study*, pp. 109,270-71; Sukthankar, *Meaning of the Mahabharata*\*, p. 35.

50. See Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*, pp. 111-14 So too, in reverse, the sacrificial implements placed on portions of the body on the funeral pyre become the sacrificer's weapons as he conquers heaven (see *SB*\* 12,5,2,8).

51. For a different articulation among the Celts, see the intriguing interpretation of the chief's self-sacrifice by Jean Markale, *Les Celtes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 50-88.

52. See above, Chapter 10, following n. 45, and Chapter 11, n. 2.

53. See above, Chapter 10, following n. 45.

dyumna, born, like his sister Draupadi \*, from the sacrificial fire and himself "a portion of Agni" (*agnerbhagam\**; var. *agneramsam\**; 1:61,87), in fact, "an auspicious portion of Agni" (*agnerbhagam\* subham\**; 15: 39, 14). In a key passage (5: 161,5-10), as the Pandava\* army approaches the battlefield, this indispensable ally,<sup>54</sup> Agni's own "auspicious portion," assigns each of his major warriors an appropriate "victim." "Having apportioned [*vibhajya*] those warriors individually and collectively, that mighty Bowman of the hue of fire [*jvalavarna\**] fixed Drona\* as his own portion" (*amsa\**; 10). This fatality, when it is accomplished, will then lead Dhrtarastra\* to remark: "It is Asvatthaman\* who was created the slayer of Dhrstadyumna\* by the high-souled [Drona\*], even as the Pancala\* prince . . . was [created to be the slayer] of Drona\*" (7:166,14). In this context we understand Asvatthaman's\* various vows to avenge his father's death by slaying Dhrstadyumna\*: the latter will be his share, and the sacrifice of battle will not be complete until Asvatthaman\* has claimed it.

(3 and 4) *Barring of the gate and possession*. Asvatthaman's\* entry into the camp is at first barred by images of Krishna-Janardana\*, which are dispelled by Asvatthaman's\* homage to Siva\* who, in turn, possesses Asvatthaman\* (10,7,65). These episodes are theological doublets, mythical reinforcements for what occurs elsewhere on the plane of the epic narrative itself. Thus the dispelling of Krishna's images duplicates the absence of Krishna. As Dumézil has pointed out,<sup>55</sup> Siva's\* possession of Asvatthaman\* doubles the latter's identification with Siva\*, as Asvatthaman\* was born a mixture "of Mahadeva\* [Siva\*] and Antaka ["Finisher"], of Krodha [Wrath] and Kama\* combined into a unity" (*ekatvam upapannanam\**; 1:61,66). Dumézil shows

54 On Dhrstadyumna\* as distributor of shares for the Pandavas\*, and for the most complete list of the shares appointed to them and their allies, see 5:56, 12-25; see also Biardeau's remarks on Dhrstadyumna-Agni's\* alliance with the Pandavas\*, "Brahmanes\* et potiers," p. 43, n. 2.

55 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 213 and 220.

this conception of Asvatthaman \* to have its closest analogue in a Bramanic\* conception of Rudra.<sup>56</sup>

In view of these duplications, the two episodes cannot be expected to have exact counterparts in the Daksayajna\* myth, except where figures appear who similarly duplicate the roles of Visnu\* (such as Dharma, who is the *dvarapala*\*, gate-keeper, who seeks and fails to prevent Virabhadra\* from entering the sacrifice in *Vam*\*, P. 4,23) or of Siva\* (Virabhadra\* himself, like Asvatthaman\* a "portion\* of Rudra," in *Bhag. P.* 4,5,4).

(5) *Entry*. "As with Isvara\* entering the camp of his foe, around Asvatthaman\* on all sides rushed invisible beings and Raksas\*" (10:7,66), that is, Siva's\* *gana*\*. This could be an allusion to Siva's\* entry of Daksa's\* sacrifice itself. Whether it is or is not, Asvatthaman\* is aided not only by Siva's\* *gana*\*, but by Krpa\* and Krtavarmanincarnations of the Rudras and Maruts respectively. This may reflect an "early" form of the narrative in which, without the *gana*\*, representatives of Rudra's Vedic hosts, the Rudras and Maruts, would have aided Asvatthaman\* in his act of destruction. The *gana*\* plays no role in what appear to be the earlier versions of the "Daksayajna\*" myth (Brahmanas\*; *Mbh.* 10:18; 7:173,41-51).

(6) *"Brutal" deaths*. These next two episodes form the most crucial sequence of the night raid. Asvatthaman's\* activities occur in two neatly demarcated phases: in the first, ignoring the sword that Siva\* has given him, he kills his foes "brutally"; in the second, using the sword, he kills by performing symbolic mutilations.

This first phase recalls the telling of his plan to Krpa\* and Krtavarman\*, to whom he predicted: "Among the Pancalas\* I shall move about, slaying them now in battle like the enraged Rudra himself, Pinaka\* [bow] in hand, moving about among animals" (*svayam\* rudrah\* pasusviva\**; 10:3,19). As to his chief

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213; to create Rudra-Bhutavan\* in order to avenge Prajapati's\* incest against their sister Usas\*, the gods "put their most fearful bodies in one" (*ghoratamastanva\* . . . ekadha\**; AB 3,33,I).

antagonist: "I will grind off [*Pramathisyami* \*] Dhrstadyumna's\* head like an animal's" (*pasoriva*\*; 3,33). Having entered the camp, he goes first to Dhrstadyumna's\* tent and finds him sleeping in a luxurious bed. He kicks him to wake him, seizes him by the hair (as Dhrstadyumna\* had done to Asvatthaman's\* father Drona\*), and presses him down to the ground.

Striking him with his foot on both his throat and chest [*tamakramya*\* *pada*\* . . . *kanthe*\* *corasi cobhayoh*\*] while he was roaring and writhing [*nadantam*\* *visphurantam*], he made him die the death of an animal [*pasumaramamarayat*\*]. Tearing at him with his nails, Dhrstadyumna\*, not very clearly, said, "Slay me with a weapon [*sastrena*\*], do not delay; if you do this, I may go to well-made worlds [*sukrtamllokan*\*]." Having heard these indistinct sounds of his, Drona's\* son said: "There are no worlds for slayers of their preceptors; therefore you do not deserve to be slain with a weapon." . . . And the wrathful one struck him in the vital parts [*marmasu*] with violent kicks of his heels." [8,18-21]

These blows bring on Dhrstadyumna's\* death cries which awaken certain guards, whom Asvatthaman\* slays with a Rudra weapon. This first phase of butchery concludes with the deaths of two more Pancalas\*, the shadowy but strangely inseparable Uttamaujas and Yudhamanyu, who also die crying out (*vinardantam*) and writhing like animals (*visphurantam*\* *ca pasuvat*\*; 8,31-35). The text itself indicates that these "brutal" deaths, at least beyond the particular case of Dhrstadyumna\* (see also 5,33-34), are not brought about simply as devices to keep the victims from reaching the heaven of heroes: "Having slain them, Asvatthaman\* rushed here and there against the maharathas\* . . . ; trembling and quivering, they were slain [*samita*\*; or: prepared as an oblation] like animals in a sacrifice" (*iva pasunmakhe*\*; 8,36).<sup>57</sup>

57 It is true that animals should be silent in a sacrifice, strangled without a sound; this seems to be one of several indications that the *Sauptikaparvan* tells of a sacrifice gone out of control.

The epic also makes it clear that these slaughters portray Asvatthaman \* in Siva's\* ancient role of Pasupati\*, "Lord of Animals": "The wrathful one caused thousands of shrinking, shuddering men to fall, like Pasupati\* among *pasus*\*" (8,122). But why are these animalian deaths singled out as so especially significant for Dhrstadyumna\* and the Pancalas\*? In the Brahmanas\* the name Pasupati\* occurs frequently in connection with the "Daksayajna\*" myth and its "multiform,"<sup>58</sup> the myth of Rudra's vengeance against Prajapati\* for the latter's incest with Usas\*. In this second myth, *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 1,7,4,1 tells us that the gods called on Rudra as Pasupati\* to avenge their sister, and *Aitareya Brahmana\** 3,33 (in which the gods make Rudra of their most terrible forms; see n. 55) says that it was as a reward for his service that Rudra claimed *pasunamadhipatyam\**, "sovereignty over animals." But more interesting is *Satapatha\** 1,7,3 (see also *TS* 2,6,8,1-3), one of the earliest versions of the "Daksayajna\*" itself. Here, when Rudra has interrupted the gods' sacrifice to demand his share, the gods set up the practice of giving him the last oblation under the euphemistic name of Agni Svistakrt\*, "Agni the Maker of Good Offering." Accordingly: "That [offering] then is certainly made to 'Agni.' His are these names: Sarva\* as the eastern people call him, Bhava, as the Bahikas\* [call him]; Pasunam\* Pati, Rudra, and Agni. The name Agni, doubtless, is the most auspicious" (*santa\**; 1,7,3,8). On this passage, Biardeau's comments are helpful concerning "the identification of Agni with Rudra Pasupati\*: the sacrifice, which involves putting victim*pasu*\*to death, has for this reason an impure and dangerous aspect which must be abolished by an oblation to Rudra. It is in this that Rudra is 'master of *pasu*\*,' and it is also this which places him in relation to death and impurity."<sup>59</sup> In these early versions of the

<sup>58</sup> The term is used in a related way by O'Flaherty, "Origin of Heresy," P. 319; Prajapati\* is "the sacrifice" whom (which) Siva\* attacks. Cf. *SB\** 1,7,3 and 4.

<sup>59</sup> Biardeau, EMH, 3, P. 80 (my translation); Jarasamdha\* (another of Siva's\* epic counterparts) similarly plans a sacrifice by placing the "mark

(Footnote continued on next page)



"Daksayajna \*" myth Rudra's character as "Lord of Animals" involves his identification with Agni as "slayer of animals." Under the "auspicious" name of Agni Svistakrt\*, he takes his "remainder" share and permits the sacrifice to be completed. But as Pasupati\*, Sarva\*, Bhava, and Rudra, he holds the threat of destruction.

In the *Sauptikaparvan*, Asvatthaman-Pasupati\* has claimed his "share" of the "sacrifice of battle" by slaying Dhrstadyumna\*, none other than the incarnation of "the auspicious portion of Agni" himself. In some cases, most clearly in that of Yudhisthira\* and Salva\*, it is evident that when a combatant slays his "share," some quality which both opponents possess is enhanced in the victor at the expense of the vanquished.<sup>60</sup> Such seems to be the significance here. In slaying the incarnation of Agni, Asvatthaman\*, as his very first act of destruction, eliminates the "auspicious Agni" and takes on the character of "the fire at the end of the yuga" (*yugante\* . . . pavakah\**; 10:8,137). Also, "desiring to please the son of Drona\*, Krpa\* and Krtavarman\* set fire to the camp in three places" (8,103) a transparent allusion to the three sacrificial fires (no doubt to be correlated with the three worlds) put to inauspicious use.

If this interpretation is correct so far, a problem remains. The episode does not follow the usual schema of the Daksayajna\* myths, where Siva\* obtains his share at the end of his destructive raid rather than at the beginning. Actually, in all the versions of the Daksayajna\* that I have examined, only in one case is there a parallel episode at this point. According to the *Linga\* Purana\**, the following is included among the mutilations inflicted by Virabhadra\*: "Having cut off the two hands of Vahni

(Footnote continued from previous page)

of an animal" (*pasusamjnam\**) on his royal victims (2:20,11); see also above, chapter 10, n. 60.

<sup>60</sup> Salva\* as a "share" symbolizes kingship, sovereignty, and the earth, the share which Krishna urges upon Yudhisthira\* (9:15,16-17); see above, Chapter, 10, following n. 45; see also Chapter 10, n. 80, on Bhishma\* and "Sveta\*."

[Agni] and having torn out his tongue in sport, the high-powered Virabhadra \* kicked him in the head with his foot" (*jaghana\* murdhni padena\**; 69,16). Dhṛstadyumna\* was kicked in the chest and throat; both cases probably indicate a crude symbolism of "putting out a fire." But there is no sense in the *Linga\** that in maiming Vahni, Virabhadra\* has obtained his or Siva's\* share. Rather, epic and myth seem to diverge here. In the former, Asvatthaman\*, by slaying foes like *pasu\**, subsumes the "auspicious Agni" as his own share and takes on the aspect of the inauspicious fire at the end of the yuga. In the myth, more optimistic, Rudra becomes the auspicious fire (Svistakṛt\*) rather than the inauspicious (Pasupati\*). This is what we may call the first "inversion" concerning the matter of "shares" (see item 13 below).

(7) *Symbolic mutilations.* Having completed the first phase of the night raid, Asvatthaman\* takes up his sword. This instrument, turned against particular foes, is used with precision. First, he attacks the Draupadeyas, Draupadi's\* five sons by the Pandavas\*. Yudhisthira's\* son Prativindhya falls when struck "in the region of the abdomen" (*kuksidese\**; 8,50); Bhima's\* son Sutasoma's arm is cut off (*bahum\* chittva\**; 8,52) and then he is slain when pierced through the heart presumably from his unprotected side; Satanika\*, Nakula's son, has his head cut off (*apaharacchirah\**; 8,54); Srutakarman\*, son of Sahadeva, is struck by the sword on his mouth (*asye\**) and falls, his "mouth disfigured" (*vikrtananah\**; 8,56); and last, having let loose a brief volley of arrows to remind us of his father, Arjuna's son Srutakirti\* is decapitated, whereupon "his radiant head, adorned with earrings, fell from his body" (8,58).

The Draupadeyas present no clear structure of their own,<sup>61</sup> and while symbolic meaning is certainly present in their disfigurements, the symbolism is borrowed from their fathers. In three instances the correlations are striking: the son of

<sup>61</sup> See Dumézil, *ME*, I, 246-49; they incarnate the Visvedevas\*.

Bhima \*, the mightiest and most "long-armed" of the Pandavas\*, loses his arm; the son of Nakula, the most beautiful Pandava\*, loses his head; and the son of Sahadeva, noted for his eloquence and "sweet words," has his mouth disfigured.<sup>62</sup> Arjuna's handsomeness is also a subject of frequent praise, so it is fitting that his arrow-shooting son should be decapitated. This leaves us in the dark only about Yudhishthira's\* belly.<sup>63</sup> But the real question is why the poets have paused on this occasion to work out a tableau of mutilations for these pale and poorly defined victims.<sup>64</sup>

The question, of course, comes back to the Pandavas\* and the continuity of the Kuru line. With Abhimanyu slain and with the pregnancy of his wife still unknown (Krishna has not divulged this information yet), the deaths of the Draupadeyas symbolize not only the apparent extinction of the dynasty but with the mutilation the fact that the ideal image of sovereignty which the Pandavas\* represent (here in face, mouth, arms, and belly) cannot be revived. As to why the poets have found this a suitable occasion to display their ingenuity at the game of symbolism, one does well to look to the Dakṣayajna\*. The two sets of mutilations which concern different limbs and apparently unrelated victims involve the same principle in different contexts. If one symbolism concerns the mutilation of those limbs, destroyed by Asvatthaman\*, which represent the effective continuity of the Kuru line, the other concerns the mutilation of those limbs and organs, destroyed by Siva\*, which represent the effective continuity of the sacrifice. No one has

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, 3:254,5-21, Draupadi\* boasting about her husbands: Bhima\* with "long arms as developed as *sala*\* trees" (9); Nakula "whose beauty [*rupam*]\* is the utmost on earth" (14); and Sahadeva, "of whom one finds no equal in wisdom and eloquence" (*vakta*\*; 17).

<sup>63</sup> But see *GB* 1,2 and *TS* 2,6,8,7 where the sacrifice is placed on the belly (*jathara*\*) of Indra (*GB*) or Brahman (*TS*), as these two are never harmed.

<sup>64</sup> Only one other figure is mutilated, the half-male, half-female Sikhandin\*, fittingly shot between the eyes and cut in two with the sword (8,59-60). One suspects several Siva\* symbols here too.

appreciated the paradoxical character of the latter symbolism as well as Dumézil: "Bhaga, who distributes 'parts' and who is blind, appears beside Savitr\*, the 'Impeller,' who sets all things in motion and who has lost his two hands; and also beside Pusan\*, protector of the 'meat on foot' which are the herds, and who, having lost his teeth, can eat only pap."65 From the Brahmanas\* on to the *Siva\** and *Bhagavata\* Puranas\**, for Daksa's\* sacrifice to continue it has been necessary that these limbs and organs be restored either directly, through Siva's\* grace, to those who have lost them (*Mbh.* 10:18,22; cf. *Siva\* P.* 2,2,43,28), or indirectly, under the guidance of Brhaspati\* (*Gopatha Br.* 1, 2; *SB\** 1,7,4,13-15) or Siva\* (*Bhag\* P.* 4,7,3), when these latter stipulate that the rite be handled or continued with the eyes of Surya\* (*GB*) or Mitra (*Bhag\* P.*), the arms of the Asvins\*, the hands of Pusan\*, and the mouth of Agni (*SB\**) or the sacrificer's teeth (*Bhag. P.*).66

(8) *Kalaratri\**. The dying warriors now envision Kalaratri\*, the black (*kali\**) Goddess Night of All-Destroying Time (8,64-67). In some Daksayajna\* myths, the goddess comes in her terrible Mahakali\* or Bhadrakali\* form to do her part in the destruction (*Mbh.* 12:283,31 V; *Vam\* P.* 4,53-57; *Siva\* P.* 2,2,33,11-12). Just as the myth can do without the goddess in this role, so it is easy to imagine the *Sauptikaparvan* without this brief intrusion of Kalaratri\*.

(9 and 10) *Dawn and vengeance*. As dawn approaches (*pratyusakale\**), "having left his foes without a trace, Asvatthaman\*

65 Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains*, p. 81 (my translation); see also *idem*, "Pusan\* édenté," *QII, Collection Latomus*, XLIV (*Hommages à L. Hermann*) (1960), 315-19.

66 See VS 11,9 "By impulse of the god Savitr\* I take thee [the sacrifice] with the arms of the Asvins\*, with the hands of Pusan\*"; Ralph T. Griffith, trans., *The Texts of the White gajur Veda* (Benares: E. J. Longmans, 1899), p. 88. Most prolific with added mutilations are *Linga\* P.* 69,15-20, where Isana\* (!) and Candramas are maimed, Indra loses his head, Vahni his tongue and hands, Yama his staff; and *Kurma\* P.* 15,60-63, where, in addition to these, the munis are kicked in the head; also *Bhag\* P.* 5,17-24 deprives Bhrgu\* of his beard and Daksa\* of his head.

shone forth in this human habitation like the fire at the end of the yuga, having turned all beings into ash" (*yugante* \* *sarvabhutani*\* *bhasma krtveva*\* *pavakah*\*; 8,136); this is a free use of *samdhyā*\* ("twilight") and *pralaya* imagery. Draupadi\* then demands revenge against Asvatthaman\*, and Bhima\* sets out after him. He is soon followed by his brothers and Krishna when the latter says that Bhima\* will be unable to deal with Asvatthaman's\* weapons. Possible connections with the *pralaya* come to mind Bhima-Vayu\* as first to act in the "recreation"; Draupadi-Kṛṣṇa-Srī\* as the earth despoiled of "prosperity"<sup>67</sup> but I doubt that these correlations are any more than coincidental. Draupadi's\* wrath (she has just lost her sons and brothers) and her reliance on the strong-armed Bhima\* (cf. the Kicaka\* story; 4:13-23) are easily explained as logical outcomes of the development of the plot.<sup>68</sup>

(11) *Contest of the weapons*. Taking off after Bhima\* and Nakula, who is acting as Bhima's\* charioteer, Krishna and the rest of the Pandavas\* catch up with them just as Bhima\* is aiming his weapon. Meanwhile, Asvatthaman\* is sitting among a group of rsis\* surrounding Vyasa\* beside the Ganges. Seeing them, Asvatthaman\* picks a blade of grass, converts it into a Brahmasiras\* ("Head of Brahma\*") weapon capable of world destruction, and, "Filled with wrath [*ruṣa*\*], he uttered the terrible word '*apandavaya*\*' ['for the annihilation of the Pandavas\*']. He then released that weapon for the sake of the bewilderment of all worlds. Then in that blade of grass, a fire was produced which seemed about to consume the three worlds" (10:13, 18-20). Immediately, Krishna urges Arjuna, who alone can match Asvatthaman\*, to counteract this weapon; and Arjuna releases his Brahmasiras\* from his bow, wishing only to "neutralize" or "appease" (*saṁyatatam*\*; 14,6) that of his opponent.

<sup>67</sup> On Vayu\*, see EMH, 2, p. 60; on Bhima\* and Vayu\*, see above, n. 38; on Draupadi\* and the earth, see above, Chapter 2, at n. 25.

<sup>68</sup> The undertow of feeling between Draupadi\* and Bhima\* is nicely appreciated by Irawati Karve, *guganta*, pp. 128-32.

Once released, it too "blazed up like the fire at the end of the yuga" (7). At this impasse, "desiring the welfare of all creatures" (*sarvabhutahitaisinau* \*; 13) as well as of the worlds (*lokanam* \*; 15), the two *munis* Narada\* and Vyasa\* take position (*sthitau*) between the two weapons to neutralize their energy. From this station they rebuke the heroes for their rash act of releasing the deadly arms, thus setting up an interesting contrast between the two combatants. To Arjuna is dedicated a long passage (15,1-10) praising the extraordinary ability possible only through *brahmacarya*, truthfulness, and the observation of vows which allows him to withdraw the weapon. Asvatthaman\*, however, having released his weapon out of wrath and fear of Bhima\*, tells the two *rsis*\* that he is unable to withdraw it (11). After further efforts have failed, Vyasa\* can only convince him to relinquish his gem so as to satisfy Draupadi\*. The curse has been made.

Here the closest parallel is found in an unusual version of the Daksayajna\*, although similar episodes are found in other versions of the myth.<sup>69</sup> Krishna is speaking, this time to Arjuna, telling him that when he, Arjuna, fought in the battle it was Rudra, proceeding in front of him, who actually slew his foes (12:330,69). Most interesting, however, is a description of what occurred after this same Rudra had finished his destruction of Daksa's\* sacrifice. His rage unspent, Rudra attacked the *rsis*\* Nara and Narayana\* (= Arjuna and Krishna) in their hermitage at Badari. As they fight, the whole universe darkens, the Vedas are concealed from the *rsis*\*, *rajas* and *tamas* pervade the gods, the oceans dry up, the mountains crack, "and indeed Brahma\* was shaken from his seat" (*brahma\* caivasanaccyutah* \*; 54). "When such signs occurred, Brahma\*, surrounded by the divine host and the high-souled *Rsis*\*, quickly came to the spot where the

69 Brahma\* intercedes often and so, sometimes, do the *Rsis*\* (*Mbh.* 7 :173,47); many versions also speak of a conflict between Siva\* and Visnu\* after the sacrifice is destroyed, sometimes Visnu\* prevailing (*HV*), sometimes Siva\* (*Linga\* P.*).

battle was raging. Joining his hands in reverence, Brahma \* addressed Rudra: 'May it be well [*sivam\**] for the worlds; throw down your weapons for the sake of the welfare of the universe'" (55-56). His intercession works: "Thus addressed by Brahma\*, Rudra, casting off the fire of his wrath [*krodhagnimutsrjan\**], then caused the powerful god Narayana\* to be gratified. . . . And then that boon-granting god, whose wrath is conquered and whose senses are conquered [*jitakrodho jitendriyah\**], became pleased there and was reconciled with Rudra" (61-62).

The contrast between the two gods is thus homologous to the contrast between Asvatthaman\* and Arjuna. As Asvatthaman\* must discharge his weapon, Rudra must "cast off" the fire of his wrath;<sup>70</sup> and as Arjuna (one with Krishna) restrains his weapons, so Narayana\* (one with Nara) has his wrath and senses under control. Moreover, there are parallels in the roles of the intercessors. For the sake of the "welfare of the worlds" Brahma\* on the one hand and Vyasa\* and Narada\* on the other are roused from their "seats" to plead for a cessation of hostilities. A variant of the crucial theme of the unleashing of Siva's\* wrath (*Mbh.* 12:274,45-46) makes it clear that Brahma's\* bargain was no less costly to the world than the one struck by Vyasa\* and Narada\*. In the one case, the fever (*jvara*) from Siva's\* wrath will be dissipated among various minerals, animals, birds, and men, to afflict them, especially the latter, at the times of birth and death. In the other, the detoured Brahmasiras\* will wipe out the last hope of the Kuru line.

(12) *Promise of the "renaissance."* Unable to withdraw his weapon, Asvatthaman\* can only alter its course through a reinterpretation of his curse's meaning: it will go into the wombs (*garbhesu\**; 15,31) of the Pandava\* wives. The Pandavas\*

70 Cf. the Banasura\* myth (*HV* 2,123,16-28) where after Siva's\* *jvara* ("fever") and Krishna's *jvara* fight to a standstill, it is agreed that Krishna will dissolve his into himself (*mayyevaisa\* praliyatam\**; 18) while Siva's\* will be distributed among diseases and deserted things. The connection between the myths is noted by Ruben, *Krishna*, pp. 196-97.

will thus be slain symbolically, with no hope of "rebirth." To console them, Krishna then commits "an imprudent act."<sup>71</sup> He tells them of Uttara's \* pregnancy: being the wife of Abhimanyu and not of the Pandavas\*, she will escape the curse. But Asvatthaman\* overhears and extends the weapon's effect to her. At this point Krishna must promise to intercede. True, he says, the weapon will take effect and the child will be stillborn; but he, Krishna, will give it life. There will be a renaissance after all.

This crucial episode has no true parallel in the "renaissance" of the Daksayajna\* which, as we have seen, concerns only the renewal of Daksa's\* rite through the restoration of the mutilated limbs of the gods. One may accept Biardeau's position that this event is cast in the imagery of the *pralaya*. But my next chapter will present an "older" comparison that will rely not on common images but on similar narratives.

(13) *Asvatthaman's\* fate*. In addition to his promise, Krishna curses the "child-slaying" Asvatthaman\* to reap the fruit of his acts in a terrible destiny:

For three thousand years you will wander over this earth without a companion and without being able to talk to anyone. Alone and with no one by you, you will wander through deserted places [*nirjanan\** . . . *desan\**]. O wretch [*ksudra\**], there will be no place for you in the midst of men. Stinking of pus and blood, you will have your home in inaccessible wastelands [*durgakantarasamsrayah\**]. You will rove about, O sinful soul, infested with all diseases. [16,9-12]

This is the point in the Daksayajna\* myths where Siva\* is given his share: certainly more a blessing than a curse. This is the second "inversion" of the share (see above, item 6): where Siva\* is blessed, Asvatthaman\* is cursed. Both inversions follow an intelligible pattern: positive and optimistic for the divine Siva\*, who takes on the character of the auspicious fire and is blessed; negative for the "human" Asvatthaman\*, who

71 Dumézil, *ME*, I, 217 (my translation).



takes on the character of the inauspicious fire and is cursed. Nonetheless, a closer look shows that Siva's \* share expresses a similar outsiderhood: it is "the remainder [*vastu\**], that part of the sacrifice which [is left] after the oblations have been made" (*SB\** 1,7,3,7; cf. *Bhag\**. P. 4,7,4: the *ucchesanam\**). Thus Dumézil can point to the outsiderhood of Asvatthaman\* as a feature shaped by the character of Siva\*: "Such will be the destiny of Asvatthaman\*, wandering alone in the bush, as does the god Rudra whom he incorporates and who possesses him."<sup>72</sup>

But if Asvatthaman\* receives his "share" elsewhere and is cursed where Siva\* obtains his, on another occasion in the Brahmanas\* Rudra receives a share that brings him even closer to Asvatthaman\*. This is at the end of the Sakamedhah\*, the third of the three seasonal rites which marks the end of the rainy season. The rite concludes with an offering to Rudra Tryambaka, and I include the pertinent passages from *Satapatha\* Brahmana\** 2,6,2:

2. When he performs these offerings, he . . . delivers from Rudra's power both the descendents that are born unto him and those that are unborn [re-emphasized, stanzas 3-4].

[5-9. Cakes are made and taken to Rudra's quarter, the north, and offered on a crossroad to Rudra and his sister Ambika\*:]

10. Now as to that additional [cake], he buries it in a mole-hill, with the text, "This is thy share, O Rudra! The mole is thy animal [victim (*pasu\**)]." He thus assigns to him the mole as the only animal, and he [Rudra] does not therefore injure any other animal. Then as to why he buries [the cake]: concealed, indeed, are embryos [*garbhas\**], and concealed also is what is buried. By this [offering] he delivers from the power of Rudra those descendents of his, that are not yet born.

[11-17. The sacrificial party now returns, having propitiated Rudra. Circumambulations are performed, and then the sacrificer takes the remains of the cakes and fastens them to something high in the northerly direction, saying:]

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 218 (my translation).

17. "These, O Rudra, are thy provisions; therewith depart beyond the Mujavats [mountains]![supplied] with provisions people indeed set out on a journey: hence he thereby dismisses him supplied with provisions whithersoever he is bound. Now in this case his journey is beyond the Mujavats!" "with thy bow unstrung and muffled up," whereby he means to say, "Depart propitious, not injuring us"; "Clad in a skin," whereby he lulls him to sleep; for while sleeping he injures no one' hence he says, "Clad in a skin."

This remarkable passage reads like a ritual text to the early "Daksayajna \*" myths, or vice versa. But more, it seems to provide a ground plan for some of the most prominent themes in the *Sauptikaparvan*: not just the "skin-clad" exile beyond the mountains and the "muffling" of the weapon, but the matter of the "concealed embryos." As A. B. Keith points out,<sup>73</sup> the whole family participates symbolically in this rite, including the Pitrs\* and the unmarried women. It is but a short step to the destiny of the Kuru line: surely Krishna "delivers from the power of Rudra those descendents of his [and of the Pandavas\*], that are not yet born."

(14) *Theological reflections*. In almost every case, the Daksayajna\* draws to a close by offering some sort of theological key to the events that have transpired. And although sectarian interests sometimes prevail, beneath them lies an emphasis on the complementarity of the two gods (see *Mbh.* 12:330,64-66; 12,284, 111-13V; *Linga\** P. 69,89; *Siva\** P. 2,2,43, 12-20). These reflections go back to the Brahmanas\*, suggesting that even there the "Daksayajna\*" myth inspired such a view. After its version, *Satapatha\** 1,7,4 continues with directives on how the Brahman priest, representing Brhaspati\*, should handle the dangerous "foreportion" (*prasitra\**) which has become Rudra's share. Having followed the careful ritual (9-16) and kept the "power of Rudra" (*rudriyam*) from the sacrificer's cattle (*pasu\**),

<sup>73</sup> See Keith's summary, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*, Harvard Oriental Series, vols. XXXI and XXXII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), XXXII (pt. 2), 322.

he eats the *prasitra* \* "with Agni's mouth" (15) and then rinses his mouth with water. Then he is brought his own portion (*brahmabhaga*\*): "Henceforth he watches what remains incomplete of the sacrifice" (*asamsthitam*\* *yajnasya*\*; 18), and maintains silence:

19. Now the Brahman, assuredly, is the best physician; hence the Brahman thereby restores the sacrifice; but if he were to sit down there talking, he would not restore it: he must therefore maintain silence.

20. If he should utter any human sound before that time, let him there and then mutter some Rc\* or Yajus-text addressed to Visnu\*; for Visnu\* is the sacrifice, so he thereby obtains a hold on the sacrifice: and this is the expiation of that (breach of silence) [*vai visnustadyajnam\* punararabhate\* tasyo haisa\* prayasittih\**].

This passage, along with analogous ones, appeared in the last chapter's discussion of the expiatory role that is shared by the Brahmanic\* Visnu\* and the epic Krishna. It now appears that this is a Brahmana\* instance of Visnu's\* absolving function being available directly after the dangerous portion of the sacrifice, connected with Rudra, has been neutralized by "fire" and water.

Similar theological keys to these are found in the *Sauptikaparvan* where, as we have seen, Krishna concludes the narrative with an account to Yudhisthira\* of the former deeds of Siva\* (including the "Daksayajna\*"). But this is not the only place where there is a pause for such reflections. Earlier, as they are being slain, the Pandava\* warriors reflect: "The son of Drona\* in anger could never perform such acts as these in battle; . . . surely through the nonpresence [*asamnidhyad\**] of the Parthas\* has our slaughter been achieved. There is no one able to defeat the son of Kunti\* whose protector [*gotra\**] is Janardana\*" (10:8,115-17). And when the bereaved Kuru king Dhrtarastra\* asks why Asvatthaman\*, so irresistible now, could not have prevented the slaughter of the Kauravas, Samjaya\* (who has been given the "divine eye" by Vyasa\*) answers in much the

same terms: "Surely the son of Drona \* was able to achieve this feat only through the nonpresence [*asmnidhyad\**] of Prtha's\* sons, as also of the insightful Krishna and Satyaki\*" (8,146-47). We have already discussed the background for this "non-presence." Let us now appreciate the symmetry in the theological reflections. In reciting the former deeds of Mahadeva\*, Krishna was responding to the same question from Yudhisthira\* (17,2-6) as was asked of Samjaya\* by Dhrtarastra\*. Where the Kuru king learned that Asvatthaman\* could succeed only by Krishna's absence, the Pandava\* king learned that he could succeed only by Siva's\* presence. This is the same pattern, but this time much clearer, as in Siva's\* potential "involvement" and Krishna's explicit "nonpresence" (*asamnidyam\**; 3:14,14) in the dice game<sup>74</sup> a confirmation also of Held's insight into the complementarity of the dice game and the war.<sup>75</sup>

Thus close correspondences exist between the structure of the Daksayajna\* and the intrigue of the *Sauptikaparvan*. Other themes connected with the sacrifice also suggest that the epic narrative has been fashioned, once again, by poets closely familiar with the ideology of the Brahmanas\*. One might object, on the grounds that there is no eschatology in the Brahmanas\*, that this alignment of the *Sauptikaparvan* with the "Daksayajna\*" has undermined the whole notion of the eschatological character of the epic crises. Here Krishna's version of the "Daksayajna\*" meets such an objection: it took place, he says, "when a *devayuga* had passed" (*devayuge 'tite*; 10:18,1). This could refer to the end of a *Kṛta\** yuga,<sup>76</sup> or to the end of a *mahayuga\**, a full cycle of four ages; but the poets have clearly perceived the eschatological potential of the "Daksayajna\*" myth.<sup>77</sup> In

74 See above, Chapter 4.

75 See Held, *Ethnological Study*, p. 304.

76 So Ganguli-Roy, *Mahabharata*, VII: *Sauptika Parva*, 42.

77 This epic treatment is in fact the only one I have found where the "Daksayajna\*" occurs explicitly at the end of a yuga; cf. *Mbh.* 12:283,1V: "in the period of Manu Vaivasvata." However, at one Sarasvati\* *tirtha\**, "a blessing was formerly uttered by Daksa\* while he was sacrificing: 'Whoever

(Footnote continued on next page)

all the post-Brahmanic \* texts there is a passage which expresses this potential unequivocally, but none more forcefully than the one in the version with which Krishna concludes the *Sauptikaparvan*: "The goddess Earth trembled and the mountains shook. The wind did not blow, nor did the fire, though kindled, blaze forth. And even the constellations in the sky, agitated, wandered about. The sun did not shine, the lunar disc lost its *sri*\*. All confounded, space became covered with darkness [*timerena*\*; cf. 7:173,46 and 13:145,15: *tamasa*\*]. Then, overcome, the gods did not know their domains [*visayanna*\* *prajajnire*\*], the *yajna*\* did not shine forth, and the Vedas abandoned them" (10:18,9cd-12).

Yet if the themes and frame of the Daksayajna\* were found to be appropriate vehicles to carry along the narrative of an eschatological crisis, the deeper question, raised by Dumézil, remains: is there an earlier, perhaps Indo-European, eschatology which has been refashioned here in the matrix of the Brahmanic\* sacrifice?

(Footnote continued from previous page)

dies here, these men shall be conquerors of heaven" (3:120,2); to which the Northern recension adds: "There is also a marvelous thing which occurs in this region: whenever a yuga is waning, there is an appearance of Sarva\* [*Siva*\*], assuming any shape at will, together with his companions and Uma\*" (3,639\*).

## Chapter 13 "Renaissance"

If an Indo-European interpretation of the epic's eschatological crisis is to be extended beyond the common but general theme of a great battle, one must look elsewhere than at Yudhishthira's \* dice play and his less than "idyllic" postwar reign. To put it as cautiously as possible, two figures, Abhimanyu and Pariksit\*, are brought into surprisingly sharp relief when their story and characters are compared with the mythology of Baldr.<sup>1</sup>

First, Abhimanyu offers a more satisfactory definition of the "royal ideal" than Yudhishthira\*. When Samjaya\* begins his account of how this heir of the Pandavas\* died, he describes Abhimanyu as the epitome of the omnivirtuous but essentially trifunctional royal ideal that was outlined in Chapters 7 and 8. In a lengthy but beautiful eulogy (7:33,1-10), the first seven *slokas*\* describe, in roughly trifunctional form, the virtues of Krishna,<sup>2</sup> of each of the Pandavas\*, and of all six together. Then it continues:

8. Those virtues flourishing in Krishna and those virtues in the Pandavas\*that assemblage of virtues was indeed found in Abhimanyu.

1 See above, Chapter 12, following n. 5.

2 Of Krishna it is said (*sl*\*. 2): "In goodness [*sattvam*], deeds [*karman*], and lineage [*anvaya*]; in intelligence [*buddhi*], character [*prakrti*\*], fame [*yasas*\*], and prosperity [*sri*\*], there never was and never will be a man having such virtues [*gunas*\*] as Krsna\*."

*ye ca krsne \* gunah\* sphitah\* .pandavesu\* ca ye gunah\*  
abhimanyau kilaikastha\* drsyante\* gunasamcayah\*.*

9. In firmness [*dhairyam*] he was the equal of Yudhishthira\*, in conduct [*caritam*] of Krishna, and in deeds [*karman*] of Bhima\* of terrible deeds;

10. In beauty, strength, and learning [*rupena\* vikramena\* srutena\* ca*] he was the equal of Arjuna, and in modesty [*vinaya*] of Nakula and Sahadeva. [7:33,1-10]

Nowhere in the epic does a more ample treatment of the virtues retain an equally trifunctional outline. Moreover, it is not only trifunctional in general but in particular: Arjuna, Abhimanyu's true father, is the only one to be individually characterized by single virtues for each function: beauty, strength, and learning.

The significance of this endowment should be apparent. Both the core of virtues that he shares with Arjuna and the full "assemblage of virtues" that he shares with the Pandavas\* and Krishna have been lost to the Kuru line with Abhimanyu's death. And who, "in reality," is Abhimanyu? In the dictionaries of incarnations he is described variously as "the good Varcas [Splendor], the splendid son of Soma" (1:61,86), and as "Soma, who became Subhadra's\* son here having divided himself in two through yoga" (15:39,13). Soma here is certainly the moon, although as I will try to show, certain resonances of the archaic double character of Soma as both sacrificial plant and moon are detectable in Abhimanyu.<sup>3</sup> Dumézil has called attention to the lunar phenomena that attend his birth, and both Hopkins and Dumézil have recognized that the brief sixteen years of his life correspond to the days in the light half of the lunar month (*suklapaksa\**).<sup>4</sup>

3 The age of this double character has long been debated, but it is at least as early as the late Vedas; see most recently Jan Gonda, "Soma, Amṛta\* and the Moon," *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), pp. 38-70.

4 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 91; Duménil, *ME*, I, 245-46.

Disappointingly, however, Dumézil refers to Abhimanyu's link with the moon as one of several divine-heroic associations in the epic that "appear artificial and without consequence."<sup>5</sup> This is an oversight. The dynasty whose virtues and continuity Abhimanyu and his son represent is the "*Lunar Dynasty*" (*candra vamsa* \*, *soma vamsa*\*). And the Vedic Soma whose Varcas he incarnates is a *raja*\*, King Soma, as well.

Dumézil's first-function portrayal of the "ideal" Baldr was not entirely convincing. Baldr does not remind one of Aryaman or Mitra. But let us recall Snorri's description of his virtues: he is "the best of them . . . fair of face and bright . . . you can tell how beautiful his body is, and how bright his hair [from the comparison of his brow to a flower]. . . He is the wisest of all the gods, and the sweetest spoken, and the most merciful."<sup>6</sup> Compared with Abhimanyu, Baldr shows the highest perfection on two levels: wisdom (first function) and beauty (third) but no warrior traits. This may suit Snorri's portrayal of Baldr as the innocent, unarmed victim in the missile-throwing game, but it is not the complete picture that Norse traditions give of Baldr. His death in the *Gylfaginning* is brought about by the fact that he is invulnerable to weapons. And, as several scholars have noticed, Saxo Grammaticus' portrayal of Balderus in the *Gesta Danorum*,<sup>7</sup> the use of his name in the formation of warrior kennings, and perhaps also the meaning of his name,<sup>8</sup> all present him with a martial side. Baldr quite plausibly becomes, like Abhimanyu, an embodiment of the highest virtues of all the functions, not just a first-function figure.

<sup>5</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 245 (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> Cited above, Chapter 12, n. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Elton, *Danish History*, I. 177-90 (Book 3); of the two portrayals, Dumézil's "Balderus and Hotherus," *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 171-92, is to me convincing in demonstrating the priority and reliability of Snorri.

<sup>8</sup> See Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, pp. 112-17; Polomé, "Indo-European Component," p. 68.



Such similarities in the physical and moral descriptions of the two "youths"<sup>9</sup> and others may be cited<sup>10</sup> are not significant by themselves. But if it can be shown that their biographies coincide on a number of major points, there will be reason to regard these two omnivirtuous figures as representatives of a common and ancient eschatological hope.

Jeu Truqué

First, a major focus of Dumézil's discussion was the comparison between the missile game in which Baldr dies and the dice game which sends Yudhishthira \* into exile. Certain differences, among them those varying fates of the two "losers," have cast doubt on whether these two "fixed matches" really have much in common. But if the death of Baldr compares poorly with the exile of Yudhishthira\*, it holds surprising parallels with the death of Abhimanyu.

Arjuna's son has fought illustriously in the first eleven days of the war, but on the twelfth Drona\* promises to take his life. He stipulates that Arjuna must be detained elsewhere on the battlefield, and the Samsaptakas\* (those "sworn-together" never to flee from Arjuna) agree to keep him busy. With Arjuna out of the way, Drona\* commands his troops to form a "circular array" (*cakravyuha\**, var. *padmavyuha\**; 7:32,18, etc.). This singular configuration is described (7:33,12-20) as a sort of mobile circle which can mount an attack, and which, though it includes thousands of warriors, has certain key figures placed on the rim and in the center. When the Pandavas\* (minus Arjuna) find themselves unable

9 Whether plant or moon, Soma is a youth (*yuvan*) or child (*sisu\**; *RV\** 9,16,17). Also, Frigg did not pick the mistletoe because it was "too young"; see above, Chapter 12, at n. 15.

10 "A splendor radiates" from Baldr; Abhimanyu "shines surpassingly" (*atirocata*; 6:69,29) while fighting. Baldr's brow is like the ox-eye daisy; Abhimanyu's eyes are like Krishna's, that is, like the lotus (14:60,7-8; 7:50,30), and he has "beautiful brows" (*subhru\**; 7:55,33).

to break this circle, Yudhisthira \* calls upon Abhimanyu, who tells him that Arjuna has indeed taught him the technique of penetration. "But," he adds, "I shall not be able to come out again if any distress overtakes me" (34,19). He is thus entering a sort of military maze.<sup>11</sup> Bhima\* then gives assurance that he will lead others into the breach to protect Abhimanyu once he has broken through, and the latter sets off. He enters the circular array and for some time gets the best of it; and at one point he performs a noteworthy trick of his father's: "Having encompassed [*kosthakikrtya*\*: "having made a wall around"] him with a host of chariots, collectively [*samghasah*\*] they released showers of different kinds of arrows at him. These he cut off in mid-air by means of his own sharp shafts and then pierced his foes in return" (7:36,10). But while he is careening about displaying his marvelous talents, Bhima\* and the rest of his allies are barred from following him by Jayadratha who uses a boon obtained from Siva\* (who else?) allowing him to harm the Pandavas\* by being able to check all of them "except Arjuna" (*rte\*'rjunah*\*; 3:256,28) once on the field of battle. The pattern that develops is then made clear (7:46,4-5). Jayadratha keeps back Abhimanyu's rescuers from a mobile position outside the circle, closing its gaps wherever necessary. At the same time, Abhimanyu is encircled by six of the foremost Kuru warriors, five of whom incarnate Vedic divinities: Drona\* (Brhaspati\*), Krpa\* (the Rudras), Karna\* (Surya\*), Asvatthaman\* (Mahadeva\* [Rudra]-Antaka-Krodha-Kama\*), and Krtavarman\* (the Maruts). The sixth

<sup>11</sup> Both *cakravyuha*\* and *padmavyuha*\* can designate a maze. Kinjawadekar, ed., *Shriman Mahabharatam*\*, IV: *Dronaparvan*\* (Poona: Chitrashala Press, 1931), facing p. 55, so interprets the former term, showing the diagram of a circular maze with a Nandi\* and Lingam\* in the center, with the Sanskrit caption that it is a "picture of a *cakravyuha*\* well known in Maharashtra.... The right or wrong direction is to be determined by those of good understanding." V. R. Ragam, *Pilgrim's Travel Guide*, pt. II: *North India with Himalayan Regions* (Guntur: Sri Sita Rama Nama Sankirtana Sangham, 1963), p. 175, cites a "Padma-Vyuha" at Porbandar, Gujerat, which "pilgrims enter ... and after going round in it they finally manage to come out with great difficulty."

and least significant is Brhadbala \*, whom Abhimanyu kills in a last blaze of glory (46,22); but his position is filled by an apparently unnamed son of Duhsasana\* (oldest of Duryodhana's ninety-nine brothers). Drona\* marvels at the prowess of this *kumara\**, boy, "whose opening [flaw, loophole] the furious *maharathas\** do not see" (*antaram . . . na pasyanti\**; 47,22), and reveals how he may be taken. By well-placed shots, Abhimanyu can be deprived, piece by piece, of all his equipment. The six warriors then cut away his armor and weapons and, after a brief flourish in which Abhimanyu courses through the air like Garuda\* (47,35) and reminds everyone of Krishna by holding up a chariot wheel (47,39-48,1), he is reduced to his last weapon, the mace. With this he engages in a final duel with Duhsasana's\* son. They knock each other to the ground; and then, "having risen up first, the son of Duhsasana\*, that increaser of the fame of the Kurus, struck Subhadra's\* son on the head with his mace" (*gadaya\*murdhnyatadayat\**; 48,12).

The role of Drona-Brhaspati\* in seeing to all the details of this slaying, the participation of *all* the figures on the Kuru side who incarnate Vedic divinities, the use of the mace on the "head" all allow one to interpret Abhimanyu-Soma's death within the context of the ritual pounding of the Soma.<sup>12</sup> The six warriors who surround him may not find exact counterparts in the Soma rite,<sup>13</sup> but on other levels parallels are striking. As Bhima\* was to be Abhimanyu's protector, Bhima's\* father Vayu\* was the Vedic "protector of Soma" (*RV\** 10,85,5; and see notes 9 and 12). Yet even this may just be an Indian rehandling, perhaps quite early, of a more ancient drama.

12 On Soma's head (*murdhan\**) in the *RV\**, see R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 45-46, especially *RV\** 9,27,3: "This bull, heaven's head, Soma, when pressed is escorted by masterly men [*nrbhir\**] into the vessels."

13 But see Keith, *Philosophy of the Veda*, I, 326: In the Soma sacrifice, "the earth thrown up from the pit (of the four sounding holes) serves to make six fire hearths or *Dhisnyas\**, which extend from north to south, and are appropriated to" various priests.

Baldr is also slain when encircled. Like Abhimanyu he is surrounded by gods (whom Snorri refers to euhemeristically as men).<sup>14</sup> Strangely, too, the figures who make the two slayings possible, and against whom vengeance is taken Hodr and Jayadrathaboth stand outside the circle.<sup>15</sup> In one case, the figure who represents the plant of immortality (Soma) is slain, while in the other his counterpart is slain with the plant of immortality (mistletoe).

These analogies, and this one striking inversion, seem stable enough that certain differences can be seen as divergences. Clearly the most apparent is that Abhimanyu is slain while the great battle is in progress, whereas Baldr's death is an important foreshadowing of the Ragnarök. Here Saxo's version is of interest, for he places Balderus' (Baldr's) conflict with Hotherus (Hodr) in the context of a strange battle probably, as. Dumézil says, a transposition of the Ragnarök itself in which Hotherus defeats the euhemerized gods, who side with Balderus, by cutting off the tip of Thor's club (that is, his hammer).<sup>16</sup> Here too a parallel emerges, for just as Thor, Balderus' second-function protector, is rendered inoperative, so is Bhima \* kept from helping Abhimanyu by Jayadratha. The upshot of these remarks is that the tradition which Snorri represents, which, as we have seen, "pacified" its ideal figure by recording only his first- and third-function virtues, may have idealized him further, dreams and all,<sup>17</sup>

14 See above, cited Chapter 12, at n. 16.

15 There is no encirclement in Saxo's version, although Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 180-83, shows that Baldr's invulnerability and the theme of "inoffensive bombardment" are probably transferred to Hotherus (Hodr). However, both Hotherus and Jayadratha must endure penances in the wilds to receive the divine favor that will enable them to slay their foes: Hotherus from certain forest virgins (Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, p. 190: "a cross between the Norns and the Valkyries"; see Elton, *Danish History*, I, 188), Jayadratha from Siva\* (see above).

16 See Elton, *Danish History*, I, 184, and Dumézil, *Myth to Fiction*, pp. 165-66 (on Thor's club as his hammer) and 191 (on Saxo's *theomachia* and the Ragnarök).

17 On the "night phantoms" which Balderus has within the context of his conflict with Hotherus in Saxo's account, see Elton, *Danish History*, I, 186.

out of the scene of battle. One might think of Baldr's death as having taken place originally within the framework of the battle of the Ragnarök, toward its beginning, like the death of Abhimanyu in the *Mahabharata* \*. In each case, a youth is the first to die of the divine company,<sup>18</sup> and to die, moreover, at the latter's hands.

A second difficulty with these comparisons is that unlike Baldr, Abhimanyu does not appear to die in a rigged game, a *jeu truqué*. The parallels that Dumézil cites elsewhere for Baldr's death make it unlikely that Snorri's tradition has innovated here.<sup>19</sup> Yet the encirclement of Abhimanyu has a certain gamelike quality. He knows the way into the "maze," but not the way out. As cited above,<sup>20</sup> when he is in the "circle-array" he is able effortlessly to turn aside weapons in mid-air. And on two additional occasions leading up to his last fight, he is encircled in arrays which clearly foreshadow Drona's\* *cakravyuha*\*: each time, fighting fearlessly and with ease and aided by Arjuna he emerges unscathed.<sup>21</sup> Thus, like Baldr, he is involved in a sort of game,<sup>22</sup> each one to a certain extent invulnerable in his circle, each able to make weapons turn aside in mid-air. He has far more invulnerability than Yudhishthira\* does when the latter enters the game of dice.

<sup>18</sup> Abhimanyu does die on the twelfth day of the eighteen-day war, but up to then, of the major heroes, only Bhishma\* has been "slain," and he is not really slain.

<sup>19</sup> Dumézil, *Loki* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1948), pp. 239-46; *idem.*, "Balderiana minora," *Indo-Iranica. Mélanges présentés à Georg Morgenstierne* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964), pt. 3, "Les pleurs de toutes choses et la resurrection manquée de Baldr," pp. 70-72.

<sup>20</sup> See above, after n. 11, citing 7:36, 10.

<sup>21</sup> See 6:57,1-5: five warriors "surrounded him on all sides" (*samantat-paryavarayan*\*); and 6:97,29-33: Bhishma\* has him surrounded (*paryavarayat*\*), having made a wall or ring around him (*kosthakikrtya*\*) as in the passage (7:36,10) cited above. Both times Arjuna comes to his aid.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, according to an interpolation (*Adiparvan*\*, App. I, no. 42), Abhimanyu's game has been fixed all along; his "father" Soma would only allow him to join the celestials on earth for sixteen years, at which point he would be slain in a *cakravyuha*\* in Nara and Narayana's\* absence (line 12).

## Lamentation

If Baldr's death brings weeping from all and everything but Thokk, Abhimanyu is incontestably the most wept-for figure in the *Mahabharata* \*. Arjuna's long lament (7:50,19-60) mentions over and over, as if in a refrain, how Abhimanyu was loved by others: by Subhadra\*, by Krishna, by Draupadi\*, by Kunti\*, and by Pradyumna (25-29 and notes). He says: "If I do not see my son, I will go to the abode of Yama" (27 and 32). This parallels Baldr's brother Hermod's descent to Hel to see if Baldr can be brought back. Abhimanyu is also deeply mourned by Vasudeva, father of Krishna and Subhadra\* (14:59,4-8). And two descriptions are given of Subhadra's\* touching lament. In the first (7:55), she, too, says she will go to Yama's abode (10), and then in a sequence that begins with a reinforcement of Abhimanyu's trifunctional character, she prays that her son may obtain the end of all those who have led good lives in the three functional zones<sup>23</sup> and other widely varying capacities as well (*munis*, good kings, good hosts, good wives, good husbands; 23bc-31). In the second account (14:60,24-29), Krishna tells how she ran wailing like a female osprey from Kunti\* to Uttara\*, asking where Abhimanyu had gone and imploring Uttara\* to tell her when he returned. She leads the weeping, then, as did Frigg.

It is my impression that such lamentations over death, and the ritualized themes they might imply, are unusual in Hindu India.<sup>24</sup> The analogues with Baldr, and with the slain or

23 7:55,20-23ab: (1) "May you obtain the way of those who are liberally disposed sacrificers, of brahmins of accomplished soul, of those who have practiced *brahmacarya*, of bathers at sacred *tirthas*\*, of those who are grateful, liberal, and attend their gurus; of those who have given thousands of *daksintas*\*; (2) may you go the way of those heroes who never turn back while fighting, of those who have fallen in battle after having slain their foes; (3) of those who give away thousands of cattle, who give in sacrifices."

24 See Fred Clothey, "Skanda-Sasti\*: A Festival in Tamil India," *HRJ*, VIII (1969), 249-50: comparing the enthronement festival of the Tamil Murukan\* with ancient Near Eastern patterns, he notes the absence in the

(Footnote continued on next page)

"martyred" youths of other Indo-European traditions,<sup>25</sup> are thus all the more striking, even considering the typically Indian handling of the events.

"Nonresurrection"

Several scholars have spoken of the "nonresurrection" of Baldr and the fact that the true lesson of his death is that, as Thokk says, Hel will "hold what she has." Edgar Polomé in particular has given an attractive reading of this episode. Arguing that Snorri merely guesses that Thokk is Loki and that she is actually Hel herself, he says: "Her very words give us a better idea of the real meaning of the Baldr myth: through his death, Baldr has entered the land of no return. There is no question of resurrection. The core of the theme of Hermodr's descent to Hel is accordingly the same as that of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh or the Greek myth of Orpheus: no one can escape death."<sup>26</sup> I cannot agree with Polomé's interpretation of Baldr's death,<sup>27</sup> as he ignores the question of Baldr's return, but I am interested in his idea that Baldr's disappearance holds a profound lesson about the finality of death. Both Baldr and Abhimanyu hold a close rapport with a plant of immortality: Baldr is slain by the mistletoe,

(Footnote continued from previous page)

former of a death-lamentation scenario. On Indian *sastric* \* injunctions against tears (with their polluting effects), especially those for the dead and those wept in death rites, see Johann Jakob Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (New York: Dutton, 1930), pp. 420-22, n. 1.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Siyavosh\* in the *Shah-nama*\*; see Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, *Ta'ziya: Das persische Passionspiel*, Skriften Utgivina av K. Humanistiska Vetenskapssfundet i Uppsala, 44, 4 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), pp. 8-9; see also Dumézil's comparison of Baldr with Sosruko, the Nart hero of Caucasus legends (see n. 19): Sosruko is "slain" after a *jeu truqué* and must weep for himself every spring, wishing he could enjoy the earth again; and all the streams which run down from the mountain are in fact his tears. But he will not return (at least not in the present state of his legend). See "Balderiana minors," pt. 3, P. 72.

<sup>26</sup> Polomé, "Indo-European Component," pp. 73-74.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-78.

Abhimanyu is slain *like* the Soma. In each case their connections with the plants of immortality hold a lesson about death that can be read on either the human or the divine plane: both die prematurely, and both are the first to die of their illustrious company that of the gods, or that of the gods in human form (see n. 18). Their deaths foreshadow doom and destruction.

But these are just the general lessons to be drawn from the two youthful deaths. Just as the Scandinavian tradition seems to have lent gravity to the scene by deepening it with Thokk's riddles on the themes of immortality, death, and non-resurrection, so the Indian tradition has paused to reflect on the very same matters. In a lengthy passage which the Critical Edition, on questionable grounds,<sup>28</sup> relegates to an appendix, Vyasa\* makes one of his sudden appearances. Before Arjuna returns to camp to learn of Abhimanyu's death, Vyasa\* seeks to console Yudhisthira\*. Once again the epic presents a significant juxtaposition of the main heroic narrative with traditional myths and legends. Here, basically two stories are involved. First, Vyasa\* tells Yudhisthira\* about a king who, having lost his son, learned from the rsi\* Narada\* about the origin of death (Mrtyu\*), the reluctant Dark Red Lady

<sup>28</sup> These stories appear in all but the Sarada\* and Kasmiri\* manuscripts, which have conceivably rejected them on the same grounds as the CE editor, S. K. De: that they interrupt the flow of the narrative. I am also not convinced by V. S. Sukthankar's implication, "Epic Studies, VI, The Bhrgus and the Bharata: A Text-Historical Study," in P. A. Gode, ed., *V. S. Sukthankar Memorial Edition, I: Critical Studies in the Mahabharata\** (Bombay: Karnatak, 1944), 309-10, that because the brahmin Bhargava\* Rama\* is included among the sixteen kings in the *Dronaparvan\** but not in the *Santiparvan\** version (which the CE retains at 12:29-31; 248-50), that the whole *Dronaparvan\** passage is a Bhargava\* interpolation. There is no reason why the Mrtyu\* story should be part of a Bhargava\* insert; if the Bhargava\* redactors have tampered with the text, it can only be on the matter of making Bhargava\* Rama\* the sixteenth "king." Moreover, there are details in the Suvasthivina\* story that point to the *Dronaparvan's\** as the more basic (or at least coherent) account: see the clumsy role given Indra in the *Santiparvan\** (12:31,17), and the slaying of the boy by a *vajra*-turned-tiger rather than by robbers (31,27-34).



(*Dronaparvan* \*, Appendix I, No. 8, lines 118-19) whose tears, shed at the thought of killing creatures, ultimately became their diseases at Brahma's\* will (Il. 208-25). This feminine personification of Death, who appears where one might expect Yama, thus brings to mind Polomé's remarks about Thokk and Hel: in the Hindu account, even Death's tears cannot prevent death; in the Norse, "Thokk will weep dry tears for Baldr." This could point back to a common tradition, or it could be no more than a fantastic coincidence, each episode provoking similar meditations on weeping and death. If it is a coincidence, however, it is not the only one. The Indian meditation also takes up the theme of nonresurrection.

Vyasa's\* second story concerns a king named Srnjaya\* who obtains a boon from the rsis\* Parvata and Narada\* and asks for a son of the following description: "Endowed with virtues [*gunanvitam*\*], a possessor of *yasas*\* and *kirti*\* [fame and glory: two second-function virtues], of *tejas* ["spiritual majesty"], a tamer of foes whose urine, excrement, phlegm, and sweat shall all become gold" (Il. 305-7). There is good reason, as we shall see, to regard this story as a parable concerning a trifunctional endowment of virtues, with the third function filled by this Midaslike capacity to produce excessive and dangerous wealth (*dhanam*; 1. 309). The boy is given the name Suvarnasthivin\*, "Gold-Spitter," and soon his father has everything around him fashioned from gold. But one day the boy is abducted by greedy robbers who chop him up and, finding no gold, then hack each other to bits (Il. 315-26). When Srnjaya\* sees his son slain, his lament brings consolation from Narada\* in the form of the longer of the two versions of the *Sodasaraajakiya*\*, "The Story of the Sixteen Kings" (Il. 327-872), biographical sketches of famous figures of legend. Each vignette yields the moral that grief is unsuitable for such a child when greater men by far have died. When Narada\* has finished, he asks Srnjaya\* whether his grief is gone, and, when he learns that it has, he favors the king with the

resurrection of his son: "I give you back your son, wantonly slain by robbers like an unconsecrated sacrificial animal [*pasumaproksitarn* \*], raising him up from a noxious hell" (Il. 877-78). And the child appears. Now comes the Indian meditation on the matter at hand: why could this fantastic lad be resurrected while Abhimanyu cannot? Vyasa\* shows that this has been the central question all along (functional traits numbered in parentheses):

(2) Unpracticed at arms, timid, slain without having donned his armor, (1) not having sacrificed, and (3) childless, this one [Suvrnasthivin\*] has thus returned to life. (2) Heroic, brave, and practiced at arms, having churned up foes by the thousands, Abhimanyu has gone to heaven, slain while facing into battle. Your son has gone to those imperishable regions that are obtained by (1) *brahmacarya*, wisdom, learning, and desirable sacrifices.... Therefore, not reaching out to possess anything [any new virtues], surely it is not possible to bring back the son of Arjuna, slain in battle and gone to heaven. [Il. 893-902]

Abhimanyu's place in heaven is thus, like Yayati's\* and Duryodhana's,<sup>29</sup> secured by a full trifunctional complement of virtues. It can, of course, be no accident that all three are Lunar Dynasty kings. Moreover, this is the third time that we have noticed a trifunctional endowment in Abhimanyu.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Suvrnasthivin\* has fulfilled none of the virtues his father bargained for and can thus return to earth, resurrected. The explanation for the nonresurrection of Abhimanyu is thus typically Indian, although "early" in the sense that its concern for heaven (*svarga*) contradicts the law of *karman*. But one important, indeed prophetic matter stands out in Vyasa's\* comparison of the two youths. Abhimanyu has clearly fulfilled himself in the second- and first-function virtues

<sup>29</sup> See above, Chapter 8, at n. 58 (Yayati\*) and Chapter 11, especially at nn. 9-11 (Duryodhana).

<sup>30</sup> See above, citing 7:33,1-10 (beginning of chapter) and 7:55,20-23 (n. 23).

which are juxtaposed so neatly in the passage just cited. But a third-function quality, perhaps rare but clear,<sup>31</sup> stands out in its solitude: Suvarnasthivin \* left the world unarmed, unfulfilled as a sacrificer, and childless; Abhimanyu left the world armed and fulfilled at sacrifices. What about the child?

The Matter of the Embryo: "Renaissance"

Baldr's reappearance as ruler of the renewed world is a miracle. And although the secret which Odinn murmurs in his ear before he is placed on the funeral pyre (*Vafthrudnismal*, stanzas 54-55) is a mystery, it seems to presage his rebirth in this "other world."<sup>32</sup> Only slightly less a mystery than the All-Father's words are the machinations of Krishna in reviving the stillborn child of Abhimanyu. The miracle is achieved by the Indian "All-God" by a method totally consonant with the prophetic hints of Kṛṣṇa\* Dvaipayana\*. In the passage cited earlier, in which Subhadra\* implores her brother to keep his word and revive the baby like the three worlds,<sup>33</sup> she prefaces her plea with a eulogy: "Surely, O Kesava\*, you have a soul of dharma [*dharmatma\**], are truthful [*satyavan\**], and have true valor [*satyavikramah\**]. It behooves you to make this

31 See Chapter 9, at n. 26, where Yudhisthira\*, after claiming responsibility for the deaths of Bhīṣma\* and Drōṇa\* (first-function sins) and Karna\* (second-function), admits to the third-function sin of "lineage destruction" for causing the "youthful" Abhimanyu's death, a sin like that of "slaying an embryo" (12:27,3 and 19-20). As we saw in Chapter 8 the notion of continuity of the family (*kulam*) sometimes falls into place in lists of royal virtues as a virtue of the third function: see 8:5,27 (Yayati\*) and 9:5,18 (Salya\*); also a similar usage of the "virtue" *arya\** at 5:39,50; cf. also 1:103,11: Gandhari\* permitted to marry Dhṛtarāṣṭra\* because of his "lineage, fame, and conduct" (*kulam\*khyatim\*ca vṛttam\**)perhaps also trifunctional.

32 See Dumézil, "Balderiana minora," pt. 1, p. 67, saying that Odinn's whispered words probably concern the impossibility of present efforts to bring him back and his eventual destiny as Odinn's own successor. See also Polomé, "Indo-European Component," p. 81, n. 72, citing pertinent bibliography: one must, however, appreciate the multivalence of this theme: "initiation" and eschatology are not mutually exclusive.

33 See above, Chapter 12, above n. 41.

word conform to truth" (*tam \*vacamrtam\**; 14:66,16). As we saw in Chapter 8, she thereby calls attention to a definite set of qualities: two from the first function (dharma, *satya*) and one from the second (*vikrama*); and it is this very set which Krishna puts into effect by attesting to it three times in succession when he chants the dead baby back to life. Here the passage, which appears in full in Chapter 8,<sup>34</sup> is condensed to the essentials:

18 I do not speak falsely, it shall be true . . .

19 I have never turned back in battle . . .

20 Dharma and brahmins are dear to me . . .

21 I have never brought about hostility with Vijaya [Arjuna] . . .

22 *Satya* and dharma are ever established in me . . .

23 Kamsa\* and Kesin\* were righteously slain by me . . . [14:68]

The cadence is heightened by the repetition in each *sloka*\* of one of the following phrases, or their equivalents: "accordingly, let this child live"; and "by that truth [*tena satyena*] may this child live." The latter, as we saw in Chapter 8, is an "act of truth" formula,<sup>35</sup> and I can now answer the question raised there. Though this formula concerns only Krishna's second-function traits directly (it is used only in *slokas*\* 21 and 23), it activates an "act of truth" that concerns as seemingly it must to alter a royal destiny<sup>36</sup> virtues or achievements from each of the three functions. For this is the final effect of Krishna's words: "When these words were uttered by Vasudeva\*, the child, O bull among men, softly, softly, O great king, quivered, now having sentence" (*sanaih\*sanairmaharaja\*praspandata sacetanah\**; 24).

34 See above, Chapter 8, above n. 38.

35 See above, Chapter 8, following n. 30, and nn. 16, 32-34 on W. Norman Brown's studies of the "act of truth."

36 See not only above, n. 29 (Yayati\* and Duryodhana), but now the "truth" or bargain of the *rsis*\* Parvata and Narada\* which makes it possible for Suvarnasthivin\* to be resurrected.

Abhimanyu has thus entered heaven not only with his first- and second-function achievements, but, thanks to Krishna, with a child now living on earth. But can the miracle of the Indian "renaissance" be paired with the return of Baldr? Pariksit\* is not, after all, Abhimanyu. Here, in my opinion, is where myth and epic diverge in easily intelligible patterns. Baldr is a god living and dying in the divine time of myth; the ideal which he personifies can thus move from the not-so-golden age of the past to the eschatological hope of the future. Abhimanyu dies and Pariksit\* lives in the heroic time of dynastic legend: the ideal they personify is thus restricted to human time, to a single turning of the ages, here of the relatively recent (in Indian terms) past. But because of that event which closes the "heroic age," our age, the dismal Kali yuga, is still, thanks to Krishna, begun with a line of kings descended from Pariksit\*the so-called Lunar Dynastyin which the ideal represented by Abhimanyu is still intact. As an embryo, Pariksit\* "began to grow in the womb [of Uttara\*] like the moon in the light half of the month" (*suklapakse\*yatha\*sasi\**; 14:61,17). And: "Very handsome, he was unto all creatures like a second Soma; . . . Prosperous, truth-speaking, of firm fortitude [*srimansatyavag-drdhavigrama*\*37], . . . beloved of Govinda; . . . born in Uttara's\* womb when the Kuru family was almost extinct [*pariksina*\*]; . . . [*Pariksit*\*] was skilled in *rajadharma*\* and *artha*, a king endowed with every virtue" (*yuktah\*sarvagunairnrpah*\*; 1:45,10-14). This is the "renaissance" of the Lunar Dynasty, the Soma Vamsa\*, from the last yuga into our present one.

Finally, the parallel between Baldr and Abhimanyu is more than a matter of two youths whose affiliation with plants of immortality holds a lesson about death, or even about death and rebirth. Surely it is the greatest tragedy that the youngest should die first. This youth represents a

37 See above, Chapter 8, above n. 40, interpreted trifunctionally.

"thwarted ideal" in a most specific sense an unused potential, a trifunctional potential placed on reserve in an eschatological hope for the return of *the completely endowed king*. In this respect, these unfulfilled youths are the male counterparts of the various virgins who, as Dumézil has so convincingly shown, service the king in numerous Indo-European traditions (myths, legends, rituals) by holding in reserve the essences of the three functions.<sup>38</sup> One indication of a common store of ideas is that a term which the *Mahabharata* \* uses for its two virgin rescuers of royal lines Madhavi\* and Draupadi\* finds a close analogue in a description of Abhimanyu. Whereas Madhavi\* and Draupadi\* are each described as *sarvadharmopacayini*\*, "a promptress of every virtue,"<sup>39</sup> Abhimanyu, as stated in Samjaya's\* eulogy of him at his death, has *gunasamcayah*\*, "assemblages" or "accumulations of virtues" which he shares with, or rather by which he surpasses, the trifunctionally described Arjuna, the Pandavas\*, and the omnivirtuous Krishna. Moreover, it is Krishna who makes the transfer of virtues possible. As I suggested in Chapter 8, Krishna, at one point, is Draupadi's\* Galava\*: each of these two male figures can facilitate the transfer of a feminine personification of sovereignty and, in the process, of sovereignty's virtues.<sup>40</sup> This is also, in effect, true in the present episode. It is through Krishna that the miracle of the rebirth of the Kuru line, with "all the virtues" intact, takes place. Indeed, the text seems to build a symbolic identity between Krishna and Abhimanyu that makes Krishna's intermediary role, as "reactivator" of the virtues, intelligible. As we have seen, Krishna and Abhimanyu have identical eyes (see n. 10) and identical virtues (7:32,2 and 8; see also 1:213,70); and Abhimanyu's last weapon, with which he goes down fighting, is a *cakra*. The significance of Krishna's constant solicitations

38ME, II, 362-74.

39 See above, Chapter 8, at n. 52.

40 See *ibid.*

of his cherished nephew during the latter's birth, marriage, and training in weapons becomes clear.<sup>41</sup>

These completely endowed youths, Abhimanyu and Baldr, thus act as repositories of royal virtues which, through the agency of Krishna in one case and of Odinn in the other, are carried into a future age. Here, however, there is a disjunction: the hope for their returns hinges on different "unfulfilled" virtues. In the Norse myths we are carried into the future by a first-function virtue, Baldr's unrealized judgments, while in India this is achieved by a third-function virtue, a child to continue the lineage. Presumably it is more although this is fundamental than just a case of theology (or myth) on the one hand and epic (with mortal heroes) on the other. In Scandinavia, as Dumézil has pointed out, the ideal of an empowered judge, righteous and impartial, is a theme that runs through several myths and symbols;<sup>42</sup> and in India, especially in the India of the *Mahabharata* \*, what theme could be more far-reaching than the duty to have a son?

<sup>41</sup> See above, Chapter 4 (beginning) and Chapter 5 (beginning).

<sup>42</sup> Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains*, pp. 67-76.

## Chapter 14 Conclusions

If doubts have been aired about some of Dumézil's comparisons of Norse mythology and the *Mahabharata*\*, and if more reliable connections have been observed between the epic's crisis and the ideology of the Brahmanas\*, the Norse myth of the Ragnarök has still proved a suggestive counterpart to a central *Mahabharata*\* sequence. Beneath the modeling of the *Sauptikaparvan* on the Brahmanic\* sacrifice lies that of the death and rebirth of the Soma Vamsa's\* ideal ruler on the Soma sacrifice. And beneath or beyond both of these, the full structure of an Indo-European eschatological myth emerges, once again involving a *jeu truqué*, a great battle, and a renaissance. Accordingly, one can still quote Dumézil about the possibility of such a myth: "That this conception appears neither in the *Rg\***Veda* nor in all that depends directly upon it does not prove that it did not exist. The thought of the Vedic singers is concentrated on the present, on the regular attendance of the gods, for which the exploits of the mythic past serve as the guarantees: the horizons of the future did not interest them."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Dumézil's more recent work changes the picture on the roles of Krishna and Siva\* in such a myth. His study of the *Mahabharata*'s\* Sisupala\* legend throws light on an archaic, perhaps para-Vedic, opposition of complementarity between Visnu\* and Rudra.<sup>2</sup> He thus no longer

<sup>1</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II. 221.

<sup>2</sup> See above, Chapter 4, n. 2; from the parallel roles of Visnu-Krishna\* and Thor, Siva\* and Odinn, Dumézil coins the terms "*dieux clairs*" for the former pair, "*dieux sombres*" for the latter. However, three affinities occur

(Footnote continued on next page)



seems so ready to reduce Visnu \* and Siva's\* double epic appearances which we have noticed on a number of occasions<sup>3</sup> to recent adaptations.

These reflections, by way of conclusion, lead to a point concerning Indian theology the age of this relationship between Visnu\* and Rudra is uncertain,<sup>4</sup> but it is most likely at least Brahmanic\*.<sup>5</sup> Thus interpretations which introduce the notion of sectarianism into the early relations between these gods are inadequate. It is probably erroneous to think of the Dakṣayajna\* as a sectarian myth,<sup>6</sup> or even (in a historical sense) as a myth that "represents [Siva's\*] assimilation into the orthodox pantheon."<sup>7</sup> Likewise, one must discard the traditional view of the *Mahabharata*\* as a Vaisnavite\* or Krishnaite sectarian poem with Saivite\* sectarian interpolations. To be sure, interpolations abound, some of them sectarian, but the prevailing mood of the epic has nothing to do with sects.<sup>8</sup> The *Mahabharata*\* is a poem where "all the gods" are active

(Footnote continued from previous page)

between Krishna and Odinn, all involving great battles: see Chapters 5 and 12. One wonders whether, through these comparisons with Krishna, we have begun to integrate disparate elements in the mythology of Odinn.

3 See above, Chapters 3, 4, 7 (following n. 53), and 12.

4 See Gonda, *Visnuism\* and Sivaism\**, p. 87: though the two gods "maintained no direct relationship with each other" in the *Veda*, he points to two *RV*\* verses (7,40,5 and 4,3,7) which may, depending on uncertain readings, point to some relation and even opposition. See Karl Friedrich Geldner, trans., *Der Rig-Veda*, Harvard Oriental Series, vols. XXXIII-XXXV (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), I, 420, speaking, in his note to 4,3,7, of "the opposition between Visnu\* and Rudra as the procreator (Erzeuger) and the destroyer" (my translation), the former apparently connected with Pusan\* and the seed (*rétas*), the latter with Agni and a firm missile weapon.

5 See above, Chapter 12, item 14.

6 Bhattacharji, *Indian Theogony*, p. 124.

7 O'Flaherty, "Origin of Heresy," p. 322.

8 See EMH, 2, p. 28, n. 1: "One hesitates to speak of sectarian puranas\*. The tendency is only too strong to think of Siva\* and Visnu\* as being mutually exclusive, something which is not even true in the interior of the sects" (my translation).

in human form, with Visnu \*incarnate in Krishna at their head, or at their "center," while Siva\* remains typically remote until the moment when he must, after all, get his share and do his work. The relationship between Visnu\* and Siva\* is thus situated within, or "above," the structure(s) of polytheism.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, their relations to the polytheistic gods are central in the epic crisis, just as they are in the Dakṣayajna\* myth. In one case, Krishna presides over the "sacrifice of battle," then absents himself for Asvatthaman\*. In the other, Visnu\* "is the sacrifice," yet he is never there when Siva\* gets his remainder share. No doubt many formulas could express the multivalent polarity of the two gods,<sup>10</sup> but the lesson here seems well expressed by the opposition: "Pervader" (Visnu\*vis\*-) and "Outsider" (Rudrarudis, Latin, "rough, raw, rude, unwrought, uncultivated").<sup>11</sup> Whatever one may think of these far-flung etymologies, they refer to an intriguing paradox: what possible relation, what underlying unity, can exist between the Outsider and the Pervader?

As to the matter of Indian polytheism, the epic must be appreciated in its correlation with a whole mythology, a mythology, moreover, with an Indo-European past. Yet there is a point where I would disagree with Dumézil over the nature of the relation between myth and epic in the *Mahabharata*\*. First, with regard to the question of individual transpositions, Dumézil speaks of a "veritable pantheon" which has been transposed into "human personages by an operation as meticulous as it was ingenious."<sup>12</sup> These transpositions

<sup>9</sup> See Dumézil's remarks, *ME*, II, 127-8 (cf. p. 82), on the relations of the two gods to the three functions: Visnu\* overflowing them (as from within?), Rudra avoiding them (as from without?).

<sup>10</sup> See Gonda, *Visnuism\*and Sivaism\**, pp. 102-4.

<sup>11</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, II, 86; also discussed in *idem.*, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 418, n. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 21 (my translation).

attest to "an 'author's' will,<sup>13</sup> and the poets themselves emerge as "erudite, skillful, loyal to a design,"<sup>14</sup> perhaps an academy of priests or several generations of a single school who would have composed the work "before writing, at the time of the four Vedas and of the fifth."<sup>15</sup> All this makes it possible for Dumézil to speak of the heroes as inflexible "copies" of their mythical prototypes.<sup>16</sup> To me, this seems too mechanical and too short-term a process. It says nothing about certain "difficult" transpositions in which the heroes' and heroines' characters and actions differ markedly from what one knows of their mythic counterparts, and it does not account for actions and themes that lack mythic prototypes.

Second, as we saw in Chapter 12, Dumézil regards certain basic moments in the unfolding of the epic crisis as transpositions of an ancient Indo-European eschatological myth, presumably still known at the time of the poem's composition. Thus the epic story, in these essential features, is a "myth learnedly humanized if not historicized."<sup>17</sup> However, in favorably discussing Wikander's treatment of the battles of Brávellir and Kuruksetra \*, Dumézil is forced to make an unconvincing distinction. It is not necessary, he says, to interpret the Battle of Brávellir, "like the *Mahabharata*\*, " by a historicized eschatological myth; for whereas the crisis in the *Mahabharata*\* bears a striking resemblance to that in the myth of the Ragnarök, the Battle of Brávellir particularly in the role of Odin does not.<sup>18</sup> Thus, despite the affinities (which Dumézil recognizes) between the *Mahabharata*\* and the Battle

<sup>13</sup> Dumézil, *Du mythe au roman: La Saga de Hadingus* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), p. 8 (my translation).

<sup>14</sup> Dumézil, *ME*, I, 21 (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> *La Saga de Hadingus*, p. 8 (my translation).

<sup>16</sup> *ME*, I, 633; see above, Chapter 1, above n. 36.

<sup>17</sup> *ME*, I, 21.

<sup>18</sup> See above, Chapter 12, n. 2.

of Brávellir, affinities which concern *epic material*, he sees the most basic features of the Indian epic story in terms of *transpositions from myth*.

The question thus is: can one speak of the basic outline of the *Mahabharata* \* as presenting a distinct epic crisis? Or must one explain the crisis solely in terms of some prior myth? In my view, the evidence presented by Wikander and others<sup>19</sup> is strong enough to suggest that the Indo-Europeans knew a story, in certain basic details like the *Mahabharata*\* about a dynastic struggle which brought to an end their "heroic age." This story itself would seem to have told of an epic crisis of what could justly be called "eschatological proportions": a break in the continuity of the dynastic line, an end to the "age of heroes," a rupture or transition marked by the "moral and physical monstrosities" of the heroes. Should this be so, it would hardly be surprising were some connections to have been perceived, some correlations to have been made, between the crises of the two orders: an epic crisis concerning the end of the heroic age and a mythic crisis concerning the end of the world.

This process of correlating epic with myth would most likely have gone on for a long time, in some cases involving rearrangements of the epic story by the introduction of mythic themes in a "humanized" form. Thus one can certainly speak of transpositions, including eschatological ones. But transposition cannot be regarded as the only key to the "mythic exegesis."<sup>20</sup> More fundamental is what I call a method of correlation or correspondence.

If the main skeleton of the *Mahabharata*\* story is old, and if, as Dumézil and others like Biardeau have shown, ancient as well as comparatively recent mythical material is reflected in

<sup>19</sup> I hope to take up this problem in another work; for other scholars, see above, Chapter 1, nn. 86-88.

<sup>20</sup>ME, I, 21.

it,<sup>21</sup> can one imagine Indian poets of one period even assuming it could have all been known at one time transposing *all* of this mythical material, from vastly remote periods, into one "humanized" or "historicized" form? The "meticulous operation" of the exacting epic bards, carefully transposing all of this at once, is unrealistic. Rather, a long process seems likely in which an epic story of ancient contours, probably at no point completely free of mythic elements, was continually compared and integrated with mythic themes in fact, with myths and structures of different periods. The process would have to have been conservative to explain certain long-standing para-Vedic, Indo-Iranian, and even Indo-European myths whose influences, as Dumézil has demonstrated, show through. But the way in which they took their footing in the *Mahabharata* \* would seem to have been not so much through a process of "transposition" as through a process of correlation between two levels of continually changing and growing tradition: myth and epic. The epic poets would thus emerge not so much as programmers, transposing one set of information into another form,<sup>22</sup> but as *rsis*\*, in this case the *rsis*\* of the "Fifth Veda" whose "school" is covered by the name of the elusive but ever-available *rsi*\* Vyasa\*. By calling attention to this term for visionaries and poets, I refer in particular to the *rsis*\*' faculty of "seeing connections," "equivalences," "homologies," and "correspondences" discussed by Jan Gonda.<sup>23</sup> This faculty of "seeing connections" would have involved the epic poets not only with correlations between myth and epic,

21 This process has not stopped. In South India, for instance, Sakta\* mythology has been transposed onto Draupadi\*.

22 Taking Dumézil's view to its conclusion, the form of a story fully "transposed" from a prior level of meaning would be allegory, not epic. Although it is popular in India to view it as such (for instance, Sukthankar, *Mahabharata*\* p. 102), I do not see the *epic* as an allegory.

23 Gonda, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), especially his definition of the Vedic term *dhih*\* pp. 68-69; see also Louis Renou, *Religions of Ancient India* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 18.

but also between epic and ritual especially that of the Brahmanic \* sacrifice. Thus the "mythic exegesis" must coexist with a "ritual exegesis." Moreover, if this was the procedure and orientation of the poets, it helps to explain why they have told certain myths at key points in the epic narrative. In some cases, they seem to have perceived correlations between myths and adjacent portions of the epic plot, correspondences which were meant to deepen one's awareness of the meanings on both the mythic and the epic planes, and ultimately, perhaps, to afford a glimpse of broader unities.

If you like this book, buy it!



# INDEX

## A

Abhimanyu, 86, 102, 105, 200, 211-12, 214, 226, 240, 311, 325, 330, 336-46, 348-53, *see also under Arjuna and Krishna*

Abhiras, 16

Archilles, 29, 35, 36, 37, 41, 44, 46, 158, 220

Act of Truth, 207-9, 211-13, 219, 350 *see also satya*

Adityas \*, 152, 173-74, 189, 218

Aentas, 36, 44

Afrasiyab\*, 54, 58, 299

African sources, 14, 72-73

Agni, 89, 123, 128, 150-52, 154, 207, 222, 231, 319, 322-24, 326, 333, 355

Ahalya\*, 167, 232, 235-36, 272

Ahriman, 299

"all the virtues," "every virtue," 167, 173-74, 189-90, 197-202, 207, 209, 213, 222-23, 228, 254, 337-38, 351; *see also royal virtues*

Amairgen, 130-31, 134-35, 139

Amba\*, 92

American Indian legends, 56

*amsa\**, *see bhaga\**

Anahita\*, 147, 153

Aniruddha, 136

Anjanadevi\*, 65, 66

Apala\*, 165, 179-80

Apantaratamas\*, 62

Ares, 35

Aristotle, 40

Arjuna, 82-83, 103-7, 123-27, 158, 181, 194, 220, 226-27, 237-38, 249-52, 257-59, 261-65, 308, 324-25, 327-29,  
and Abhimanyu, 86, 214, 240, 337, 339-40, 342-44, 346, 352;  
and Bhishma\*, 135, 239, 233-45, 249-50, 284;



and Duryodhana, 69, 82-83, 103-7, 124-27,  
and Indra, 27, 38, 41, 42, 167, 237, 249, 257, 261-65, 284,  
and Karna\*, 38, 41, 242, 253, 256-57, 261-66,  
among Pandavas\*, 27, 70, 85, 167, 195,  
and Yudhisthira\*, 186, 197, 240, 247, 253-54, 255, 265, 288, *see also* Nara *and* undo Draupadi\* *and* Krishna  
Aryaman, 302, 305-8, 338  
Astaka\*, 207-10, 219  
Asuras, 91, 107, 118, 126, 131, 136, 156-62, 164, 261-64, 266, 276-77; *see also* Devas and Asuras  
Asvamedha\*, 148, 154, 225, 235, 248, 292-93, 296, 308  
Asvatthaman\*, 35, 69, 70, 127, 194, 250-53, 266, 309, 311, 313-31, 333-34, 340; *see also* undo Krishna *and* Siva\*  
Asvins\*, 28, 123, 152, 167, 173, 326  
Australian Aboriginal heroes, 35, 56  
*avatara\**, avatar, 35, 62, 75, 102, 111 119, 163, 227, 257, 296, 299, 310  
**B**  
Bahlikas\*, Bahikas\*, 273, 276-78  
Balarama\*, Baladeva, 65-67, 74, 82, 123, 173  
Baldr, Balderus, 47, 302-8, 336, 338-39, 342-47, 349, 351-53  
Bali, 136-37, 152, 159-65, 170, 176  
Bana\*, 136, 299, 329  
Bascom, William, 31  
Bhaga, 302, 305-8, 326  
*bhaga\**, "share" (also *amsa\**), 145, 170, 177, 268-69, 279, 281, 283, 286, 289, 316, 317-19, 322-24, 330-33, 356  
Bhagadatta, 244  
*Bhagavad Gita\**, 19, 83, 114-21, 124-28, 131, 139, 162, 196-97, 237, 256, 257-59, 277, 281, 288, 296, 310, 312  
Bhima\*, 27, 42, 45, 61, 83, 87, 123, 158, 195, 220, 250-51, 261, 288, 310, 324-25, 327-28, 340-41  
Bhisma\*, 42, 54, 92, 124, 200, 244-50, 266, 267, 281-85;  
as authority on dharma, 97, 122, 133, 194, 196, 214, 247-48,  
in battle, 58, 135, 248, 283;  
death of, 58, 117, 214, 237, 239, 247-50, 252, 265, 284-85, 288-89, 343, 349;  
as potential king, 200, 214, 281;  
and vows, 38-39, 245-46, 248-50, 282  
Bhudevi\*, 68, 107, 167, 266, 278-79, *see also* Earth, goddess

Bhurisravasa\*, 45, 244, 288-89

Biardeau, Madeleine, 15, 16, 20, 28, 86, 139-40, 166, 276, 282-83, 319, 322, 327, 355, 358;

on Arjuna, 41, 159;

on *Bhagavad*

[< previous page](#)

page\_362

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

Biardeau, Madeleine (*cont.*)

- Gita* \*, 114-20, 126;
- on Draupadi\*, 67-68, 80-81,
- on Nara-Narayana\*, 84, 85, 90, 290;
- on *pralaya*, 90, 114-20, 125-26, 309-12, 320;
- on Siva\*, 80-81, 85, 90, 94-96, 101;
- on Sri\*, 145;
- on Vyasa\*, 84;
- on Yudhisthira\*, 197

Bowra, Cecil Maurice, 48-49, 53

Brahma\*, 116, 123, 160, 161, 200, 233, 310, 316, 327, 328-29, 347

Brahmanas\*, Brahmana\* literature, cult, mythology, 15, 94-95, 105, 147-56, 165, 171, 179-80, 219, 221, 231-32, 271, 285, 287, 292-95, 312, 313, 317, 318, 320, 322, 325, 326, 331-32, 334-35, 354, 355, 360

Brávellir, Battle of, 30, 35, 58, 110-13, 130, 276, 300, 357-58

Brelich, Angelo, 32, 33, 36, 40, 44-47, 199

Brhaspati\*, 150-52, 156, 235, 311, 326, 332, 340-41

Brown, W. Norman, 208-9

Bruno, 110-12, 130

Buddha, the, 32, 45, 67, 182, 199, 210

Buddhist themes, concepts, legends, 56, 64-67, 181-86, 193, 199, 207, 209, 210, 219

## C

*cakravyuha*\*, 339-43

caste, *varna*\*, 63, 195-96, 250-52, 256, 259, 273, 274, 277, 281-82, 283, 285

Celtic myth and legend, 28, 30, 39, 45, 48, 52, 53, 55, 57, 130-31, 134, 175-81, 184-86, 190-91, 201, 203-4, 208, 318

Ceylon, Ceylonese legend, 181-86, 190-91

Chadwick, H. Monro, and Nora Kershaw Chadwick, 35, 36, 47-49, 55, 56

China, 55, 57

Christian traditions, 32, 35, 56

color symbolisms, 60-76, 112, 283

Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 163, 179

Critical Edition of *Mahabharata*\* Poona, 15, 144-46, 156, 222, 249, 253, 261, 272, 277, 346

Cúchullain, 35, 36, 39, 45

## D

Dahlmann, Joseph, 16, 313

Daire, sons of Daire, 175-78

Daksa\*, Daksa's\* sacrifice, 215, 299, 313-17, 320, 322-23, 325-26, 328, 330-32, 334-35, 355 -56

Damayanti\*, 201, 209, 215, 221

*danam*\*, 193, 196, 205-7, 210, 214, 216-17, 221, 280

"dark age," 54-57

Darmesteter, James, 58, 59

deer, as symbol of sovereignty, 178, 180, 185, 186-88, 190, 206

Dema Divinities, 56

Devas, gods, 115

Devas and Asuras, 98, 105-6, 116, 135, 155-56, 205, 233, 236, 238, 290-91; *see also* Asuras

dharma, as Virtue, Law, 73-74, 190-92, 195, 197, 200, 223, 248, 257, 273, 275-77, 310;

dharma as a single virtue, 157-58, 195, 206, 207, 211-12, 215-20, 247-50, 280;

dharma as virtues in general, 192-93, 198, 205, 207, 222-24, 352; *see also under* Bhisma\*, Dharma, Krishna, Siva, *and* Yudhisthira\*

Dharma, 27, 42, 122, 136, 144, 167, 173, 174, 188-89, 197, 198, 207, 219, 247-49, 320

Dhrtarastra\*, 42, 43, 46, 58, 90, 110-12, 117, 122-23, 133-34, 137, 165, 200, 210, 241, 305-8, 315, 334

Dhrstadyumna\*, 81, 82, 89, 250, 252-53, 318-24

dice, dice game, 81, 86-90, 93-101, 102, 111, 136, 159, 171, 224, 226, 306-7, 316, 334, 336, 339, 343

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 129, 138

Divali\*, 95

Douglas, Mary, 274, 277-78, 281

Draupadeyas, 5 sons of Draupadi\*, 45, 240, 324-25

Draupadi\*, 200-201, 215, 226-28, 319, 327-28, 344, 352;

and Arjuna, 83, 85, 169, 186, 190, 226-27;

at dice game, 69, 73, 88-90, 159;

as goddess, 66, 67, 68, 359;

in *Jatakas*\*, 63-67;

and Karna\*, 156, 226-28, 282, 311;

as Krsna\*, 60-69;

and Madhavi\*, 223-24, 352;

marriage with Pandavas\*, 27-28, 50, 54, 61, 79-85, 96-99, 147, 156, 159, 177-78, 186, 311;

and Siva\*, 80-81, 83-85, 96-99, 166-67, 177-78, 311;

and her sons, 240, 324, 327;

and Sri\*, 28, 42, 62, 64, 67-68, 89, 96-99, 144-47, 166-74, 177-78, 184, 190, 192, 223-24;

and Visnu\*, 64, 75, 83-85, 96-99;

and Yudhisthira\*, 69, 97, 178, 197, 227; *see also under* Krishna

Drona\*, 124, 245, 250-54, 280-83, 285, 311, 339-41, 343;

death of, 117, 127, 239-40, 250-54, 265, 282, 285, 288-89, 291, 319, 321, 349;

and *satya*, 237, 251, 254

Drupada, 60, 83, 84, 103-4, 138, 169, 173, 280

Duhsasana\*, 58, 121-22, 133, 341

Dumézil, Georges, 15-17, 19-20, 27-29, 36, 40-41, 45, 52, 53, 57-59, 74, 139-40, 154, 158, 196, 217, 221, 273, 284, 285, 311, 318, 319, 326, 331, 335, 337-38, 345, 353, 354, 356-59;

on *Bhagavad Gita*\*, 120;

on Indo-European eschatology, 28, 300-309, 342-43, 349, 354;

on Indra, 229-32, 237, 259;

and Pandavas\*, 27-28, 195, 219, 237;

on Sisupala\* legend, 46, 57, 87, 175;

on Sri\* and Draupadi\*, 80, 146-48, 155, 166-71,

on "three steps," 128-32, 135, 138;

on Yayati-Madhavi\* legend, 20, 39, 57, 181, 188, 202-10, 219, 225, 238; *see also* "three sins of the warrior"

[< previous page](#)

**page\_363**

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

Durga \*, 67, 315

Duryodhana, 46, 73, 80, 87, 90, 103-7, 121-27, 132-37, 288-90, 299-300, 306-7, 348;

death of, 58, 237, 288-89,

and Salya\*, 213, 241, 257, 267, 270; *see also under* Arjuna, Karna, Krishna, *and* Yudhisthira\*

Dvapara\* yuga, 28, 52, 94, 97

Dvaraka\*, 65, 67, 93

Dyaus, 285

## E

Earth, goddess, 107, 240, 251, 262, 266, 269-72, 275, 278-79, 280, 282-86, 291, 327, 335, *see also* Bhudevi\*

Edgerton, Frankhn, 88, 118

Ekanamsa\*, Ekadasa\*, 66-67

Eliade, Mircea, 19, 28, 31, 278

## F

fate, fatalism, 33-35, 302, 305-7

Fenrir Wolf, 305

lethal priests, 128-29, 132, 138

"five former Indras," myth of; "Indras among men," 81, 84, 88-89, 94, 96-99, 145, 147, 152, 169-80, 182, 184-86, 189-90, 195, 200, 239, 254, 264, 313

Flaith, Flaith Érenn, 175-81, 184-85, 190

Freud, Sigmund, 40, 43

Freia, Freja, 109

Frigg, 303, 339, 344

## G

Galava\*, 204-6, 211, 222, 225, 352

Ganga\*, Ganges, 96, 160-61, 170, 177, 180, 190, 225, 239, 246, 273, 275, 327

Ganguh, Kisari Mohan, 13, 14, 62, 63, 84, 158, 160, 222, 224, 226, 253, 271, 289

Gandhari\*, 122, 288, 315

*gets, gessa*, 39

Germanic myths and legends, 49, 102, 108-9, 354-55

Gesar, 14, 35, 36, 45

*Gesta Danorum*, see Saxo Grammaticus

Ghatotkaca\*, 244

Gilgamesh, 14, 35, 36, 345

Godan, 108-9, see also Odinn

Gonda, Jan, 143-44, 150, 168, 202, 217, 285, 287, 293, 316, 355, 359

Gopas, 16

Gopis\*, 16

Greece, Greek myth and legend, Greek heroes 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 40, 41, 44-47, 48 54, 55, 57, 130, 199, 345

*gunas*\*, three "strands" of matter, 68, 70-71 196;

as "qualities" or "virtues," 192, 194 196-201, 206-7, 224, 352

## H

Haraldus Hyldetan, 35, 45, 58, 110-12, 276

*Hartvamsa*\*, 66

Heestermann, J. C, 95, 101

Hektor, 35, 37

Hel, 303-5, 344-45, 347

Held, G J., 16, 68-71, 82, 87, 94-96, 106, 334

Helen of Troy, 29, 36

Heracles, 36, 57, 158, 220, 230, 238

Hermod, 304, 344-45

heroic age, 19, 48-59, 131, 351, 358

Hesiod, 31, 36, 37, 51-52, 54

Hodr, Hotherus, 302-3, 305-6, 342

Holtzmann, Adolf (nephew), 16, 73, 290, 313

Holtzmann, Adolf (uncle), 16, 73

Homer, 30, 36, 40, 43, 48

Hopkins, Edward Washburn, 16, 61, 79, 144, 337

## I

Iceland, 53

*Itad*, 29, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 41, 44, 48, 130

Indra, 91, 96, 123, 150-69, 170-73, 182, 220, 235, 357, 279, 284-85;

and Asuras, 131, 136, 154, 156-64, 176-79, 217, 233-34, 258, 261-65, 271-72, 291,

his fall and restoration, myth of, 233-37, 242-43, 272, 279, 292-93, 313;

sins of, 47, 167-69, 229-38, 271-72, 291; *see also* "five former Indras," myth of, *and under* Arjuna, Siva\*, Sri\*, *and* Visnu\*"

inversion theory" of *Mahabharata*\*, 44

Iran, Iranian myth and legend, 53, 54, 55, 130, 147, 153, 166, 178, 189, 208, 299-300, 304, 307, 311, 345, *see also* *Shah-nama*\*

Ireland, *see* Celtic myth and legend

Israel, early traditions, 54, 55, 274, 281

## J

Jacobt, Hermann, 74-75, 79

Jagannatha\*, 67

Jaiswal, Suvira, 64-66, 74, 143-44

Jarasamdha\*, 87, 91, 92, 134, 276, 311, 322-23

*Jatakas*\*, 64-67

Jayadratha, 38, 237, 244, 340-42

Jensen, Adolf, 56

Johnsen, Gosta, 155

Jupiter, 128, 129, 138

## K

Kalaratri\*, 315, 326

Kali\*, 68

Kah, Kah Yuga, 28, 52, 62, 63, 94, 97, 308, 351

Kali\* (Satyavati\*), 60, 68, 73

Kamsa\*, 16, 41, 65, 66, 92, 93, 122, 212, 350

Kane, P V, 193

Karna\*, 38, 41-42, 43, 73, 194, 199, 225-27, 254-66, 281-85, 311, 340;

death of, 35, 117, 239, 261-66, 284-85, 288-89, 349;

and Duryodhana, 122, 255, 257, 260-61, 281;

as potential king, 200, 214, 225-27, 281;

and Salya\*, 255-57, 259-60, 272-77, 281, *see also under* Arjuna, Draupadi\*, Krishna, *and* Yudhisthira\*

Karve, Irawati, 42

Kathakali, 71



[< previous page](#)

page\_364

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

Kauravas, 43, 94, 103-7, 121-26;

and Pandavas \* 13, 68-70, 73, 80-82, 98, 102-5, 111, 121, 135, 143, 238, 278, 282, 310; *see also under* Krishna\*

Ker, W P, 40, 48-50, 52, 56

Key Khosrow, 58

Khandava\* forest, 86, 311

kingship, 183-85, 188, 190, 198-211, 213-14, 218-21, 239; *see also under* sovereignty and royal virtues

Kirk, G. S., 31, 51

Krappe, Alexander H., 144, 188

Krishna, 16-18, 19, 42-43, 45, 60-76, 79, 85, 143, 194, 196, 200, 253, 308, 314, 319, 327, 336-37;

and Abhimanyu, 86, 240, 325, 339, 341, 344, 349-53;

absences of, 73, 86-101, 314-16, 333-34;

as ambassador, 111, 128-39, 225;

and Arjuna, 61, 86, 88, 103-7, 110, 114-15, 118-19, 123-27, 135, 194, 197, 212, 237-38, 244-45, 248-50, 256-65, 288-89, 291, 312, 327, 329, 350;

and Asvatthaman\*, 309, 315, 330, 333-34, 356;

at bedside of, 102-7, 240, 291;

as charioteer, 104, 110,

and dharma, 73-74, 83, 90, 99-101, 118-20, 132, 133, 138-39, 225, 250, 258, 267, 287, 289-90, 292, 295, 350;

and dice, 90, 93, 97-100;

and Draupadi\*, 81-83, 85, 88-90, 145-46, 226-28, 352;

and Duryodhana, 83, 103-7, 121-26, 132-37, 225, 240, 289-90,

and Kamsa\*, 66-67, 92;

and Karna\*, 70, 225-28, 244, 257, 260-65, 282;

and Kauravas, 103-7, 121-26, 132, 137;

and Lunar Dynasty, 211-13, 219, 275-76, 311-12, 330, 349-53;

and Odinn, 108-13, 353, 354-55;

and Pandavas\*, 13, 69, 82-83, 90-94, 100, 102-5, 107, 113-14, 121, 123, 137-38, 211, 228, 244, 256, 289-91, 314-15, 332;

and Pariksit's\* revival, 211-13, 219, 311-12, 330, 350-51;

and sacrifice, 101, 105, 293;

and Salya\*, 241-42, 256-57, 267-71, 318;

and sins, 229, 237-38, 244, 251, 262-63, 280, 287-91;

and Sisupala\*, 91-92, 196;

and Siva\*, 94, 97-101, 125, 136, 313, 328, 329, 332-34, 354;

and Sri\*, 143, 145, 227-28;

theophanies of, 124-28;

and "three steps," 132-35, 137-39, 238, 295;

and Visnu-Narayana\*, 16-18, 61, 64, 88-89, 101-2, 105-7, 112, 118, 135-39, 146, 194, 227, 257, 261-65, 293, 295-96, 333, 356;

and Yudhishthira\*, 87, 88, 93, 100, 132, 134, 195, 197-98, 244-45, 248, 250-51, 267-71, 275-76, 280, 288-89, 292-93, 295-96, 318, 323, 333; see also *avatara\**, *Bhagavad Gita\**, *Narayana\**, and *Vasudeva\**

Krpa\*, 70, 245, 252-53, 311, 316-17, 320, 323, 340

Krsna\* (Kanha\*) Draupadi\*, 19, 60, 64, 66, 67, 82, 89, 144, 168

Krsna\* Dvaipayana\* (Kanhadipayana\*), 19, 60-61, 65, 112, 349

Krtavarman\*, 70, 124, 311, 316-17, 320, 323, 340

Kunti\*, 80, 105, 195, 198, 200-201, 224, 225, 227, 283, 344

Kuru Dynasty, *see* Lunar Dynasty

Kuruksetra\*, 107-8, 110, 113, 114, 273, 275, 286, 357

Kuvanna\*, 183-85, 188

## L

*laksanas\**, 45, 198

Laksmi\*, 97, 143, 147, *see also sri\* and Sri\**, *Sri-Laksmi\**

Langobards (Lombards), 108-9

Laden, Christian, 16

Lévi, Sylvain, 105-6, 120

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 31, 45

Littleton, C. Scott, 29, 46

Livy, 129, 138

Loki, 47, 136, 299, 303-4, 306, 345

Ludwig, Alfred, 16, 70-71, 313

Lug, 35

Lugaid Laigde, and brothers, 175-79, 185, 190

Lugaid-Red-Stripes, 204

Lunar Dynasty, 13, 69, 199-200, 203, 211-13, 214, 223-24, 275-76, 311, 325, 329, 332, 337-38, 348, 351-52, 354

## M

*Mabinogton*, 30

Madhavi\*, 57, 181, 188, 203-6, 211, 222-26, 352

Madra, Madrakas, 256, 259-60, 272-75, 277-78

Madri\*, 241, 273

*Mahavamsa*\*, 181-83

Maitreya, 88

*Markandeya\* Purana*\*, 147, 154, 167-69, 231-32, 236, 238, 271

Maruts, 311, 320, 340

Mathura\*, 16

Matsya, 98, 275

Maya, 86

Mayon, Mayavan, 67

Medb of Gruachan, 39, 57, 203-4, 224-25

mistletoe, 303, 339, 342, 345-46, 351

Mithra, 130

Mitra, 27, 150-51, 153, 219, 246, 302, 306-8, 320, 338

Mrtyu\*, 346-47

## N

Nahusa\*, 234-36, 242-43, 272, 279, 280-81, 292

Nakula, 27, 152, 187-88, 195, 224, 241, 273, 324-25, 327

Nala, 198, 201, 209

Namuci, 159, 258-59, 261-64

[< previous page](#)

page\_365

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

Nara, 18, 61, 88, 194, 257, 328-29, 343

Narada \*, 69, 91, 160-62, 177-78, 225, 318, 328-29, 346-47, 350

Naraka, 107

Narayana\*, 18, 61, 62, 84-85, 88, 90, 96, 98, 99, 102, 116, 146, 147, 163, 194, 257, 310, 316, 328-29, 343; *see also* Visnu\*

Narayana\* Gopas, 104, 106

*Narayaniya\**, 61

Niall, and brothers, 176-79, 185, 187, 190

Norse myths and legends, 28, 45, 48, 55, 57, 58, 109-13, 136, 230, 276, 299-309, 311, 336, 338-39, 342-47, 349, 351-53, 354, 357-58

## O

Odinn, 29, 35, 36, 102, 108-13, 300, 301, 303-5, 349, 353, 354-55, 357

*Odyssey*, 54

Odysseus, 55, 130

Oedipus, 40

Oldenberg, Hermann, 16-17, 79, 131

Olo Vegetus, 111, 276

Orpheus, 345

Otto, Rudolf, 119-21, 124-26, 128

"overanxious maiden," story, 80-81, 166-67, 169, 174, 189

## P

Pancalas\*, 68, 80, 249, 252, 275, 280, 316-22

Pandavas\*, 61, 82-83, 90-94, 96-99, 102-5, 107-8, 137-38, 144-56, 177-78, 222, 247, 299, 307-8, 316-17, 324-25, 329-30, 336-37, 340;

births of, 27-28, 96-98, 167, 173,

and sins, 229, 237, 244, 253-54;

in *Yaksaprasna\** episode, 185-91; *see also under* Draupadi\*, Kauravas, and Krishna

Pandu\*, 46, 70, 200, 225, 273

Parasurama\*, 74, 194, 346

Pariksit\*, 200, 211-13, 214, 219, 308, 336, 305-51

Parvati\*, 94, 96-97, 171

*pasu*\*, "victims," "animals," "cattle," 148, 284, 320-24, 331, 332, 348

Pater Patratus, 129, 134-35, 138

Patroklus, 37

Paulus Diaconus, 108-9

Polomé, Edgar, 301, 304, 345, 347, 349

polyandry, *see* Draupadi\*: marriage with Pandavas\*

Pradyumna, 91, 123, 344

Prahlada\*, 156-59, 162, 217

Prajapati\*, 105-6, 149, 150, 170, 274, 295, 320, 322

*pralaya*, 90, 114-20, 126, 128, 299, 309-12, 327, 330

*prayascitta*\*, *prayascitti*\*, "expiation," 292, 294-95

Puranas\*, Puranic\* mythology, 31, 93, 115-16, 118, 139-40, 179, 295, 299, 309-10, 314, 316, 317, 323-24, 326, 331, 332, 355; *see also* *Markandeya*\* *Purana*\*

Purl, 67

Purusa\*, *Purusa*\* *Sukla*\*, 128, 147, 203

Purusarthas\*, 195

## R

Radha\*, 16

Radin, Paul, 56, 57

Ragnarok, 36, 301, 304-5, 342-43, 354, 357

Rajasuya\*, 87, 91, 95-96, 100-101, 111, 198, 219, 275

Raksasas\*, 98, 123, 277

Rama\* Dasaratha\*, 18, 44, 50, 54, 74-75

*Ramayana*\*, 18, 49, 52, 74, 266

Rashnu, 130

Rees, Alwyn, and Brinley Rees, 130, 204

*Rg*\* *Veda*, Vedic myths and terms, 36, 131-32, 135, 139, 155, 179-80, 209, 218, 219, 231, 246, 257, 264, 284, 299, 302, 305-7, 320, 354-56

Ringgren, Helmet, 34-35

Ringo, 111, 276

Rome, Roman myths, legends, histories, rituals, 28, 30, 45, 55, 128-29, 134, 138-39, 230

Rostam, 54, 130

Roy, Pratap Chandra, 13, 14; *see also* Ganguli, Kisan Mohan

royal virtues, 189-90, 195, 198-211, 213-28, 280

Ruben, Walter, 16-17, 64, 65, 66, 79, 82, 87, 92, 104-5, 16, 133, 237, 241, 256, 267-68, 271, 288

Rudra, 95-96, 101, 123, 125, 320-24, 328, 331, 354-56; *see also* Siva\*

Rudras, 311, 320, 340

Rukmini\*, 62, 91, 145

## S

Saci\*, 62, 145, 147, 154, 166, 168-69, 235-36, 242, 272

Sahadeva, 28, 152, 195, 222, 224, 241, 273, 324-25

*sakhi*, *sakhyam*, "friend," "friendship," 89, 103, 106, 119-20, 232, 234, 256-61, 264-66, 272, 280

Sakuni\*, 94, 95, 100, 122, 306

Salva\*, 91-93, 249

Salya\*, 241-43, 245, 255-57, 259-60, 265-79, 280-86, 288;

death of, 213, 267-71, 282;

and "dirt," 259, 272, 277-78, 283, 286;

and the earth, 266, 269-72, 278, 280, 283, 323;

as exemplary king, 266-67, 270, 276, 281, 323; *see also* Karna\*, Krishna, Madra, *and* Yudhisthira\*

Sarasvati\* 147, 150, 152, 153, 273, 275

Sarpedon, 36

*Satarudriya*\*, 94

[< previous page](#)

page\_366

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

*satya*, 153, 157-58, 193, 195, 202, 206-1, 214, 216-19, 246-47, 251, 254, 265, 280, 350, 351; *see also* "Act of Truth"

Satyaki \*, 70, 122, 124, 132, 244, 314, 334

Satyavati\*, 60, 68, 73

Saubha, 91-92

Savitr, 45, 150, 152, 326

Saxo Grammaticus, 30, 58, 109-13, 130, 276, 338, 342

Scandinavian myths and legends, *see* Norse myths and legends

Sharer, Robert, 274, 275

*Shah-namo*\*, 19, 30, 34, 35, 44, 54, 58, 130, 178, 189, 299-300, 345

Sibi\*, 207-10, 219

Sikhandin\*, 239, 249, 325

sins of the sovereign, 231-38, 254

Sisupala\*, 38, 57, 87, 91-93, 175, 196, 230, 238, 267, 354

"Sixteen Kings, Story of," 346-49

Siva\*, 16, 68, 80-81, 92, 97-101, 166-67, 171-75, 215, 249, 269, 313, 322, 325, 328-35, 354-56;

and Asvatthaman\*, 35, 194, 309, 311, 317, 319, 320, 330-31;

and Daksa's\* sacrifice, 315-17, 320, 323, 325-26;

and dharma, 83-85, 94, 99-101, 169;

and dice, 94-101;

and Indra, 96, 171-75, 177-78;

and Pandavas\*, 96-98, 340, 342;

as Pasupati\*, 322-24;

at *pralaya*, 310-11; *see also* Rudra and under Draupadi\*, Krishna, Sri\*, and Visnu\*

Siyavosh\*, 35, 345

Snorri Sturluson, 302, 304, 338, 342-43, 345

*Sodasarakjiya*\*, *see* "Sixteen Kings. Story of"

Soma, 150-53, 154, 231, 341-42, 345-46, 351, 354

Sosruko, 345

South Indian traditions, 67, 68, 80, 167, 226, 344, 359

sovereignty, 97, 134, 149, 152, 159-65, 172, 175-91, 192, 195, 215, 224, 228, 229, 238-39, 352



Sraddha\*, 151-52

*sri*†, "prosperity," "beauty," 87, 90, 99, 143, 148-49, 154-55, 201, 213-16, 220-21, 267, 270, 280, 335, 351

Sri\*, Sri-Laksmi\*, 67-68, 75-76, 144-47, 149, 166-74, 177-78, 188, 190, 203, 221, 223-25, 227-28, 270-71, 296;

and Asuras, 157-66;

autonomy of, 162;

in Brahmanas\*, 143-56;

and five Indras, 81, 84, 96-99, 147, 169-80, 184-86;

and Flaith, 175-81, 184-85, 190;

inconstancy of, 156, 163-66,

and Indra, 96-98, 150-66, 168, 170-73, 176-79, 188, 190, 225;

and Kuvanna\*, 184-85;

and Rukmini\*, 145-46;

and Saci\* 62, 145, 147, 168;

and Siva\*, 81, 84, 96-98, 171-75, 177-78, 184;

and sovereignty, 149, 152, 156, 159-65, 172;

and Visnu\*, 73, 83-85, 98, 144-46, 161-62, 173, 177-78, 227; *see also under sri*†, and "Svayamvara mythologem"

*Srisukta*\*, 147, 153

Srnjaya\*, 346-48

Starker (Starcatherus), 57, 230, 238

Stem, Rolf-A\*, 45, 50, 54

Subhadra\*, 67, 86, 102, 105, 211-13, 312, 344, 349

Sukthankar, Vishnu S., 16, 42-43, 79, 104-5, 120, 346, 359

Surya\*, Sun, 38, 41, 199, 264, 283-85, 311, 326, 340

Suvarnasthivin\*, 346-49

Svayamvara\*, 69, 79, 81-85, 86, 92, 155-56, 186, 190, 226

"Svayamvara\* mythologem," 155-56, 162, 186, 190-91

T

*Tain Bó Cuailnge*, 30, 39

*tejas*, 148-49, 152, 157-58, 167, 174, 196, 201, 202, 213, 215-17, 220-21, 233, 236, 242, 280, 285, 347

Thokk, 304, 344-47

Thor, 302, 305, 342, 354

"three Krsnas\*," 60-76, 112

"three Ramas\*," 74-75

"three sins of the warrior," 48, 57, 93, 167, 171, 174, 182, 229-31, 238, *see also* sins of the sovereign

Tibet, Tibetan epic, 35, 36, 45, 50, 54, 57

Trasadasyu\*, 36

*trimurti\**, 68, 116

Tripathi, Gaya Charan, 131, 137

Tripura, 92, 299

Turner, Victor, 20, 21, 37, 50-51, 54-55, 71-74

Tvastr\*, 231-33

## U

Ubbo Frescius, 58

Upanisads\*, 193, 195-97, 207, 219

Usas\*, 150, 320, 322

Uttanka\*, 120

Uttara\*, 102, 211, 237, 311, 330, 344, 351

## V

Vac\*, 147, 150, 152, 155-56, 162, 165, 178

Vajapeya\*, 96, 206

Vamana\* (Dwarf) *avatara\**, 64, 130-32, 135-39, 159, 238

van Buitenen, J. A. B., 14, 20, 86, 87, 92, 95-96, 100, 106, 127, 170, 197

Vandals, 138-9

Varuna\*, 122, 136, 150, 153, 219, 249-95, 302

Vasudeva, 60, 65, 105, 344

Vasudeva\* (Krishna or Kanha\*), 60-61, 65, 67, 73, 75, 242; *see also* Krishna

[< previous page](#)

page\_367

[next page >](#)

If you like this book, buy it!

Vasumanas, 207, 210

Vayu \*, 27, 167, 173, 220, 327, 341

Vernant, J P., 51, 52

Vidar, 201, 304-5

Vijaya, first King of Ceylon, 181-85, 188, 190

Vidura, 42, 43, 88, 124, 133, 165, 189, 193-94, 198, 200, 248, 305-8

Virabhadra\*, 316, 320, 323

virginity, 205, 223, 352

Visnu\*, 66, 68, 74-78, 83-85, 106-7, 116, 119, 130, 135-39, 182, 184, 289-95, 315-16, 320,

as Anantasayin\*, 107, 130,

and expiation, 292-96;

and five Indras, 84-85,

and Indra, 131, 136, 159, 182, 233-35, 257, 262-65, 291, 292, 295,

and Prajapati\*, 105-6;

and *pralaya*, 310,

and Rudra-Siva\*, 184-85, 90, 99, 160, 169, 174-75, 177-78, 309, 315-16, 328, 332-33, 354-56,

and the sacrifice, 105, 293-94, 333, 356,

and Vamana\* (Dwarf, "three steps"), 130-32, 135-39, 159, 238, 295, 301;

and Vyasa\*, 61-62, 84-85, 112, 168, 184, 289, *see also avatara\**, Narayana\*, *and under* Draupadi\*, Krishna, *and Sri\**

Visvamitra\*, 204-5

Visvarupa\*, 154, 231-34, 242, 271, 287, 292

*vrata*, 39, 210, 216-20, 245-50, 265, 280-82

Vrtra\*, 131, 153, 154, 231-34, 242-43, 258-59, 261-64, 271, 291, 292

Vyasa\*, 54, 60-69, 73, 75, 80, 86, 169, 173, 346-49, 359;

birth of, 60-61;

at end of war, 69, 290-93, 327-29;

in *Jatakas\**, 63-65, 67,

and Narayana\*, 61-62, 84-85, 112, 166, 184; *see also* Krsna\* Dvaipayana\* *and under* Visnu\*

## W

Wales, Welsh stories, 28, 55; *see also* Celtic myth and legend

Warner, Arthur George and Warner, Edmond 58, 59

Wayang Kulit, 71

Wayang Purva, 71

West, M. L., 31

Western Indian traditions, 226, 340

Whitman, Cedric, 30, 34

Wikander, Stig, 15-17, 19, 28, 52-58, 80, 100, 112, 219, 222, 299-301, 357-58

Winnili, 108-9

Wotan, 108-9; *see also* Odinn

Y

Yadu, 18

Yadavas\*, 68, 82, 122

Yaksas\*, Yaksinis\*, Yakkhas, Yakkhins\*, 182-85, 187-88, 190, 198, 248;

*Yaksaprasna\** episode, 186-91

Yama, 170, 177, 344, 347

Yamuna\*, 61, 273, 275

Yayati\*, 20, 46, 200, 202-11, 213, 219, 222, 224-25, 234, 238, 275, 284, 289, 348

Yudhisthira\*, 18, 58, 61, 114, 186-91, 195, 198, 251, 295-96, 306-8, 318, 324-25, 336-37, 339-40, 343, 346;

and Bhishma\*, 237, 239, 245-50, 252;

and dharma, 132, 138, 188-89, 197, 248-50, 253-54, 271, 279, 282, 291, 295, 308;

and Dharma, 27, 42, 174, 188-91, 197-98, 247, 249, 253;

and Drona\*, 245, 250-54;

and Karna\*, 199, 227, 240, 255, 265, 271;

and riddles, 187-88, 248;

and Sahadeva, 222;

and Salya\*, 213, 245, 255, 265, 267-71, 279, 282, 286, 318, 323;

as sinner, 237-43, 246-47, 250-54, 265, 271, 280, 284, 285, 288, 291, 296, 308, 349;

as sovereign, 87, 95, 100, 102-3, 133-34, 197-98, 200, 214, 247-48, 279, 286; *see also under* Arjuna, Draupadi\*, *and* Krishna

Z

Zaehner, R C, 115, 117, 120, 127

Zeus, 37, 47, 51, 54

[< previous page](#)

page\_368

If you like this book, buy it!