

**DECIPHERING PATTERNS OF TRIADISM IN THE HINDU EPICS**

**by**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that *Deciphering Patterns of Triadism in the Hindu Epics* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

# **Deciphering Patterns of Triadism in the Hindu Epics**

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**A synoptic summary of the origin, aims and methodology of the  
thesis**

**The Indo-European family**

The Indo-European ethno-linguistic family of mankind may be divided into seven broad ethno-linguistic branches. These are:

- A] Celtic
- B] Germanic
- C] Italic
- D] Balto-Slavic
- E] Hellenic
- F] Caucasian [Armenian]
- G] Indo-Iranian

**Dumézilian Indo-European Triadism**

The Indo-European cultural tradition discovered by Georges Dumézil may be enunciated as follows:

The first level is associated with notions such as purity, morality, religion, magic, law, justice, sovereignty etc. The second level is associated with martial matters such as heroism, sacrifice, violence, blood etc. The third level is associated with notions such as multiplicity, femininity, fertility, docility, insignificance, health, wealth, happiness, agriculture etc.

## **Other triadisms specific to the Hindu context**

### **The sattva-rajas-tamas triadism**

In the Upaniṣadic Era of the Vedic Age of Hinduism, another type of triadism developed. It is very close to the Indo-European triadism discovered by Dumézil but has a slight variation. The category of sattva stands for all that is spiritual, pure, lucid, light, moral etc. Its color is white. The category of rajas stands for all that is dynamic, forceful, wrathful etc. Its color is red. The category of tamas stands for all that is inert, slothful, dark, dull etc. Its color is black. As is quite obvious, the first two categories of sattva and rajas together with their colors readily match-up with the first two categories of the Indo-European Dumezilian triadism. The third category of tamas presents the slight variation. Instead of the fertility and prosperity scheme of Indo-European triadism with its coordinate colors of green or yellow, the tamas category presents a different view of triadism. It concentrates more on the inert and dark aspect of reality associated with the color black than the more positive variant of the third layer of Indo-European triadism.

### **The dharma-dharmādharma-adharma triadism**

Closely associated with sattva-rajas-tamas triadism is the dharma-dharmādharma-adharma triadism. Though the notions of dharma and adharma are found extensively in Hindu sacred literature, the triadism



derived out of these notions are the result of my own cogitation. Throughout Hindu sacred lore including the two epics, there are personalities, episodes and scenarios that clearly depict dharma and adharma. This is hardly a new discovery. However, there are plenty of people and situations where the line is not so clear-cut. These people or situations are dharmic at times and adharmic at others. Such people or situations can come under this new category of dharmādharma. There are plenty of persons and episodes in the two epics that fit this latent category. I have brought these out together with their wholly dharmic or adharmic counterparts.

### **The asceticism-violence-eroticism triadism**

This tripartite scheme of asceticism-violence-eroticism is actually an augmentation of the dualistic polarism discovered by Wendy Doniger in the context of her analyses about the Hindu god Śiva. It is common knowledge to anyone who has even a very basic knowledge of Hinduism that the god Śiva is an ascetic who is engaged in deep meditation in his snowy abode of Mount Kailāsa in the Himalayas. It is also common knowledge for such people that when not engaged in meditation, he is engaged in amorous dances with his spouse, the goddess Pārvatī. In short, one need not even go into the innumerable myths about Śiva to know about these polaristic attributes associated with him. With asceticism and eroticism dwelling in the same individual, it bound to create tension which in turn leads to violence. This violent nature is the third attribute of the god Śiva. This attribute of Śiva is also common knowledge with Hindus

and students of Hinduism as he is after all the god associated with the destruction of the universe at the end of a kalpa or world-period.

### **The aim and methodology of the thesis in a nutshell**

The aim of this thesis is three-fold. Firstly, the thesis seeks to prove that the Indo-European tripartite pattern discovered by Georges Dumézil [1898-1986 CE] is not solely confined to the Vedic Period of Hindu religious history, but can be found at least through the Epic period. This is achieved by systematically applying the Dumézilian tripartite scheme to the various and sundry episodes of the Hindu epics of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Secondly, following the Dumézilian tripartite pattern, I have both invented as well as extracted two more tripartite schemes and applied them to the various episodes of the two Hindu epics whenever it is possible to do so. The first triadism is the dharma-dharmādharmādharmā scheme which is my own invention. The second triadism is the sattva-rajas-tamas triadic scheme extracted from the Upaniṣadic literature. Thirdly, I have augmented the asceticism-eroticism dualistic scheme discovered by Wendy Doniger [1940-present] into the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadism and applied this in the analysis of the various episodes of two Hindu epics.

### **Methodology**

Now, for a brief note on the methodology relating to this thesis.

Firstly, this thesis is primarily a work in the field of Indological studies. In other words, it deals with Hinduism in particular, and more specifically the two voluminous Hindu epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. One would need a good knowledge of the Sanskrit language in order to work with this material and present one's findings cogently to the examiners and the interested readers. In addition, this thesis has an interdisciplinary angle to it in that it involves Indo-European ethno-linguistic studies in general and more particularly the tripartite scheme of Georges Dumézil (1898-1986). One of the specific aspects of this thesis is to apply this tripartite scheme to the two Hindu epics which are both at the geographical fringes and the temporal edges of the Indo-European phenomenon.

Secondly, in planning research of this thesis, I have not only used the full texts of the two epics in Sanskrit, but associated literature (academic articles and books) on the epics in English. I have also looked at the works advocating and criticizing the tripartite theory of Dumézil as well as works in Sanskrit and English pertaining to the concept of Dharma and the Sankhyan concepts of sattva-rajas-tamas as well as the asceticism and eroticism dualism theory of Wendy Doniger (1940-present) in the context of Hindu mythological material. I have detected triadisms in these views which have been expounded in the thesis.

Finally, I went through all the episodes of both Hindu epics in detail, and selected roughly forty episodes for the purposes of analysis in the four triadic theories I thought were an integral part of the Hindu cultural mindset having emerged out of the amalgamation of Elamo-Dravidian and Indo-European elements over the centuries.

## **Abbreviations of the titles of Academic Journals**

ABORI = *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*

AJA = *American Journal of Archaeology*

BSOAS = *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

ERE = *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (ed. Hastings)*

HR = *History of Religions Journal*

IA = *Indian Antiquary*

IHQ = *Indian Historical Quarterly*

IJJ = *Indo-Iranian Journal*

IJHS = *International Journal of Hindu Studies*

JAAR = *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*

JAS = *Journal of Asian Studies*

JIES = *Journal of Indo-European Studies*

JIP = *Journal of Indian Philosophy*

JOI = *Journal of the Oriental Institute (Baroda)*

JRAS = *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

JRE = *Journal of Religious Ethics*

JRS = *Journal of Religious Studies*

JSAL = *Journal of South Asian Literature*

JVS = *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*

WZKM = *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Kunde des Morgenlandes*

ZDMG = *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

## **Acknowledgements**

In matters of translation, I have consistently used the translations of Sir Dr. S. Radhakrishnan with regards to the Upaniṣad and Bhagavadgītā citations. In regards to the Rāmāyaṇa citations, I have used the translation of M.N.Dutt as edited by Dr. Ravi Prakash Arya, and in regards to the Mahābhārata citations, the translation of M.N.Dutt as edited by Dr. Ishvar Chandra Sharma and Dr. O.N. Bimali. In regards the Ṛgveda citations, I have used the translation of Prof. H.H.Wilson as edited by Dr. Ravi Prakash Arya and K.L.Joshi. I have found that all of the above translations are time-tested, widely accepted and referenced by many scholars. In regards to the Dharmasūtras, I have used the English renderings of Prof. Patrick Olivelle.

# **PART A**

## **Chapter 1**

### **The aim and methodology of the thesis**

The aim of this thesis is three-fold. Firstly, the thesis seeks to prove that the Indo-European tripartite pattern discovered by Georges Dumézil [1898-1986 CE] is not solely confined to the Vedic Period of Hindu religious history, but can be found at least through the Epic period. This is achieved by systematically applying the Dumézilian tripartite scheme to the various and sundry episodes of the Hindu epics of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Secondly, following the Dumézilian tripartite pattern, I have both invented as well as extracted two more tripartite schemes and applied them to the various episodes of the two Hindu epics whenever it is possible to do so. The first triadism is the dharma-dharmādharmādharmā scheme which is my own invention. The second triadism is the sattva-rajas-tamas triadic scheme extracted from the Upaniṣadic literature. Thirdly, I have augmented the asceticism-eroticism dualistic scheme discovered by Wendy Doniger [1940-present] into the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadism and applied this in the analysis of the various episodes of the two Hindu epics.

Having stated the aims, a series of questions arise such as what is triadism? Who are the Indo-European peoples? Who is Georges Dumézil? Who is Wendy Doniger? What is the asceticism-eroticism pattern? What is the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism? What is dharma-dharmādharmādharmā

triadism? What is the Rāmāyaṇa? What is the Mahābhārata? How are all these related? This is precisely what this thesis hopes to answer one by one, and ultimately weave them altogether into a cogent and comprehensive treatise.

Having said this, it is equally important to make clear to the readers that in the process of writing the treatise, I do not intend to “reinvent the wheel”. I will not deal extensively with the Indo-European phenomenon nor write an exposition of the tripartite scheme of Dumézil. I will merely touch upon these matters in an introductory fashion and concentrate on the main thrust of my thesis, i.e. the application of the various triadisms including the Dumézilian on the various episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. This is truly the *new ground* that I will break, the new turf that very few have tread on before.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Introduction**

#### **Section 2.1**

##### **Historical background**

The civilization of South Asia may be stratified into three layers. These are:

1. The aboriginal layer [pre-6000 BCE]
2. The Elamo-Dravidian layer [6000-3000 BCE]
3. The Indo-European layer [4000-1000 BCE]

There is very little that is known about the aboriginal peoples who inhabited the Indian subcontinent prior to the entrance of the two dominant ethnographic groups, popularly referred to by Indologists as the Dravidians and the Aryans. The remnants of the aboriginal layer are the Munda group of language speakers of east central India.

The Dravidians are a distinct ethno-linguistic group that are part of the Elamo-Dravidian family. These peoples migrated to the Indus Valley area around 6000 BCE. The Elamites who once inhabited Iran prior to the infusion of the Indo-Europeans into that area were part of this family. The

Brahui people in the Baluchistan and Sind provinces of Pakistan are the living representatives of the isolated remnants of the Dravidians entering the Indian subcontinent proper. However, the bulk of the Dravidian peoples occupy the southern regions of India. They are the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu and Kodava speaking peoples. Minor Dravidian language groups are Gondi, Kolami, Parji, Kui, Gadaba spoken in Chattisgarh and Orissa, and Kurukh spoken in Jharkhand and Malto in northern Bengal.

The third, the relatively most recent and the most dominant layer is the Aryan layer. This layer is part of the Indo-European ethno-linguistic family of mankind which may be divided into seven broad ethno-linguistic branches. These are:

- A] Celtic
- B] Germanic
- C] Italic
- D] Balto-Slavic
- E] Hellenic
- F] Caucasian
- G] Indo-Iranian

After much speculation about where their common homeland might have been which ranged everything from the Arctic regions proposed in 1899 by B.G.Tilak [1856-1920 CE] to several areas within Europe proper. However, the most recent, very definitive and quite widely accepted Ur-Heimat theory of the proto-Indo-Europeans was ultimately proposed by Marija Gimbutas [1921-1994 CE] in 1956 based on much archeological research. This proposition came to be called the Kurgan homeland theory

which located the Indo-European Ur-Heimat to be in the Ukraine area. From here, it is said that the proto-Indo-Europeans moved towards all parts of Europe in the west, and to Iran and northern India in the east around 4000 BCE in several waves spanning two millennia.

### **The AMT-CTT debate**

In recent years, there has been a heated debate among scholars as to whether the Aryan migration [circa 4000 BCE] into the Indian subcontinent was a historical fact or a total fiction. The first viewpoint is the academically historical one, and for the most part, is espoused by the worldwide Indological circle of scholars. This view has been termed as the Aryan Migration Thesis [AMT]<sup>1</sup>. The second viewpoint is the rival rebellious one, and for the most part, is advanced by the Hindu nationalists and their ardent supporters, some of whom (mostly by those of Indian descent) are to be found in the academia as well. This view has been termed as the Cultural Transformation Thesis [CTT]<sup>2</sup>.

### **The AMT viewpoint**

The AMT viewpoint had its first authentic and academically acceptable bases in the linguistic discoveries of William Jones [1746-1794 CE]. A linguistic prodigy, Jones who was educated in Harrow and Oxford, became a barrister-at-law in 1773. A decade later, he was appointed a

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<sup>1</sup> Flood, *'An Introduction to Hinduism'* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.31

<sup>2</sup> Flood, *'An Introduction to Hinduism'* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.31

magistrate of the British Colonial Service that landed him in Calcutta, India. In 1784, he founded the Asiatic Society, and two years later, under its aegis, Jones made his landmark announcement which has remained to this day the first and oft cited passage in Indo-European studies.

"The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all without believing them to have sprung from some common source which perhaps no longer exists. There is similar reason, though not quite forcible for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family."<sup>3</sup>

The next major figure whose findings and contributions led to the further emergence of the AMT viewpoint was a German linguist named Franz Bopp [1791-1867 CE]. Deeply influenced by the writings of Friedrich Schlegel [1772-1829 CE], especially his *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, 1808), Bopp began his study of Sanskrit literature which effected in the publication of the critical edition in Latin of the Nala-Damayantī story of the Mahābhārata (London, 1819). His mastery of several Indo-European languages led him to publish in six parts between 1833 and 1852 his *magnum opus*, *Vergleichende Grammatik des Sanskrit, Zend, Griechischen, Lateinischen, Litthauischen, Altslawischen, Gotischen und Deutschen*

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<sup>3</sup> Mallory, 'In Search of the Indo-Europeans' (Thames & Hudson, 1989), p.12

(Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Old Persian, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Old Slavonic, Gothic and German).

However monumental, both the findings and works of both Jones and Bopp remained within the domain of linguistics in general and comparative philology in particular. The emergent field of Indo-European studies needed to move further if the connection between Europe and northern India by way of Armenia and Iran had to be solidly affirmed.

That much needed impetus came in the arduous and ground-breaking scholarly pursuits of Friedrich Max Müller [1823-1900 CE]. Receiving his doctoral degree in philosophy in 1843 from the University of Leipzig, Max Müller, also exhibited a flair for mastering languages. Among the classical ones he knew Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. Except for Arabic, all the rest of them were Indo-European. As a student of Bopp, his equipment of Sanskrit became more solid. However it was the famous German philosopher, Friedrich Schelling [1775-1854 CE], who convinced Max Müller that there was an intimate and inextricable link between language and culture. This was the much needed vital link in the next stage of development of Indo-European studies, and Max Müller brought it to a fitting level. Schelling had passed the vital message to the apt person. Max Müller realized quickly that if the linguistic connection between Europe and northern India via Armenia and Iran had to be consolidated, the cultural connection which was naturally there, needed to be investigated, extrapolated and enunciated. From the vantage point of his distinguished position as professor of comparative religion between 1868 and 1875 at Oxford University, Max Müller delivered many important lectures which eventually after his retirement led to the publication of several important works establishing the vital connection between language

and culture (especially religion) in the field of Indo-European studies for which he particularly became known. Some of these important works are:

1. *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (1859)
2. *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1864)
3. *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873)
4. *India, What it can teach us?* (1883)
5. *Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy* (1899)
6. *Comparative Mythology* (1856 lectures, posthumously published in 1909)

The second and third of the works mentioned above show Max Müller's competence in both linguistics and culture. He had the right combination of the respective expertise of both Schlegel and Bopp and what emerged out of that combination was a distinguished savant at the right juncture in history.

This important link between language and culture is not something tenuous much less far-fetched and outlandish. It was the natural outcome of a logical thinking process by any sound academic mind.

Let's apply this logical reasoning in the context of the Indo-European ethno-linguistic family. Jones discovered the family, Bopp put the discovery on a firm-footing by writing a highly erudite scholarly treatise comparing the grammar and philology of several Indo-European languages. The next step is that these languages are after all spoken by people. How then did these linguistically interconnected peoples stretch from Ireland in the west to northern India in the east some seven thousand miles right across the Eurasian landmass? They must have had an original homeland (Ur-Heimat) from which their common proto ancestors must have migrated. These peoples had their cultures expressed in their respective mythologies, religious rites, social structures, traditional customs etc. These cultural

traditions had certain common traits and motifs just as their languages shared certain common word roots, stems and grammatical patterns. It is these series of interconnected questions that Max Müller so wonderfully weaved into a fascinating tapestry. Below is a sampling of his method and manner in this regard.

Müller gives several examples to show how language and tradition are related in the Indo-European context. Firstly, the English word “father” finds its cognate in other languages of the Indo-European family such as “fadar” in Gothic, “pater” in Latin, “patir” in Greek, “patar” in Avestan, and “pitar” in Sanskrit. All these come from the proto Indo-European verbal root “pa” meaning “to protect”. Similarly, the English word “brother” and its Sanskrit cognate “bhrātar” have their common origin in the proto Indo-European verbal root “bhṛ” meaning “to bear”. Also, the English word “daughter” and its Sanskrit cognate “duhitar” have their common connection in the proto Indo-European verbal root “duh” meaning “to milk”. Müller explains this linguistic-cultural connection through this verbal root “to milk” for “daughter”. He points out that “the name milkmaid, given to the daughter of the house, opens before our eyes a little idyll of the poetical and pastoral life of the early Aryans. One of the few things by which the daughter, before she was married, might make herself useful in a nomadic household, was the milking of the cattle, and it discloses a kind of delicacy and humor, even in the rudest of society, if we imagine a father calling his daughter a milkmaid, rather than ‘sutā’ his begotten, or ‘filia’ the suckling. This meaning must have been forgotten long before the Aryans separated. Duhitar was then no longer a nickname, but it had become a technical term, or so to say, the proper name for daughter. That many words were formed in the same spirit, and that they were applicable only during a nomadic state of life, we shall have frequent

opportunity of seeing, as we go on. But as the transition of words of such special meaning into general terms, deprived of all etymological vitality, may seem strange, we may as well give at once a few analogous cases where, behind expressions of the most general currency, we can discover, by means of etymology, this peculiar background of the ancient nomad life of the Aryan nations.”<sup>4</sup>

Even the term “go” which in Sanskrit means “cow” which has been consistently used by all who wish to caricature Hinduism and Indian culture is thankfully redeemed by Müller who uses it to explain the Indo-European cultural phenomenon. Müller says that “the very word ‘peculiar’ may serve as an illustration taken from more modern times. Peculiar now means singular, extraordinary, but originally it meant what was private, i.e. not common, property; being derived from peculium. Now, the Latin ‘peculium’ stands for ‘pecudium’ (like ‘consilium’ stands for ‘considium’) and being derived from ‘pecus’, ‘pecudis’, it expressed originally what we should call cattle and chattel. Cattle constituting the chief personal property of agricultural people, we may well understand how peculiar, meaning what refers to one’s own property, came to mean not-common, and at last, in our modern conversation, passed into the meaning of the strange. I need hardly mention the well-known etymology of pecunia, which being derived from the same word, pecu, and therefore signifying flocks, took gradually the meaning of money, in the same manner as the Anglo-Saxon ‘feoh’, the German ‘Vieh’, ‘cattle’, received in the course of time the sense of pecuniary remuneration, a fee. What takes place in modern languages, and as it were, under our own eyes, must not surprise us in more distant ages. Now, the most useful cattle have always

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<sup>4</sup> Müller, '*Comparative Mythology* (Routledge, 1909), pp. 33-34



been the ox and the cow, they seemed to have constituted the chief riches of the Aryan nations. Ox and cow are called in Sanskrit 'go', plural 'gavas', which is the same word as the Old High German 'chuo', plural 'chuowi' and with a change from the guttural to the labial media, the classical 'bons', 'boes', and 'bos', 'boves'. The Slavonic languages also have preserved traces of this ancient name; for instance, the Lettish 'gowhs', the Slavonic 'govyado', a herd, Serbian 'govedar', a cowherd, 'gotra' in Sanskrit, was originally a hurdle, and meant the enclosure by which the herd was protected against thieves, and kept from straying. Gotra, however, has almost entirely lost its etymological power in later Sanskrit, where the feminine only, 'gotrā' preserves its meaning of a herd of kine. In ancient times, when most wars were carried on, not to maintain political equilibrium of Asia or Europe, but to take possession of good pasture, or to appropriate large herds of cattle, the hurdles grew naturally into walls of fortresses, the hedges became the strongholds, and those who lived behind the same walls were called 'gotra', a family, a tribe, a race."<sup>5</sup>

### **The CTT viewpoint**

The rival CTT viewpoint did not have scholarly origins. It had emotional nationalistic origins. Its view may be summed up as follows:

"Aryan culture is a development of the Indus valley culture whose language belongs to the Indo-European family, possibly spoken in the region as far back as the Neolithic Period, in interaction with Dravidian culture. On this

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<sup>5</sup> Müller, '*Comparative Mythology* (Routledge, 1909), pp.34-37

view, there were no Aryan incursions into India, but Indus valley culture is an early Aryan or Vedic culture."<sup>6</sup>

The first prominent proponent of this view was Dayananda Saraswati [1824-1883 CE], the founder of the Arya Samaj. Though a good scholar of Sanskrit and the Vedas, he was not academically trained in this type of Indological scholarship. The next was Aurobindo [1872-1950 CE] who though an independent thinker and versatile spiritual genius and master in his own right, again lacked the requisite academic training in these matters. Real scholars like archeologist B.B. Lal [1921-present] had genuine credentials, but again had nationalistic goals which colored the scholarship.

However, in the past two decades, the CTT view, with the rising tide of nationalism in India, managed to pick up steam with the writings of David Frawley [1950-present], an American Indophile scholar of ancient Indian medicine called Ayurveda, and with the treatises of N.S.Rajaram [1943-present], a mathematician of Indian origin teaching in Canada. Though both Frawley and Rajaram are reputable scholars in their own respective fields, neither of them is a trained Indologist and both have been discredited by trained Indologists worldwide on charges of engaging in pseudo-archaeology, politically-motivated biased thinking, selective substantiations, and even hoax. They have two trained Indologists in the West who are their ardent supporters. These are Koenraad Elst [1959-present] of Belgium and Klaus Klostermaier [1933-present], a German-born professor who taught in Canada eventually becoming a distinguished professor of Indology and Director of the Oxford Center of Hindu Studies.

Outside of India, the pseudo-archeological methods of the CTT viewpoint have increasingly come to be viewed by the vast majority of

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<sup>6</sup> Flood, '*An Introduction to Hinduism*' (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.31

Indological scholars as somewhat being akin to the methods and goals of the Biblical fundamentalists in trying to look for Noah's Ark in order to substantiate their creationism doctrine, or like those of the modern pan-European chauvinists trying to look for Plato's lost continent of Atlantis. Though the CTT proponents are of varying shades of opinion from the utterly ridiculous to the plausibly palpable, they are all, in the end, different yellow brick roads all leading to the same land of Oz.

What are the main obstacles that the most reasonable proponents of the CTT face in order to prove the rectitude of their viewpoint over the majority AMT view? Afterall, the burden of proof does lie with them as theirs is the later, rival and less accepted view. The obstacles they face are threefold:

"First, advocates of the alternate view must argue that the Indo-European languages come from a homeland in India. These languages could have spread from India, but Sanskrit is not the mother of Greek, Latin, Old Persian, and so forth but the sister, and the language of the Veda cannot be much older than about 1200 BCE, even if the Aryans were indigenous to India. Thus, under the alternate view, the language of the Indus Civilization would have to have been a precursor of Sanskrit, namely Proto-Indo-European or something close to it. The proponents of the alternate view have to show not only that the pattern of evidence *can* be read to support that conclusion, but must give compelling reasons why the evidence *must* be read that way.

Second, the alternate view must also account for the existence of Dravidian languages in this hypothetical Indian homeland of the Indo-European language family and explain the history of the encounter between the two language families. It would have to explain why both Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family have retroflexion, but not the other Indo-European languages which are also, in this view, supposed to have come

from India. This is a very serious obstacle to the alternate view. It is not at all evident that the proponents of the alternate view recognize this problem, let alone provide a plausible answer to it.

The third problem is the horse and the chariot. The Rig Veda largely consists of poetic addresses to the gods, and in their nature there is little reference to material objects that will leave an unambiguous archeological trace. However, the abundant references to horses and spoke-wheeled chariots are one feature of the Veda for which we can expect archeological confirmation. Indeed, other chariot and horse-using societies, such as early China, Greece, and Egypt, have yielded abundant evidence of them, and Indian sculpture of a later period has many representations of horses and chariots.

There are two aspects to this matter. On the one hand, the Veda and other early Sanskrit texts make it abundantly clear that the warrior class of Vedic society, the Kshatriyas, had a mode of warfare based upon the horse and spoke-wheeled chariot. The warrior-class identified strongly with their horses and chariots, even taking names formed with words for horse (*ashva*) and chariot (*ratha*) such as Brihadashva and Brihadratha.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the Indian environment is not especially favorable to horses, and horses are not abundant in India.<sup>8</sup> Horses are not found wild in India, although there are wild relatives of the horse such as the *khur* of Kutch. Horses had continually to be imported to

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<sup>7</sup> names like Daśaratha and that of his father-in-law, Aśvapati Kekeya from the Rāmāyaṇa, and Aśvatthāmā and Jayadratha from the Mahābhārata, also come to mind at this juncture.

<sup>8</sup> Cp. Mughal Emperor Babur's observations. Babur says: "Hindustan is a country that has few pleasures to recommend it. The people are not handsome. They have no idea of the charms of friendly society, of frankly mixing together, or of familiar intercourse. They have no genius, no comprehension of mind, no politeness of manner, no kindness of fellow-feeling, no ingenuity or mechanical invention in planning or executing their handicraft works, no skill or knowledge in design or architecture; *they have no horses*, no good flesh, no grapes or musk melons, no good fruits, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread in their bazaars, no baths or colleges, no candles no torches, not a candlestick." (italics and underlining are mine) [*Babūrnāmā* folio 290b; translated by Beveridge, (Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979) Vol. 2, p.518]. Most of Babur's observations are rubbish except for some truly objective observations such as "no horses.....no ice or cold water."

keep the armies of India adequately stocked, from points to the north and west of India, throughout most of its history----the probable directions of Aryan arrival in the standard view. It is notable that while horses were plentiful in Europe, to the degree that the peasantry owned horses and ploughed with them, in India horses were rare and expensive, ownership was largely confined to the nobility, and agriculture used and still uses oxen or buffaloes to draw ploughs, but not horses. The horse culture of the Kshatriyas that is so noticeable in the Veda, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana was maintained at great expense and under unfavorable conditions.

The proponents of the alternative view have come up with some bits of evidence which they argue support the claim that horses were known to the people of the Indus Civilization. But if the Vedic texts belonged to the time of the Indus Civilization or the people of the Vedic texts were the immediate descendents of the people of the Indus Civilization we would expect the material evidence of horses and chariots in the Indus Civilization sites to be very, very plentiful. So far the evidence is that horses were not used in the Indus Civilization. For example, we find many instances of toy ox-carts with solid wheels and oxen in sites of the Indus Civilization, but we do not find toy chariots with spoked wheels and horses. An argument from absence, of course, is not as strong as an argument from presence, but the burden of proof lies on those who wish to overturn the standard view, and to meet it they need to come up with lots of evidence. So far, precious little evidence of Indus Civilization horses and chariots has been adduced by proponents of the alternative view, and the evidence adduced is doubtful."<sup>9</sup>

Of the Dravidian languages, Tamil is the purest and has been the least influenced by Sanskrit both in terms of phonetics and grammar. It is

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<sup>9</sup> Trautmann, *The Aryan Debate* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.xl-xlii

the only major language of India that not only lacks aspirated forms of each alphabetical letter, but also makes no distinction between certain sounds [e.g. [ग] = 'ga' and 'ka', [ब] = 'ba' and 'pa', [ड] = 'da' and 'ta']. Once the migrating and later expanding Aryans made their entry into the subcontinent, the Dravidians moved south.

With no further place to migrate (because of the vast Indian Ocean to their south) and consequently no other peoples to invade them from the seas in a major way, the Dravidian peoples were locked-in and became highly influenced by their northern neighbors, i.e. the Aryans. Because of millennia of contact and interactions between the two groups, certain phonetic peculiarities like the retroflexive sounds [e.g. 'r' [र], 'l' [ळ], 'ṭa' [ट], 'ḍa' [ड], 'ṇa' [ण] have come into the Aryan languages from the Dravidian. Marathi, the closest Aryan language to the Dravidian language area, tends to use 'l' [ळ] far more than any northern Indian vernacular language.

The Aryan languages, in turn, have lent much vocabulary which are now an integral part of the Dravidian tongues. Seeing these mutual borrowings which are the natural result of millennia of proximity and interaction, the ordinary folk of the sub-continent are convinced by the CTT intellectuals into thinking that Indians were always one undivided peoples who were forcibly and artificially divided by their European colonial masters on the basis of the "divide and rule" theory of imperial administration. The truth is that the British did not create the Aryan-Dravidian divide. They merely took advantage of what was already there.

What is the main reason, besides nationalistic feelings, which has made the average, but otherwise well-educated Indian so naive and gullible in these matters? It is the lack of a sustained high-level and high-quality education in the humanities in the Indian educational system and curriculum. It is not just inadequate, but woefully so. The best way to describe the condition of humanities education in India is that it is a malignant conspiracy of the ignorant (Indian public) and the obliging (Indian academia). It has always been socially unacceptable among the Indian public to make a serious scholarly study of the humanities. Consequently, the Indian educational system in turn obliges and indulges them by catering to their ignorant demands. For example, anthropology departments are rarely found in Indian colleges and universities, and comprehensive and comparative religious studies departments are non-existent. Philosophy departments are fossilized into a routine artificial methodology, history departments merely teach an endless litany dates and dynasties, Sanskrit departments are filled with "divine language" glorifying tufted pundits, and literature departments are repositories of unvarying Anglophile maestros.

One way to rectify this situation is that the Indian public at-large has to get off the paranoid mentality that there is some giant western conspiracy out there brewing, scheming and trying to destroy Indian culture. This attitude, understandably, stems from almost two millennia of Islamic and European colonial rule in succession. However, there is no need to continue to foster such fears. There is no need for a desperate and artificially galvanized unity. A nation can be ethnically diverse and still be politically and solidly united. The Latin words "e pluribus unum" meaning

"out of many, one" is the living creed of a very important nation, i.e. the USA.

Further, if the Indians seriously studied world ethnography, they would soon realize that the Indo-Europeans and the Elamo-Dravidians are not the only two ethno-linguistic groups in the world, but there are at least fifteen other major ones such as the Hamito-Semitic, Ural-Altai, Sino-Tibetan, Malayo-Polynesian, Austro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo etc. Also, they have to know that all European languages are not Indo-European in the first place for some giant European conspiracy. Finnish (a non-Indo-European language of Europe) is as different from Swedish (a neighboring Indo-European language) as Telugu (a Dravidian language) is as different from Marathi (a neighboring Aryan language) in the Indian scene. Until such realizations happen, and/or the decipherment of the script of the Indus Valley civilization, this AMT-CTT debate, I'm afraid, will remain a going concern.



## **Section 2.2**

### **Theoretical background**

After Max Müller, the next major figure to make a monumental contribution to Indo-European studies was Georges Dumézil [1898-1986 CE]. Following the cue of Max Müller in regards to the cultural connections among the Indo-European peoples as a whole, Dumézil discovered that the Indo-Europeans organized and expressed themselves in a tripartite fashion. This numerical leitmotif was deemed by him to be the hallmark of Indo-European culture.

The question comes up as to what is so special about the number three that seemed to have magnetically caught the attention and eventual allegiance of the Indo-Europeans as a whole? There is no easy answer, but perhaps one might attempt to answer it despite the difficulty.

One must realize that peoples of the ancient world had less understandings of the workings of nature than we moderns. Nature to them was awesome, fearsome, mysterious, capricious, magical, omnipotent etc. They were both bewildered by it as well as curious of it. They were wise enough to know that they could not defeat it, so they wanted to tap into its mysteries so that they can be, at least, attuned to it so that nature would be benignant and not malignant towards them.

As one among the ancient peoples of the world, the Indo-Europeans seemed to have observed that there is something both natural and mysterious about the number three. To begin epistemologically, when one observed nature, it seemed to reveal itself in terms of the knower, the known and knowledge. Also, visually, nature seemed to reveal itself in a

three-dimensional way, i.e. length, breadth and height. Nature seemed to be made up of three types of things, i.e. solids, liquids and gases. In a more massive fashion, nature was land, sea and sky. The phases of all existence are triadic, i.e. birth, life and death. The fleeting and evanescent aspect of nature, i.e. Time, presents itself as triadic, i.e. past, present and future.

Independently, even mathematicians have found that the number 3 is a very special number in many ways. Firstly, it is the first true odd prime number. Secondly, it is the only positive integer that is the sum of its two preceding positive integers, i.e.  $1+2 = 3$ . Thirdly, it is the first number to increase more by multiplication than by addition. Fourthly, a circle can be drawn through any three points not on a straight line. Fifthly, according to the German mathematician Carl Gauss [1777-1855 CE], every integer is the sum of at most three triangular numbers. Sixthly, according to the Russian mathematician Ivan Vinogradov [1891-1983 CE], all sufficiently large odd numbers are the sum of at most three primes. Seventhly, all numbers that are not of the form  $4^n(8m+7)$  are the sum of three squares. Eighthly, it is the integer through which  $\Pi$  (pi) is expressed<sup>10</sup>. Ninthly, the triangle is the most common figure in geometry.<sup>11</sup>

### **Indo-European triadism**

The assimilation and expression of their institutions, i.e. religious, cultural, social etc. by the Indo-European peoples in a tripartite manner having been deciphered by Dumézil may be briefly formulated as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> Coincidentally enough, the mathematician, William Jones (1675-1749), who is most noted for his contribution in terms of his proposal to use the Greek letter  $\pi$  (pi) as the symbol to represent the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, also happened to be the father of the linguist, William Jones (1746-1794), the discoverer of the Indo-European ethno-linguistic family.

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3\\_\(number\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3_(number))

The first level is associated with notions such as purity, morality, religion, magic, law, justice, sovereignty etc. The second level is associated with martial matters such as heroism, sacrifice, violence, blood etc. The third level is associated with notions such as multiplicity, femininity, fertility, docility, insignificance, health, wealth, happiness, agriculture etc.

Even though a much more detailed analysis of the Dumézilian triadism will be done in the fourth chapter of this work, nevertheless, here is a statistical sampling, as to how this tripartite scheme is found in the cultural institutions of the various branches of the Indo-European peoples.

### **The Celtic tradition**

#### **The three conditions**

When Lleu was born, his mother laid down three conditions for him:

A] He could not be called by any name until she said so. This represents the first level as it clearly infringes on his sovereignty.

B] He could not play with any weapons. This represents the second level being associated with the martial aspect.

C] He could not marry a human wife. This represents the third level as it is connected with the feminine principle, sexuality etc.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Eddie and Hamilton, *Teach Yourself Celtic Myths*, pp. 75-76

### **The three kings**

In the Irish tale of King Aed of Tara and the priest Columba, the king asks the priest as to how many kings will go to heaven. Columba points out that there are three such kings. The first type of king would be one who never reproached any cleric. The second type of king would be one who dies a hero's death on the battlefield. The third type of king would be one who punishes himself for his own moral inequities.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Germanic tradition**

The Nordic triad consisted of the gods Odin, Thor and Freyr. Here, Odin represents the first level. He is the god with cosmic authority who is all-knowing and all-seeing. From his throne located atop a mighty tower, he surveys the whole world. He sends his two ravens Hugin [Thought] and Munin [Memory] to keep him informed of the happenings of the world.<sup>14</sup> Thor represents the second level as lord of the atmosphere commanding thunder and thunderbolt. Freyr represents the third level as he secures peace and sensuality for the people. These three gods are beautifully portrayed in a medieval temple in Uppsala, Sweden.<sup>15</sup>

Another example of triadism in Scandinavian mythology is how Starkad the hero was granted three life-spans by the god Odin. However,

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<sup>13</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* p. 42

<sup>14</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* pp. 85-86

<sup>15</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* pp. 15-16

in each of these he commits a sin which leads to his doom. In the first, he murders the Norwegian king Wicarus. In the second, he deserts the Swedish king Regnaldus at a critical moment in battle as a result of which the king is killed. In the third, Starkad conspires to kill Olo, the unpopular king of Denmark. Thus in each life, Starkad is associated with each of these three Scandinavian lands.<sup>16</sup>

Alfred the Great [849-899 CE] talks of the trifold classification of Anglo-Saxon society, i.e. gebedmen [men who pray], frydmen [men who fight], and weorcmen [men who work].

### **The Greek tradition**

Ion, the philosopher of Chios (490-420 BCE), said: “the best of everything that is, is a triad, i.e. intelligence, force and well-being.”<sup>17</sup> These three correspond with sovereignty, heroism and prosperity.

Pythagoras in his numerical philosophy pointed out that reality is tetraktys [four-fold], i.e. points, lines, surfaces and solids. Of these, the first three are two-dimensional, the fourth clearly is the odd one out as it is three-dimensional. Again, the point is that the two dimensional world as understood by Pythagoras is triadic. Aristotle in describing the Pythagoreans points out that “all in all, things are defined by threes; for end, middle and beginning constitute the number of all and also the number of the triad.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* pp. 196-197

<sup>17</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* p. 41

<sup>18</sup> i:1;268a:10 "On the Heavens" *Physics*

Homer, in the Iliad<sup>19</sup> describes the shield of Achilles. The shield made by Hephaestus is embossed with scenes of three cities. In the first city, the scene shows elders seated in a circle rendering judgment. In the second city, the scene depicts a city under siege by hostile armies. In the third city, the scene is pastoral with farmers working in a field which has been plowed three times, and three men binding straw.

### **Italic tradition**

In Ancient Rome, the Capitoline Triad of deities were Jupiter [representing sovereignty], Mars [representing heroism] and Quirinus [representing plurality].

The three flamens that constituted Roman priesthood were the:

- A] Flamen Dialis [the high priests who performed the most sacred rituals associated with Jupiter and the other gods]
- B] Flamen Martialis [the priests who performed military rituals]
- C] Flamen Quirinalis [the priests who were associated with the general populace]<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> XVIII:478-608

<sup>20</sup> *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* p. 52

### **Vedic Indian tradition**

The well-known caste system of the Indo-Aryans is a classic example of Indo-European triadism in the context of Vedic Hinduism. Though the caste system is four-fold, the “twice-born” Aryan castes are only three, i.e. the Brahmin [the priest], the Kshatriya [the warrior] and the Vaishya [the merchant].

The Vedic gods are classified into three types, i.e. celestial, atmospheric and terrestrial. The celestial gods such as Varuṇa watch over the Cosmic Order. The atmospheric gods like Indra slay the demons in battle, while the terrestrial gods like Sarasvatī provide fertility to the lands.

Based on the triadism of the Vedic Indian branch of the general Indo-European tripartite schemes, there are other triadisms discernable in the Hindu tradition on which this current work focuses on. These triadisms, which together with the Dumézilian triadism, will also be applied in the analysis of the two Hindu Epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. These triadisms may be summarized as follows:

### **The sattva-rajas-tamas triadism**

In the Upaniṣadic Era of the Vedic Age of Hinduism, another type of triadism developed. It is very close to the Indo-European triadism discovered by Dumézil but has a slight variation. The category of sattva stands for all that is spiritual, pure, lucid, light, moral etc. Its color is white. The category of rajas stands for all that is dynamic, forceful, wrathful etc. Its color is red. The category of tamas stands for all that is

inert, slothful, dark, dull etc. Its color is black. As is quite obvious, the first two categories of sattva and rajas together with their colors readily match-up with the first two categories of the Indo-European Dumézilian triadism. The third category of tamas presents the slight variation. Instead of the fertility and prosperity scheme of Indo-European triadism with its coordinate colors of green or yellow, the tamas category presents a different view of triadism. It concentrates more on the inert and dark aspect of reality associated with the color black than the more positive variant of the third layer of Indo-European triadism. The tradition of sattva-rajastamas can be seen to recur many times in post-Vedic Hindu sacred literature such as the Epics and the Purāṇas. In fact, the 18 major Purāṇas are classified into three groups based on the sattva-rajastamas scheme. In my opinion, the sattva-rajastamas scheme is the product of the Aryan culture's compromise with the pre-Aryan cultures such as Dravidian and the aboriginal. The god Śiva, an unadorned dark-skinned non-Aryan deity, is associated with the category of tamas. The position and depiction of the first two categories of the Indo-European triadism is maintained intact as they represent the powerful Brahmin and the Kshatriya castes known in the Vedic tradition by the special name of ubhayavīrya which itself bears testimony to their special joint status. It is the third category that was compromised in favor of the tamas category in this new strain of triadism.



### **The dharma-dharmādharma-adharma triadism**

Closely associated with sattva-rajastamas triadism is the dharma-dharmādharma-adharma triadism. Though the notions of dharma and adharma are found extensively in Hindu sacred literature, the triadism derived out of these notions are the result of my own cogitation. Throughout Hindu sacred lore including the two epics, there are personalities, episodes and scenarios that clearly depict dharma and adharma. This is hardly a new discovery. However, there are plenty of people and situations where the line is not so clear-cut. These people or situations are dharmic at times and adharmic at others. Such people or situations can come under this new category of dharmādharma. There are plenty of persons and episodes in the two epics that fit this latent category. I have brought these out together with their wholly dharmic or adharmic counterparts. The terms dharma and adharma are used here in the sense of righteous and unrighteous. Dharma and adharma are multivalent terms. However, their most broad and readily recognizable and fairly universally acceptable meanings are associated with that which is right and that which is wrong respectively. It is in these senses that the analyses of the persons and events in the two epics have been dealt with.

### **The asceticism-violence-eroticism triadism**

This tripartite scheme of asceticism-violence-eroticism is actually an augmentation of the dualistic polarism discovered by Wendy Doniger in the

context of her analyses about the Hindu god Śiva.<sup>21</sup> It is common knowledge to anyone who has even a very basic knowledge of Hinduism that the god Śiva is an ascetic who is engaged in deep meditation in his snowy abode of Mount Kailāsa in the Himalayas. It is also common knowledge for such people that when not engaged in meditation, he is engaged in amorous dances with his spouse, the goddess Pārvatī. In short, one need not even go into the innumerable myths about Śiva to know about these polaristic attributes associated with him. With asceticism and eroticism dwelling in the same individual, it is bound to create tension which in turn leads to violence. This violent nature is the third attribute of the god Śiva. This attribute of Śiva is also common knowledge with Hindus and students of Hinduism as he is after all the god associated with the destruction of the universe at the end of a kalpa or world-period. Together with the gods Brahmā and Viṣṇu, Śiva forms the trinity of deities [trimūrtis] associated with the cosmic functions of creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe on a periodic basis.

Wendy Doniger did not ignore this violent nature of Śiva. It is latent in her thesis and was not emphasized as it did not fit into her asceticism-eroticism polarism scheme about Śiva. I have thus brought to the forefront this aspect of violence thereby augmenting the original asceticism-eroticism dualistic scheme and creating a new triadism of asceticism-violence-eroticism. This new triadism is in step with the original Dumézilian one as well as with the sattva-rajas-tamas one.

Thus equipped with the four types of tripartite schemes, I will analyze the various and sundry episodes of the two Hindu epics.

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<sup>21</sup> *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, 1973)

## **Section 2.3**

### **The Purpose, Plan and Methodology**

The main purpose of this work is to show that the cultural leitmotif of Indo-European triadism not only exists in its Indic branch, but has perpetuated beyond the Vedic Period into the transitional Epic Era of Hindu history and has also spawned off into other types of triadic schemes mentioned previously.

In order to acknowledge the existence of the Dumézilian and other triadisms in the Hindu context, one must first of all acknowledge the veracity of the AMT viewpoint. But even among those who acknowledge the AMT view, which mainly consists of Western scholars of comparative Indo-European mythology, they traditionally have stuck to the Vedic material and have rarely ventured to go into anything beyond that. Secondly, the two epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, have been historically extremely popular among the Hindus whose episodes are perennially narrated, sermoned, liturgically chanted, dramatized and depicted, whose heroes and heroines imitated, glorified and in some cases worshipped, and whose morals are highly valued, adhered to and lived by, on a daily basis. Being this central to the Hindu cultural mindset, it is important to bring to the notice of those Hindus who still have an open mind and have not yet been propagandized into rejecting the AMT view, that these two Hindu epics not only amply depict and detail the themes of the Dumézilian Indo-European triadism among other tripartite schemes, but also "thin out" as the second epic, the Mahābhārata, strays further away in terms of time from the Vedic Era.

With these purposes in mind, the plan of this work will be as follows:

**PART A** will be essentially dealing with such matters as the aim, the introduction, the literature review and most importantly the theoretical and structural backgrounds of the four types of triadic concepts that I would be applying in the analysis of the Hindu Epics. This part will contain seven sections.

**Chapter 1** will merely state the aims of the thesis.

**Chapter 2** will be dedicated to the introduction. It will be divided into five segments. They will look into the plan and purpose, the prior attempts on the subject matter, if any, and the inadequate manner in which this has been dealt with, the historical and the theoretical backgrounds of the thesis topic outlining the structures of these triadisms, and finally the expected outcome of the thesis.

**Chapter 3** will be divided into two segments which will look at the literature review on the subject both in terms of books as well as articles.

**Chapter 4** will be dedicated to Georges Dumézil and the understanding of his tripartite scheme. It will be divided into four segments. They will look into the circumstances of the discovery of the tripartite scheme, the tripartite schemes in the Indo-European cultures of pre-Christian Europe such as the Celtic, Germanic, Balto-Slavic and Greco-Roman, the Indo-European tripartite schemes in Avestan (Iranian) and Vedic (Indian) cultures

and will conclude with a review of the criticism of Dumézilian triadic scheme.

**Chapter 5** will look into the triadism extrapolated from the Asceticism and Eroticism dualism of Wendy Doniger. This section will be divided into four segments. The first segment will look at the institution of asceticism in the Indian cultural context. The next two segments will look at eroticism and violence also in the Indian cultural context. This section will conclude by looking at the initial dualistic scheme of Doniger in the light of the triadism extrapolated from it.

**Chapter 6** will introduce the Indologically well-known triadic concepts of sattva-rajas-tamas. This section will be divided into three segments. The first segment will begin by tracing the origins of the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism to some late Upaniṣads. The second segment will then proceed to show how this triadic concept received doctrinal edification and formulation in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system of Hindu thought. The final segment will show its spill-over into, and adaptation by, the three most important schools of Vedānta, i.e. the schools of Śaṅkara [788-820], Rāmānuja [1017-1137] and Madhva [1238-1317].

**Chapter 7** will introduce the very Indian cultural concepts of dharma and adharma. This section will be divided into two segments. The first segment will look into the religious context of this highly charged multivalent term called "dharma" and its counter co-relate term "adharma". The second segment will show the social context of these two terms in Indian culture.

**PART B** will mostly deal with introducing the two Hindu Epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, in terms of providing synopses of these epics and introduction and analysis of some of the important personalities in these two epics. The idea behind this is that the reader becomes thoroughly familiar with both the story lines as well as the nature of each of the important protagonists who will show up in the analysis of the various episodes of the two epics. This part will be divided into four sections.

**Chapter 8** will provide a synopsis of the Rāmāyaṇa which contains seven books.

**Chapter 9** will provide a synopsis of the Mahābhārata which contains eighteen books of which the first three books contain the bulk of the epic story.

**Chapter 10** will analyze sixteen important personalities from the Rāmāyaṇa story line. These persons include people from all the three kingdoms involved in the epic. From the Ayodhyā Kingdom, we have the king and his three queens and the four sons where two of whom are twins. There are two sages, both rājaṛṣis [royal savants], associated with the Ayodhyā Kingdom. One of them has an adopted daughter who is the heroine of the epic. From the Kiṣkindhā Kingdom, are the two rival brothers and their intelligent minister. From the evil Laṅkā Kingdom are the three brothers, one of whom is the chief villain of the epic.

**Chapter 11** will analyze twelve important personalities from the Mahābhārata story line. These persons include the Grand Sire of the epic, the martial arts brahmin teacher, the three of the five brothers who are the heroes of the epic, their mother, their common wife, an alienated brother who has joined the two villains who are brothers in turn, and finally this divinity-incarnate, who staying on the sidelines, dominates both the ethics and the metaphysics of the epic.

**PART C** will be the application part. It will be divided into two main sections which are essentially the application of the four triadic concepts discussed in Part-A to the two Hindu Epics that are analyzed in Part-B. Altogether some 27 episodes are analyzed from the Rāmāyaṇa epic applying some or all of the tripartite schemes. Similarly, some 20 episodes are analyzed from the Mahābhārata epic applying some or all of the tripartite schemes. The analyses of the various episodes from both the epics will be done in a template and tabulation style manner so as to give the reader a ready "photographic" effect in terms of viewing and absorbing the analyses made. All the details would have already been dealt with in Part-B quite extensively. So, there is absolutely no need for repetition here. Two other sections will deal with the interconnectedness of the two epics through three curious episodes, and give concluding remarks on the whole thesis. Finally, there will be a bibliography.

**Chapter 12** will analyze some 27 select episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa epic.

**Chapter 13** will analyze some 20 select episodes from the Mahābhārata epic.

**Chapter 14** will show how the two epics are connected in three curious episodes from both epics associated with the notions of dharma and adharmā

**Chapter 15** will give the concluding remarks on the whole thesis

**Chapter 16** will provide the bibliography divided into two segments, i.e. books and articles in scholarly journals on the various topics dealt with in this thesis.

## **Section 2.4**

### **Prior attempts**

Proverbially speaking, if there are a "hundred" works on the Dumézilian tripartite scheme, there a "thousand" on the two Hindu epics. However, I can confidently say that there is not a single substantial piece of work that has interpreted both the Hindu epics in the light of the Dumézilian tripartite hypothesis *and* the other types of triadic schemes in a comprehensive and detailed manner and *under a single aegis*.

There are some works that have tried to do this, but they have all been piecemeal, partial, and peripheral attempts in this regard. The third chapter will be entirely dedicated to the exposition of such material. However, some samplings will be presented here as well.



The question is why hasn't a substantial attempt been made? The western comparative Indo-European mythologists who have worked with the Dumezilian hypothesis, find the two epics as being outside the body of Vedic literature (which has been their traditionally pre-circumscribed limit), and hence have not touched them. Indian pro-Dumezilian scholars are non-existent for reasons described earlier. Those western or eastern Indologists who have dedicated their scholarship to the study of the two Hindu epics are chiefly interested in topics such as: figuring out if the Rāmāyaṇa is a myth or a reality, making a socio-political study of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, depicting the role of Hanumān in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, making a linguistic study of the Rāmāyaṇa, describing the role of Arjuna in the Mahābhārata, cataloging the destiny and human initiative depictions in the Mahābhārata, explaining the concept of education and the various values in the Mahābhārata, narrating the juicy details of the sexual ethics in the Mahābhārata, making an anthropological study of the tribes in the Mahābhārata, and so on. The main thing is that none of them have even remotely been interested in anything close to the Dumezilian hypothesis in the context of the two Hindu epics in a detailed and exhaustive manner.

Some of the other types of triadic analyses that I wish to investigate such as the asceticism-violence-eroticism and the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism are sort of obliquely touch on, but not directly focused upon. The dharma-adharma issue, though not in a triadic manner with which I want to analyze the two Hindu epics, is a little bit better in terms of the material available. This is because the notion of dharma or its counter co-relate, adharma, are very central concepts in Hindu ethics.

Let me now take a couple of samplings and show through certain scholarly articles on how peripheral, cursory and incomplete the application

of the Dumézilian tripartite scheme has been in terms of the Hindu epic material.

C. Scott Littleton writing in his article entitled *The Comparative Indo-European Mythology of Georges Dumézil* writes:

"Some years ago the eminent Swedish mythologist Stig Wikander, perhaps Dumézil's most brilliant disciple, discovered that a tripartite division of heroes and semi-divine beings can often be found in I-E epic and saga as well as myth. For example, in the great Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, he has demonstrated that the five central figures the Pāṇḍavas, all derive from one or another of the earlier Vedic gods: e.g, Yudhiṣṭhira, the leader of the five, derives from Varuṇa and is thus a first function figure; Arjuna, the great epic warrior, derives from Indra and is a second function figure."<sup>22</sup>

There are several things that the citation confirms on what I have been trying to point out about western comparative Indo-European mythology scholars. Firstly, the material written is literally a few lines barely applying Dumézilian triadism to a Hindu epic which in this case happens to be the Mahābhārata. Secondly, the material is secondary for it has been referenced from Stig Wikander, and as such nothing new has been said. Thirdly, whatever that has been referenced is incomplete, i.e. Yudhiṣṭhira is given as the example of the first level of the tripartite scheme, and Arjuna has been given as the example of the second level. The third level is not even mentioned. Fourthly, it typically confines itself to cross-referencing it back with the Vedic mythology material, i.e. the gods Varuṇa and Indra. These scholars cannot seem to free themselves to

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<sup>22</sup> Journal of the Folklore Institute, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Dec., 1964), pp. 147-166

look beyond the traditionally circumscribed Vedic context, i.e. the Mahābhārata within itself, without Vedic reference, in purely Dumézilian or other triadic terms.

The next scholar, Alfred Hildebeitel, who has done a book review of Dumézil is himself a good scholar of Dumézil as he has translated some of Dumézil's works from French to English. In this review of Dumézil's *Mythe et épopée* volumes 2 and 3 under the title of Comparing Indo-European "Epics", Hildebeitel writes:

"Now, to clear the air on this point, taking everything else into account, I am convinced by Dumézil's view (ME, 2:66-68) that the five sins with which Kṛṣṇa charges Śiśupāla fall into the three functional zones, perhaps elaborating an earlier triad such as is committed by Starkadr and Heracles. Thus we find two second-function sins (burning Dvārakā in Kṛṣṇa's absence, attacking the Bhoja princes while they are sporting on Mount Raivataka), one first-function sin (obstructing Kṛṣṇa's father's horse sacrifice), and two third-function sins (abducting the wives of two of Kṛṣṇa's kinsmen, in the second instance while disguised; Mahābhārata, Poona Critical Edition, 2:42, 7-11). A sixth "sin," set apart, changes nothing essential; it concerns Śiśupāla's competition for Rukmiṇī (2:42,15), a theme which Dumézil attempts to cover from another angle (ME, 2:109-13)."<sup>23</sup>

Again, this being a book review, it merely emphasizes what Hildebeitel considers to be the most important aspects of Dumézil's tripartite analysis of certain episodes of the Mahābhārata.

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<sup>23</sup> History of Religions, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Aug., 1975), pp. 90-100

## **Section 2.5**

### **Expectations**

I have been reading and re-reading the two Hindu epics for several years now and have been trying to view and analyze their episodes and incidents through the prisms of the various triadic schemes. The various triadisms stood out for me in the same way as they did for the few scholars who have attempted to view them this way thus far.

Yet there is a difference. My findings are not confined to just the Dumézilian type of triadism. It goes much beyond into three other triadic schemes that I have already talked about. Though they are variations of ancient Indian motifs, yet my researches have broken new ground with many first time interpretations.

Even while applying the Dumézilian triadism, I'm not merely repeating what Dumézil or his chief exponents like Wikander or Puhvel have said. Here too, there is much that will be new to the readers of comparative Indo-European mythology.

Further, as one can see in the thesis work plan given above, the profile of each of the main characters from the two Hindu epics will be given. These character profiles are carefully constructed with direct book, chapter, and verse citations from the each of the two epics. This then sets the stage for the proper episodic analyses applying the appropriate and relevant triadisms wherever and whenever possible.

The Mahābhārata will provide the deviation from Indo-European triadism as its "vapor trail" thins out with Dravidian elements particularly in the form of the number five gaining prominence. But even here, it is a

blending into a sort of Aryo-Dravidianism which is slowly gaining ground as the Aryan penetration, merger and mingling is taking place with the Dravidians in this phase of Hindu history to become what the modern nationalistically-minded Indians have come to regard as something uniquely and solidly Indian without any external frame of reference whatsoever.

However from my perspective, I see the blending and even the metamorphosis that is occurring between the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata eras of Hindu history in terms of the Indo-European themes and structures to be a fascinating one. If only the ancient Hindus had a sense of history by truly cataloging real events rather than narrating fanciful mythopoeic imaginations, it would have been a real blessing to us moderns to understand this blending process better.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will deal with the reviews of the important and selected extant literature, both books and articles, associated with the topic of this thesis. Each relevant book and article has been reviewed individually in alphabetical order based on the last name of the author. I have selected these books and articles as they are, in my opinion, the closest to the topic of my thesis. According to my findings, there is nothing in the body of scholarly literature that touches directly the topic of my thesis. I find them all as being obliquely touching my thesis topic. Hence, I have reviewed them individually.

### **Section 3.1**

#### **Book Reviews**

*Homer and the Indo-Europeans: Comparing Mythologies*

I.B. Tauris, London:1994

Author: Julian Baldick

The author compares Homer's epics with its other Indo-European counterparts, and especially with the Indic ones, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, in terms of both characters as well as the episodes.

While Zeus determines the course of the Iliad, Brahmā determines the downfall of Rāvaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa. Paris compares with Rāvaṇa as the handsome seducer. Nestor compares with Jāmbavān in that both are aged wise counselors. Just as Odysseus visits Troy before the siege, so too does Hanumān visit Lankā before the invasion. Hanumān also resembles Idomeneus as the commander of the largest force allied to the two brothers who retrieve a missing wife. Indrajit in the Rāmāyaṇa corresponds to Sarpedon in that neither Brahmā nor Zeus can prevent from either being killed. Achilles' spear, Rustam's arrow in the Iranian epic, and Rāma's unsurpassable weapon kill Hector, Isfandiyar and Rāvaṇa respectively.

Near the end of the Mahābhārata, Arjuna is killed by the son born to him by Chitrangada. Ulupi then appears as a sort of honorary second mother to this son. Similarly, in the extra-Homeric legend, Odysseus is eventually killed by a son whom he has sired on his travels. The Romans had a triple sacrifice of a pig, a ram and a bull offered to Mars, and the Indians would offer an ox, a sheep and a goat to Indra. The Phaecian city corresponds to Dvarakā in the Mahābhārata. The trickery of Athena, helping Odysseus to kill the suitors, is paralleled at a similar stage in the Indian epic. Eumaeus, a honorary younger brother to Odysseus, becomes a swineherd much like Nakula becoming a stable-keeper. Karṇa, the Sun god's son, is killed in a non-chivalrous manner just as Jason murders the Sun god's grandson when the latter is treacherously lured to a meeting.

*Dharma-Adharma and morality in Mahābhārata*

S.S. Publishers, Delhi:1992

Author: A.N. Bhattacharya

The poet of the Mahābhārata was motivated to compose this great epic to show the triumph and glory of dharma. The character of dharma has been viewed from the different angles of vision. Moral values such as not to lie, not to violent etc. are not absolute but circumstantial. This situational ethics is supposed to be for the greater good. Svadharma, if done properly, is supposed to be better than paradharma. Another concept is niškāma karma echoing the Kantian notion of 'duty for duty's sake.' One's own duty is to be performed under any circumstance whatever results may come out of it. Indeed, it is the greatest dharma of life.

The deviations in dharma are only apparent in nature, and not fundamental ones. For each deviation, the poet has endeavored to put forward proper justifications. He had no ill-motive to deform dharma---but his intention was to fit it properly in different circumstances. His motive is always found good and virtuous. One single tone of thought is found everywhere, that is the tone of solemnity and divinity in dharma.

Mahābhārata believes in the Will of God and the karma theory. The two are not contradictory. It is like the Christian view of Divine Providence working in perfect harmony of a good work ethic. The epic upholds moral values like charity, hospitality, forgiveness etc., but all this seems to be very brahminically based.

In dealing with women, the epic is extremely sexist. Women are considered the source of all evils. They are fickle-minded and selfish. They are opportunists. They forsake everything for satisfying their evil wishes.



They are sexual in the extreme point. The virtue of loyalty is unknown to them. Their vagina is wetted at the sight of a good-looking man. The way Satyavatī, Kuntī, Draupadī etc. were treated by sages, gods, royalty etc. reflect this view of women. Yet, Savitrī, Gāndhārī, Mādrī etc. are treated as lumious examples of ideal dharmic womanhood.

*Balts and Aryans*

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla:1968

Author: S.K. Chatterji

The author in his early years had come across articles stating that of all of the Indo-European languages, Lithuanian was closest to Sanskrit. This finding roused the curiosity of the author. This led him to gain immense mastery over several Indo-European languages eventually becoming a comparative Indo-European philologer and ethnographer.

The author opines that India is a mixture of four main ethno-linguistic families, i.e. the Austro-Asiatic, the Sino-Tibetan, the Dravidian and the Aryan. The Indo-Europeans who arrived the last into the sub-continent called themselves 'Aryas'. They dubbed the Dravidians as 'Dasyus', the Austro-Asiatics as 'Nishadhas', and the Sino-Tibetans as 'Kiratas'. After an initial period of hostility, they learned to live together, and they gradually became familiar with each other thereby creating a remarkable synthesis.

As the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) branch moved from the Indo-European homeland in the Caucasus region into northern Mesopotamia, they became profoundly influenced by the Semitic and Elamite cultures. However, since

their religious and political leaders strongly maintained the Aryan mindset and habits, the Indo-European base culture and language remained strong.

The proto-Indo-Europeans got divided into two major branches, i.e. the Satem branch and the Centum branch. The Indo-Iranian, the Balto-Slavic, the Armenian and the Albanian groups came under the Satem branch, while the Greek, the Italic, the Germanic and the Celtic groups came under the Centum branch.

Among many things that are common to the Indo-European peoples, there are some worthy of being noted. The all important 'chariot' was 'ratha' in Sanskrit, 'ratas' in Lithuanian, 'rad' in Germanic, 'rota' in Latin, and 'ruoth' in Old Irish. This is one of the few words that barely morphed across the various Indo-European languages. The gods of the Balts rode chariots in as much as the gods of the Vedic Aryans. Milk and milk products had a great importance in Indo-European food. The Sanskrit 'dadhi' (thick sour milk) was 'dadan' (milk) in Baltic. The Sanskrit word for 'god' is 'deva' which is 'dievas' in Lithuanian and 'dievs' in Latvian. The sky-dwelling god who apportioned food and happiness was 'bhaga' in Vedic Hinduism. This was 'bogu' in Slavic. The Baltic thunder-god 'Perkunas' was 'Parjanya' of the Vedic Aryan religion.

### *Celts and Aryans*

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla:1975

Author: Miles Dillon

The Celts are the most westerly of the Indo-European peoples. The linguistic position of the Celtic may be defined in two dimensions: first, as the most western of the western group, closely akin to Italic as against

Greek and Germanic; and second, as the language of a lateral area, archaic in structure and vocabulary, and pressing early Indo-European features in common with Vedic Sanskrit in the far distant east. Just as there was Indo-Iranian unity prior to the split, there was Italo-Celtic unity prior to that split. However, the latter split was earlier to the Indo-Iranian one.

The sandhi system in Sanskrit and the system of initial mutations in Celtic languages showed a common archaism. In Irish, as in Sanskrit, verbs are commonly compounded with prepositions. There is also agreement in syntax between Vedic and Old Irish. They are the only languages to preserve fully the Indo-European tradition despite the fact that they were separated geographically for more than three millennia. Further, the Greek, Irish and Slavic poetic meters are the same as in the Ṛgveda. Opining on the tradition of court poetry in the Celtic world, Sylvain Levi pointed out that it was almost exactly identical to the Indian one in style and content. Celtic society too was divided into druids (priests), equites (warriors) and plebs (common people) like the brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya of Vedic Aryan society.

*Tales of sex and violence: folklore, sacrifice and culture in the Jaiminīya*

*Brāhmaṇa*

Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi:1986

Author: Wendy Doniger

The book begins with the critical assessment of the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa by early Western Indologists. Whitney, an American Indologist,

called the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 'dull and uninteresting'. Eggeling called it a work 'characterized by dogmatic assertion and a flimsy symbolism'. Max Müller, a German Indologist, called the entire Brāhmaṇa literature as 'marked by shallow and insipid grandiloquence, by priestly conceit, and antiquarian pedantry'.

The Brāhmaṇas are texts that deal with Vedic sacrifices and stories that are associated with the sacrifices in order to elucidate their purposes. The Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa tells many long folktales that are not found elsewhere in the Brāhmaṇas. The Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa deals with explaining dangers inherent in death, sex and the human body. Myths express untamed dangers; they give vent to the full range of nightmare possibilities. Rituals tend to tame those dangers and to express them in terms of a more limited range of human actions.

In the stories dealing with the fear of death, women are depicted as faith and non-faith, men as anger. It admonishes eating of animals in the proper way, so that you're not eaten by them in the other world. It foreshadows the ethics of vegetarianism and the karma-reincarnation doctrines. In the stories dealing with the fear of the gods, the assumption is that the gods of the three worlds unite to keep men out of heaven; they take away from men the hymns that is the source of their divine strength, hymns that the gods use in their battles against their fraternal enemies the demons. Gods steal the wives of men. Even though the gods are more powerful than men, the knowledge of the sacrifice turns the tables, and man wins out in the end. In the fear of the fathers segment, the sexual competition between father and son is depicted, and the woman as the person who has power over both the domestic fire and the sexual fire. The Brāhmaṇas see women as ambivalent beings, i.e. both as somebody who

can destroy a sacrifice, and somebody who lends it ritual completeness by being the sacrificer's spouse. There is a cycle of stories in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa in which a woman who plays a key role is both seductive and potentially dangerous by virtue of that seductiveness.

*The Sanskrit Epics' Representation of Vedic Myths*

Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi:2004

Author: Danielle Feller

This book studies several mythical motifs found in the Ṛgveda on the one hand, and in one or both Sanskrit epics on the other. The myths are: Agni's hiding, the theft of the Soma, Indra's rape of Ahalyā, Upamanyu's salvation by the Aśvins, and finally the representation of the Great War of the Mahābhārata as a sacrifice. While it is often said that subsequent Indian literature only paid lip-service to the Vedas without really knowing and even less understanding these texts, the present study not only shows that many Vedic myths are still kept alive in the Epics, but more importantly, that their deep underlying meaning was perfectly understood by the epic mythographers and re-actualized to fit the changed religious conditions of epic times.

In the Ṛgveda, Agni, although he is said to be ancient, is at the same time frequently called a child. He is the offspring or fetus of the waters. He represents the life-principle or fiery germ of life lying in the primordial waters, his mothers. In the Mahābhārata, when he unites with the waters of the Gangā, he is no longer a child hiding in the womb, but

as a male uniting with a female, thereby producing a child in her. However, in both the Vedas and the Epics, the fundamental quality of fire as the life-principle has remained unchanged through the ages.

In the Ṛgveda, Indra is prominently the warrior-god, and the god Parjanya is associated with the raining function. But by the time of the Epics, Indra's quality as the rain-god has gained much prominence, and this is perhaps the reason why the epics mention his sexual excesses, more frequently, precisely because they are but an aspect of his cosmic fertilizing activities.

The Soma is first in the sky. An eagle, acting as a go-between, brings it down to earth which is then used in the sacrifice. This is the Vedic myth. By contrast, in the Mahābhārata, the soma-amṛta cannot remain on the earth even for an instant. Thus, Indra immediately snatches it back and takes it to the heavens.

War is a sacrifice. This motif draws its source from very ancient Indo-European ritual beliefs and customs. War is represented as a sacrifice in order to legitimize the rectification of a distorted moral order. It is a device used to smooth away moral dilemmas in the epics. In the Vedas, sacrifice achieves the negation of its own violence. In Ṛgveda I:162:21, the sacrificial horse is addressed by saying to it: "you do not really die here, nor are you injured. You go to the gods on paths pleasant to go on." This is exactly what happens to all the heroes and villains in both the Sanskrit epics.

*The Iliad and the Rāmāyaṇa: a comparative study*

Ganga Kaveri Publishing House, Varanasi:1994

Author: Vijaya Guttal

Monier-Williams, the great British Sanskritist, points out in his comparison of Achilles and Rāma: 'How far more natural is Achilles with all his faults than Rāma with his almost painful correctness of conduct! Even the cruel vengeance that Achilles perpetrates on the dead Hector, strikes us as more likely to be true than Rāma's magnanimous treatment of the fallen Rāvaṇa.'" The author counters this above opinion by saying that the two instances of Achilles dragging the dead Hector in dust in fury (Iliad XXII), and Rāma ending his enmity with the death of his foe (Rāmāyaṇa VI:112), are two different responses which essentially belong not only to the two magnificent heroes, but also to the two cultural contexts themselves that outline the spirit of the poems. The task of a true comparist is to enlarge the sympathies of his/her readers without denigrating or undervaluing either side.

While personal honor and glory are important marks of the heroes in the Iliad, it is not so in the Rāmāyaṇa. Vengeance is the aim of the Iliad's battle, while dharma is the motivation behind the Rāmāyaṇa's battle. The Iliad's heroes are courageous for mundane reasons, while that of the Rāmāyaṇa's heroes are courageous for spiritual ends. The Iliad illustrates the habit of the Greek mind to perceive the essence excluding much that is accidental, the Rāmāyaṇa represents the habit of the Indian mind to visualize the essential in all its comprehensiveness. The Iliad and the Rāmāyaṇa narrate stories through long speeches, debates, descriptions, catalogs, genealogies and similies. These give variety and dramatic force to

the narrative. Homer and Vālmīki both employ meters which are based on quantity and not on accent. The hexameter of the Iliad and the anustubh meter of the Rāmāyaṇa, both of which were inherited from the poetic styles of an earlier era, are perfected in the hands of the epic poets. The Iliad reflects realism, while the Rāmāyaṇa reflects idealism. Both the Iliad and the Rāmāyaṇa end on a note of great tragic beauty. There is a similar note of agony, and both poets work in a similar way through the tragic mode. However, though both epics have a tragic ending, in the Iliad, life after death is darkness and extinction of hope. In the Rāmāyaṇa, it is believed that suffering brings profound humility which in turn guides man towards wisdom, towards the realization of the spiritual.

### *Dharma*

University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu:2010

Author: Alfred Hildebeitel

The author examines the history of the various meanings of the term 'dharma' in Indian culture. Starting with the term 'dhárman' in the Ṛgveda which stands for 'foundation', the author shows how multivalent the term became later on in Buddhism and Classical Hinduism. In Buddhism, the term 'dharma' not only referred to the teachings of the Buddha, but also it became a technical term to denote ontological phenomena. In Classical Hinduism, it stood for religion, law, righteousness, duty etc. Here too, it was used as a technical term to mean quality, attribute or property.

The Vedic term 'dhárman' meaning support implying the support of Truth, was akin to the term 'ṛta' (cosmic order). However, in the late



Vedic era, one finds the term used in the context of legal manuals known as the Dharmasūtras. Still later, treatises on socio-religious law called the Dharmaśāstras came into being. The Laws of Manu is the most famous one of this latter group.

Next, by the time the two Sanskrit epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, emerge, the multivalent term 'dharma' as is understood in current-day Hinduism, is in full-force. The author compares Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira since they are considered the embodiments of dharma in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata respectively. Rāma's dharma biography revolves around upholding not only his own truth but that of his father's as well. In Yudhiṣṭhira's case, it is non-cruelty which is the highest dharma. It even trumps truth. Rāma, on the other hand, does not put non-cruelty above truth. He also gets away with numerous cruelties which is trumped by truth. In comparing Sītā with Draupadī as the spouses of Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira respectively, both register that their husbands' allegiance to dharma can leave them unprotected which becomes ironical as strīdharma (dharma for women) requires that they be protected by their husbands. In the Bhagavadgītā, the battle which is about to be fought was supposedly dharmic. Hence the god Kṛṣṇa refers to the battlefield as dharmakṣetra (1:1). This god points out that he incarnates himself to re-establish dharma in every Hindu aeon (4:8). In the end, the god urges all to abandon their dharmas and seek refuge in him (18:66).

*The Concept of Dharma in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*

Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi:1965

Author: Benjamin Khan

The author opines that Vālmīki wrote the Rāmāyaṇa to show to the people of India and the world at large that there are people, from all stations and walks of life, whose footprints should be followed for a good and spiritual life. Vālmīki depicts the hero of the epic, Rāma, as a great personality who creates a moral standard by what he does and suffers and how he illustrates it in highly critical moral situations. Dharma is supposed to protect its practitioners, and yet when it apparently fails to protect, the emotional explosions of otherwise dharmic folks under the stress and strain of life becomes clear in the epic. Even the adharmic Rāvaṇa tells Sītā that it is the dharma of the rākṣasas to seduce women, and yet he will not touch her without her consent.

Vālmīki was a realistic moral philosopher; he interpreted the law of dharma in practical terms of utility to be followed more in order to benefit human life, and through it, to establish character and association of values for society at large than to deal with abstract theological values. Inward well-being of the soul, and outward well-being of society, this was the basic principle of Indian morality. Vālmīki points out that one should give up kāma (material desires) as it is the source of all evil. Kāma should be overcome through penance and strong will. Vālmīki suggests that a man must do good whatever his station of life may be, or in whatever circumstances he may be thrown. Doing good to humanity is the supreme virtue.

Vālmīki did think that life on earth is transient, but never as full of misery. This life must be devoted to the accumulation of dharma, i.e. spiritual and moral perfection. Man is not merely what ought to be, but more who he is. Such ideas as the goal of life and its pursuit never occurred to him as we find in the Upaniṣads. Men were believed to die once, and thereafter enjoy immortality in heaven or suffering in hell. Neither karma and transmigration, nor māyā as cosmic illusion, or the ideal of mokṣa, are to be found in a serious manner in the epic. If there are, they are few and probably later interpolations. For Vālmīki, dharma was the only good in itself as well as a way to achieve the highest object of life. Vālmīki raised the principle of dharma as an internal authority, not coercive but persuasive, humanistic in nature and free from all the ills that flow from an authoritarian ethics. Vālmīki was the father of Hindu moral thought who, some thousand years ago, gave to India a concept of morality unparalleled in the history of thought. Vālmīki, like Socrates and Aristotle, believed that virtue is both a kind of knowledge and a kind of habit. There is nothing mechanical 'doing the done', but a habit with insight.

*The Vedic People: Their History and Geography*

Oriental Longmans, Delhi:2000

Author: Rajesh Kochhar

The Indo-European languages are spread over a vast geographical area extending from Ireland in the west to India in the east. The linguistic

distribution, however, is highly non-uniform. The European languages are confined to rather small areas and show marked differences from each other. In contrast, in ancient times vast stretches of land in Asia were inhabited by speakers of Indo-Iranian, a single member of the family. The point of departure between the Avestan and the Vedic religions lies in the emphasis placed by Zarathustra on ethical conduct to the exclusion of everything else. At the same time, Zarathustra firmly and boldly rejected the worship of the warlike, materialistic devas, i.e. Indra and his companions. Devas are amoral in the Ṛgveda; they are branded wicked by Zarathustra. Deva, Indra and Nāsātya figure in the Avesta also, but as demons. It is only Indra who is disowned, not the joint Indo-Iranian heritage. Vṛtrahana, the slayer of Vṛtra, is the personification of victory. In the Ṛgveda, he is identified with Indra. In the Avesta, he appears in his own right as Varathraghna. Also, there was a shift in the significance of fire. In the Ṛgveda, fire is the purifier; that is why dead bodies can be cremated. In Zoroastrianism, fire is pure; it is not to be polluted. Of all the Indo-Europeans, the Indo-Iranians are the only ones who took to composing and preserving hymns.

The Ṛgveda uses the term 'yuga' in the sense of a time-span, an age, or a generation. Ṛgveda I:158:6 uses the expression 'daśame yuge' (tenth yuga) to refer to the age of Dīrghatamas; the yuga here seems to mean a period of 10 years or less, depending on how old an aged (jujurvan) person is expected to have been in those days. Vedānga Jyotiṣa refers to a five-year yuga. Atharvaveda mentions in order 100 years, ayuta (10,000 years) and then two, three or four yugas. This suggests that a yuga here means an ayuta. The annual celebration of Yugādi (Ugādi) in South India implies a one-year yuga.

The compilation of the Ṛgveda was taken up after 1700 BCE in Afghanistan by a section of the Indo-Iranians, designated the Ṛgvedic people or Indo-Aryans. After 1400 BCE, when late Harappan cultures were in decline, the Ṛgvedic people entered the Punjab plain and eventually spread further eastwards up to the Yaga doab. In about 900 BCE, the compilation of the Ṛgveda was finally closed and the Bharata battle fought. Armed with the newly acquired iron technology, the Aryans moved east of the Ganga. The migration was not in a single procession but in phases. The first entrants were the Mahābhārata people, the Puru-Bharatas, who settled close to the Yamuna. The Ikṣvākus, the inheritors of the Rāmāyaṇa, came later and moved further eastwards. During their migrations, the Indo-Aryans carried with them not only their religious beliefs, rituals and hymns but also place and river names which they selectively re-used.

Differential migration of the Aryans into India is independently suggested by linguistic evidence. Older parts of the Ṛgveda as well as the Avesta show a distinct preference for the r-sound over the l-sound. Where the other Indo-European languages have 'r', the Ṛgveda also has 'r' (Sanskrit: rājan, Latin: rex; Sanskrit: ratha, Latin: rota). But even when the associate languages have 'l', the Ṛgveda uses 'r' [Sanskrit: sūrya, Latin: sol; Sanskrit: pur, Greek: polis]. But the later portions of the Ṛgveda use 'l' as well as 'r'. The Ṛgveda does not contain any hymns that refer to the Aryan homeland and migrations from it. There is, however, no basis for supposing that if such hymns had been composed, they would have been preserved, and consequently since they are not extant, they were never composed. The absence of evidence does not constitute evidence of absence.

It has been known for more than 200 years now that a large number of languages of Asia and Europe are closely related to each other, and that their speakers shared a common mythology and even rituals. The relationship among Indo-European languages is mostly seen in their vocabulary. In many languages, now geographically separated by vast distances, words for a basic concept like numbers are similar. Words pertaining to an ancient and sacrosanct institution like family are the same in many Indo-European languages. Even words associated with the human body are similar. Latin 'anus' seems to correspond to 'vaniṣṭhu', while English 'gut' with Sanskrit gudā. Such intimate vocabulary is more likely to be intrinsic than acquired. Furthermore, it is well-known that people cling to their mythology even while borrowing vocabulary and technology from others. Common mythology, as illustrated by the equivalence of Ṛgvedic Dyaus Pitṛ with Greek Zeus Pater and Latin Jupiter, all meaning "sky-father", underscores the basic oneness of the Indo-Europeans. Indeed, the most natural way of explaining the Indo-European commonality is to assume that there existed a proto-Indo-European people bound together by geography, common culture and a common mother language. From their homeland, these people dispersed in stages, chalked out their individual cultural trajectories and eventually entered history.

When we first encounter the Indo-Europeans, they are already geographically and linguistically distinct from each other. On leaving their homeland, the Indo-Europeans would have encountered a number of population groups which they assimilated or displaced. Such encounters would have modified the vocabulary. The Indo-Europeans eventually came to occupy a huge geographical area with a natural environment vastly different from their own homeland. Thus, while the original words

representing ubiquitous items like cow or dog would have remained in vogue, words peculiar to the original environment would have become redundant. They would have been either totally discarded or given new meanings. The Indo-European words for daughter, through their Sanskrit cognate, *duhitṛ*, can be given the meaning "she who milks". Presumably, in the proto-Indo-European society it was the daughter who milked animals. There is however no common Indo-European term for milk.

The Vedic people were not merely familiar with the horse, they were obsessed with it. They had built a full-fledged cult around the horse and the chariot. The names of kings and others included the words 'aśva' and 'ratha' such as *Aśvapati* (lord of horses), *Aśvattha* (horse stand), and *Daśaratha* (ten chariots). Interestingly, *Ṛgveda* V:27:4-6 mentions a prince named *Aśvamedha*, "offering a horse-sacrifice". Distances were measured in units of *āśvina*, that is a distance covered by a horse in a day. Stars were named after them: *Āśvayuja*, the two horse harnessers (Beta and Zeta Arietia). *Aśvini* is a later name for the pair. Aryan gods like *Sūrya* and *Agni* majestically rode horse-drawn chariots. The horse obsession was a common feature of the Indo-Europeans whose personal names were similarly horse-based: Old Persian *Višt-aspa*, Greek *Hipp-arkos* and *Phil-ippos*, Gaulish *Epo-pennus*, and Old English *Eo-maer*. The *Aśvins* correspond to the Greek horsemen, *Castor* and *Pollux*, who however are associated with the constellation *Gemini* rather than *Aries*.

There are two major language groups in India: Dravidian and Sanskrit. There are also two archaeological cultures. One is the Harappan, while the other in its unmodified form is represented by Swat and Pirak in northwest India. The most logical way to understand this double duality is to correlate the Harappan culture with the Dravidian speakers, and the Swat-Pirak culture with the Indic speakers. This correlation is supported by

the fact that though northwest India is the home of the Indo-Aryan languages, it still hosts a pocket of speakers of a Dravidian-related language, Brahui. It is surmised that the Brahui speakers are related to the urban Harappans.

If the Indian subcontinent were the Indo-European homeland, it should have been the center of the migration of Indo-European speakers. In reality, it lies at one end, there being no Indo-European languages to the east of India and in south India. This implies that the center was somewhere to the west. If the Indian subcontinent were the Indo-European homeland, the Ṛgvedic language would be the mother of the Indo-European languages. Linguistic evidence indicates that it is one of the sister languages, not the mother language. Most features of the Indo-European language and mythology can be satisfactorily explained by postulating a homeland in the European steppes. Any alternative hypothesis, to be acceptable, must explain the linguistic and mythological commonalities, at least, to the same degree of satisfaction. Thus, the Ṛgvedic people and the Harappans are unconnected.

*Classical Sāṅkhya*

Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi:1979

Author: Gerald Larson

The Sāṅkhya system represents one of the more interesting and fascinating phases of Indian religion and thought. Even though the system is no longer a living force in contemporary Indian culture, nevertheless it



has exerted an important influence in the development of Indian religious thought, and many of its terms and notions have been and continue to be employed in other systems. The term 'Sāṅkhya' has been variously understood and translated by Indologists as 'enumeration', 'analysis', 'discernment', 'ratiocination' etc.

The historical development of Sāṅkhya falls into four periods. These are: a] germinal Sāṅkhya (9th to 6th centuries BCE)

b] proto-Sāṅkhya (4th century BCE to 1st century CE)

c] classical Sāṅkhya (1st to 11th centuries CE)

d] later Sāṅkhya (15th to 17th centuries CE)

Garbe thinks that Sāṅkhya is one of the oldest philosophies of the Indian tradition. He believed that Sāṅkhya is a kṣatriya (warrior-class) philosophy that influenced Buddhism. Dahlmann believes that the oldest form of Sāṅkhya is to be found in the philosophical sections of the Mahābhārata. Oltramare opines that Sāṅkhya is brahminical in origin though a unique system. He thinks that the Yoga thinkers annexed the Sāṅkhya theoretical views in order to systematize their own practical techniques and ascetic exercises. Oldenberg avers that the Sāṅkhya is found in the middle and younger Upaniṣads like the Kaṭha and the Śvetāśvatara as well as in the Bhagavadgītā and the Mokṣadharmā sections of the Mahābhārata. Keith points out that the Sāṅkhya is to be found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya Upaniṣads. Chattopadhyaya, an Indian Marxist scholar, thinks that the Upaniṣads are Aryan, pastoral and patriarchal in their views, while the Sāṅkhya is non-Aryan, agricultural and matriarchal in its outlook containing the seeds of a proto-materialistic philosophy.

The Sāṅkhya system enunciates that there are two primordial principles, i.e. Prakṛti and Puruṣa. The former is material, non-conscious

and evolves to bring the stuff of the world into being. The latter, i.e. the principle of puruṣa, is spiritual, conscious and neither creates nor is created. The principle of Prakṛti has three constituent elements in it. They are sattva (which includes notions such as goodness, light, pleasure, thought etc.), rajas (which includes notions such as passion, pain, stimulation, motion etc.), and tamas (which includes notions such as darkness, heaviness, indifference, matter etc.). When these three elements are in equilibrium, Prakṛti is unmanifest. When there is disequilibrium among these three, then it becomes manifest causing the three-fold suffering for puruṣa which has come under the grip of Prakṛti. Through discernment, puruṣa can ultimately free itself forever from Prakṛti.

*In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology and Myth*

Thames & Hudson, London:1991

Author: J.P. Mallory

This book is a good systematic scholarly inquiry into the origin of the Indo-European ethno-linguistic family. Starting with the primitive linguistic attempts of James Parsons, the author steadily takes the readers into the erudite and vastly improved theories of William Jones, August Schleicher and Johannes Schmidt. The most recent and up-to-date theories on the classification of Indo-European languages of Antilla, and those of

the duo Ivanov and Gamkrelidze are depicted with all their complex details.

Next, the history of the spread of Indo-Europeans into Asia is looked at by starting with the coverage of the once powerful but now extinct Hittites that once occupied Anatolia, to the Armenians, and then the Indo-Iranians. The author moves on to look into the migrations of the Indo-Europeans into Europe. In this context, the Greeks are the first Indo-European group to be examined in terms of how they subsumed and superseded the pre-Indo-Europeans who occupied that general area. The uniqueness of the Albanians is seen as a case which is so different from other Indo-European languages. The Slavs, the Balts and the Germanic branches of the Indo-Europeans are examined in detail. The Latin branch is, again like the Greeks, is given special attention as it also has issues of assimilation and absorption of pre-Indo-European peoples occupying the Italian peninsula. Lastly, the extreme western Indo-European peoples, i.e. the Celts, are viewed in terms of their domination from Iberia to Ireland, and how the Latin and Germanic fellow Indo-Europeans pushed them west into the British Isles region.

Moving out of the linguistic arena, the author looks at the Indo-European religion from the Celtic to the Vedic fully expounding and supporting the Dumézil's tripartite scheme as the hallmark of Indo-European culture. Finally, the author concludes the work with an extensive and meticulous analysis of the Indo-European *Ur-Heimat* (homeland) issue, skillfully reviewing the evidence from linguistic paleontology to archaeology, and coming up with the plausibility of the Kurgan homeland theory advanced by Marija Gimbutas.

*Sages, Nymphs and Deities: Excursions in Indian Mythology*

Lokbharti Distributors, Allahabad:1997

Author: V.S. Naravane

The author opines that in India, mythology, religion, poetry, art and philosophy are inseparably connected with each other within a unified cultural tradition. The author rejects any Jungian, Marxist, Existentialist or any other sort of interpretations of the Indian cultural tradition.

The mythographers of ancient India seem to have realized that stories about gods, demons, nymphs and sages, however heroic and profound, could not become an integral part of the ordinary person's life unless people could relate to them. Hence, there was no hesitation in poking fun of gods or sages. Also, the perennial nature of Indian culture is marked by two features: continuity in the midst of change, and unity in the midst of diversity.

The sage in India was a philosopher, prophet and poet all rolled into one. He had the insight of a philosopher, the spiritual and moral authority of a prophet, and the compassion and sensitivity of a poet. The sage was human in the sense that he fell victim to jealousy, anger and lust; but he was superhuman in that he had the wisdom, farsightedness and the discipline to quickly rectify himself and redouble his ascetic efforts and spiritual endeavors. He knew the difference between intellectual knowledge and spiritual intuition, between pleasure and happiness etc. Sages in their anger hastily pronounced curses, but they were equally quick in bestowing boons and blessings.

The nymphs were extra-ordinarily and bewitchingly beautiful semi-divine maidens whose tasks were to entertain the gods, as well as, on the orders of the gods, distract the sages from their ascetic vows and spiritual

penances. In this sense, a vast portion of Indian mythology revolves around the interactions of gods and sages being foiled by demons and nymphs with curses and boons resulting from this interplay.

The author also gives details about animals, birds, trees, rivers, mountains in the context of Indian mythology. The author gives his opinions on six major Hindu myths: the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu, the descent of the Ganges river, the churning of the milky-ocean by the gods and the demons, the wedding of Śiva and Pārvaī, the killing of the buffalo-demon by the Mother-goddess, and the mythology of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The book also has a separate section on Buddhist mythology starting with the legends in the Buddha's life-story to the myths associated with various dhyāni buddhas and bodhisattvas.

*Advent of the Aryans in India*

Manohar Publications, Delhi:1999

Author: R.S. Sharma

The author points out that in India the Aryan debate recently has been vitiated by extra-academic considerations. Some Hindu fundamentalists assert that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. The validity of the fundamentalist view can be better tested if aspects of the Aryan culture are analyzed in a wider horizon and not confined to the Indian perspective. More importantly, we have to note whether cultural traits known from textual, lexical and linguistic data fit the archaeological reality.

A study of the extant literature from across the Indo-European peoples reveal agriculture and pastoralism as the main sources of livelihood. They lived in a temperate climate. They domesticated horses which were used for riding and driving carts. They lived in male-dominated societies. They buried the dead, but also practiced cremation. The cults of fire and Soma prevailed among the Indo-Iranian group of the Indo-Europeans. The most important mark of Aryan culture is its language.

The chariot-race prescribed in the Vājapeya sacrifice of the later Vedic texts was also a Greek practice which is fully described in Homer. The terms axle, harness etc. have cognates in six Indo-European languages. Similarly, arboreal terms like 'bhūrja' or 'birch' has its cognates in six Indo-European languages since the use of birchwood seems to be an Aryan feature.

Fire-altars discovered in the Harappan context, match neither (Vedic) textual prescriptions nor age-old traditional (Vedic) practices. Harappan culture is not Ṛgvedic nor Sarasvatī-based because none of the major Harappan sites are located on the Hakra or the Ghaggar (modern names for the Sarasvatī river. In the Ṛgveda, the Sarasvatī is called the best of rivers (nadītama). It seems to have been a great river with perennial waters. The Hakra and the Ghaggar cannot match it. Also, there are several Sarasvatīs. The earliest Sarasvatī is considered identical with Helmand in Afghanistan which is called Harakhwati in the Avesta. Also, fired bricks are a striking feature of the Harappans, and this important construction material is unknown to the Ṛgveda. The life of the Harappans was not horse-centered, as was the case with the early Vedic peoples. S.D. Singh also points out that although the Harappans were fully familiar with the wheeled vehicle, there is no proof of the battle-chariot before the

advent of the Aryans. It should be noted that the Aryans were basically pastoralists who adopted the skills and crafts of sedentary people on their arrival in India. This explains the presence in the Ṛgveda of agricultural terms which do not occur in other ancient Indo-European languages. Of the three terms, vṛka, sīra and lāngala, each used for the plough in the Ṛgveda, only the first has parallels in the Indo-European languages.

The disappearance of the Harappan writing is attributed to either the breakdown of long distance trade or to the dominance of Vedic ritual-ridden priests. In several ancient societies, the victorious were culturally conquered by the vanquished, but the Indo-Aryan immigrants seem to have been numerous and strong enough to continue to disseminate much of their culture. The Ṛgveda suggests that the people whom the Aryans encountered spoke a language different from their own. The term 'mṛdhavāc' is applied to the Dasyus and Paṇis who were the great enemies of the Aryans.

Though the term is translated as 'insulting' or 'hostile' speech, it is also rendered as 'stammering' or 'unintelligible' speech. Recent linguistic researches show that the Dravidian-speaking peoples were present in the Indus Valley, in both the Harappan and post-Harappan periods. At present, besides the prevalence of the two Dravidian dialects in the Brahui area of Baluchistan, we find remnants of Dravidian language in the North-West Frontier region and Kashmir. The mid-Ganga plains retain several small Dravidian pockets till today. Dhangar, which is a dialect of Dravidian Kurukh language spoken by the Oraons in Chotanagpur, is present in the Terai districts of Nepal. Malto, another Dravidian dialect, is spoken in the Rajmahal hills lying at the eastern end of the mid-Ganga zone. A good many Dravidian words came into the Indo-Aryan languages. The Dravidians made their way south via Gujarat. Pre-Vedic Dravidianization of the Aryan

language is evidenced by the retroflexion sounds in the Ṛgveda such as *ṭa*, *ṭha*, *ḍa* etc.

Though direct references to the migrations of the Aryans into India are wanting, there's no dearth of indirect references. The Ṛgveda clearly suggests that the worshippers of the Maruts crossed the Sarayu, the Indus and its four tributaries, and appeared on the east of the Indus.

*The Riddle of the Ramayana*

Meherchand Lachmandas, Delhi:1972

Author: C.V. Vaidya

The author opines that the present Rāmāyaṇa, even as it is approved and adopted by the searching and all-respected commentator Kaṭaka, is not the Rāmāyaṇa originally written by Vālmīki. Whoever even cursorily reads the poem, cannot but be struck with the inconsistencies, the severances of connections, juxtapositions of new and old ideas, which abound so greatly in the present Rāmāyaṇa. And one cannot but come to the conclusion the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki was substantially reconstructed at some subsequent date. A few glaring instances of contradiction will be here sufficient to convince those who have not gone through the poem. The first canto is an answer to a question by Vālmīki to Nārada as to who was then the best of kings, and Nārada gives the palm to Rāma and



recounts the whole story of his life. The canto is, thus, almost a precis of the whole poem. It seems from this, as if Vālmīki knew not Rāma nor his great exploits. And yet further on he says to Sītā in the Uttarakāṇḍa that he knew her father-in-law Daśaratha who was his friend and knows her father Janaka, that he knows why and how Rāma abandoned her. In fact, Vālmīki knows everything and yet asks Nārada who is the best of kings. Either the first or the second is a subsequent interpolation. Again, Sugrīva in the Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa first says that he does not know the abode of the evil Rākṣasa (Rāvaṇa) nor his prowess, nor his family [Rāmāyaṇa IV:7:2]. And yet further on Sugrīva gives a detailed description of the whole world to the search parties sent by him and therein describes Lankā itself mentioning the fact that the country belonged to Rāvaṇa [Rāmāyaṇa IV:41:25]. It is clear from this that forgeries always expose themselves, and the numerous additions, alterations and amplifications in the Rāmāyaṇa are so evident that the conclusion cannot be avoided that the text of Vālmīki has been recast almost wholly and by unskillful hands. The old nucleus of the Rāmāyaṇa is, however, easily distinguishable from the vast accretions which have gathered around it. The Rāmāyaṇa essentially belongs to that ancient period of Indian history when sacrifice was the most distinguishing feature of Aryan worship, when Buddhism was unknown, when idol-worship did not exist, when Brahmins and Kṣatriyas freely ate animal food, when women learnt the Vedas and performed Vedic rites, when Kṣatriyas competed with Brahmins in learning, and Brahmins competed with Kṣatriyas in archery.

The author itemizes many glaring contradictions in the Rāmāyaṇa.

1. Rāma had many wives, not just one. [Rāmāyaṇa II:8:12].

2. The Rāmāyaṇa does not represent Ahalyā as transformed into a stone nor did Rāma release her from her metamorphosis by the touch of the dust of his feet.
3. The mention of rāśis or zodiacal signs in the modern compilation of the Rāmāyaṇa proves it to be not earlier than the first century BC. Up to that time, the Aryans of India regulated their sacrifices by the conjunction of the moon with the several fixed stars. In fact, the astronomy and the astrology of the ancient Aryans were based till then solely on the division of the ecliptic into the 27 constellations. They had no knowledge of the signs of the Zodiac or what are now known as the lagnas or rāśis, which were evidently introduced by or borrowed from the Greeks about 200 BC, for even the Buddhistic scriptures of the days of Aśoka regulate their time by reference to nakṣatras only.
4. The theory of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu is a creation of the Purāṇas and not that of the Mahābhārata nor the Rāmāyaṇa as is abundantly clear from the Rāmāyaṇa itself. The Varāha avatāra seems not to have been looked upon as an avatāra of Viṣṇu in the days of the Rāmāyaṇa. According to the Rāmāyaṇa, it is Brahmā who became Varāha and raised up the earth [Rāmāyaṇa II:110:3-4].
5. Other than the interpolated line of 'atra prasādamakaronmahādevaḥ svayam mama', Rāma is throughout the length of the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki shown as a Vedic Aryan who knew nothing else but sandhyā and sacrifice. He is never spoken of as worshipping a linga. It is Rāvaṇa who is spoken of as worshipping a Linga in the Uttarakāṇḍa 31:42.

The Devas are none but the idealized forefathers of the Aryans who came to and settled in India. They appear to have lived originally

somewhere in cold and snowy regions full of importance of fire and the sun. The Devas were a sect of dissenters from the general body of Aryan people and had to leave their homes in consequence of their dissensions. Their favorite deity was Indra, and they were fond of soma, that mysterious intoxicating drug which is spoken of so often in the Vedas but of which we, the present Aryans of India, have not the faintest idea. The Aryans of India look upon the Devas as benevolent deities and upon the Asuras as evil ones. The Zends of Persia thought exactly otherwise. They look upon the Devas as devils and the Asuras or Ahuras as angels. This clearly shows that Zends are among the descendents of those Aryans who were at feud with the Devas, the forefathers of the Aryans of India. Indra, the favorite god of the Devas, is with the Zends an infernal deity, while Tvaṣṭṛ, the favorite god of the Asuras, is looked upon in the Vedas, as an evil deity. Fire and the sun are, however, their common gods, and are still worshipped as good deities by the Zends and the Hindus alike. The cause of the dissensions or differences between these cousin races appears to have been the intoxicating habits of the Devas as typified in those of their favorite gods. Prof. Kunte says that 'Indra was abhorred by the Zends as a bad power who exulted in the intoxicating soma and helped the wild warriors who delighted in chivalrous gallantry.' A peculiarly interesting story in support of this idea is found in the Rāmāyaṇa. When from the churning of the ocean by the Devas and the Asuras, surā, or liquor, was extracted. While the Asuras declined to partake of it, the Devas drank it freely. Thenceforward, these two sections became distinguished as the Asuras and the Suras, i.e. those who did not take liquor, and those who did. What an irony on the vicissitudes of human beliefs! Whereas in modern Hinduism, the idea of an Asura cannot be separated from bottles

of liquor, in old Aryan mythology, Vāruṇī was 'anindita' or blameless and the Asuras were exactly those who abhorred liquor!

Indra, the favorite deity of the Devas was probably invested with the attributes of the leaders of those Aryans who left Ariana or the ancient home of the Aryans and proceeded towards India. He conquered many a town and hence is called purandara. He cuts roads through mountains and hills and hence is called gotrabhid. He incited the brave and chivalrous Aryans in their contests with the aborigines or dāsas and led them successfully to new lands. He was hence raised to the rank of the 'king of the gods'. He is the lord of the east because he led them towards the east. He is moreover also of svarga---that happy place to the northwest of India, towards which they often looked back with affection from their new homes.

Viṣṇu, another Vedic deity, appears now to have been invested with the attributes of their heroes in their new home. To us, he appears to be pre-eminently the God of India proper, an idealization of the last of those Aryan heroes, who coming from the northwest made rapid progress in the exploration of India and the conquest of the aboriginal races. Hence, Viṣṇu is called the youngest of the gods 'yathāvareṇa devānāmaditirviṣṇunā purā'. His title 'Upendra' can be understood when we remember that next to Indra it was he, to whom the Aryan people, who were indebted in the extension of their colonization in India and the destruction of their enemies.

In Aryan society, Kṣatriyas married Brahmin girls and freely gave princess in marriage to Brahmins. Kṣatriyas like Janaka disputed the palm with Brahmins in austerities and philosophical discussion, while Brahmins like Paraśurāma wielded the bow as no Kṣatriya could ever do. The

Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas of the Aryan period of ancient Indian history were a noble and mighty race of men. Fair in complexion, tall in stature and powerful in frame, they seemed a superior race of beings to the aboriginal inhabitants of the land. But the Aryans prided themselves on their moral superiority and exulted in the name of 'ārya' with which word they identified all that was noble, good, chaste and truthful, in short, all that was morally sublime. The ancient Brahmins and Kṣatriyas freely ate animal food and had no objection to animal slaughter for purposes of food and sacrifice. There were, no doubt, some distinction between medhya or clean and amedhya or unclean animals. Aryan kings prided themselves on the great horse-sacrifice and their women were strong. Kausalyā, the future mother of Rāma, killed by her own hands the sacrificial horse with three sword strokes with great glee [Rāmāyaṇa I:14:33].

The modern idea of a rākṣasa is so terrible and absurd that it is necessary to describe their personal appearance in detail to show that the modern idea has no basis whatsoever in the old Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. The rākṣasas were no doubt dark in complexion like of the inhabitants of southern India. The Rāmāyaṇa abounds in descriptions in which the darkness of their color is brought into relief by the side of the fair complexion of the Aryans. Fair Sītā, as she is carried away by black rākṣasas, is beautifully compared to a golden girdle encircling a dark elephant [Rāmāyaṇa III:52:23]. But though dark in color, the rākṣasas were not ugly in appearance. They had regular features which were often striking and handsome. Such examples of pleasing countenances are frequently met with even in these days among the dark inhabitants of southern India.

*Heaven, Heroes and Happiness*

University Press of America, Lanham:1995

Author: Shann Winn

The author opines that the vast majority of the peoples of the world have no interest in investigating their ethnological origins. They feel detached from such remote beginnings, which seem to lack spirituality and meaning that relates to their daily lives, so they choose to believe that they are descended from the traditional Adam and Eve. In the West, there is seldom any reflection at all on the legacy their pre-Christian ancestors; indeed, they are not taught about their "pagan" past. They are taught that the history of their civilization begins with classical Greece and Rome. Furthermore, it is assumed that the "significant" religious ideology of the West was introduced from the "Holy Land". It is easy to forget that Palestine was immersed for centuries in Greco-Roman culture brought by foreigners who spoke Indo-European languages, and it is seldom mentioned that prior to the Greek and Roman periods, the Jews lived under the domination of Indo-European Persians in both Babylon and Persia. The focus of the author is the study of the Indo-European ideological heritage--beliefs and values which have survived from the Indo-European past. To unveil this legacy, the author seeks insights gleaned from myth and language which will be supported with concrete evidence from the field of archaeology.

Indo-European ideology emphasizes three fundamental principles. First, an ultimate authority based on sacred (sworn) oaths in the heavenly realm and on laws and covenants based on earthly matters. Second, physical force, especially military. And third, well-being and prosperity, specifically, wealth, health and fertility. These principles were first observed

by the eminent linguist and mythologist, Georges Dumézil. Hence the author's book is entitled *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness* to encapsulate the Dumezilian pattern. Ironically, many ancient Indo-European peoples never recognized their fellow Indo-European peoples even despite the encounter. The Romans, though well-acquainted with the Gauls and Germans, never suspected that the speech of these neighboring peoples were related to Latin. The Greeks fought legendary battles with their fellow Indo-Europeans, the Persians. The troops of Alexander the Great marched to India, where they encountered a language (Sanskrit) with many lexical parallels to their own. Yet the connections went unobserved.

Some of the common triadic patterns across the Indo-European world are: an ancient prayer to Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of Iran, requests protection from three evils: the Lie (a demon who breaks covenants and destroys order), hostile armies, and a poor harvest. Old Irish law identifies the three sources of calamity as broken covenants, acts of war, and disease-producing famine. The same formula can be seen in the criminal code of ancient Rome, which meted out separate punishments for black magic, mayhem and theft. The Anglo-Saxons had a comparable formula consisting of Woden, Thunor and Frige. Their names survive in the names of three consecutive weekdays, i.e. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The gods themselves have disappeared, replaced by the Christian trio of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. There is evidence of a threefold code of punishment among ancient Germanic peoples. Death by hanging, Tacitus writes, was the expected penalty for traitors and deserters among the Germans; sexual crimes were punished by drowning. Treason and desertion, both violations of a covenant, fall neatly into the highest level, or the first function, of the tripartite scheme. Sex, an element of fertility and well-being, belongs to the lowest level---the third function. The evidence for a

second level (military) penalty points to the shedding of human blood through the use of a weapon, as retribution for crimes of violence. Also, Iranian, Greek and Indic medical lore indicate a classification of remedies of three types: spells, surgery and herbs. Spells represent an invocation of higher authority and were used for mysterious diseases, such as sores. Surgery, called knife-medicine in Iran, involves the use of incisions to treat wounds. Herbs, a product of the fertile earth, were used to cure ordinary illnesses. Blessings follow a similar pattern. The great Irish hero, Cú Chulainn, was granted knowledge of the future, skill in warfare, and a desirable marriage. A parallel set of blessings was enjoyed by a Norse king, who received runic wisdom, victory at war, and a good harvest season. A tripartite ideology also seems to be at work in Homer's celebrated description of Achilles' shield, in the *Iliad*. The shield, forged by the deity Hephaestus, is adorned with scenes that apparently portray the three functions. In the first city, an assembly has gathered to settle a dispute over blood money. The elders are seated in a circle, preparing to render judgment. The second city is under siege by hostile armies, who are debating whether to sack the city or spare it in return for heavy tribute. The outcome is war, as armed men from the city, through a ploy of their own, precipitate a bloody battle. The ambience of the third scene is rural and productive, featuring men working in a fallow field that has already been plowed three times. Further, the *Republic* of Plato determines that an ideal society consists of philosophers (repositories of sacred knowledge), soldiers and producers of wealth. Lastly, the religious practices of ancient Rome, for instance, included three types of flamens (priests), each of which corresponds to one of the tripartite levels. The flamen dialis was ranked highest, and performed the most sacred rituals associated with Jupiter and the pantheon of gods. The second type of priest had military



associations, as indicated by his title, flamen martialis. The third type of priest, the flamen quirinalis, was associated with the general populace. In Roman chariot races, three colors were displayed: the sacred white of priests, the red of warriors, and green, the color of Venus, the goddess of love and fertility.

*Character Portrayals in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*

Ajanta Publications, Delhi:1976

Author: Alois Wurm

The author systematically and methodically analyses the vanavāsī characters, the chief vānaras, the principal rākṣasas, the older characters of the Ayodhyā court and the four heroic Ayodhyā younger royals, i.e. Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā and Rāma.

Of the vanavāsī characters, Guha, the Niṣāda king, is portrayed as a hospitable, sympathetic and devoted individual. All the ṛṣis are portrayed as sages of extra-ordinary yogic power surrounded with an aura of brahminical lustre living a life of self-restraint bent on the welfare of all beings and devoted to the undivided pursuit of dharma immersed in an atmosphere of ascetic austerity and yogic contemplation. Jaṭāyu is portrayed as a self-sacrificing hero, and his brother Sampāti as someone who possesses profound knowledge of ancient events such as the wars between the gods and the demons and who is full of affection for his brother.

Of the chief vānaras, the author analyses Vālī, Sugrīva and Hanumān. Vālī is seen as two-faceted figure. On the one hand, he is heroic, brave and trusting. He has all the social merits of a king in that he has righteousness, conciliation, generosity and forbearance. On the other hand, Vālī is quickly wrathful which can become unrestrained and awesome. This can lead to deep embitterment, coarseness, and extreme cruelty. Sugrīva is good-natured but emotionally immature. Hanumān is portrayed in ideal terms as a wise, level-headed, devout, loyal, and humble being. Yet he is someone who has fabulous supernatural power, lustre, valor and heroism.

Of the rākṣasas, Mārīca, Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa, are analyzed. Mārīca is seen as a conscientious and benevolent rākṣasa who finally is harassed by Rāvaṇa to give into the latter's devious ways. Vibhīṣaṇa is a deeply dharmic rakṣasa who will not abandon his brother until he is reviled and thrown out. Rāvaṇa is a rākṣasa who has immense supernatural powers, who is awe-inspiring and splendid in appearance and yet vicious, cruel, deceptive, scheming, self-conceited, arrogant, treacherous, perverse and adharmic.

Of the elder royals of Ayodhyā, Kaikeyī, Kausalyā and Daśaratha are analyzed. Kaikeyī is a benign, loving, humane and cheerful queen to begin with, but when manipulated by her chamber-maid, she succumbs. A deep-rooted and vehement ambition has been awakened in her, and as she sees her ambition threatened, and imagines herself the victim of a foul trick by Daśaratha and his consorts, she turns into the most embittered, jealous, hard-hearted and vengeful petty-patroness for Bharata determined in her impatience to see her ambition fulfilled, not to shun from employing the most oblique, shameless and indiscreet cunning and meanest deceit and

from pestering her victim Daśaratha with the most cruel and ruthless pressures in order to drive him to succumb to her wiles, delighted, as it were, in inflicting grief on her imagined enemies.

Daśaratha, the king of Ayodhyā, is portrayed initially as a great monarch living amidst an atmosphere of enchanting splendor and majesty. He is a powerful, wealthy and very dharmic kṣatriya. Yet he has two weaknesses that'll eventually lead to his tragic downfall. The first is his very special affection for his oldest son, and the second is his utter infatuation for his beautiful third queen. These two attachments come into conflict, and the monarch dies in utter grief and agony when he is unable to reconcile them.

Of the heroic four, Bharata is analyzed first. Bharata is portrayed as an ideal brother who has an intimate fraternal affection and selfless love for Rāma. Bharata is critical of his mother. He knows of her self-conceited, impetuous way of behavior and her potential to create mischief in the family. Bharata suffers a series of traumatic shocks when he hears about the exile of his brother and demise of his dear father. After this, he has nothing but boundless curses for his mother and for her vulgar ambitions. When his brother Rāma refuses to return until the completion of the stipulated exile period, Bharata lives like an ascetic until Rāma's return.

Lakṣmaṇa is Rāma's second self and literally his shadow. Though he adores and admires his brother Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa sees his brother as too idealistic, tolerant and too dharmic. He is intolerant of injustice and is short-tempered.

Sītā, the spouse of Rāma, is the paragon of marital fidelity, wifely love, devotion and spiritual sublimity. She is lofty, noble, humane and tender. The highest joy and happiness of her life is to share the most

adverse destiny with her husband, to take upon herself the gravest of miseries and hardships for his sake. Most of all, Sītā has the deep wifely pride to relentlessly lash out at Rāvaṇa for his insolence, shameless cowardice and cruelty, his exorbitant presumption and perversity of mind in aspiring the wife of a man who is a world above the despicable lowness of his character.

Rāma, the superhero of the epic, is the paragon of all virtues, a dharmavīra, greater and deeper than none could be. He is the model of the ideal perfect personality unrivalled by any man or god.

## Section 3.2

### Article Reviews

#### *Arjuna and the second function: a Dumézilian crux*

Author: Nick Allen

Source: JRAS, 9, 3, 1999, pp. 403-418.

Allen regards Arjuna as the central character of the Mahābhārata. Arjuna has the unique status of being the recipient of the great sermon called *Bhagavadgītā* from Kṛṣṇa. He is the son of the god Indra, the king of the gods (*devendra*), and as such a major figure in Hinduism. Dumézil regarded Arjuna as a second function figure in his Indo-European tripartite scheme. Allen challenges this Dumézilian view in this article.

Allen points out that Indra being king of the gods is a first function figure not a second function one. Next, Allen points out the duality of the second function in the Mahābhārata wherein this function is shared by Bhīma and Arjuna who are "two rather different heroes and two rather different gods" (p. 405). In fact, Allen makes this "duality in the second function, the central problem of the paper." (p. 405). Bhīma was the son of Vāyu and Arjuna, the son of Indra. Allen points out that Arjuna in no way matches the physical strength of Bhīma. However, he himself admits that "Vāyu was a derived Indo-Iranian war-god closely associated with Indra." (p. 405).

Allen then takes the four-fold analysis of Dumézil of the Mahābhārata heroes, and shows how Arjuna does not fit the Dumezilian second function mould. The four-fold categories are divine fathers, details of birth, characteristic behaviors, and contrasting disguises in the Virāṭa Parvan.

Starting with birth issues, Allen points out that Arjuna's birth alone is prepared for by ascetic-type ritual by his parents, and celebrated by the gods, and that Arjuna's birth account is two or three times longer than that of his brothers. Kuntī is said to have fasted for an entire year and Pāṇḍu performed austerities standing on one foot. There is also a lack of clear focus in Arjuna's excellence though Allen observes that the disembodied voice (*aśarīravāṇi*) at Arjuna's birth foresees his later military glories. In terms of characteristics, the author regards Arjuna as being different from his brothers as he does not have the one-dimensional type of qualities that each of them is associated with. In the incognito years, Allen remarks that "Arjuna presents himself as a eunuch, a teacher of song and dance, and a story-teller. It is not obvious what to make of this combination, but one thing is clear; it cannot be linked with the second function." (p. 407). Allen also points out that Dumézil has asserted that Indra occasionally appears as a dancer in the Ṛgveda.

The three sins of the Indo-European warrior are, according to Dumézil, found in the episode of Indra killing the brahmin Trisīras wherein Indra loses his *tejas* (spiritual effulgence), *bala* (physical strength), and *rūpa* (looks) which are taken over by the gods Dharma, Vāyu and the Aśvins respectively.

Allen points out that Arjuna is further special in that he is the first among the five brothers to hide the weapons before going incognito. He is

also special in that Arjuna is the only one to go to visit the gods to gain celestial weapons from Śiva, Yama, Kubera, Varuṇa and Indra. Allen sees a triadism in Śiva, the three deities Yama, Kubera and Varuṇa, who give Arjuna weapons immediately, and Indra who gives it later.

Finally, Allen sees Arjuna as a fourth function figure in which he is seen as the "valued half" of his rival Karṇa who is seen as the "devalued half" of this function. Karṇa is devalued because he was disowned by his birth mother Kuntī, and insulted for his low caste. Arjuna and Karṇa are compared in many ways by the author. Arjuna is *nara* (man), Karṇa is *naraka* (hell) in that the latter is the incarnation of the demon of that name<sup>24</sup>. Arjuna is the third Pāṇḍava brother, and Karṇa is the third Kaurava marshal. Kṛṣṇa offers Draupadī and the kingdom if Karṇa changed sides.<sup>25</sup>

*The Mahābhārata and the Iliad: a common origin?*

Author: Nick Allen

Source: ABORI, 83, 2002, pp. 165-177.

The author begins his investigation by saying that the language of the two epic traditions have a common origin; so could the narratives have a common origin? The author confines himself to an in-depth investigation

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<sup>24</sup> Vana Parvan 240:19, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Udyoga Parvan 138:14

of the commonalities in the structure of the Kurukṣetra and Trojan wars. Though the Trojan war is longer, less neatly and aesthetically structured (with lack of a fifth leader and regular decline in the marshalship) than the Kurukṣetra war, they are, nevertheless, both pentadic in structure.

The five Kaurava marshals are Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śalya and Aśvatthāmā. The Trojan leaders are Hector, Penthesilea, Memnon, Eurypylos and the "Wooden Horse". The last one (Wooden Horse) is not a leader but that which leads to the destruction of Troy.

There are five selected phases comparing the wars in the two Indo-European epic traditions.

#### Phase-1

Ambiguous female collaborates in killing (Śikhaṇḍin and Athena). Mutual affection between enemies (Arjuna and Bhīṣma; Achilles and Priam).

Because of an oath he once took, Bhīṣma can only be killed by Arjuna acting together with the quasi-female Śikhaṇḍin. The collaboration is so close that which of the two is the real killer remains unclear.

Hector is usually thought of as killed by Achilles, but the latter's glory is shared with the goddess Athena. As Achilles says to Hector: 'Athena will kill you using my spear (22:446); but in this context the goddess's sex is ambiguous since to lure Hector into a fatal duel, she temporarily adopts the form of Hector's brother Deiphobus.

No other marshal in either epic tradition is killed with the help of a female.

In both epics the death in Phase-1 evokes a display of affection between individuals on opposite sides. Arjuna, one of the killers of Bhīṣma, has tears in his eyes when he asks his grandfather for instructions



on how to make his head comfortable on the bed of arrows, and the grandsire is happy at Arjuna's behavior. Similarly, Achilles, the human killer of Hector, has an emotional scene with Hector's father Priam, when Priam comes to beg for his son's body. The two weep together and admire each other.

In no other phase does a leader's death evoke such emotions (which do not stop the killers continuing their bloody work).

### Phase-2

Quarrel among victors (Sātyaki and Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna; Achilles and Diomedes). Attempt at immediate revenge (Aśvatthāmā and Ares).

Following what is effectively a lie (told by Bhīma and confirmed by Yudhiṣṭhira), Droṇa is beheaded by Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna. Arjuna regards the killing of their guru as a great sin, while Bhīma and Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna claim that it was simply their duty. Sātyaki joins in their argument on Arjuna's side and Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna responds angrily. Sātyaki seizes a club and has to be restrained. Kṛṣṇa and Yudhiṣṭhira eventually restore peace.

Having killed Penthesilea, Achilles removes her helmet, and struck by her beauty, regrets killing a potential bride. Thersites mocks him and is struck dead by Achilles. Diomedes, the relative of Thersites, has to be restrained from going for Achilles with his sword.

In both cases the quarrel starts with regrets expressed by the major champion on the victor's side, and nearly ends in violence. In both cases, such a quarrel occurs after no other marshal's death.

While the victors quarrel, someone from the losing side attempts revenge. While the Indian epic interrupts the story of revenge with the quarrel, the Greek epic does the converse. The attempts of would-be avengers in both cases are accompanied by strange phenomena such as storms, earthquakes, bizzare noises etc. Both attempted avengements fail as they are foiled by super-human forces like Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna and Zeus respectively.

### Phase-3

Supernatural spectators take sides (Arjuna/Karṇa; Achilles/Memnon). Both sets are well-matched duelists.

Phase-3 leaders are solar. Karṇa's father is Sūrya, and Memnon's mother is Eos, Dawn, the goddess of sunrise.

The Kurukṣetra war was a human version of an ancient struggle between the gods and the demons. The whole cosmos was divided into two groups in taking sides between Karṇa and Arjuna. The supporters of Karṇa were the stars, demons, ravens and dogs, while the supporters of Arjuna were the rivers, mountains, Vedas, elephants and the gods.

In the Greek tradition, though the scale is less cosmic, the gods do gaze down from their abode on Mt. Olympus on the battle between Achilles and Memnon. Some of them support Achilles, and some support Memnon.

#### Phase-4

Loyalty, luxuries, lodging (Śalya; Eurypylus). Arrival of outsiders (Balarāma; Neoptomelos and Philoctetes) and death of arch-sinners (Duryodhana; Paris). Crucial absence of divine figures (Kṛṣṇa; Pallas Athena).

In the Indian epic, Śalya changes loyalty because of the luxurious pavilions provided by Duryodhana for his overnight accommodation in the course of his journey to the battlefield.

In the Greek epic, Eurypylus is bribed by Priam with a golden vine. He sleeps in the splendid chamber normally used by Helen and Paris.

As Sanjaya comments in Mahābhārata 10:8:146-147 the massacre at the night raid would not have been possible if Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas had been present. Similarly, the image of Pallas Athena is removed by Odysseus before the destruction of Troy. So, in both traditions the major divine helper of the winning side moves or is moved away from the scene of the massacre.

Also, Phase-4 is marked by the arrival of individuals who have not previously participated in the war such as Balarāma in the Mahābhārata 9:33:2, and in the Greek tradition Neoptomelos and Philoctetes. Balarāma watches the duel between Bhīma and Duryodhana, the arch-villain, in which the latter is fatally wounded. Philoctetes participates with Apollo in the fatal wounding of Paris who, as the abductor of Helen, is the arch Trojan sinner. Both Duryodhana and Paris suffer particularly long-drawn out and agonizing deaths.

### Phase-5

Night attack follows example of birds (owls and crows; falcon and dove); Division of attackers (Kṛpa, Kṛtavarmaṇ and Aśvatthāman; Tenedos group and Horse group]. Most salient killing by son of a dead champion (Dhṛṣṭadyumna by Aśvatthāman; Priam by Neoptomelos).

Soon after he becomes "marshal", Aśvatthāman is lying sleepless beneath a fig tree filled with sleeping crows, when he sees an owl swoop down and massacre them.

In the Greek tradition, the diviner Calchas sees a falcon attacking a dove, who takes refuge in a hole. Pretending to withdraw, the falcon lures forth the dove and kills it. Hearing this story, Odysseus devises the complex stratagem of the wooden horse, one aspect of which is that the Greeks pretend to withdraw from Troy.

### *The migration route of the Indo-Aryans*

Author: P. Bosch-Gimpera

Source: JIES, 1, 1973, pp. 513-517.

The author points out that the Indo-Aryans did not enter Iran and Afghanistan from their original Indo-European homeland via the Aral Sea and Oxus River areas, but from the Caucasus region. According to the author, the former route is untenable because the peoples of the Aral Sea and Oxus River regions are largely Ural-Altai peoples, not Indo-European. Important scholars like Jettmar who had earlier propounded the Aral-Oxus

route abandoned it in 1956. The presence of the Indo-Aryans in Turkestan is on account of their migration from Iran itself, and not an indicator of their migration route into Iran from the Aral-Oxus region. The Indo-Aryans were much influenced by the peoples of the Caucasus and Mesopotamian regions as they were later on by the Indus Valley peoples. The Bronze Age artifacts point to such connections.

*The concept of Dharma in the Rāmāyaṇa*

Author: J.L. Brockington

Source: JIP, 32, 5-6, 2004, pp. 655-670.

The author points out that the concept of *dharma* is extremely broad. There is misunderstanding, inadequate understanding or a retro-reading of the modern understanding of the term. The term *sanātana dharma* first occurs in the epic in the context of family customs. The term *dharma* is also understood as propriety or norm. Sumitrā's advice to her son Lakṣmaṇa before going into exile in II:35-6-7 is an example of *dharma* used as propriety. The term *dharma* is also used in the sense of merit. An example of this is when Bharata speaks of his brother Rāma in II:93:33. Again, the term *dharma* has been used in the epic to mean personal integrity as in II:55:1, or ancestral duty as in IV:18:39. It has been used also a term meaning "immemorial custom" as in IV:18:18. Natural instincts or urges is another usage of the term *dharma*. An example of such a use is the word *dehadharma* in IV:39:9 where Tārā

uses it in "seeking to excuse Sugrīva's neglect of Rāma's cause and indulgence in sexual dalliance." (p.661). The term is also used in the sense of hospitality in IV:51:16. When Rāma marries Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa marries Urmilā, the term *dharmasambandha* is used in I:71:3 to describe the wedding as that which is lawful. Mantharā while convincing Kaikeyī reminds her that Bharata has a "rightful claim" (*dharma*) to the throne in II:8:23. The term *dharma* is used in the sense of being legally acceptable as in the case of II:110:30 where a heavenly voice tells Janaka that the infant girl he found in a casket while plowing the field was his to have and keep legally. Filial duty is yet another sense of the word *dharma* as in II:27:9.

Interestingly the author seems to provide a novel understanding of Rāma in this context. According to him, the epic's "original authors were more concerned with telling a story which extolled Rāma's martial qualities and it was only later redactors who became worried by Rāma's moral scruples." (p.667).

*The Rāmāyaṇa: Its History and Character*

Author: C. Bulcke

Source: Poona Orientalist, 25, 1960, pp. 36-60.

There are three different recensions of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. They are the Southern recension, the Bengal recension and the North-Western

recension. The most obvious difference between these recensions is that each of them has a considerable number of verses and even long passages and entire cantos which are absent from one or from both of the other recensions. For example, 4202½ ślokas of the North-Western *Sundarakāṇḍa*, 31% are absent from the Bengal recension and 28% of the Southern recension, whereas 13% are exclusive to the North-Western recension. Though these differences are cosmetic to the overall narrative, nevertheless interpolation issue needs to be factored into the analysis. The difference consists in the fact that frequently each of them differs from one or from both of the others in the text of those very verses that are common in all three recensions.

The style and composition of both the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* stand in sharp contrast to the other books of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Both are sadly lacking in unity and development of plot. Both contain much material that has no direct bearing on the Rāma story. The Purāṇic stories, especially, occupy a very large portion of both kāṇḍas, whereas there is not a single one of them in the other books.

The spuriousness of the *Bālakāṇḍa* is confirmed by the fact that its subject-matter is never referred to in the genuine books. In addition, there are some contradictions between the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the following books; for instance the marriage of Lakṣmaṇa and Ūrmilā is clearly mentioned in the *Bālakāṇḍa*, but we find no mention of Ūrmilā in the rest of the poem, not even in the lengthy farewells of the three exiles; indeed it is contradicted in the *Aranyakāṇḍa* (18:3) where we read that Lakṣmaṇa is unmarried.

As regards the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, we derive additional evidence from the fact that the *phalaśruti* at the end of the sixth book, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*,

shows clearly at the time of the composition of the work, the *Rāmāyaṇa* was considered to end at this place. Moreover the *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata*, which is based on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, does not refer to any events of the later life of Rāma as narrated in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, but ends with Rāma's coronation on his return to Ayodhyā.

According to the author, many famous incidents of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* are interpolations. Some of these are:

1. the episode of the golden deer
2. the burning of Lankā by Hanumān
3. the flight of Hanumān to the Himalayas
4. the fire-ordeal of Sītā
5. the return to Ayodhyā in the aerial chariot

The Rāma-story is not very old since the whole of Vedic literature does not contain a single reference to it. Some names do occur which are the same as those of the characters of the Rāma-story, but the fact that they are never connected with one another constitutes an additional proof that the Rāma-story was unknown to the compilers of Vedic literature. Janaka for instance, is never mentioned in connection with Sītā, although his name occurs frequently. This is not surprising since Sītā in Vedic literature has no affinity whatever with any human being; she is an agricultural goddess, a personification of the furrow. The Sītā of the genuine *Rāmāyaṇa* has no connection with that of the goddess; it is only in later times, that Sītā is said to have been born miraculously from the furrow. The *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivamśa* know nothing of this preternatural birth and hold her to be the daughter of Janaka.



According to the author, a dispassionate examination of the text clearly supports the view that Rāma was a noble king and a great warrior, but definitely a mere human being. Rāma was later identified as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The Jains consider Rāma as one of the 63 mahāpuruṣas, and the Buddhists regard him as a Bodhisattva.

Further, the author opines that the rougher manners, the fierce martial spirit and the implacable hatred portrayed in the *Mahābhārata* reflect the then more primitive civilization of the western part of India where the *Mahābhārata* arose, but it is more probable that the mild character of many personages of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially Rāma himself, is the result of Buddhist influence.

The original *Rāmāyaṇa*, according to the author, is from the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* to the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*. The epic consists of two parts: the court intrigue and the adventures in the forest. The original *Rāmāyaṇa* story may be summed-up as follows:

*"Once upon a time, there was a prince of Ayodhyā and his name was Rāma. Due to the cunning of his step-mother, he was banished for a time to the forests. He went into exile and his wife, Sītā, and his brother Lakṣmaṇa, gladly went with him. While they were living in the forest, an aboriginal chieftain kidnapped Sītā. Rāma rescued his faithful Sītā, but only after many adventures and with the help of friendly aboriginal tribes. Then the time came for his exile to end and for him to return to his kingdom. He returned to Ayodhyā, was crowned, and reigned for many years."*

Everything other than the core story above is embellishment, interpolation and hyperbolization. The author points out that the unparalleled popularity of the Rāma-story is on account of its vivid

portrayal of high moral values. It is because of the importance it attaches to things of the spirit, because of its noble conception of the sacredness of a pledge, its high ideals of duty, truthfulness and self-control, its living examples of domestic and social virtues, its deep faith in the ultimate meaning of life as a struggle between good and evil, that the *Rāmāyaṇa* conquered the heart of religious-minded India.

*On Ātmatuṣṭi as a source of "Dharma"*

Author: D.R. Davis

Source: JAOS, 127, 3, 2007, pp. 279-296.

There are three traditional sources of *dharma* in Hinduism. These are śruti, smṛti and ācāra. Occasionally, a fourth source, ātmatuṣṭi (what pleases oneself), is mentioned. Ātmatuṣṭi may be deemed an inner sense of morality, an appeal to conscience or a personal sense of right or wrong. It is an elevation of mystical empiricism over scriptural authority; a subordination of the sacred texts to inspirations of the heart.

The source of ātmatuṣṭi is Manu Smṛti II:6 and Yājñavalkya Smṛti I:7. The latter text is heavily indebted to the former. The concept of ātmatuṣṭi is also strongly advocated by Kumārila in the *Tantravārttika* while commenting on the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa Sūtra I:3:7. The notion of ātmatuṣṭi is not mentioned in either the Dharmasūtras, the Epics or the Purāṇas. Vyāsa Smṛti alone lists it as one of the sources of dharma.

All the sixteen commentators of Manu Smṛti have a scholarly consensus that the limitations of ātmatuṣṭi be based on one or more of the three following restrictions.

1. when there are two equally strong rival rules on ritual and/or law
2. to situations not covered by the other three sources of dharma
3. to persons of impeccable character who have deep training in the knowledge of the Vedas

Kumārila goes through four examples on the ātmatuṣṭi issue. These are:

1. Duśyanta's love for Śakuntalā
2. Prajāpati's incestuous love for his daughter Uṣas
3. Indra's adultery with Ahalyā
4. Viśvāmitra performing sacrificial rites necessary for the now outcaste Triśanku to obtain heaven.

Kumārila provides four rationales to show that there is no sin incurred in the four aforementioned cases.

1. there is only an appearance of similarity to violation of śruti mandates
2. prohibition applies only to humans
3. divine energy is very powerful
4. one should interpret these in such a way that there is no contradiction

Only divine individuals, mythological sages and gods transcend dharma. The Sanskrit maxim "*na deva caritam caret*" meaning "don't do what the gods do" and Daṇḍin's conclusion in the *Daśakumāracarita* in the words "*amarāṅgām ca teṣu teṣu kāryeṣu āsuravipralambhanāni jñānabalān*

*na dharmapīḍān āvahanti*" meaning "for immortals such devilish deceptions among their various acts do not lead to a violation of dharma because of the strength of their knowledge" are cited by the author as further external support for these rationales of Kumāṛila.

Thus ātmatuṣṭi is understood as that which:

1. is limited to Vedic sages and gods in its strong sense because ātmatuṣṭi transcends dharma in this case.
2. is restricted to situations of technical option and matters not addressed by any other sources in its weak sense, because here it is dharma as determined by other means that produces the feeling of ātmatuṣṭi
3. has little or no normative radiance, unlike other sources
4. tends to be subsumed by other sources, either because it is defined as the spirit of the Veda or because it is a supplement to other sources
5. has restricted scope (*viṣaya*) of applicability and is thus considered to be inferior (*apakṛṣṭa*) source.

*Sītā and Helen, Ahalyā and Alcmena: a comparative study*

Author: Wendy Doniger

Source: HR, 37, 8, 1997, pp. 21-49.

The purpose of this article as enunciated by the author is to compare and contrast four female mythological figures of which two are from India, i.e. Sītā and Ahalyā, and two from Greece, i.e. Helen and

Alcmena. The author first chooses to compare and contrast Sītā and Helen, and then Ahalyā and Alcmena.

The author wishes to compare the shadow Sītā with the phantom Helen. Both these ideas seem to be outside of Vālmīki and Homer respectively. An episode from the loose-ends tying and afterthoughts Uttarakāṇḍa is provided for Rāvaṇa not touching Sītā during her forced stay in Lankā. ). The Vedavatī affair in Rāmāyaṇa VII:17:1-31 and the Brahmāvaivarta Purāṇa II:14:1-59 provide other further reasons for the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa. However, this, according to the author, was not enough for the post-Islamic female chastity-obsessed Hindu tradition. Her stay at Lankā had Sītā's reputation, if not her chastity, sullied by her long sojourn in the house of another man. (p.22). The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa III:7:1-10 redeems this situation by creating a *māyāsītā* (illusory Sītā) who was abducted by Rāvaṇa. According to this invented tradition, Rāma who is aware of Rāvaṇa's evil intentions with regard to Sītā, asks the real Sītā to hide herself in the hut in the fire and leave the shadow Sītā outside the hut for Rāvaṇa to abduct. This episode does two things, i.e. protects the reputation of the real Sītā and justifies the fire-ordeal of Sītā when she is redeemed from Lankā. However, while the real Sītā is protected, the shadow Sītā becomes a problem after her task is done. The same passages of the previously cited Brahmāvaivarta Purāṇa say that the shadow Sītā went to Puṣkara (Ajmer, Rajasthan) where she prayed to Śiva asking the god for a husband five times. Shadow Sītā is re-born as Draupadī with the five Pāṇḍavas as her husbands. A retroactive connection is made where this female is identified with Vedavatī in Kṛta Yuga, Sītā in Tretā Yuga, and Draupadī in the Dvāpara Yuga. The Venkaṭeśvara

Mahātmya, a south Indian story, makes her be re-born as Padmāvati, the wife of Venkaṭeśvara in Kali Yuga. There are other illusory Sītās in the main Rāmāyaṇa itself. Indrajit, the son of Rāvaṇa, produces the false image of Sītā and uses it to fool Rāma in VI:68:1-23. A golden image of Sītā takes the place by Rāma's side at every sacrifice after her final disappearance (VII:89:4).

In the case of Helen, later opinions of Herodotus, Plato and Euripides are assessed and analyzed against the original version of her story as presented by Homer. The author brings to our attention of a phantom Helen in the play of Euripides where Helen says: "Hera gave Paris not me, but a breathing image [*eidolon*] made in likeness of me." [*Helen*, 31-67].

In contrasting Sītā with Helen, the author points out that Sītā is innocent when abducted by Rāvaṇa, while Helen is guilty as she voluntarily leaves with Paris. Sītā never slept with Rāvaṇa, while Helen slept with Paris. Sītā was not born a goddess but becomes one, while Helen though born the daughter of a god (Zeus) never becomes a goddess. While later Greeks questioned the Trojan war, the Hindus justified the war with Lankā.

The author proceeds then to compare Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama and Alcmena the wife of Amphitron. In both cases the gods Indra and Zeus respectively impersonate a human husband in order to gain sexual access to a human woman. In the earliest Hindu texts, Indra after taking away Ahalyā by force rapes her. In subsequent Hindu texts, Indra comes masquerading as her husband and Ahalyā could not see the difference between Indra and her husband or pretended not to see. In the Gaṇeśa Purāṇa 30-33, Ahalyā, upon discovering that it is Indra, takes him to task.

Alcmena is seduced by Zeus (Odyssey II:266-8) and Herakles is born out of this. Zeus suffers inner torment and gets away with it. Indra does not get away with his sexual excesses and is mutilated. Zeus and Indra are no longer worshipped by their respective peoples. Indra is paid lip-service in Hindu ritual. Alcmena was innocent and is totally forgotten. Ahalyā remains alive in the Hindu wedding rites and in the retelling of the Rāmāyaṇa epic. A child is born from the Zeus-Alcmena encounter. No child is born from the Indra-Ahalyā dalliance.

In comparing all four, the author concludes that Sītā (meaning, "furrow") and Alcmena are innocent, while Ahalyā (meaning, "not to be plowed") and Helen are guilty. Though all have an Indo-European background, the similarities are superficial.

*Aryans, Non-Aryans and Brāhmanas: Process of Indigenation*

Author: M.M. Deshpande

Source: JIES, 21, 1979, pp. 215-236.

The author cites two important passages from Indological scholars Oldenberg and Chatterji to testify to the mixed nature of the Indian peoples. However, an important citation comes from Patañjali who residing in Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna, Bihar) in the first century CE remarks in his *Mahābhāṣya* that a brahmin by definition needs to be fair-complexioned. This comment becomes quite troublesome in later centuries when

commentators of the famous Sanskrit grammarian "struggled hard to show that being fair-skinned was not an essential characteristic of a brahmin." (p.217). How did this change take place? It is because brahmins took non-brahmin wives. The scholar Karve's views are cited to lend support to the author's opinion. The author shows ample proof from Hindu sacred lore attesting to such marriages. The stories of Satyakāma Jābāla, Śrutaśravas, Jaratkāru, Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara, Vyāsa are cited as proofs of such marriages. Caste confusion is shown through Satyavatī's two sons, i.e. Vyāsa and Vicitravīrya. The former became a brahmin because his father, Parāśara, was a brahmin. The latter became a non-brahmin because his father, Śantanu, was a non-brahmin. According to the Manu Smṛti 10:68, the child of an Aryan man marrying a non-Aryan woman was considered a non-Aryan, while the child of a non-Aryan man marrying an Aryan woman was considered non-Aryan. The Hindu law-books considered the former as a *anuloma* alliance and the latter a *pratiloma* alliance. The former was preferred over the latter. With this, Aryans slowly mixed with the non-Aryans and the modern Indian evolved by process of this over the centuries. In early Aryan society, the wife was the peer of her husband as a *sahadharminī* in every sense including the recitation of the Vedas. As time went on, this remained only in name as the wife could not recite the Vedas. The present-day Indian is an Aryo non-Aryan maintaining caste identities by tradition.



Draupadī and the dharma

Author: Nancy Falk

Source: Beyond Androcentrism: new essays on women and religion,  
Scholar's Press, 1977, pp. 89-114.

The author cites the Mahābhārata epic to point out that "a wife that speaks disagreeable words is comparable to a preceptor that can't expound the scriptures, an illiterate priest, a king who cannot protect, a cowherd who cannot go to the fields, and an outcaste with religious aspirations." (p.89). Draupadī seems to be this kind of a sharp-tongued woman as she chastises the eldest of her five husbands and yet the epic praises her endlessly as a *dharmic* wife. Draupadī calls her spineless husbands as eunuchs when they fail to protect her when she was being humiliated in the Kuru court.

Yudhiṣṭhira, who is Draupadī's oldest husband, is addicted to gambling and causes her endless grief is strangely praised in the epic as the "best of virtuous men", the "knower of every rule of morality", the very son of Dharma who cannot lie. Draupadī too is praised in the epic as ideal, no does not lie, has no improprieties, never idle, respectful and renounces what her husband renounces.

Dharma is subtle and ambiguous. "It does not give the clear answers that one might hope or desire from it. It has often been noted that Yudhiṣṭhira's character itself constitutes the central problem for the epic." (p.96). Yudhiṣṭhira is an *un-kṣatriya* like *kṣatriya* going against his caste-dharma. However, it is Draupadī "who most persistently and

perceptively lays bare the inconsistencies in Yudhiṣṭhira's supposedly righteous behavior." (p.96).

Bhīṣma, the dharma-expert, is mute on many an inconvenient dharma occasion in the epic. Gāndhārī, who is such a faithful wife to her blind husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra, takes her husband to task for not averting the war. Draupadī and Gāndhārī are like the Goddess who takes Śiva to task. These women were models of a Vedic wife who was both obedient and dutiful yet sharp-tongued and chastising towards their husbands. Dharma is hard to nail down as it is a mix of morality, caste and gender in its sensitivity and definition.

*Dharma and its translation in the Mahābhārata*

Author: James Fitzgerald

Source: JIP, 32, 5-6, 2004, pp. 671-685.

Fitzgerald regards the term *dharma* as the single most difficult and vexing to translate in his translation of the *Śāntiparvan* of the Mahābhārata. Additionally, he regards the term as varied and elusive, a complex concept whose definition is contested both implicitly and explicitly in the epic itself. In his investigation of the nature of dharma, he first cites the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:20:6 which says:

*na dharmādharmāu carata āvam sva iti na devagandharvā na pitara  
ityācakṣate 'yam dharmo 'yam adharmaiti.*

"Dharma and Adharma do not go about saying 'Here we are!' Nor do the gods, Gandharvas and ancestors tell us 'This is dharma', 'This is adharma!'"

Next the author points out the subtle (*sūkṣma*) nature of dharma and its indefinite nature as proposed by Draupadī, Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. The author cites Halbfass who opined that there was no direct connection between the Vedic notion of *Ṛta* which was very cosmic in scope and the context-based concept of *dharmā* in post-Vedic Hinduism. The blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, aftermath the great battle, is said to have asked his half-brother Vidura about the nature of dharma.

*yad idam dharmagahanam buddhyā samanugamyate. etad vistaraśaḥ sarvam  
buddhimārgam praśamsa me. [Strī Parva 5:1]*

"Describe fully to me the ways of that intelligence by which this wilderness of dharma may be safely crossed."

The author sees dharma in the epic as operating on the transcendental unseen level. It is said to encompass law, merit, justice, righteousness, virtue and piety. Fitzgerald analyzes dharma in its three manifestations in the epic, i.e. sacramental, legal and ethical.

*Some Observations on the Paraśu of Paraśurāma*

Author: R.P. Goldman

Source: JOI, 21, 1972, pp. 153-165.

The main point of the author is that the well-known axe-weapon that the Sage Paraśurāma is so famous for in Hindu mythological lore is conspicuously absent in almost all of the episodes involving him in both Sanskrit epics except for one, i.e. the execution of his mother.

The axe-wielding sage is never referred to as Paraśurāma in the Hindu epics but rather as Bhārgava Rāma, Bhṛgunandana, Bhṛguśārdūla, Jāmadagnya or simply as Rāma, a name which he shares with his more famous and much more widely worshipped namesake. The so-called Paraśurāma is a man of utter complexity, fascination, and contradiction. He was a "brahmin and a warrior, contemplative ascetic, bloodthirsty killer, fond son of his father, murderer of his mother, devotee of Śiva and avatāra of Viṣṇu, inferior only to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa." (p.). It is not his temper but his regular use of weaponry that sets him apart from the other sages in Hindu lore. In the Rāmāyaṇa and in the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata, he uses mostly a bow and arrow and not an axe. Even in his various encounters with superhuman foes, he never uses his axe. The axe is mentioned only in two places for which he becomes very famous. Both of these are in the Mahābhārata. The first is in the Vana Parva 116:5-18 where he beheads his mother at the behest of his father. The second is in the Śānti Parva 49:33-34 where he chooses the axe as his weapon in the context of a boon from the god Śiva. Even as the guru of Bhīṣma and Karṇa, he does not have the axe as his weapon.

*Rāmah sahalakṣmanah: psychological and literary aspects of the composite  
hero of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana*

Author: R.P. Goldman

Source: JIP, 8, 2, 1980, pp. 149-189.

Hindu epics seem to produce a composite hero consisting of complementary and mutually reinforcing characters. Some of these are: Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the five Pāṇḍava brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma etc.

Rāma cannot eat or sleep without Lakṣmaṇa who accompanies him into exile, battles alongside with him, argues with him, is of opposite nature to him etc. When separated in the end by destiny, the two brothers barely outlive each other.

In the case of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, the former is fair and the latter is dark. The former is an agriculturalist, the latter a pastrolist. Kṛṣṇa too does not outlive Balarāma for too long.

The antagonists in the two epics are treated differently. Duryodhana and Rāvaṇa are treated differently. Duryodhana and Rāvaṇa are senior brothers of each set. Duryodhana's brothers, for the most part, lack any personality and they are totally subservient to him and they die before him. Vibhīṣaṇa is, on the other hand, totally the opposite of Rāvaṇa. The epic heroes can be contrasted psychologically and physically, but not morally. Vibhīṣaṇa and Rāvaṇa can be, and thus the former outlives and succeeds the latter.

The heroes in both epics have certain things in common. They are all born extra-ordinarily, the youngest of each group are twins, they are denied the right to succession, they go into exile into the forest, there is

an assault of the chief wife, and they regain their kingdoms after a terrible battle.

Nevertheless there are distinctions as well. In the Rāmāyaṇa, none can outshine Rāma and there is a divided loyalty among the twins. In the Mahābhārata, Bhīma and Arjuna constantly outshine Yudhiṣṭhira. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma and his brothers are incarnations of the Supreme, whereas in the Mahābhārata, the Pāṇḍavas are incarnations of the gods. Rāma as a powerful hero takes on the roles of Yudhiṣṭhira and Kṛṣṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa.

While Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are born separately and are incarnations of Viṣṇu and Śeṣa respectively, the four sons of Daśaratha are born as a result of the consumption of a single porridge containing the essence of Viṣṇu, and hence are regarded as portions of Viṣṇu. Rāma and Bharata are dark, while the twin sons of Sumitrā are fair. Rāma is patient, passive and idealistic, while Lakṣmaṇa is short-tempered, aggressive and realistic.

Rāma is a complex figure. Even though he is seemingly the exemplary son full of filial piety, he, nevertheless, exhibited bitterness, at least once, against his father (II:47:8-10). Rāma stands deeply devoted to the ideal of love for one wife, and yet puts the value of affection of a dead vulture, Jaṭāyu, over that of his own wife (III:64:25). Rāma rejects his wife twice after all the trouble he goes through to win her back. In the first instance, after killing Rāvaṇa, he subjects Sītā to a torrent of abuse, and only after her ordeal by fire, accepts her back. In the second instance, he finally rejects her and disowns her after hearing that the populace of his kingdom do not regard him as an ideally moral king as he accepted his wife back after the latter had lived in someone else's place. Yet having abandoned her, he regrets.

Lakṣmaṇa is presented as an asexual, even anti-sexual, figure. He is presented as someone who will guard his brother and sister-in-law while they make love to each other (II:28:10). Lakṣmaṇa is hostile towards the sex-crazed Śūrpanakhā. Lakṣmaṇa does not recognize any of Sītā's jewels except her anklets (IV:6:22-23). This is again repeated when Lakṣmaṇa, in the Uttarakāṇḍa, on the orders of Rāma, abandons Sītā on the banks of the Ganges. When Sītā asks him how he could do this given her pregnant condition, Lakṣmaṇa says that he has never seen her above her feet (VII:48:22-23). Sītā, on the other hand, had previously accused Lakṣmaṇa of lusting for her secretly when he (Lakṣmaṇa) refused to go looking for Rāma when the mimicking calls of phony distress by Mārīca came (III:43:5-6, 21-22). In all of the above, Lakṣmaṇa was merely following his mother's orders in terms of sexual propriety considering Rāma and Sītā as his parents. The author sees Sītā as having an oedipal fantasy on Lakṣmaṇa.

Bharata is a parallel hero to Rāma. However, both are passive, and as such there is no power struggle. Bharata truly admires Rāma and is thus totally deferential and devoted to him. It is an involuted oedipal relationship.

Śatrughna is the least important and least well-defined of the four sons of Daśaratha. Śatrughna is to Bharata as Lakṣmaṇa is to Rāma. The parallelism between the two sets of brothers is thoroughgoing. Śatrughna is as wrathful as his twin Lakṣmaṇa and is totally controlled by Bharata.

The end of the incarnation of the god Viṣṇu in the form of the four sons of Daśaratha has several important and distinctive features. The ascension into heaven of the four brothers is not in order. Lakṣmaṇa, on account of his banishment by Rāma, is first to shed his mortal frame

while being in a yogic trance on the banks of the Sarayū river. Rāma, who himself resolves to leave the world, tries to give the kingdom to Bharata who refuses it for the third time. The brothers then die in succession with Rāma being first followed by Bharata and Śatrughna. They all give up their lives by drowning themselves in the Sarayū river. The composite hero of the four brothers represent the erotic, aggressive and moral aspects, all complexly woven into one.

*Śiva, the Goddess, and the Disguises of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī*

Author: Alfred Hildebeitel

Source: HR, 20, 1980, pp. 147-174

At the very outset, the author remarks that the Mahābhārata is very coherent and consistent in its symbols and themes. The poets and the bards of this epic have displayed the "deepest" level of their play with symbols in the Virāṭa Parvan, the fourth book of the epic.

The author points out that the epic has grown beyond its Indo-European core to its representation of classical Hindu triad deities of Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Goddess. These deities are represented by Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, the Pāṇḍava brothers collectively and Arjuna specifically, and Draupadī respectively.

The analysis commences with the epic narrative in the fourth book reflecting the Vedic sacrificial theme neatly woven together with non-Vedic



elements and motifs. The thirteenth incognito year is compared to the *garbhavāsa* of a Vedic rite. Arjuna going to heaven in order to obtain divine weapons for the sacrifice of battle is compared to the Vedic *dīkṣā* of the *yajamāna*. The very word "Virāṭa" is compared to the quasi-feminine Vedic principle of *Virāj*. The Matsya dynasty is a reminder of the fish imagery that runs throughout the epic.

Arjuna as the eunuch Bṛhannalā represents *Ardhanārīśvara*. He is Draupadī's favorite husband (17:2:6). He represents three aspects of Śiva, i.e. dance teacher = Naṭarāja, music master = Nādabrahmaśiva, eunuch = Ardhanārīśvara (Śiva as man and woman in Śvetāśvataropaniṣad IV:3). Arjuna, in his battle against the Kaurava intruders, is compared by Prince Uttara to Śiva (4:40:11). The author himself sees Arjuna as resembling Śiva as *Kālāgnirudra*. Arjuna's encounter with Aśvatthāmā in the great battle is compared as a duel between two protégés of Śiva. Arjuna as the possessor of the mighty Paśupata weapon once again links him with Śiva.

Further Vedic motifs are linked to Śiva and the Pāṇḍavas. In the Vājapeya sacrifice, during the purchase of the *parisrut* (an intoxicating beverage which is neither soma nor surā), a eunuch must be present. In the Rājasūya sacrifice, *akṣāvāpa* surveys the dicing hall which is linked to Śiva playing dice. There is also a *govikartṛ* who is a cow-slaughterer. Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma fulfil these respective roles in the Virāṭa Parva. The twins Nakula and Sahadeva working horse and cattle keepers under the names of Granthika and Tantripāla are associated with Śiva in his role as Paśupati. Draupadī, linked to five, is seen associated with five Kaurava figures and three colors. Droṇa and Kṛpa have white garments, Karṇa yellow, and Duryodhana and Aśvatthāmā, blue.

*Kṛṣṇa and the Mahābhārata: a biographical essay*

Author: Alfred Hildebeitel

Source: ABORI, 60, 1979, pp. 65-107

The author reviews the views of several scholars on the Mahābhārata. The scholar Lassen's views are reviewed first. Kṛṣṇa has double connections with cattle-folk and warrior-folk. The Bhagavadgītā is an interpolation. There are not two distinct Kṛṣṇas, but there are two layers of one tradition about him. Of these, the pastoral layer is older, and the warrior layer is later. Kṛṣṇa was divinized in post-Buddhist times.

The author next reviews the theories of the Holtzmanns, the uncle and nephew scholarly team. They believed that the Mahābhārata has three layers, i.e. the Buddhist, the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava. Duryodhana was a Buddhist king because there was a namesake Buddhist king also with a hundred brothers. The older gods like Indra, Brahmā and Sūrya are moved out in favor of Śiva and Viṣṇu. With the full and eventual Vaiṣṇavification of the epic, Kṛṣṇa, who was originally a deceitful propounder of immoral advice to the Pāṇḍavas, is transformed into an artful deity of wise trickery with a moral end in mind.

According to the Holtzmanns, Kṛṣṇa was originally a deified hero of a non-brahminical people with a taste for drunkenness and sensuality. He was the crafty and dishonorable advisor to the more ignoble party, the Pāṇḍavas. This popular but disreputable figure was, in the course of time, turned into the proto-type of all virtue, the incarnation of the highest god. This was said to be a thoroughly pragmatic decision on the part of the

brahmins to use the popularity as a means of combating Buddhism by identifying Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.

The author next reviews the view of Alfred Ludwig who thought that the entire Mahābhārata epic was an anthropomorphized version of a Aryan solar drama. According to him:

1. Pāṇḍu = faded former sun
2. Dhṛtarāṣṭra = ineffectual cloud-enveloped winter sun
3. the five Pāṇḍavas = the five seasons
4. Draupadī = the Earth
5. Kṛṣṇa = the spring season sun
6. Karṇa = the summer season sun robbed of his brilliance (armor)
7. disrobing of Draupadī = the baring of the Earth by the winter
8. the Kauravas = winter
9. Aśvatthāmā = last spring-night frost
10. Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas = the triumph of the sun

The view of Joseph Dahlmann is reviewed next. Dahlmann sees the entire epic as a morality play where Yudhiṣṭhira represents the forces of dharma, and Duryodhana, the forces of adharma.

The views of the distinguished German scholar Walter Ruben are reviewed next. Ruben presents ten enigmas with regard to Kṛṣṇa.

1. Kṛṣṇa's cowboy manners before Jarāsandha
2. Kṛṣṇa's fear of Jarāsandha when the former is forced to flee from Mathurā
3. Kṛṣṇa's ignorance in battle when he cannot see where Arjuna is  
[Mahābhārata VII:18:21]

4. Kṛṣṇa's unreasonable rage when Arjuna does not fight his utmost against Bhīṣma and when Kṛṣṇa breaks his promise when he nearly engages in combat [Mahābhārata VI:55:86]
5. Kṛṣṇa's occasional worship of Śiva and Umā
6. Kṛṣṇa's powers received from the gods for slaying the demon Naraka [Mahābhārata V:47:74-81]
7. Kṛṣṇa's admissions of powerlessness in certain instances in battle.
8. A reference to Kṛṣṇa as only a half-quarter (*turīyārdha*) of Viṣṇu [Mahābhārata XII:271:61]
9. Denunciations of Kṛṣṇa by his rivals, foes and critics as a deceitful and low person, a cowherd and a coward.
10. Kṛṣṇa's weakness and despair when plagued by his kin.

Ruben sees the second enigma as the biggest reason for considering Kṛṣṇa as a mere human being. Further, he appears so in Chāndogyopaniṣad III:17:6. He sees the historicity of the Magadhan raid on Mathurā as the connecting link between archaeology and mythology. The Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā is synthesized with the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of Dvārakā.

Ruben points out that Kṛṣṇa appears in eleven instances in the epic. Some of these are:

1. as a spectator in Draupadī's svayamvara
2. as a person who encourages Arjuna to marry Subhadrā (Kṛṣṇa's sister)
3. as the slayer of Śiśupāla and Jarāsandha at the Rājasūya sacrifice
4. as the failed peace-maker to the Kuru court
5. as the superfluous non-combatant in the war

Most of these are totally peripheral to the main epic.

Ruben believes that four streams went into making this composite Kṛṣṇa.

1. Viṣṇu the Vedic god
2. Nārāyaṇa, the cosmic philosophical god
3. Vāsudeva, the warrior-savant
4. Gopāla, the cowherd god of the Ābhiras

Another scholar named Held saw the epic as reflecting the Indo-Iranian theme of battle of Good versus Evil with Kṛṣṇa thrown in as a mediator. The dice-match (*dyūta*) and battle (*yuddha*) are seen as representations of Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively.

The author then reviews the views of Sukthankar who sees the epic as operating on three levels, i.e. the mundane, the ethical and the metaphysical. The mundane presents the human drama in the epic, the ethical presents the struggle between dharma and adharma. Finally, the metaphysical shows the Brahman and Ātman relationship. Sukthankar points out two major interpolations in the epic involving Kṛṣṇa. These are:

1. Providing garment to Draupadī when she is being disrobed
2. Eating a grain from the Akṣayapātra so that Durvāsas and his companions feel full

The last review presented by the author are those of Georges Dumézil who presents his Indo-European tripartite view. Here:

1. Yudhiṣṭhira is the first level
2. Bhīma and Arjuna are the second level
3. Nakula and Sahadeva are the third level

Dumézil sees the epic as reflecting the Vedic Viṣṇu and Indra in the form of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. The three steps of the Vedic Viṣṇu are reflected in the epic as follows:

1. Kṛṣṇa stepping down from the chariot in the battlefield to sermon the Gītā to Arjuna
2. Kṛṣṇa's opposition to Aśvatthāmā
3. Kṛṣṇa's revival of Parikṣit

*Did the Dravidians of India obtain their culture from Aryan immigrants?*

Author: P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar

Source: Anthropos, 1914, pp. 1-15

The author begins to resolve the central issue of his interrogatively entitled article by criticizing Max Müller's Aryan Invasion theory based on the reckoning that the unity of speech implied the unity of race. He points out that Max Müller himself recanted his theory in 1891. To this end, the author quotes Max Müller who is purported to have said the following: "to me, an ethnologist who speaks of an Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar. It is worse than a Babylonian confusion of tongues, it is downright theft." Anthropologists like Haddon and Myers have made accurate presentations about the ethnic compositions

of peoples of the world, and the Indologists have not caught up with their findings.

The author lays out in a six-fold manner that sums up the theory upheld by the Indologists advocating the Aryan Invasion thesis, and devotes the rest of the article to refuting these six propositions, systematically, by one by one.

The six-fold Aryan Immigration thesis is as follows:

1. Aryans invaded and conquered northern India around 1200 BCE.
2. Aryan immigration took place in two waves. The first immigration was through the Panjab where they displaced the local population completely. The Rajputs and Jats are descendents of these Aryan invaders. The second immigration made its way into India via Gilgit and Chitral into the Ganges Doab area. This second wave mingled with the indigenous peoples and produced an intermixed composite populace of Aryan and non-Aryan ancestry.
3. The indigenous peoples whom the Aryans subjugated were savages and thus referred to by the Aryans by the contemptuous term '*dāsyus*'.
4. The invading fair-skinned Aryans invented the infamous caste system on account of the stress of contact with the dark-skinned indigenous peoples.
5. The invading Aryans brought their own mythology which has since become Hindu mythology.
6. The Aryans spoke the Vedic language from which came the languages of northern India which extends south through the Maratha country. All of this occurred on account of gradual and thoroughgoing Aryanization. The southern part of India thus became the homeland of the indigenous peoples who resisted Aryanization, but despite holding their own, were somehow influenced by the Vedic Aryan language.

With these having been said, the author commences his systematic refutation.

#### Refutation of Point-1

Nowhere in the Vedic mantras have the incidents of the invasion been mentioned. The fights mentioned there have been for cattle, women etc. There is no reference to any displacement of tribes or acquisition of territories from foreign foes. The Aryans do not refer to any foreign country as their original home; nor do they refer to themselves as coming from any place beyond India; nor do they refer to the route by which they came into India; nor do they name any place in India after the names of places in their supposed original homeland as conquerors and colonizers always do, but speak of themselves exactly as sons of the soil would do.

#### Refutation of Point-2

The theory that the peoples of the Panjab and Rajputana are racially distinct from the rest of the people of India as they were part of the first Aryan wave of immigrants, is refuted because the alleged doliocephalic types are found among many non-Aryan peoples of the world such as the proto-Nordics, the Chudes of Trans-Baikalia, the Kurgan builders of South Russia, the Wusuns of Turkistan, and even the native Australians.

Also, the caste system and the fire-soma cult were not institutions that evolved because they were part of the second wave, but are examples of far-flung foreign influences on native peoples as in the cases of Mithraism in ancient times, and Christianity from ancient times to the present day.



### Refutation of Point-3

The word '*ārya*' occurs 33 times in the Ṛgveda, the word '*dāsa*' 50, and the word '*dāsyu*' 70 times. These terms have been used in the context of the Indra and Agni cults. Those who adored Indra and Agni were considered *āryas*, while those who were opposed to them were *dāsyus* or *dāsas*. The context of these terms is one of cult, and not one of ethnicity. The solitary word '*anāsa*' occurring in Ṛgveda VI:29:10 has been taken by Max Müller *et al* to mean "noseless", therefore implying the Aryan condescension of the flat-nosed non-Aryans. The Sanskrit commentators have analyzed the word not as '*a-nāsa*' (noseless), but as '*an-āsa*' (mouthless) meaning "those devoid of fair speech". Also, the *āryas* and *dāsyus* had the same stage of culture. Both lived in cities. Both had chariots, horses, cows etc. The Dravidians (Tamils) had their own words for horse and chariot, i.e. '*kudirai*' (horse) and '*tēr*' (chariot), which were purportedly Aryan-introduced entities into the subcontinent further discredits the Aryan migration thesis.

### Refutation of Point-4

The theory of the invasion of India by Aryans has, in modern India, flattered the prejudices of the higher castes, and also pressed into service, in the administration of the Hindu law, those that can pretend to belong to one of the four Aryan castes being given the benefit of the Hindu law of inheritance as laid down by the Ṛṣis and commented on by the brahmin commentators from the 11th to the 18th centuries C.E. Thus, all this Aryan invasion business is the outcome of the fanciful notions of the clique of Indological philologists. However it is untenable that the motive caste hierarchy was racial superiority. The caste system has always

existed in India, and is on account of ethnic, linguistic, geographical, occupational, religious, and numerous other differences. It is marked by endogamy and commensality. The caste system is purely associated with the fire-rite alone. The brahmin performs the fire-rite, the *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* patronize and participate in it, and the *śūdra* serves it.

#### Refutation of Point-5

The names of the gods of Europe have been etymologically linked with the names of the Vedic deities by philologists now assuming the role of comparative mythologists. Thus, the Greek Zeus-pater was the Vedic Dyaus-pitar; the Greek Ouranos was the Vedic Varuṇa etc. Whereas Zeus was one of the most important of the Homeric deities, Dyaus-pitar was hardly a god in the Vedic pantheon. Thus to round out all this, the author points out that Indian mythology is a blend of the pre-existing myths blended together with the deities of the fire-soma cult.

The god Indra is a totally Indian deity because the monsoons do not exist anywhere else in the so-called Indo-European world. The Vedic Viṣṇu was a minor god who was falsely referred to as the "all-pervading one" by later Sanskrit commentators who were totally ignorant of the annals and epochs of Indian religious history. The word '*Śiva*' meaning "red" in Tamil is definitely a Dravidian god. The god Agni alone is of foreign origin as the cold weather is generally found outside of the sub-continent. The conclusion is that when the fire cult entered India, the tribe whose god was Indra first accepted the method of offering him Soma juice and the flesh of animals through the fire. Indra then became the chief Soma drinker and the patron of the *ṛṣis*, and as the cult spread to the

other tribes, other gods were admitted to their communion but had, during the age when the fire-cult dominated, a place inferior to Indra.

Soon after its introduction into India, the fire-cult developed into a complicated ritual which could be conducted only by trained brahmin priests. So, the old worship of Śiva, of Viṣṇu, and of Kṛṣṇa, the god of the pastoral tribes on the banks of the Yamunā, and an enemy of Indra, in the Vedic Age, spread among the people, the Vedic fire-cult died a natural death. The brahmins have kept up the ghost of the fire-rite in their domestic ritual.

#### Refutation of Point-6

Though Sanskrit has greatly influenced Dravidian tongues, the reverse is also equally true. There are Sanskrit words such as *majura*, *pippali*, *miricha*, etc. that are peculiar to India, especially to South India. These do not have cognates in other Indo-European languages. The Sanskrit words for 'water' and 'fish', i.e. *nīra* and *mīna* respectively, are of Dravidian origin. Vedic language became Classical Sanskrit, then Prakrit, and eventually evolved into the languages of northern India. Vedic tongue came into India with the fire-soma cult, and got accepted much as Pali was accepted by the Burmese Buddhists or Latin by non-Latin Catholics.

The grammatical affinities of the northern Indian languages with the Dravidian family were noted by Stephenson as early as 1849, and have been discussed by Caldwell in his *Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*. The principal particulars in which the grammar of the northern Indian idioms accords with that of Dravidian languages are as follows:

1. The inflexion of nouns by means of post-fixed particles added to the oblique form of the noun.
2. The inflexion of the plural by annexing to the unvarying sign of plurality the same suffixes of the case as those by which the singular is inflected.
3. The use in, several of the northern idioms of two pronouns of the first person plural, the one including, the other excluding, the party addressed.
4. The use of post-positions instead of prepositions.
5. The situation of the relative sentence before the indicative.
6. The situation of the governing word after the governed.
7. The use of the root-verb as the imperative.
8. The mode of the formation of the interrogative.
9. The three cases of the nouns, as opposed to the seven of the Sanskrit.
10. The four tenses, i.e. present, past, future and indefinite, as opposed to the ten of Sanskrit.
11. The piling of participle upon participle to produce a compound sentence.

Most of these are characteristic peculiarities of agglutinating languages, and surely no inflectional language has been proved to breakdown to an agglutinating one. On the contrary, when inflections die out their place is taken, as in English, by prepositions; the inflection is analyzed into the root-word and a particle that does the work of the inflection, and hence such languages are called analytic. The North Indian languages are as much agglutinating as the South Indian ones. More than this, the order of words in the North Indian languages is so much the same as that in the South Indian ones, that any sentence of the one can be turned into one of the other by the simple process of the substitution

of the Southern word by the Northern word, a process by which, if applied to a Sanskrit or English sentence, will yield nonsense. Also, all Indian languages abhor the passive. On the other hand, Sanskrit has pushed the passive voice to the insane length of inventing the passive voice of the intransitive verb; in fact the inane phrase, '*tena bhūyate*' meaning "by him it has been", is more idiomatic in Sanskrit than '*saḥ bhavati*' meaning "he is".

The conclusion is that the Northern Indian people spoke Dravidian dialects when the Vedas were composed by the Ṛṣis, and that the Vedic language and its daughter, Classical Sanskrit, being the sacred language of the more influential classes, and the language of their literature and culture, exercised an enormous influence over the spoken idioms, and the Northern Indian languages are the result of this powerful action of Sanskrit and the Dravidian dialects.

The Indo-European philologists have misled anthropologists about Indian ethnicity and civilization. India's civilization is 4000 years old and wholly indigenous albeit marginally influenced by the slightly alien fire-soma cult and the Vedic tongue which entered the subcontinent proper.

*Draupadī on the walls of Troy: Iliad 3 from an Indic perspective*

Author: Stephanie Jamison

Source: Classical Antiquity, 13, 1, 1994, pp. 5-16

The author sees certain patterns in the accepted forms of Indo-European marital systems as manifested in ancient Greece and ancient

India. The abductions of Helen and Draupadī in the Iliad and Mahābhārata respectively serve as the bases for this comparison.

The third book of the Iliad contains the *Teikhoskopia*, the "viewing from the wall" in which Helen identifies certain Greek heroes for the benefit of Priam and other Trojan elders (III:161-244), and the subsequent single combat between Menelaos and Paris (III:313-382), a duel that is supposed to settle the war: the victor is to get Helen and her possessions, and the Greeks will go home, whoever wins. Homeric scholars have found this episode both anomalous and puzzling. Expert consensus is that this episode is a result from the displacement of these scenes from another part of the poem or indeed from a different poem etc.

One important comparandum that needs to be factored into the analysis of this Iliadic episode is to view it in conjunction with the cognate epic tradition of the Mahābhārata. Examined from the Indic point of view, the *Teikhoskopia* and the duel both appear to fill important structural roles in the larger narrative and to be crucially connected to each other. That it is Indic material that sheds this light suggests that this narrative complex may be an inherited one in both Greek and Sanskrit epic, and that it has a place in an Indo-European typology of marriage, both legal and illegal.

In India, the Sanskrit law codes regularly classify marriage into eight categories, according to the circumstances under which the bridegroom takes charge of the bride. These categories are hierarchically ranked, by position on the list, and the legality (or not) of any particular marriage depends on its position in the hierarchy and on the social class of the participants. The 7th type, the *Rākṣasa* or "Demonic" marriage, is the lowest type of legal union. This is marriage by capture or abduction, defined with unblinking violence as:

*hattvā chittvā ca bhittvā ca krośantīm rudatīm gṛhat. prasahya  
kanyāharaṇam rākṣaso vidhir ucyate. [Manu Dharmasāstra III:33].*

"The abduction by force of a maiden, weeping and wailing, from her house, after smashing and cleaning and breaking (her relatives and household), that is called the Rākṣasa rite."

This type of marriage has not only a secure position in the legal tradition; it is also repeatedly exemplified in the narrative literature. The Mahābhārata contains several discursive narratives of Rākṣasa abductions, the most famous of which are Bhīṣma's abductions of Ambā and her sisters (I:96, V:170), and Arjuna's of Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā (I:211-213). In fact, Bhīṣma at one point in the Mahābhārata rather startlingly proclaims it as the best type of marriage for warriors.

Abductional marriage, if done with due ceremony, is legal; skimping on the latter is illegal. In fact, it involves double illegality, i.e. societal and caste-based. This double illegality may account for its power as a narrative theme: two great Indo-European epics, the Indian Rāmāyaṇa and the Greek Iliad, are essentially stories about the repercussions of an illegal abduction.

And what are the repercussions? The family of a girl correctly abducted has no recourse. The marriage must be accepted. But an illegal abduction is quite different: there is a legal remedy, which one can call the re-abduction or counter-abduction. The injured party or parties can assemble a posse and pursue the abductor, with intent to fight and recapture the woman. Thus Rāma can follow Rāvaṇa and Sītā to Lankā;

Menelaos can follow Paris and Helen to Troy. Counter-abduction too has its rules and ceremonial steps.

In India, abduction and counter-abduction is the topic content of the entire second half of the Rāmāyaṇa. In the Mahābhārata, it is only a minor episode of passing significance. When the Pāṇḍavas with their common spouse Draupadī were in exile, an instance occurs when Draupadī is left in the care of a maid-servant and a household priest while the five brothers are away. Jayadratha, the sole son-in-law of the Kaurava king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, seeing Draupadī is attracted to her, and tries to carry her off. The priest does not regard to act of Jayadratha as immoral, but as illegal as the latter ought to first confront and defeat the Pāṇḍavas and then take Draupadī. The priest says:

*neyam śakya tvayā netum avijitya mahārathān. dharmam kṣatrasya paurāṇam avekṣvasva jayadratha.* [Mahābhārata III:252:25]

"This (woman) cannot be led (married) by you, without (your) having conquered the great chariot (fighters) Look at the ancient dharma of the warrior, O Jayadratha."

Jayadratha's intended abduction is illegal on every count.

1. he has not announced his intentions
2. his actions have no legal witnesses
3. he performs no feats of valor

When the Pāṇḍavas are seen coming, Jayadratha asks Draupadī to identify each of them. Draupadī does so as it is a legal requirement.



[Mahābhārata III:254:5]. The counter-abduction is when the Pāṇḍavas defeat Jayadratha and humiliate him. With this, the incident is closed.

In Greece, Iliad 3 is a parallel point by point to the counter-abduction of Draupadī, but with a surprise ending. The *Teikhoskopia* corresponds to the counter-wooing, the great oath sworn corresponds to the witnessing required in both ordinary marriages and marriages by abduction, the duel of Menelaos and Paris to the Pāṇḍavas combat with the army of Jayadratha, but has vastly different effects on the story.

For comparison, one can take each of these points in turn beginning with the *Teikhoskopia*. Helen's tranquil, almost elegiac musings on the wall certainly differ in mood from Draupadī's defiant speech on a lurching chariot, but the two episodes serve the same purpose: the counter-wooing, the identification and announcement of the pursuers intending to re-abduct the woman. The only difference is that Draupadī speaks directly to her original abductor, while Priam serves as surrogate or proxy for his son Paris.

In both the Iliad and the Mahābhārata, there is an interruption of action by the arbitrary suspension of time between Paris' challenge to Menelaos and the actual duel. It is the same effect produced by Draupadī's freeze-framed monologue in the chariot (of Jayadratha). Pointed artfulness is at work in both epics. Violent and decisive action has been set in motion, is both inevitable and imminent, and then the motion stops at its most dramatic, while the measured, tradition-bound voice of legality and ceremony confers legitimacy on the violence to come.

Helen turns to her own kinsmen, remarking on the absence of her twin brothers, Kastor and Polydenkes. It is perhaps worth noting that the last two people Draupadī identifies in her counter-wooing are the twins

Nakula and Sahadeva. Like Draupadī, Helen emphasizes in her response to Priam that she has been *asked* for the information. Helen's response is similar to Draupadī's style of reply. Both the situations are followed by duels. Though Paris and Jayadratha are both humiliated in the end, Aphrodite, *dea ex machina*, intervenes on behalf of Paris, the rules are circumvented, thus giving a different ending to this episode in the Iliad. By contrast, the re-abduction is successful in the Mahābhārata. In the Iliad it is not and hence the story continues. In this epic, Helen's abduction is the main story, whereas in the Mahābhārata, the Jayadratha affair is a side story.

The concluding remark is that despite this, both epics belong to an inherited Indo-European narrative pattern that it has its roots in a particular societal institution---the fine line between legal and illegal abduction in the typology of Indo-European marriage.

*The Concept of Prakṛti in the Sāṅkhya Philosophy*

Author: C.T. Kenghe

Source: Poona Orientalist, 23, 1958, pp. 1-7.

The Sāṅkhya system, according to the author, is the oldest system of Indian thought. It is a rationalistic system in that it has constructed its doctrines based on the observation of the universe and its workings. The Sankhya system is a dualism which believes in two mutually distinct irreconcilable ontological entities, i.e. puruṣa and prakṛti. The former

(puruṣa) is spiritual and internal to man. It is the pure, unchanging soul within man. Puruṣa is of the very essence of consciousness. There are infinite number of puruṣas, though in their essence they are all the same. The latter (prakṛti), on the other hand, is non-spiritual. Prakṛti is uncaused, infinite, impartite and is the source of everything except for the puruṣas. Prakṛti has two aspects, i.e. psychical and physical. The psychical evolves into the physical. The intellect, the mind, the power of the five sense-organs and the five motor organs are psychical. Matter which is made of the five gross elements are physical. Prakṛti is ever-changing. It is non-conscious though capable of reflecting the consciousness of the puruṣa. Prakṛti has three constituent elements called guṇas to it. They are sattva, rajas and tamas. They are the intelligence, energy and mass aspects of Prakṛti. Within man, they cause pleasure, perplexion and pain respectively. When these three guṇas are in a state of equilibrium, Prakṛti is unmanifest. When the equilibrium of these guṇas is disturbed, Prakṛti evolves into the universe. Since Prakṛti is the great source of all things, except for puruṣas, it is called mahadbrahman and is considered both the efficient and material causes of the universe. Since the Sāṅkhya system subscribes to satkāryavāda, the view that the effect pre-exists in its material cause, the whole universe potentially exists in Prakṛti and becomes manifest through evolution. The Sāṅkhya system is non-theistic and rejects the notion of God as creator. When puruṣa unshackles itself from the bonds of Prakṛti, it attains liberation which a permanent state of freedom from the clutches of Prakṛti.

*First migration wave of the Indo-Iranians to the south*

Author: Elena Kuzmina

Source: JIES, 29, 1-2, 2001, pp. 1-40.

The model established by European linguists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries on the question of the Indo-European homeland still dominates the scholarly scene. Gimbutas has a special place among scholars in this connection as she established Kurgan homeland theory. From this homeland in the Pontic Steppes, they moved westwards into Europe and eastwards into Iran first and then into India. Based on flora and fauna, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov suggested Asia Minor as the Indo-European homeland. Diakonov supported this theory as also Renfrew. Chernykh and Anthony supported Gimbutas based on their theory of the domestication of the horse in Eastern Europe during the Eneolithic epoch (4th to 3rd millennia BCE). Mallory advocated the view that the Indo-Iranian homeland issue ought to be always seen in the context of the Indo-European homeland problem. A steppe homeland for the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European peoples which was first put forth by Otto Schrader in 1901 has been accepted by a vast majority of Indo-Iranian specialists.

The author supports an East European genesis for the Indo-Iranians. The Indo-Aryan migration into the subcontinent is based on the following decisive arguments:

1. The presence of a large number of native loanwords in Sanskrit mainly cultural terms connected with farming, irrigation, crafts, pottery, and also

with naming flora and fauna. Also, Aryan society during the Vedic period included representations of a local population whose names were not Indo-Iranian.

2. The high-level of Harappan farming civilization is incompatible with the economy and cultural type of the pastoral Aryans depicted in Vedic literature.

3. The localization of the Indo-Aryan homeland in the Steppes is pre-conditioned not only by the connections between Finno-Ugrian and Iranian, but also Aryan.

4. The production of ceramics without the pottery wheel by the Indo-Aryans is witnessed many times in the Vedic texts. This automatically excludes from consideration as the homeland all the cultures of India/Near-Eastern region, where pottery wheel was used in the 3rd millennium BCE and earlier.

5. The horse cult, which was of essential importance to Indo-Iranian culture and also common to Indo-European culture finds its widest distribution and earliest evidence for existence in the East European Steppes from the 4th millennium BCE.

6. The horse-drawn chariot played a great role in describing the social group of warrior-charioteers among the Indo-Iranians. *Tvashtar*, creator-god was the inventor of the chariot; the divine creator *Vishwakarman* was the carpenter as were the celestial craftsmen the *Ribhus*; in the *Rigveda*, the chariot-making is compared to the creative work of a poet-rishi. Identical

set of weapons for charioteers are described in the Vedas, in the Avesta and in a text from Nuzi in Mitanni.

Interest in Indo-Iranian problem has been revived by the discovery of the kurgans in the Sintashta burial ground in the Urals with burials of warrior-charioteers interred with chariots, pairs of harnessed horses etc. Large number of elite warrior burials have been discovered on the Don. Much corroborating archeological evidence is given by the author about these burial sites.

Judging by the Vedic texts, Indo-Aryans who arrived in India were pastrolists, engaged in nomadism for half the year, moving by vehicle with their herds or walking according to the Ashvamedha rite, after the king's sacred horse to conquer new lands.

*Rāma's moral decisions*

Author: B.K. Matilal

Source: Adyar Library Bulletin, 1980-81, pp. 344-351.

The author argues that *dharma* in the Hindu tradition is formalistic ethics. It is formalistic norm that must be upheld at all costs though sometimes technical loopholes are taken advantage of in order to circumvent it or explain it away.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Daśaratha had to banish his own son, Rāma, against his own will and judgment as well as the will of everybody else,

the citizens of Ayodhyā, the ministers and priests, simply because he had to fulfill his formal promise to his once beloved queen, Kaikeyī. Rāma had to go to the forest abandoning his rightful claim to the throne in order to simply fulfill his formal duty as a son. He had to abandon his beloved wife, Sītā, being aware of her innocence, in order simply to fulfill his formal duty as a ruler, as a king. If opinion of the citizens is so important that Sītā had to be abandoned in an almost inhuman manner, why did Rāma go to the forest in the first place against the will of all the citizens? The answer lies in understanding the same kind of formalistic ethical principles that held the highest authority in the society of which Rāma was a part.

Sage Jāmadagnya kills his own mother at the behest of his father because of this formalistic dharma. Rāma's ancestor, Sagara, lost his thousand sons because they were obeying his command which was dharmic. Rāma banishes his faithful and innocent brother Lakṣmaṇa simply because Rāma would not violate a formalistic promise he had made. In fact, in the promise Rāma had made to the Sage Kāla, the former vowed to kill anyone who disturbed them during their meeting. Technically, as per this formal vow, he would be dharmically obliged to kill Lakṣmaṇa, but Rāma finds a loophole for he says: *tyāgo vadho vā vihitaḥ sādḥūnām hyubhayam samam* (VII:106:13) meaning "With regard to good people, abandonment is the same thing as killing."

In all of the above, factual faults or real crimes do not matter that much. Violation of a formal rule or a stupid promise is all that matters. The sage Vasiṣṭha makes this formalism very clear when he says: *pratijñāyām hi naṣṭāyām dharmo hi vilayam vrajet* (VII:106:9), meaning "For when a promise is not kept, dharma is destroyed."

In the *Mahābhārata*, Yudhiṣṭhira's adherence to truthfulness had the same formalistic character. To tell a lie is adharma, no matter what. Thus, to tell a harmless lie so as not to hurt the feelings of an otherwise honest nice man, would be considered adharma, according to this norm. But Yudhiṣṭhira lied only once---the lie that he knew would be sufficient to kill his own guru, Droṇa. But Yudhiṣṭhira deluded himself into believing that he was, after all, making a formally true statement by declaring that '*Aśvatthāman* (an elephant) was dead' when the real intention was to convince Droṇa that his son Aśvatthāman was dead. One should remember here that Yudhiṣṭhira was aware of the full consequences of this little lie: namely, the death of Droṇa, and victory for him. For this heinous little lie, Yudhiṣṭhira was only nominally punished (a mere view of the sinners in hell) at the end of the epic.

Similarly, it is to uphold this dehumanized norm, Dharma, Rāma could punish innocent persons like Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Śambūka etc. The killing of Vālin by Rāma is also clothed in the upholding of this formalistic ethical norm called dharma, namely, protecting a friend, Sugrīva, and keeping of a formal promise. Rāma reminds Vālin that he had stolen Sugrīva's wife Rumā and slept with her. This was a great sin and adharmic (IV:18:19). Though Sugrīva too had slept with Vālin's wife, Tārā, it was not adharmic because Sugrīva had thought that Vālin was dead. Rāma tells the dying Vālin that his killing was done according to dharma (IV:18:35). One would have to take Rāma's word on this matter as he seemed to be, at an earlier instance in the epic, fully aware of his powerlessness before the powerful impersonal formalistic norm of *dharma* and the consequences of violating it. The author points this out in the course of his article when Rāma engaged in a conversation with his dear



brother Lakṣmaṇa says: *eko hyaham ayodhyām ca pṛthivīm cāpi lakṣmaṇa. tareyam iṣubhiḥ kruddho nanu vīryam akāraṇam. adharmabhayabhītaśca paralokasya cānagha. tena lakṣmaṇaḥ nādyāham ātmānam abhiṣecaye.* [II:53:25-26], meaning, "If I'm angry, O Lakṣmaṇa, I am alone capable of conquering not only Ayodhyā, but the whole earth. But alas, strength is of no avail here. Being afraid of *adharma* and *paraloka* (other world), O sinless Lakṣmaṇa, I have not allowed myself to be anointed king this time."

*Kṛṣṇa: in defence of a devious divinity*

Author: B.K. Matilal

Source: *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, E.J. Brill, Leiden:1991, pp. 401-418

Kṛṣṇa seems to be a character who represents the most confusing moral enigma not only in the Mahābhārata epic, but also in the whole Hindu ideal of dharma. Kṛṣṇa is depicted in Hindu art and iconography as having a mischievous and mysterious smile. It seems a striking contrast to the Buddha's smile that not only depicts tranquility and serenity, but radiates both confidence and compassion on the beholders. Kṛṣṇa claims to be God Almighty in the epic, but through his various acts comes out looking like a devious fraud. Prof. Sukthankar points out that Kṛṣṇa is "a cynic who preaches the highest morality and stoops to practice the lowest tricks in order to achieve his mean ends!"

Duryodhana presents a full litany of Kṛṣṇa's devious acts just before he passes away. The author of the Mahābhārata himself surprisingly agrees with Duryodhana's assessment of Kṛṣṇa's adharmic behavior. Despite all this, the Hindus believe that these contradictions either must have some deeper significance or some plausible explanation. The Mahābhārata (the Gītā excepted) does not represent absolutistic universal ethics, but rather relative situational ethics. Kṛṣṇa's role, it seems, was not to resolve the moral ambiguity, but to heighten the mystery. To this end, one can question as to why the author of the Mahābhārata presented to his readers a Kṛṣṇa with character blemishes rather than a perfectly moral being. Kṛṣṇa, according to his own words in the Mahābhārata, is not omnipotent. He acknowledged his limitations to the Sage Utanka as to how powerless he was in not having been able to stop the war. Kṛṣṇa acknowledged that the war was inevitable, and that he was powerless to stop the inevitable. Kṛṣṇa is portrayed by the author of the Mahābhārata as mightier than anyone else, but not omnipotent. Kṛṣṇa cites that the gods won over the demons through devious means. Kṛṣṇa as Time is passionless and free from human virtues. Sometimes situational constraints and the risk of the loss of the greater good might influence a rational agent to transgress certain valued principles. Kṛṣṇa represents this transcendental ethics.

*Georges Dumézil: Theories, Critiques and Theoretical Extensions*

Author: Dean Miller

Source: Religion, 30, 1, 2000, pp. 27-40.

According to the author, Georges Dumézil took the theoretical structure from the French sociological theorist, Émile Durkheim, developed it into an innovative tool in philology, and along the way became an important theorist in myth. In the uniqueness of his achievements, he belongs on the same level as Claude Levi-Strauss and Carl Jung. The first lesson that he took from Durkheim was that sacred beings and the themes or essences, and the stories about them, reflect social divisions, and Dumézil took this insight into the realm of language. Dumézil pointed out that societies within this Indo-European linguistic superfamily were inclined to divide themselves and their gods into three hierarchical clusters which Dumézil referred to as the 'three functions'. These were the Sovereign (First) Function, the Warrior (Second) Function, and the Fertility (Third) Function. There was a color-coding for each of these functions as well. Indo-European pre-Christian Europe had this tripartite pattern in all its cultural institutions. This triplex pattern shaped Christianity as well. However, Momigliano, a critic of Dumézil, opined that most of European society was tripartite because it was Christian.

Within this Indo-European structural pattern, Dumézil also developed a number of major sub-impulses or sub-themes. The First Function was split into two based on the Indic pattern, i.e. the trusting Mithraic and the mysterious Varunic. Also, it is fair to say that out of the very large Indo-European speaking family, in all its various sub-groups ranging from the Indo-Iranian to the Celtic, some areas have been more open to a

Dumézilian inquiry than others. Ancient Rome provided an early and rich store of material for his explorations, and also a rich ground for controversy. Ancient Greece has always been resistant to the point where Dumézil named Greece his *grande mystère*. However, J. Oosten insists that the Indo-European component in ancient Greek culture is, in fact, quite strong but Dumézil's theories do not explain this phenomenon or its manifestations. It is ancient Indic sources in all its rich complexity and diversity have fed Dumézil's theories from the first.

Many scholars have continued to build on his insights. Rodney Needham, and even more markedly, N.J. Allen, have explored his theoretical possibilities to considerable effect. Other Dumézilian scholars have been B. Sergent whose special area is archaic and ancient Greece but who has also published a massive analysis of the entire Indo-European subject matter. Littleton has extended his investigative range of Arthurian source legends. Strutinsky is a firm trifunctionalist with a Germanic and classical bent. Dubuisson whose special area was the investigation of Indic and Irish sources. Puhvel, a supporter and friend of Dumézil, has come to think that Dumézil's main enduring contribution will be in his innovative philological studies, not in the tripartite theory so frequently attributed to him. Polomé has been able to bridge the gap between the philological and the mythographic aspects of Indo-European studies.

Against Dumézil are people like Schlerath who denies that tripartition even exists. Ginzburg thinks that Dumézil was fascistic and anti-Semitic, a charge echoed by Bruce Lincoln. Arvidsson in his essay '*Aryan Mythology as Science and Ideology*' repeats much of the anti-Dumézilian line. The author points out that Ginzburg and Lincoln are revisionists. In fact, Dumézil had both left-wing and right-wing scholarly admirers. Dumézil himself was a Catholic conservative who had an open and flexible

mind. He was a polymath with sixty immensely productive years of scholarship.

*Draupadi and her Dumézilian interpretation*

Author: Edgar Polomé

Source: JIES, 17, 1-2, 1989, pp. 99-111

In 1947, Stig Wikander established that:

1. the gods fathering the Pāṇḍavas constitute a structured set that does not correspond to the one commonly found in epic mythology.
2. the grouping is almost Vedic, but for the fact that Vāyu is given much more importance, and Dharma replaces at the top of the hierarchy the Vedic deity whose meaning and function had been considerably changed in epic mythology.
3. the special importance of Vāyu reflects an older stage even than Vedic mythology.
4. the number and order of birth of the Pāṇḍavas reflects the organization of this Vedic and pre-Vedic pantheon.
5. the collective marriage of all five Pāṇḍavas translates a Vedic/pre-Vedic "theologeme" referring to a relevant group of deities.

Accepting this, Dumézil made his own analysis in the context of his triadic theory.

1. Mitra-Varuṇa of the Ṛgveda becomes the Dharma in the Mahābhārata. Yudhiṣṭhira represents the sovereignty of Mitra-Varuṇa, and through his intelligence and righteousness, dharma.
2. Indra of the Ṛgveda becomes Vāyu and Indra in the Mahābhārata. Bhīma's uncouth display of brute strength reflects the nature of the storm-god Vāyu, while the gallant chivalry of the amorous and adorned Arjuna as the skilful bowman reflects directly the nature of Indra and the Maruts.
3. The Nāsatyas of the Ṛgveda are the Aśvins of the Mahābhārata. They represent fertility, prosperity and health. The twin sons of Mādri, Nakula and Sahadeva, represent this function. There are certain problems with this as Nakula and Sahadeva are often contrasted. Nakula is said to be brave and beautiful, while Sahadeva is wise and pious. While serving incognito as a horse caretaker in the Virāṭa court, Nakula is closer to his essentially kṣatriya brothers, especially Bhīma, at whose side he often fights. By contrast, his twin brother Sahadeva also serving incognito as a cow caretaker in the Virāṭa court is closer to the brahmin whose sacrificial animal he controls--hence, his closer association with Yudhiṣṭhira and with the intellectual pursuits that characterize the activity of a diviner. Both Donald Ward and Georges Dumézil have provided interesting parallels to show that this contrast between the twins reflect an older Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European tradition.

Also, when Śiva punishes Indra for his pride, the latter joins the other four Indras who have sinned like him. Their only redemption is to enter a human womb to expunge themselves. The five Indras are reduced to the Indo-European trio for redemption.

1. In the first case where Indra was deprived of his tejas (majesty) for the brahminicide of killing Tvaṣṭṛ's tricephalic son, he is reborn as Yudhiṣṭhira where Dharma sets free his tejas.
2. In the second case where Indra was deprived of his bala (strength) for a breach of trust when he violates his agreement with Vṛtra and kills him, he is reborn as Bhīma where Vāyu sets free his bala, and the remainder of Indra's vigor goes to Arjuna.
3. In the third case where Indra was deprived of his rūpa (good looks) for a deceitful satisfaction of his lust when he assumes the shape of Gautama and seduces his wife Ahalyā, he is reborn as the twins Nakula and Sahadeva where the Nāsatya bless them with Indra's looks.

Draupadī, born of Fire, is the wife of Indra (Arjuna) alone though she, by the above design, becomes the wife of the remaining Indras as well. As the manifestation of Śrī, by virtue of the definition given to Śrī in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, she bestows on the sacrificer (yajamāna), spiritual strength (tejas), physical power (indriya) and cattle (paśu) which is what Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma-Arjuna, Nakula-Sahadeva stand for respectively. Further in Ṛgveda VIII:71:11, Agni is invoked in prayers (dhīṣu), in combat (árvati), and for productiveness of the fields (kṣatriya sādhas).

The Indo-Iranian water/river goddesses Anahita (Iranian) and Sarasvatī (Indian) respectively, are both described as "wet", "strong" and "immaculate" which fit with the tripartite notions of fertility (third function), fighting (second function) evil and purifying ritually (first function).

The goddess Frigg in Germanic mythology is very similar to Draupadī. Her name means 'love' (Old Norse: frya), and is the cognate of the Sanskrit word for 'beloved or spouse' (priyā). Friday, the day associated

with love and fertility throughout the Indo-European world, is named after her. Her abode is Fensalir (hall of marshland) which points to her affinity with soil and waters. So, this third level deity is also the "queen of heaven" as the wife of Odin, the Germanic Varuṇa. Frigg is the strong supporter of Winnili ('warriors'). Frigg also sleeps with Odin's two brothers, Villi and Vé. Villi means 'vital energy' or 'force', while Vé means 'magician' or 'diviner'. So, here too, a fertility goddess, like Draupadī, is the common spouse of the tripartite gods.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Georges Dumézil and the Indo-European tripartite scheme**

#### **Section 4.1**

##### **Discovery**

###### **A brief biography of Georges Dumézil**

Georges Dumézil was born on March 4th 1898 in France. He was the son of a classicist named Jean Anatole Dumézil [1857-1929]. Because of his learned father's influence, Georges was able to read the *Aenid* of Virgil in the Latin original at the age of nine.<sup>26</sup>

After studying in the high schools of Troyes and Tarbes, and the Jesuit College of Neufchateau, Georges attended the Parisian secondary school of Lycée Louis Le Grand, where he came under the influence of a leading French philologist named Michel Bréal [1832-1915] who was a student of the renowned comparative Indo-European scholar Franz Bopp [1791-1867]. Bréal taught him about the vastness of Indo-European linguistic family.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 'Georges Dumézil' entry

<sup>27</sup> *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 'Georges Dumézil' entry

Dumézil began his college-level education at the Parisian *École Normale Supérieure* in 1916 during which time he came under the influence of Antoine Meillet [1866-1936] who was both a historian and an Indo-European linguist who gave Georges the connections between Indo-European languages and their common mythological motifs. After graduating in the Classics in 1919, Dumézil re-entered the French university system as a doctoral candidate receiving his doctorate in 1924. The topic of his doctoral thesis was a comparison of the common origins of the Greek *ambrosia* with the Vedic Indian *amṛta* both of which were divine drinks of immortality in their respective Indo-European cultures. One of Dumézil's doctoral candidacy examiners was Henri Hubert [1872-1927] who was religious anthropologist, an Eastern Christianity specialist as well as a scholar in the pre-Christian religions of the Celtic and the Germanic peoples. Hubert was considered an important examiner for Dumézil's doctoral thesis because he was already well regarded an accomplished sociologist of religion in his time by such eminent scholars like Émile Durkheim [1858-1917] and Marcel Mauss [1872-1950].

In 1925, Dumézil took up a teaching job at the University of Istanbul. However, the great landmark event of his life came about in 1929 when he published his work *Flamen-Brahman* wherein he fully and comprehensively expounded the Indo-European tripartite scheme for which he became so famous for the rest of his life and career. The reason perhaps as to why Dumézil's findings and scheme became such a major finding is because it connected in a very interesting way the mythology of most of peoples of Europe (who were the dominant people of the world politically and otherwise) with ancient high cultures in the East such as Avestan Iran and Vedic India. That is perhaps why his work attracted

more attention and curiosity than another anthropologist working on, let's say, a native American tribe or a Pacific Island peoples.

From 1931 to 1935, Dumézil taught in Uppsala, Sweden. After this, he returned to France for good where he became chairman of the Comparative Religion Faculty at the École Pratiques des Hautes Études. In 1949, he also became a professor at the College de France. He was elected to the Academie Françaises in 1978 on the recommendation of his good friend and fellow academic, the famous linguistic anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss [1908-2009]. Dumézil passed away in Paris, France on October 11th 1986 after a distinguished academic career.

### **The evolution of the discovery**

Though the foundations of becoming an Indo-European scholar were laid by his father, and his three academic mentors, i.e. Bréal, Meillet and Hubert, the ultimate exposition of Dumézil's tripartite scheme was influenced by three major European stalwarts in the liberal arts of the nineteenth century. These were Max Müller [1823-1900] in terms of comparative Indo-European mythology, James Frazer [1854-1941] in terms of anthropology, and Émile Durkheim [1858-1917] in terms of sociology.

Though Max Müller's contribution to the development of Indo-European studies was considered by critics to be heavily linguistic, it is not all that so when compared to his predecessors like William Jones and Franz Bopp. It only seems that way from a cultural anthropologist's viewpoint. In fact, if Max Müller had not consolidated the vital connection

between language and culture, the cultural anthropologists, at least in terms of Indo-European studies, would not have gone too far. Müller must, in this sense, be looked upon as the *tertium quid* scholar between the purely linguistic approach of William Jones and the very cultural anthropologist approach of Georges Dumézil. The realization that Dumézil came to that it was not possible to understand any single Indo-European religious system without reference to a common set of gods, rituals and myths, might not have been possible without Müller's vital connection which was provided to Müller by Friedrich Schelling [1775-1854], the historian of language and religion in Berlin. With this important connection having been established, Dumézil could then leave the linguistic angle behind and proceed to delve further into the cultural anthropology side.

James Frazer, the author of the *Golden Bough*, "developed his famous thesis that gods or images thereof are everywhere periodically sacrificed in order to keep them from decaying and, by extension, to keep the world and its inhabitants from suffering a similar fate. Thus myths inevitably reflect this magical relationship between natural and supernatural phenomena, he asserts, for the initial or 'mythopoeic' age in the development of supernaturalism was a magical one, and the most fundamental myths are those that express the periodic rejuvenation of the world and the spirits that animate it."<sup>28</sup>

The influence of this Frazerian perspective on myth and its magical function was evident in the very thesis of Dumézil in which he was comparing the Greek *ambrosia* to the Vedic *amṛta* both of which were drinks of immortality. In both cases when the gods imbibed this celestial beverage it magically nourished and invigorated them. Similarly, when the

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<sup>28</sup> Littleton, 'The New Comparative Mythology' (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.37

devotees of these gods ritually partook of this celestial beverage, it conferred immortality on them. The mortal became immortal magically. According to Dumézil, this sacred rite of the immortal drink is uniquely Indo-European stretching from Celtic Ireland to Vedic India. The Christian Eucharistic wine was supposed to be a copy of this Indo-European prototype drink. Non-Indo-European cultures, he asserted, even if they did have this rite, did not have the significance of divine immortality attached to them. The potlatch of the Kwakiutl was given as an example.<sup>29</sup>

Émile Durkheim regarded the collective life as the source and object of religion. In Durkheim's own words, religion was viewed "as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden---beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church."<sup>30</sup> To Durkheim, sacred things like gods, totems, myths and rites are reflections of social and cultural realities. The individual who is both a part and a product of this socio-cultural complex, then experiences and interprets the world around him or her through the medium of these sacred representations.<sup>31</sup>

This sociological interpretation of religion is reflected in Dumézil's thinking. His entire tripartite scheme is fundamentally an affirmation of the Durkheimian view of religion with his own unique derived addendum that there are certain ethnographically recognizable cultural paradigms and patterns that become the ideological hallmark of a certain set of people in the greater context of comparative world ethnography. In this sense, one can safely say that Dumézil is the next logical step after Durkheim in the

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<sup>29</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), pp.44-45

<sup>30</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary forms of Religious Life* (Collier Books, New York, 1961), p.62

<sup>31</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary forms of Religious Life* (Collier Books, New York, 1961), p.421

sociology of religion. While Durkheim was concerned with primitive religion and society, Dumézil was concerned with early civilized societies. The critical link between Durkheim and Dumézil was Henri Hubert who was Durkheim's close colleague in these matters and Dumézil's doctoral thesis examiner.

Dumézil's Indo-European tripartite discovery, though based on Müller, Frazer and Durkheim, is not a mere confluence of their views but the most original re-shaping of their views into a single solid structure. Littleton has expressed this best in three succinct paragraphs given below.

"In adding a functionally oriented sociological and anthropological dimension to the traditional comparative study of the myths, epics, ritual, and folktales of the ancient Indo-European peoples, he has forged a wholly new conception of the relationship among language, myth and social organization. As I see it, the conception has profound implications not only for social anthropology, but also for the social sciences as a whole."<sup>32</sup>

"The advent of Dumézilian mythology has precipitated what amounts to a *revolution* in most of the disciplines that impinge upon the ancient I-E speaking domain. No longer is it possible for a student of any one of the I-E religions to view the character of that religion as wholly unique. Even if one totally rejects Dumézil's specific interpretations of the principal myths and divinities involved, he must indeed take cognizance of the fundamental assumptions upon which these interpretations are based."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Littleton, *'The New Comparative Mythology'* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.1

<sup>33</sup> Littleton, *'The New Comparative Mythology'* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.3 (italics mine)

"I share Dumézil's fundamental assumptions that basic social and religious ideas *tend* to be tied closely to the language of those who possess them, and that if speakers of a language become separated from one another, such ideas *tend* to undergo the same sort of differential development that ultimately yields a set of related yet distinct daughter languages. Yet I must emphasize the word 'tend,' for ideas, even the most sacred ones, seem to be somewhat more amenable to diffusion than phonemes or grammatical features. Before one assumes that a given set of parallel myths, rituals, or social structural features is a result of differential development of a common proto-myth, ritual or social feature, one should take all possible care to rule out internal borrowing."<sup>34</sup>

Dumézil's earliest formulation of the tripartite scheme began in looking into Avestan literature.<sup>35</sup> Ancient Avestan society of Iran was divided into three groups, i.e. the *āthravan* [priests], *rathaēštar* [warriors], and *vāstriyō.šuyant* [farmers and merchants]. On the Indian side of the equation, there are the three Aryan castes, i.e. the *brahmin*, the *kṣatriya* and the *vaiśya*.

Five years later, Dumézil in comparing the roles of priests between ancient Vedic India and Rome noticed certain similarities. Firstly, the prosperity of the ruling monarchs was directly connected to the prosperity and vigor of the priesthood. Secondly, the priests in both societies could not be executed no matter how grave the crime. Thirdly, they could never undress completely, and lastly, they could not have anything to do with horses.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.48

<sup>35</sup> Dumézil, *La préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes* (Journal Asiatique, 1930, 216, pp. 109-130)

<sup>36</sup> Dumézil, *Flāmen-Brahman* (Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de vulgarisation 1935, 51)

Next, Dumézil added the Celtic branch of the Indo-Europeans to his already comparative exposition of the Vedic and Roman groups. The three castes of the Vedic Indians had their parallel in the Roman *flāmen diālis*, *flāmen martiālis*, and the *flāmen quīrinālis* corresponding to the gods Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus. The Vedic caste system too has its divine counterpart in the tripartition of the Vedic gods into the *Ādityas* [celestial deities], *Rudras* [atmospheric deities], and *Vasus* [terrestrial deities]. To these are compared the Celtic triad of the *druides*, *equites*, and *bo-airig*. In comparing Vedic social triadism to the Roman one, Dumézil noticed that the former was rigid, feudal and its priests served a whole pantheon of deities without allegiance to any particular one. By contrast, Roman society was fluid in its structure, civic in its orientation, and each of its priests served only one particular god exclusively.

In his development of the tripartite scheme, Dumézil was not oblivious to differences and divergences even within the same group leave alone between groups. For example, in his 1939 article *Deux traits du monstre tricéphale indo-iranienne*, Dumézil not only demonstrates the similarities between the Vedic-Indian and Avestan-Iranian versions of the three-headed monster myth, but also their differences. In the Indian version, the three-headed monster "wishes to prevent the killing and eating of animals; in Iran he wants to incite this practice. Dumézil's point here is that the subject matter of the narrative has been realigned to suit the differing values and attitudes characteristic of the two religious systems. The Indic story is unconcerned with any moral point, but centers on magical action and sacrificial practice, whereas the Iranian version, a



product of the Zoroastrian moral reform, hinges upon a moralistic precept and is a lesson in conduct."<sup>37</sup>

Having initiated and foundationalized his tripartite scheme based on Indo-Iranian and Roman myths, Dumézil set about the task of expanding his idea into the Germanic branch of the Indo-European world. It was to become his third solid base to further consolidate his discovery. In his article *Mythes et dieux des Germanes: Essai d'interprétation comparative*, Dumézil regards the gods Odin, Thor and Njordr as the three gods that correspond to the gods Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus of the Romans, and the gods Varuṇa, Indra and the Aśvins of the Vedic Indians. Like Varuṇa, Odin is the sovereign of the gods who is the maintainer of law and order. Both represent the first level in the Dumézilian triadic scheme. Thor is like Indra in that both are fierce warriors that wield thunderbolts. Both obtain a vessel to hold the sacred drink. They represent the second function. The gods Njordr and Freyr are the Aśvins of the third level.

Later, in 1941, Dumézil brought in the Celtic and Greek worlds in a more substantial way into his comparative Indo-European triadism. Firstly, in the Celtic, he adduces that the four talismans of the Irish myth *Tuatha dé Danann* where the "Cauldron of Dagda" never failed to provide food [third-level], the "Spear of Lug" and the "Sword of Nuada" made their possessors invincible in battle [second level], and the "Stone of Fal" which served as the seat of sovereignty [first level].<sup>38</sup> This problem of tripartizing four entities we will encounter in the Rāmāyaṇa among the four sons of king Daśaratha. Also, in the Irish tale of Queen Medb, her husband to be

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<sup>37</sup> Littleton, 'The New Comparative Mythology' (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), pp.62-63

<sup>38</sup> Dumézil, 'Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus: essai sur la conception indo-européenne de la société et sur la origines de Rome (Collection La Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, vol. 1, Paris:Gallimard) pp.241-245

must be as brave in war [second level] and as wealthy [third level] as her to be the king [first level].<sup>39</sup>

For the Greek, Dumézil cites Plato who in his *Republic* states that the ideal political state must be possessed of philosophers, soldiers and laborers. In the fourth book of the same work, Plato suggests that the ideal citizen, the Just Man, must possess the wisdom of a philosopher, the bravery of a soldier, and the wealth-producing skills of an artisan or cultivator.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most interesting problems in the Indo-European triadic scheme of Dumézil is the existence of two gods that mark the beginning and the end of a ceremony or two-faceted gods having opposite characteristics or merely two gods that complement each other but are not twins. Example of the first kind are the gods Janus and Vesta that were invoked in ancient Rome at the beginning and at the end of every religious ceremony. The example of the second kind is the god Vāyu who can be a benign yazata or a malevolent spirit in the Avestan religion of Iran. The example of the third kind are the gods Agni and Sarasvatī in the Vedic religion. Littleton believes that these twin or two-faceted or complementary gods are remnants of an earlier phase of religion prior to the Indo-European entrance into a particular region, and that they were just incorporated into the Indo-European religion.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus: essai sur la conception indo-européenne de la société et sur la origines de Rome* (Collection La Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, vol. 1, Paris:Gallimard) pp.115-116

<sup>40</sup> Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus: essai sur la conception indo-européenne de la société et sur la origines de Rome* (Collection La Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, vol. 1, Paris:Gallimard) pp.257-259

<sup>41</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.83

## **Section 4.2**

### **Tripartite schemes in the traditions of pre-Christian Europe**

Among the traditions of pre-Christian Europe, there is a paucity of material in the Celtic and Slavic regions in terms of Dumézilian analysis. The Roman and the Germanic materials are the most abundant, and the Greek has certain issues with regarding to the heavy remnants of pre-Indo-European cultures that flourished on Greek soil. Despite all this, I will still make an attempt to present the tripartite schemes culture-by-culture throughout pre-Christian Indo-European Europe as best as the materials will allow me to do so.

#### **The Celtic situation**

As the Indo-Europeans migrated from their Kurgan-Heimat in the Ukraine into continental Europe around 3400 BCE, the historical proto-Celtic peoples among them emerged as a distinct and identifiable group around 1200 BCE in the Halstatt region of Austria. They lived in this region until 650 BCE when the Indo-European Greeks and the non-Indo-European Etruscans through constant raids dispersed them into Iberia and France in the west, northern Italy in the south and central eastern and south eastern European regions in the east. In fact, some Celtic groups migrated as far east as Anatolia.

Due to constant pushing of the Celtic peoples by their fellow Indo-Europeans like the Italic, Germanic and Slavic peoples, they finally started moving out of continental Europe and migrated into the British Isles and Ireland around 450 BCE. By 50 BCE, the Celtic peoples had almost all been evacuated from continental Europe. The final homes of the Celtic peoples became Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Their only major home in continental Europe was in the Brittany region of France. The remnant Celtic tribes of Europe are the Helvetii in Switzerland, the Boii in Italy, the Averni in France, the Vindelici in Germany, the Lugii in Poland, the Cotini and the Osiin in Slovakia, the Eravisci in Hungary, the Latorici in Slovenia, the Varciani in Croatia, and the Scordisci in Serbia.

The chief god of the Celtic peoples was Lugh. He was tricephalic. There were also the three matron goddesses in Celtic mythology (cf. tryambikās in Hindu mythology). However, the three gods of Celtic mythology which neatly fit into the Dumézilian triadic scheme are the gods Esus, Taranis and Teutates. The god Esus whose name means "lord" represents the first level. Sacrifices to him were done by hanging the victim. The act of hanging shows the regal and legal authoritativeness of Esus. The god Taranis whose name means "thunderer" represents the second level like Indra in the Vedic pantheon. Sacrifices to him were done by burning the victim. The act of burning is symbolic of a violent sacrifice, and fire which is the principal agent of incineration is akin to the thunderbolt, the main accouterment of Taranis. The god Teutates whose name means "god of the tribe" represents the third level as he deals with the people as a whole. Sacrifices to him were done by drowning the victim. The act of drowning represents the waters which is a symbol of fertility.

Also, Dumézil and his students had their first attempts at finding triadism in the Celtic tradition in 1954. In this investigation, Dumézil shows this in the context of the three *machas* of Ulster. The first woman is the prophetess of sacred man Nemed. This is clearly the first level which deals with sacred and magical matters. The second woman is a warrior who ultimately assumes the throne after many battles. This is the second level which is associated with martial matters. The third woman is the beautiful wife of a farmer who brings him wealth and bears him twins. This is certainly the third level in more ways than one, i.e. feminine beauty, agriculture, wealth and fertility.<sup>42</sup>

The god Esus is depicted in one of the reliefs as cutting a tree with an axe and associated with this relief is another one which depicts a bull with three cranes seated on it. Celtic scholar Jan de Vries has understood this as the Celtic version of the Vedic myth. On this, Littleton comments:

"De Vries' interpretation here closely parallels that of Dumézil (1942), who linked Esus' behavior as depicted on the altar with Indra's (or Trita Āptya's) slaying of the three-headed son of Tvaṣṭar. According to Yajurvedic and epic tradition, Indra was exhausted by the fight and enlisted the services of a passerby, a carpenter, who completed the slaying by severing the three heads with an ax, upon which three birds (cf. the three cranes) escaped from each hollow. The foregoing Indic-Celtic parallel, coupled with the Roman tale of Horatius and his slaying of the three Curiatii, led Dumézil to the conclusion that there may have been a Proto-I-E (or perhaps even more ancient) initiation ritual, applied to warriors, in which

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<sup>42</sup> Dumézil, *'Le trio des macha'* (Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, 1954, 146, pp.5-17)

the initiate engaged in a mock battle with a three-headed wooden dummy (cf. Dumézil, '*Horace et les Curiaces*', Collection "*Les Mythes Romains*" vol. 1, 1942, pp.131-135, Paris:Gallimard). Whether or not this ritual actually existed, the association here of an ax-wielding Esus with the *tarvos trigaranus* would, in the light of the Indic and Roman materials just mentioned, seem to indicate that the Gallic god in question is indeed a representative of the second function."<sup>43</sup>

This then presents a problem. Esus is a first function deity as explained above in the context of the Esus-Taranis-Teutates trinity. So, how can a first function deity become a second function god? Really speaking, this easy interchange between the first and second functions is not all that unique or outlandish. In fact, it is typically Indo-European. It has plenty of counterparts in the Indic lore. Firstly, Indra, a second level god, later displaces Varuṇa as the king of the gods. Secondly, in the Rāmāyaṇa, Viśvāmitra who is a kṣatriya becomes a brahmin. Thirdly, in the same epic, Rāma's father-in-law, king Janaka of Videha is considered a *rājarsi* (royal sage) because he behaves like an ascetic. His full behavior as a non-worldly philosopher-king is depicted in chapters three and four of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Fourthly, in the Mahābhārata epic, Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira exhibit brahminical puritanism, while Droṇa, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāmā being brahmins conduct themselves like warriors.

Further, the triskel, a figure composed of three spirals in Celtic tradition, symbolizes the three-fold nature of the human being, i.e. the physical, spiritual and the symbolic. Also, there was a sacred bond between the three aspects of nature, i.e. land, sea and sky, which witnessed all things. Hence the human being took an oath that if that person erred, then

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<sup>43</sup> Littleton, '*The New Comparative Mythology*' (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), pp.169-170.

may the land swallow that violator, the sea drown the person or the sky fall upon such an individual. Marriage oaths were taken three times. Celtic poems and riddles were tri-phrased. In the Celtic celestial court there were said to be thirty-three gods and heros, i.e. the thirty-two plus the sovereign god. This is comparable to the thirty-three gods of the Vedic pantheon described in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III:9:2. It is also the number of islands that the Celtic hero, Maelduin, encounters before he reaches home. The number twenty-seven (three times nine) is also very sacred in Celtic tradition as it contains the full potency of three in a nine-fold manner because nine itself is three times three. Thus, the number of warriors in the court of a Celtic chieftain always numbered twenty-seven.<sup>44</sup>

Another interesting feature is existence of the four major Celtic festivals which too can be divided into three. These are the *Imbolc*, the *Beltaine*, the *Lughnasadh*, and the *Samhain*. The *Imbolc* which is a fertility festival dedicated to the goddess Brigit, the Celtic deity of fertility. It was held on January 31st. This is clearly a third function festive event. The *Beltaine* which was held on April 30th was a festival in which centered around the lighting of ceremonial fires. This is a second function festive event. The *Lughnasadh* was a sovereignty celebration event held in honor of the king but dedicated to the god Lugh. It is clearly a first function event. It was held on August 1st. The last festive event was the fourth and occult event. This was the *Samhain* festive event held on October 31st. It was the day on which the spirits and ghosts became visible to humans. It was held for three days. It is an event that is celebrated to this day as the Halloween festival. This fourth festival does not pose a problem. This is what the Indic tradition would refer to as *apavarga*, the

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<sup>44</sup> Denault, 'Celtic Europe' <http://www.watson.org/~leigh/celts.html>

odd one. Such *apavargas* are the Atharvaveda, the Upaniṣads, sannyāsa, and mokṣa and the śūdra caste. Firstly, the Atharvaveda which is the occult Veda emanating from the fourth and hidden face of the god Brahmā at the back. It is separated from the other three Vedas [Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma] which form one set. Further, while there exist brahmin families which owe allegiance to each of the three august Vedas, there is none that owes allegiance to the Atharvaveda. Secondly, the Upaniṣads which are the fourth non-ritualistic section of the Vedas stand apart from the other three sections [Mantra, Brāhmaṇa and Araṇyaka] which form one set in terms of both polytheism and ritual. The Upaniṣads, by contrast, are both metaphysical and monistic. Thirdly, the institution of the sannyāsa is the only non-worldly stage of Vedic Aryan life, while the other three [brahmacarya, gṛhastha and vānaprasthā] form one set as they are worldly in nature. Fourthly, the puruṣārtha of mokṣa [salvation] stands alone when compared with the other three puruṣārthas [artha, kāma and dharma] which are worldly in nature. Fifthly, the śūdra caste is the only non-Aryan caste. The other three castes [brahmin, kṣatriya and vaiśya] are considered dvijas [twice-born] and eligible for the sacrament of upanayana [investiture of the sacred thread].

There are very many triadisms in Celtic legend and lore such as the three war goddesses Morrigan, Neman and Macha, or the fact that Urien, Bran and Uthr are three forms of one god that were worshipped by bards etc. It is not necessary to catalog them all. However, three interesting but random samplings of the triadic patterns that fit the Dumézilian scheme are the Celtic hero Conn-crithir and the three supernatural women, Kian's confrontation of the three brothers, Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, and the Welsh god Llud's dealings with the three plagues.



In the story of Conncrithir, the three supernatural women fall in love with him [third function], aid him in battle [second function] and magically heal [first function] his wounds when he is wounded and promise to make him alive again even if were to be killed in battle.

In the story Brian and his two brothers, Kian who is their enemy, meets them on the Plain of Murthemney where Kian not wanting to confront the brothers magically transforms himself [first function] into a pig [third function]. Brian then recognizes him and darts him with a spear [second function].

In the story of Llud, he destroys the creators of the first plague by throwing water [third function] on them. Llug then captures the dragon whose shriek on the eve of May creates the second plague and who attacks [second function] the dragon of Llud's land. Finally, Llug captures and destroys the magician [first function] who is the creator of the third plague.

### **The Germanic situation**

The proto-Germanic people, a branch of the Indo-Europeans who migrated into Europe from their Ur-Heimat (hypothetical original homeland), became an identifiable group around 1250 BCE. They made their homeland in what is now Denmark, the southern fringes of Norway and southern Sweden.

By 750 BCE, they had started their migration southward and soon came to occupy what is now Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, Luxemburg and parts of Belgium. This pattern of southward expansion and occupation lasted until 1 CE. Then after a three century gap, they moved into what is now the England region of Britain as well around 400 CE. Eventually, these people, i.e. the Danes, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Germans, the Dutch, the Flemish, the English, the Germanic-Swiss, and the Austrians, became the Germanic branch of the Indo-European peoples.

Dumézil began his triadic investigations of the Germanic mythological material in 1939. He readily saw the tripartite pattern in the gods Odin, Thor and Freyr. However, in 1952, Dumézil himself saw that there an alteration in the functions of the above gods in the Germanic tradition. Odin, the first function deity now has become a god of war [second function]. Thor, the second function god now has become a deity of fertility [third function]. However, Freyr, still remains as a third function god, but is confined to the roles of marriage and reproduction.<sup>45</sup>

Then in the Temple at Uppsala in Sweden, Thor is seated in the middle as king flanked by Odin and Freyr. Here, Thor is the god that must be invoked at the time of famine [third function], Odin during war [second function] and Freyr at the time of the wedding ceremony [third function]. The first function is missing.<sup>46</sup>

Other matters complicate the triadic pattern further. It is said that Odin was an imported god from Saxaland [northwestern Germany]. Thor

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<sup>45</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.103.

<sup>46</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.103.

was the chief god of the Norwegians, and Freyr, the chief god of the Swedes.<sup>47</sup>

Actually, none of these need be seen as problems. In fact, they should be viewed as patterns of change within the triadic scheme which seem to take place in other Indo-European cultures as well. In India, was not Varuṇa [Odin] displaced by Indra [Thor] as king of the gods in later Hindu mythology? Why should not Thor be invoked at the time of famine just because he is a second function god? Are not the rains connected with thunder and lightning which would then destroy the parched earth and produce crops thus eliminating the famine? Further, the mixing of the functions and castes is not unheard of in the Indian mythological scene. Did not the cowherd Kṛṣṇa [third function] become the king [first function] of Dvārakā who became a battlefield charioteer [second function]? One must always make room for local changes, variations, circumstances etc. The main thing is that despite these changes over a period of time together with local conditions, the triadic pattern, overall, has remained remarkably intact.

In much of Germanic mythology, the three gods, Odin, Thor and Freyr dominate the stories. When Egil Skallagrímsson curses the king of Norway, he does so in the name of Odin, Thor and Freyr.<sup>48</sup> In the Eddic poem, *Skirnismál*, Gerd is threatened with a curse in the name of Odin, Thor and Freyr.<sup>49</sup> Hallfrethor Vandræthaskald rejects the Norse religion of Odin, Thor, Freyr and Njord in favor of Christianity.<sup>50</sup> Magical formulas against sickness and evil in Norway are done to this day in the name of

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<sup>47</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.xxiii

<sup>48</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.5

<sup>49</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.6

<sup>50</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.6

the three gods and the Christian trinity.<sup>51</sup> In a Germanic myth, the dwarfs give up their three treasures of the magic ring [first function], hammer [second function] and the wild boar with golden bristles [third function] to the gods Odin, Thor and Freyr respectively.<sup>52</sup> In the *Voluspa*, the gods Odin, Thor and Freyr take the dead nobles, non-nobles and women respectively from the battlefield.<sup>53</sup>

In 1958, Dumézil in his researches in Germanic mythology came across the quintessential Indo-European tripartite scheme in the Norse poem *Rigsthula*. This Eddic poem deals with the exploits of the god Heimdall, a half-brother of Odin, who was born from nine waves. He guards the Bifrost Bridge (which is known by two other names, Bilrost and Asbru) that resembles a rainbow which is made of three colors. This bridge connects Midgard [the realm of men] with Asgard [the realm of the gods] whose wall builders were promised three prizes (sun, moon and the hand of the goddess Freya) if they built it in three winters. Heimdall never sleeps and hears everything. He earned this extra-ordinary power by sacrificing one of his ears at the Well of Mimir. He protects and guides humans who seek his assistance.

In the *Rigsthula* it is enunciated that Heimdall descended to Midgard to awaken humans to a higher consciousness. He took the name of Rig, and incognito, first went to the house of Ai and Edda who were very poor. Having accepted their hospitality, he went to bed with them placing himself in the middle. He did this for three nights in a row. After this he left. Nine months later, Edda bore a son who was named Thrall.

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<sup>51</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.6

<sup>52</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.6

<sup>53</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.7

He was associated with manual labor and the color black.<sup>54</sup> Next, Rig went to the home of Afi and Amma who were wealthier than the previous couple. Having accepted their hospitality, he went to bed with them placing himself in the middle. He did this for three nights in a row. After this he left. Nine months later, Amma bore a son who was named Karl. He was associated with farmer's chores such as dealing with oxen, ploughshare, carts and barns. He was also associated with the color green.<sup>55</sup> Finally, Rig went to the domicile of Fadir and Modir who were very wealthy. Having accepted their hospitality, he went to bed with them placing himself in the middle. He did this for three nights in a row. After this he left. Nine months later, Modir bore a son who was named Jarl. He was associated with martial matters such as shields, swords, bows, arrows, horses and hounds. He was also associated with the color red.<sup>56</sup> However, unlike the other two sons, Rig did not abandon Jarl. He returned, reclaimed and adopted him teaching Jarl the runes, the most secret and sacred of inscriptions. Jarl in his exploits later claimed eighteen halls of wealth.<sup>57</sup> Jarl eventually bore many children of whom the youngest was a son who was named Konr Ungr. He too was taught the runes.<sup>58</sup> Konr Ungr then acquires all the wisdom of the runes and becomes king.

The *Rigsthula* is replete with Indo-European leitmotifs. The god Heimdall is born of nine waves, he visits three households and stays in each for three nights. Further, his three sons, Thrall, Karl and Jarl are associated with the functions of the lower three castes of Vedic Aryan society. Thrall coincides with the functions of a śūdra, Karl with the

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<sup>54</sup> *Rigsthula* vv. 2-7

<sup>55</sup> *Rigsthula* vv. 14-22

<sup>56</sup> *Rigsthula* vv. 26-35

<sup>57</sup> *Rigsthula* v. 39

<sup>58</sup> *Rigsthula* vv. 42-44

functions of a vaiśya, and Jarl with that of the kṣatriya. Konr Ungr becomes the wise man who knows fully the secret runes. So, he is sort of like the brahmin. It is the caste system in the reverse with Konr Ungr being the odd one. In comparison to the three major Germanic gods, Konr Ungr resembles Odin, Jarl is similar to Thor, and Karl bears semblance to Freyr. It is very clear that the tripartite function exists with the usual "odd one out" scenario. This comparison with Vedic India is being made on account of the fact that it is the main orientation of this work.

### Odin

Odin as the head of the gods was the protector of kings and their power. He sacrificed one of his eyes to be able to see everything. He is a great magician and the knower of the secret of the runes.

Odin sacrificed himself by hanging himself upside down from the world tree Yggdrasill (which has three roots under which there are three magic wells). He hung on this tree for nine days and nine nights pierced by a spear so that he gets 18 charms of the runes from the Well of Wyrð. Odinn spent three nights with the ogress Gunnlod in order to obtain mead. She then allowed him to take three drinks of mead, each from one of the three vessels.

Odin has nine special possessions. These are:

1. Gungnir [a spear which never misses a target]
2. Draupnir [a gold ring from which eight rings appear every ninth night]
3. Sleipnir [an eight-legged steed]

4. Huginn [a raven]
5. Muninn [a raven]. Both Huginn and Muninn travel around the world each day, and report the happenings of the world to Odin at night]
6. the severed head of Mirmir which foretells the future
7. Valknut [the slain warrior's knot consisting of three interlaced triangles]
8. Geri [a dog]
9. Freki [a dog]. Both Geri and Freki are guardian dogs which are part of Indo-European motifs associated with death and judgment.

According to Dumézil, Odin combines the roles of Varuṇa [Vedic king of gods] and Yama [Vedic god of death]. In the funeral hymns of the Vedic Indians, Varuṇa and Yama are invoked together (R̥gveda X:14:7).<sup>59</sup>

Odin has three residences. The first is Gladsheim. It is a vast hall presided over by 12 judges to regulate the affairs of Asgard. The second home is Valaskjalf which is built of solid silver and has an elevated place named Hlidskjalf from which Odin could survey all that happened on earth. The third place is Valhalla which has five hundred and forty gates and a vast hall of gold with gold shields, spears and armor. Also, according to *Prose Edda*, Odin calls himself by three names, i.e. Har (High, which is ironically the lowest), Jafnhar (Just-as-High, middle one), and Thridi (Third, which is the highest).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dumézil, *'Gods of the ancient Northmen'* (University of California Press, 1973), p.36

<sup>60</sup> *Prose Edda, Gylfaginning*, chapter 20

## **Thor**

Thor is the son of the god Odin and the ogress Jörd. Thor has three children, two sons and a daughter. Thor has three possessions:

1. Mjölnir [a short-handled hammer which returns magically to its owner after hitting the target]
2. Megingjörð [a belt that boosts the wearer's strength]
3. Jarngreipr [a pair of iron gloves to lift the hammer]

According to the *Grimnismal*, the residence of Thor is a mansion called Bilskirnir which has 540 rooms.

## **Freyr**

Freyr, the fertility god, has three magical possessions:

1. Skidbladnir [a ship which could go both on land and sea and carry all the residents of Asgard. It possessed the power to always have a favorable wind, and when not in use, it could be folded and kept in a pouch]
2. Gullinbursti [ a pig with golden bristles that could go with ease through air or water and could outrun any horse]
3. a sword which could fight on its own.



### **other triadisms in Germanic mythology**

Loki, the malignant god, had three progeny, i.e. Fenrir (wolf), Jörmungandr (world-serpent), and Hel (goddess of dead). Fenrir, himself had three fetters, i.e. Loeding, Dromi, and Gleipnir. The giant Hungrir's heart was triangular in shape. Ragnarok, the end of the gods, will have three signs prior to its coming, i.e. three hard winters, birth of Loki's three children, and the death of the god Baldr. There are three hags who possess immense power. They sit at the base of the Yggdrasil tree. They are Urdr, Verdandi and Skuld. There are three mysterious gods, i.e. Hoenir, Lodurr and Mimir.

As Dumézil pointed out, therefore and as he discussed in his *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, the number three takes on tremendous significance in this ancient Germanic mythology. Next, we will look at his analysis of other Indo-European peoples.

### **The Greek situation**

The Indo-Europeans entered Greece in two distinct major waves of migrations. The first took place circa 1600 BCE. These Indo-Europeans came into contact with an earlier and quite advanced non-Indo-European civilization named as the Minoan culture whose base was in the island of Crete. This first wave of Indo-European migrants came to be termed by scholars as the Mycenaean Greeks. They adopted much from the Minoans and became quite advanced culturally. This eventually made the Greeks the most civilized of all the Indo-Europeans in Europe. The second wave of

Indo-European migration into Greece took place circa 1100 BCE. These migrants built further on the older two cultural layers. Scholars termed these people as the Dorian Greeks to distinguish them from the Mycenaean Greeks. The classical civilization of Greece was essentially their history and culture.

One of the major products of this era of Greek civilization was the Iliad of Homer [circa 850 BCE]. According to Dumézil, there are two major Indo-European tripartite motifs in the Iliad. The first deals with the figure of Paris and the fall of Troy. The second deals with the shield of Achilles. The first situation "concerns the well-known judgment of Paris, wherein the Trojan prince must choose between the regal Hera, the warlike Athena, and the voluptuous Aphrodite. So as to influence him in his choice, each goddess, here seen as a representative of one of the three functions offers Paris a gift: Hera offers world sovereignty (first function), Athena promises military prowess (second function), and Aphrodite tenders the gift of earthly pleasure (third function). Paris chooses the latter goddess and thus, by alienating Hera and Athena (i.e., the first two functions), ensures Troy's ultimate downfall."<sup>61</sup> In the second situation, the shield of Achilles has embossed upon it three depictions. The first scene is that of dispute, blood-money, arbitration by judges seated in a circle.<sup>62</sup> The scene is a legal situation and hence represents the first function. The second scene is that of a city under siege, impending battle etc.<sup>63</sup> This martial scene clearly represents the second function. The third scene is that which is rural wherein the field is being plowed for the third time, farm-hands

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<sup>61</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), pp.14-15.

<sup>62</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 18:497-508

<sup>63</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 18:509-540

with sharp sickles, three binders, vineyards, dancing youth etc.<sup>64</sup> This pastoral scene is definitely a third function depiction.

Another situation is discerned by Dumézil as being found in the book of Herodotus [484-425 BCE]. In the dialog<sup>65</sup> between the rich and self-sufficient Lydian king Croesus [595-547 BCE] and his Athenian guest Solon [638-558 BCE], the former asks the latter about people who were as happy as he was. Solon mentions three people. The first was Tellos of Athens who was as sovereign (first function) as Croesus was, and who eventually died a glorious death in battle (second function). Solon then narrates the story of two Argive youths, Kleobis and Biton, who took their mother to the festival of the goddess Hera at Argos in a cart with themselves serving the role of oxen which were unavailable at that instance. After happily partaking in the festival and enjoying the holy banquet, the two youth fell asleep in the temple premises and never woke up. They had passed on. These two youth represent the third function in terms of being two [twin-like], serving their mother [fertility symbol] in taking her to the festival of a goddess [feminine principle].

### other triadisms in Greek mythology

The three sons of Zeus and Europa are Minos, Rhadhamantus, Sarpedon. The three-faced goddess Hecate, the three Gorgons, Stheno, Euryale and Medusa, the three graces, i.e. Aglaia, Euphrosyne, Thalia.

However, the three-headed dog, Cerberus, that guards the world of the dead which allows the departed to enter but not leave, is a very Indo-

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<sup>64</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 18:541-605

<sup>65</sup> Herodotus, *History* I:30-92

European theme that is found not only here, but in Germanic mythology as associates of Odin, and in Indo-Iranian tradition. The triune beast Chimera which had the head of a lion, the body of a goat and a tail of a snake, also represents the tripartite ideology where the lion as a symbol of the sovereign is a first function thing, goat, the quintessential sacrificial animal is a second function entity, and snake the symbol of fertility is a third function beast.

The three furies, i.e. Alecto, Tisiphone and Megaera who are associated with the infractions of anger, homicide and marital infidelity respectively, are also in step with the Indo-European tripartite motif. Anger is mental and as such clearly a first function matter. Homicide being physical and blood-letting, is a second function affair. Finally, marital fidelity being associated with the feminine principle and fertility, is a third function theme.

### **The Roman situation**

The Indo-Europeans entered the Italian peninsula in several waves between 1800 BCE and 900 BCE. The earlier non-Indo-European Etruscan civilization was finally brought down by this Italic branch of Indo-Europeans named Latins in the Battle of Cumae in 474 BCE. The legendary founding of Rome by the Latin hero Romulus [771-717 BCE] is said to have taken place around 753 BCE.

Dumézil discovered the Indo-European tripartite scheme in Roman mythology in 1938. His discovery centered around the Roman gods Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus. Jupiter was the Roman Zeus, the chief of the gods,

and hence associated with the first function. Mars was the Roman war-god and hence a second function deity. Finally, Quirinus, an agricultural deity, was the god of the people, both of which were third function aspects.

However, there was much changing of the roles of these gods in Roman religious history. Jupiter acquired an additional warrior function.<sup>66</sup> He also appeared to have had a role as a rural deity.<sup>67</sup> The deity Mars too is said to have had an agrarian aspect. "Mars is invoked during the 'lustratio agri', a typical agricultural prayer; the Arvales hymn, in which Mars is directly connected with agriculture; the ceremony of the October equus, a Mars ritual, which is held according to Festus 'ob frugum eventum', with a typically third function purpose; a text from Cato, in which Mars and Silvanus are invoked 'pro bubus uti valeant'.<sup>68</sup> Quirinus also is identified with Mars, and even later with Romulus, the founder of Rome. So, Quirinus, a third function god becomes both a second and first function deity.<sup>69</sup>

Dumézil has explanations for all these confusion of roles. Jupiter's "second function" status is to be understood as the god's universalist tendencies, and also as the triumphal imperator on earth.<sup>70</sup> Jupiter's "third function" may be explained that farmers honored him as the sovereign god. In the Roman agrarian festival of Vinalia, Jupiter is accorded a place of the highest honor. As regards Mars and his "third function", "Dumézil rather mockingly dispenses with the supposition that is sometimes made that Mars was transformed from an agricultural god into a god of war by referring to an unspecified scholar who saw a parallel with the

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<sup>66</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.87

<sup>67</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.87

<sup>68</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.88

<sup>69</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.93

<sup>70</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.87

development of the use of the horse---from an agricultural beast harnessed to pull the plough to a section of the army, the cavalry."<sup>71</sup> Mars creates the conditions for a good harvest where the crops are free from disease and he also protects livestock from dangers of all kinds. As for Quirinus becoming a "second function" god, Dumézil sees this as "a reflection of a social process. The men who till the soil as Quirites in times of peace are identical with the men who defend their country as Milites in times of war."<sup>72</sup> The "first function" of Quirinus can also be explained if one were to look to the other parts of the Indo-European world. Romulus who as founder of Rome is a first function figure. He "appeared after his death with the message that he should not be lamented, but that he should be worshipped as a god under the name Quirinus."<sup>73</sup> In Avestan Iran too, Yima, the first king becomes the god of the netherworld after his death. Thus, Dumézil keeps the roles of Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus as the gods of the first, second and third functions respectively intact.

Dumézil also sees the tripartite function in the elegy of Propertius lauding ancient Rome. He sees "Lines 9-14 and 15-26 describe the men Romulus and Remus, who are concerned with first function activities, senatorial discussion and religious ceremonies. Then come lines 27-29 with their account of primitive warfare under Lygmon (Lucumo) and his men. Finally, Tattius is characterized by his wealth in line 30. Lines 31 and 32 conclude the picture with the mention of the names of the three tribes supervised by Romulus."<sup>74</sup>

Further, Dumézil perceives the tripartite scheme in the story of Camillus, the second founder of Rome.

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<sup>71</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.88

<sup>72</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.92

<sup>73</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.93

<sup>74</sup> Belier, *'Decayed gods'* (E.J. Brill, 1991), p.81

"When Dumézil first examined the saga of Camillus, he recognized immediately that this was no historical chronicle and that its 'truth' was more likely 'poetic' in Aristotle's sense of the word. It was clear that the authors of this biography, or if not they then certainly their unknown sources, had in mind something more than to preserve a set of haphazard occurrences. The clues are numerous. Camillus begins his career as interrex after the previous government's failure to observe the proper religious ceremonies had resulted in its fall. The incident foreshadows Camillus' later destiny as Rome's second founder, for it was charges of impiety in his use of a chariot drawn of four white horses---symbol of the honors reserved exclusively for Jupiter---that, among other things, led to his convenient expulsion from Rome just as the city was threatened by advancing Gaulish forces. The remaining two charges against Camillus complete a tripartite pattern: the military complained of being denied their lawful booty or *praeda*, while the plebian farmers were outraged when they failed to receive the rich agricultural fields of conquered Veii. None of the complaints were justified; in fact, it was the Romans who violated the tripartite order when they replaced Camillus with a multitude of inept commanders leading inexperienced soldiers drafted from the ranks of the Quirites, and when these citizens themselves neglected their religious sacrifices. This triple offense results in a triple calamity: the army is destroyed at the Allia; the Vestals and the Flamen Quirinalis are forced to flee Rome, which is generally abandoned except for the Capitol; and the remaining priests and senators are slaughtered by the enemy. The entire sequence of events has thus been cast unmistakably in the Indo-European ideological framework."<sup>75</sup>

The three fates, Decima, Nona and Morta in Roman mythology need to be taken note of in this general context.

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<sup>75</sup> Dumézil, '*Camillus*' (University of California Press, 1980), pp.36-37

## Section 4.3

### Tripartite schemes in the Indo-Iranian tradition

#### The Indo-Iranian tradition

One must never lose sight of the fact that Dumézil began his entire Indo-European tripartite enterprise in the Indo-Iranian regional and cultural sphere of the Indo-European world. This area was his base of operations for his monumental discovery. This ought not to come as a surprise to anybody because it is the only area where the Indo-European tradition is preserved albeit in a very modified form. And even here one would have to exclude Iran and confine oneself to India alone. As one eminent European Indologist puts it to his fellow Europeans:

"If we wish to understand the oldest Indo-European culture, we must go to India, where the oldest literature of an Indo-European people is preserved."<sup>76</sup>

The word "preserved" here does not mean the current protection and care of a defunct and spurned antiquarian past, but rather the living perpetuation of an ancient cultural inheritance proudly sustained and piously transmitted through the ages. None of the Indo-European peoples of Europe have retained their Indo-European religions. They have all become Christians. As far as the Asiatic Indo-Europeans are concerned, almost all

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<sup>76</sup> Winternitz, 'A History of Indian Literature' Vol. 1 (1927), p.6 (italics and underlining is mine)



(like the Iranians, Afghans, Kurds, Pakistanis etc.) have become Muslims; the Indians being the sole and very important exception. They still remain Hindus. The Hinduism practiced today in India is not that of the Vedic era. However, the Vedic era gods Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Agni etc. are still worshipped whenever there are yajñas (Vedic fire-sacrifices) performed or even during the pūjās (worship services) at a Hindu temple especially at the time of the *mantrapuṣpa* ceremonies etc. Even what little that there is still left of Zoroastrianism [ancient pre-Islamic Indo-European religion of Iran] is due to its taking refuge and being perpetuated in India. It is small wonder then, that Dumézil turned to the Indo-Iranian group to commence the workings of his tripartite ideology.

The Indo-Europeans entered Iran from their Ur-Heimat in the Ukraine in several waves lasting from 3000 BCE to 800 BCE. These Aryan tribes displaced the earlier non-Indo-European Elamite civilization. This was to repeat itself in the same timeline in the Indian subcontinent with the same Aryan tribes displacing the Elamite kindred Indus Valley culture of the Dravidians. This Aryan group spread from Kurdistan in the west to Assam (India) in the east.

### **The Iranian situation**

Besides the social tri-partition mentioned earlier in both Avestan Iran and Vedic India which were closely linked, the most significant triadism of Avestan Iran were a set of six arch-angelic figures collectively known as the Amesha Spentas. These were: Vohu Manah [Good Mind], Asha Vahishta [Right Order], Kshathra Vairya [Powerful Dominion], Armaiti [Piety], Haurvatat [Health], and Ameretat [Immortality]. Here, Vohu Manah

and Asha Vahishta represent the first level. Vohu Manah is the steward of these six arch-angelic beings besides being associated with pure and noble thoughts. Asha Vahishta represents Order. Kshathra Vairya represents the second function as he is associated with physical power. The three remaining arch-angels represent the third function as they jointly represent the feminine principle. Further, Haurvatat and Ameretat are twins. Also, Armaiti is the guardian angel of the Earth, Haurvatat of water, and Ameretat of plants. All three are thus symbols of fertility.<sup>77</sup>

The Avestan initiation ceremony for boys and girls, known as the *Navjote*, consists of taking three vows by the youngster. These are good thoughts, good words and good deeds.<sup>78</sup> Based on the proper observation of these three vows throughout their lives, their souls, upon death are judged by three yazatas [angels] at the celestial *Chinvat Bridge*. These *yazatas* [literally, 'worshipful ones'] are Mithra, who is overall supervisor of the judgment process; Sraosha, who is the angel who intercedes to exaggerate any good thought, word or deed of the individual; and Rashnu, the angel who literally weighs the good thoughts, words and deeds of the individual one pan of the scale against the bad thoughts, words and deeds on the other pan of the scale. If the good outweighs the bad, the soul crosses the *Chinvat Bridge* and enters Paradise. On the other hand, if it is the reverse, the soul attempts three times to cross the *Chinvat Bridge*, and on the third try, it slips and falls into perdition. If the good and the bad of the individual are equal on the scales of Rashnu, the soul enters *Hamastakan*, which is a sort of a limbo, where the soul neither enjoys nor suffers. As to the body of the deceased, the Zoroastrian clergy symbolically

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<sup>77</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.76

<sup>78</sup> Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith* (McGill University Press, 1993), pp.99-100

draw three concentric circles to keep the contagion of pollution caused by death inside.<sup>79</sup> The *sagdid* ceremony, wherein a dog is brought in to gaze at the corpse at three distinct junctures in the funerary process.<sup>80</sup>

There are said to be three saviors who will appear at thousand year intervals just before the end of the world. The mother of each of the savior figures will be a virgin who will bathe in a lake in Persia where the seed of Zoroaster is said to be preserved. These savior beings are named *Aushetar* [Pahlavi: *Hoshedar*], *Aushetarmah* [Pahlavi: *Hoshedarmah*], and *Soshyans*.<sup>81</sup> There are also three types of argyaries [fire-temples]. These are [from the lowest to the highest], *Atash Dadgah*, *Atash Adaran*, and *Atash Behram*. Zoroastrian clergy is also said to be of three types. These are [from the lowest to the highest], *Ervad*, *Mobed*, and *Dastur*.<sup>82</sup> The Zoroastrian calendar consists of thirty days wherein each day is associated with three types of hierarchically placed divine beings, i.e. God, the archangels, and angels. Even here, three of those days, known as *Dadvah* days, are dedicated to Ahura Mazda [God] in His function as the Creator of the Universe.<sup>83</sup> It is said that after Creation, the divine beings made a triple sacrifice of plant, bull and man for the furtherance of creation.<sup>84</sup> Zoroastrian purification rites are of three types, i.e. *padyab*, *nahn* and *riman*.<sup>85</sup> The priestly purification called *Bareshnum* consists of three ceremonial baths done over nine nights.<sup>86</sup> Also, during the *Riman*

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<sup>79</sup> Nigosian, *'The Zoroastrian Faith'* (McGill University Press, 1993), p.102

<sup>80</sup> Boyce, *'Zoroastrians: their beliefs and practices'* (Routledge, 2nd Ed., 2001) p.27

<sup>81</sup> Boyce, *'Zoroastrians: their beliefs and practices'* (Routledge, 2nd Ed., 2001) pp.74-75

<sup>82</sup> Nigosian, *'The Zoroastrian Faith'* (McGill University Press, 1993), p.104

<sup>83</sup> Boyce, *'Zoroastrians: their beliefs and practices'* (Routledge, 2nd Ed., 2001) p.71

<sup>84</sup> Boyce, *'Zoroastrians: their beliefs and practices'* (Routledge, 2nd Ed., 2001) p.12

<sup>85</sup> Nigosian, *'The Zoroastrian Faith'* (McGill University Press, 1993), p.104

<sup>86</sup> Nigosian, *'The Zoroastrian Faith'* (McGill University Press, 1993), p.105

purification, the candidate sips *nirang* (consecrated bull's urine) three times from an egg shell.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Vedic Indian situation**

The geography of Vedic India consisted of Gandhara, Punjab, Sind, and the Ganges plain region of northern India [see map below]. These people began their history with their Avestan Iranian brethren, but theological differences made them part company. The quarrel was perhaps over the supreme status of Varuṇa. The Avestan Iranians retained him as the supreme god of the Aryan pantheon later calling him Ahura Mazda [literally, 'Lord of Wisdom'].<sup>88</sup> The Vedic Indians eventually abandoned Varuṇa, and elevated Indra to be the chief of the gods calling him 'Devendra'. This role he retains to this day in Classical Hinduism. The Indians then began to refer to Varuṇa and his hosts as *aris* which came to mean "enemies". The god Indra and his hosts became known as *sūris*. This theory has been proposed by Aguilar y Matas.<sup>89</sup> This opposition between Varuṇa and Indra is nothing but the Indo-Iranian version of the Odin and Thor dispute for supremacy in Germanic mythology.

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<sup>87</sup> Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith* (McGill University Press, 1993), p.107

<sup>88</sup> Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (Harper-Collins India, 5th Ed., 1997), p.32  
fn.1

<sup>89</sup> Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.50

According to Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III:9:2,<sup>90</sup> it is quite clear that the Vedic gods were divided into three types, i.e. the celestial [Ādityas], the atmospheric [Rudras], and the terrestrial [Vasus]. Actually one finds here a triadism within a triadism. Not only are the three types of gods a triadism, but they together would form the third level of the Dumézilian triadism with the thunderbolt-wielding Indra, the Vedic Thor, occupying the 2nd level, and Prajāpati, the Vedic Zeus, father of all creatures, occupying the 1st level.

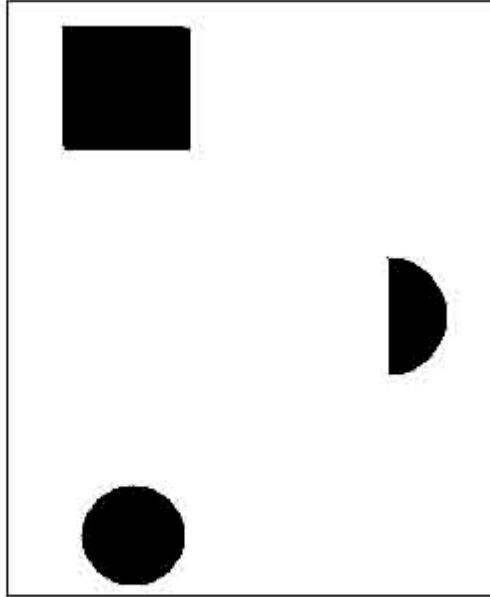
Further, there are three fires maintained in the Vedic household. An ideal Vedic priest is deemed to be a *trayāgnihotr* [oblation-offerer of the three fires]. These three fires are the *Āhavanīya* in the east whose altar is squarish in shape and is used to offer oblations to the gods for the general well-being; the *Gārhapatya* in the west whose altar is circular in shape and is used to offer oblation to the gods for domestic sacraments; and lastly the *Dakṣiṇa* in the south whose altar is half-moon shaped and is used to offer rites to the recently departed and the ancestors for up to three generations.

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<sup>90</sup> "trayas trimśat tveva devā iti. katame te trayas trimśad iti. aṣṭau vasavaḥ ekādaśa rudrāḥ dvādaśādityāḥ te ekatrimśat indraścaiva prajāpatiśca trayatrimśāviti"

["there are only thirty-three gods. Which are these thirty three? The eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, these are thirty-one; Indra and Prajāpati make up thirty-three"]

### Picture of the three types of Vedic fire-altars



**Figure 3:** The three Vedic altars

It is important to note that Indra is the guardian of the east, whereas Varuṇa is deemed the guardian of the west. Also, Yama, the god of death, is the guardian of the south, the direction dedicated to the dead and the departed.

The Vedic Hindu sacred thread, the *yajñopavīta*, invested to the first three upper caste youngsters [later males only were initiated], has three strands to it held together in a knot. The three strands represent restraint and control of thought, word and deed. Its equivalent on the Avestan Iranic side is the *kusti*.

Again in the Indic context, Dumézil points to the Luristan bronze quiver from 7th century BCE wherein the tripartite scheme is depicted. Commenting on this, Mallory, a prominent Indo-European specialist writes:

"The bronze capitol, dated to about the seventh or eighth century BC, is illustrated with seven registers, the upper and bottom two of which can be dismissed as primarily ornamental. It is the three central friezes that offer, according to Dumézil, iconographic evidence of the Indo-European system of tripartition. The upper register portrays two figures symbolically co-joined by both holding the same palm in the centre. The left hand figure stands next to an altar, a clear association with religious functions, while the right hand figure stands next to a bovine. Dumézil reminds us that the bull was the titular animal of Mitra, and he identifies the two figures as the sovereign gods Varuṇa and Mitra. The middle register depicts a figure standing between two lions with a bird overhead. Dumézil suggests that the figure is quite probably of Indra, the Indic warrior-god. Of the 36 mentions of a bird in the *Rig Veda*, 23 of them are associated with Indra while another 6 occur with the Maruts, Indra's warrior band. Twelve of the 13 mentions of a lion in the *Rig Veda* are connected with Indra or the Maruts. The lower register depicts two figures, interpreted as the Indic divine twins, the Asvins, assisting an older figure, an iconographic representation of an incident in the *Rig Veda* where the twins rejuvenate an old man.

Whether one is impressed by this interpretation or not, it must be admitted that there is ample room for archaeological 'testing' of the tripartite model."<sup>91</sup>

As it would be too vast to delve into all of the literary materials of Vedic India to show the embedded depth of Indo-European triadic pattern,

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<sup>91</sup> Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (Thames & Hudson, 1989), p.133

I have chosen the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* as the representing the microcosm of this numerical leitmotif in the religio-philosophical culture and way of life of Vedic India. The reasons for this decision are that firstly, this work blends quite nicely the ritualistic, axiomatic, metaphysical and mystical aspects of Vedic Hinduism.

### **Triadism in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad**

This work is the oldest, the longest and the most authoritative of the principal Upaniṣads, which form the fourth and most important section of the Vedas.

#### **ritualistic triadism**

This work begins with the all-Aryan ritualistic hallmark, i.e. the horse-sacrifice. In the Vedic Hindu context, this rite is referred to as the *Aśvamedha*. "In this sacrifice, a horse is let loose and a guard of three hundred follows his track. If anyone hinders the horse's progress, the guard will have to fight. When the horse completes a victorious circuit of the earth and returns to the capital, he is offered as a sacrifice and the king who performs the sacrifice assumes the title of sovereign, emperor."<sup>92</sup>

Twenty-four [eight times three] parts<sup>93</sup> and discharges of the sacrificial horse are mentioned as representations of the world. At this

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<sup>92</sup> Radhakrishnan, *'The Principal Upaniṣads'* (Harper-Collins India, 5th Ed., 1997), p.149 fn. "*aśvamedha*"

<sup>93</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* I:1:1 mentions the head, eye, breath, mouth, body, back, belly, hoofs, sides, ribs, limbs, joints, feet, bones, flesh, stomach, veins, liver, lungs, hair, forepart, hindpart, urine and voice.



juncture, it is important to mention Mallory's comments on the tripartite origins of Indo-European sacrifices in general, and the horse-sacrifice in particular.

"Perhaps a potentially more rewarding area for examination can be found among the ritual animal sacrifices that we encounter among the early Indo-Europeans. The evidence of these rituals, especially preserved in ancient India and Rome, demonstrates how a hierarchy of victims were sacrificed to, or associated with, the various divinities who filled out the major social 'functions' of Indo-European mythology. In the Indic *sautramani*, the priestly Sarasvati received a ram, the warlike Indra obtained a bull, and the Asvins, the twins who represent the third estate, were offered a he-goat. In the *Avesta*, the great goddess Arədvī Sura Anahita, who embraced all three functions, received the sacrifices of horses, cattle and sheep. The Roman purification sacrifice of the *suovetaurilia* preserved within its very name the identity of three ritual victims ----- *su* 'pig', *ovis* 'sheep' and *taurus* 'bull'.

Although the sacrificial sequence in these and other rituals was clearly hierarchical, the precise identity or sequence of the victims sacrificed was not rigidly observed within the same culture, much less between different Indo-European peoples. In examining the Indic evidence, for example, Jaan Puhvel notes that where horse is identified as one of the victims it is dedicated to the warrior-god, while a sheep or hornless ram is offered to the priestly deity and cattle or goat to those representing the third estate. But where the horse is absent from the ritual, cattle replaces it and the third function receives a goat or pig. The Roman evidence shows even greater variability, and in the Greek triple sacrifice known as the *trittua*, we find that the animals are often a ram, bull and a boar."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (Thames & Hudson, 1989), pp.133-135

"Some would maintain that the *premier* animal of Indo-European sacrifice and ritual was probably the horse. We have already seen how its embedment in Proto-Indo-European society lies not just in its lexical reconstruction but also in the proliferation of personal names which contain 'horse' as an element among the various Indo-European peoples. Furthermore, we witness the importance of the horse in Indo-European rituals and mythology. One of the most obvious examples is the recurrent depiction of twins such as the Indic Asvins 'horsemen', the Greek horsemen Castor and Pollux, the legendary Anglo-Saxon settlers of Britain, Horsa and Hengist (literally Horse and Stallion) or the Irish twins of Macha, born after she had completed a horse race. All of these attest the existence of Indo-European divine twins associated with or represented by horses.

The major ritual enactment of a horse-centered myth is supported by evidence from ancient India and Rome and, more distantly, medieval Ireland. The Indic ritual is the *asvamedha*, probably the most spectacular of the ancient Indic ceremonies.....

Ancillary rituals took place throughout the year until the horse was returned for a three-day finale. This involved, among other things, the horse pulling the king's chariot, a large sacrifice of a variety of animals, and the smothering of the horse, after which the king's favorite wife 'co-habited' with the dead stallion under covers. The horse was then dismembered into three portions, each dedicated to deities who played out the canonical order of Dumézil's three 'functions'.

The *asvamedha* bears comparison with the major Roman horse-sacrifice which was known as the *October Equus*. Following a horse race on the ides of October, the right-sided horse of the team was dispatched by a spear and then dismembered, again in such a fashion as to indicate its 'functional' division into three estates. As with the Indic ritual, the major recipient of the sacrifice was the warrior-god (Mars). In medieval Ireland, and through the admittedly somewhat jaundiced eyes of Norman Geraldus, we read how in the inauguration of one of the tribal kings of Ulster, a mare was sacrificed and then dismembered. In a classic example of Ulster pragmatism, the pieces of horse flesh were then boiled

in order to make a great broth in which the king subsequently bathed while devouring the morsels of meat.

A detailed analysis of this and other material has led Jaan Puhvel to propose a Proto-Indo-European myth and ritual which involved the mating of a figure from the royal class with a horse from which ultimately sprung the famous equine divine twins. He offers some additional linguistic support for such a ritual in the very name of the Indic ceremony, the *asvamedha*. This derives from the Proto-Indo-European *\*ekwo-meydho* 'horse-drunken', attesting a ritual which included both a horse and drunkenness."<sup>95</sup>

According to this Upaniṣad, there are three kinds of physical results that come from making offerings into the sacrificial fire. These are those when offered blaze upward, those when offered make great noise, and those when offered sink downward.<sup>96</sup>

### **axiomatic triadism**

Prajāpati, the chief of the Vedic gods, had three offspring, i.e. gods, men and demons. Having instructed them in the sacred lore, he uttered the syllable "da" to each group. The gods understood the syllable to mean "dāmyata" [self-control]. Men understood the syllable to mean "dāna" [charity]. The demons understood the syllable to mean "dayā"

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<sup>95</sup> Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (Thames & Hudson, 1989), pp.135-136

<sup>96</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad III:1:8. Also vide Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (Harper-Collins India, 5th Ed., 1997), p.214

[compassion].<sup>97</sup> The Hindu philosopher Śaṅkara [788-820 CE] gives the reasons for these three groups selecting these three virtues because the gods have desire, men have greed, and the demons have anger. Therefore, these three virtues of self-control, charity, and compassion will temper those three vices.<sup>98</sup>

### **metaphysical triadism**

The primal deity Hiraṇyagarbha turned himself into a sacrificial horse, and divided himself into three. One-third became fire, one-third the sun, and one-third the air. His head and arms became the east, his tail and hip-bones became the west, his sides became the north and south, his back became the sky, his belly became the atmosphere, and his earth became the chest.<sup>99</sup>

Nine gods are mentioned as powerful deities, i.e. Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mṛtyu, Īśāna, and Brahmā.<sup>100</sup> Prajāpati, the father of the gods, became three-fold, i.e. mind, speech and breath.<sup>101</sup> The speech became the earth, the mind the atmosphere, and breath the heavens.<sup>102</sup> Further, the same scripture points out that the world of men is attained by sons, the world of the fathers is attained by rites, and the world of the gods by knowledge.<sup>103</sup> Also, this world is a triad of name,

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<sup>97</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad V:2:1-3. Also vide Radhakrishnan, 'The Principal Upaniṣads' (Harper-Collins India, 5th Ed., 1997), pp.289-290

<sup>98</sup> Radhakrishnan, 'The Principal Upaniṣads' (Harper-Collins India, 5th Ed., 1997), pp.108-109

<sup>99</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:2:3

<sup>100</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:4:11

<sup>101</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:5:3

<sup>102</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:5:4

<sup>103</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:5:16

form and deed.<sup>104</sup> Three kinds of instruments, i.e. the drum [a percussion instrument], the conch [a wind instrument], and the lute [a string instrument] are mentioned to convey the epistemological means of grasping reality.<sup>105</sup> The verses of the Ṛg and Sāma Vedas are of three types, i.e. introductory, ritualistic, and benedictory.<sup>106</sup>

### **mystical triadism**

There are three important mystical requests chanted by the *Prastotr* priest and the *yajamāna* [sacrificer]. These are the requests of leading one from unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.<sup>107</sup>

The Supreme Reality, Brahman, is considered the immanent indweller in all things. However, twenty-one [seven times three] such entities are specifically named as examples. These are the earth, water, fire, sky, air, heaven, sun, space, nocturnally visible celestial bodies, ether, darkness, light, creatures, breath, tongue, eye, ear, mind, skin, intellect, and semen.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:6:1

<sup>105</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad II:4:7-9

<sup>106</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad III:1:7 & 9

<sup>107</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:3:28

<sup>108</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad III:7:3-23

## Section 4.4

### Criticisms of the Dumézil's tripartite scheme

In this segment, I shall present the six major critics of Dumézil's trifunctional hypothesis. These are the criticisms of Thieme, Gershevitch, Rose, Gonda, Kuiper and Brough.

#### criticisms by Paul Thieme

Paul Thieme [1905-2001] was a distinguished German Sanskrit scholar who taught both in Germany and India. His professorial career spanned four decades from 1932 to 1972.

In 1938, Thieme criticized Dumézil over the word "ārya". Thieme pointed out that this word was derived from the Sanskrit stem *ari-* meaning "stranger", and thus by extension "enemy". Dumézil disagreed with this etymology, and pointed out that the word "ārya" indeed "refers to one who is a member of the same ethnic group, if not the immediate social group, as the poet or speaker. In other words, it refers to one who does indeed worship the *same* gods (cf. Rig Veda 7.65.9, 10.12.1). Dumézil also points out that the Vedic language does not lack for terms specifically designating such concepts as 'guest' (*atithi-*) or 'enemy' (*śatru-*)."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.186

In 1957, Thieme criticized Dumézil's interpretation of Mitra and Varuṇa as first function figures. Thieme pointed out that the term "Mitra" does not mean 'friend', but rather means someone who would be friendly to a person who abides by the terms of a contract. Also, the functions of both Mitra and Varuṇa "overlap, and neither god can be seen to exercise the kind of sovereignty claimed for them by Dumézil."<sup>110</sup>

The most direct criticism by Thieme of Dumézil's tripartite scheme came in 1960 when Thieme pointed out that Dumézil had forced the roles of the Mitanni gods into the latter's tripartite scheme. "Claiming that any series of 'men or gods' is easily divisible by three, he cites Brough's (1959) application of Dumézil's scheme to the Old Testament, as well as the fact that the *Rig Veda* contains numerous references to Indra as the slayer of the *amitra*, or 'he who does not recognize the sacredness of contracts'."<sup>111</sup>

### **criticisms by Ilya Gershevitch**

Ilya Gershevitch [1914-2001] was a distinguished scholar of Ancient Iranian Studies at Cambridge University from 1948 to 1982. He was born in Switzerland to Russian parents. After receiving his doctorate from the University of Rome in 1938, he moved to the U.K. and lived there for the rest of his life.

In 1959, Gershevitch teamed up with Thieme to criticize Dumézil. Gershevitch remained an anti-Dumézilian for the rest of his life.

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<sup>110</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.188

<sup>111</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.191

Gershevitch's main complaints against Dumézil are firstly "that the *Rig Veda* knows nothing of the distinctions Dumézil sees between Mitra and Varuṇa,"<sup>112</sup> and secondly, that there is no "Avestan evidence that would support Dumézil's (and Duchesne-Guillemin's) contention that Aša and Vohu Manah are, respectively, 'more remote' and 'closer' to mankind."<sup>113</sup>

### **criticisms by H.J. Rose**

Herbert Jennings Rose [1883-1961] was a Canadian scholar who studied at McGill and Oxford. He was a professor of the European classical languages of Greek and Latin. He taught Latin at University of Wales from 1919 to 1927, and from 1927 to 1953, he taught Greek at the University of St. Andrew's. Rose criticized Dumézil from the standpoint of the European Classical languages.

Rose firstly questioned the uniqueness of Indo-European triadism. Secondly, he thought the triadism of the Roman deities, Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus were logical derivations.<sup>114</sup> Thirdly, Rose suggested that the manaistic interpretation of Roman rituals were not considered by Dumézil.

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<sup>112</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.190

<sup>113</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.190

<sup>114</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.193



### criticisms by Jan Gonda

Jan Gonda [1905-1991] was a Dutch Indologist who not only obtained his doctorate at the University of Utrecht in 1929, but taught there from 1932 to 1976. He was an enormous scholar with wide ranging interests. Besides Sanskrit and Indology, Gonda researched in the European classics, Avestan and Old Javanese.<sup>115</sup>

Gonda principally questions Dumézil's etymologies and finds the latter being carried away by his theories. Gonda offers "a number of specific criticisms: for example, (1) Ouranos and Varuṇa cannot be equated simply on the basis that each might possibly be conceived as a 'binder'; (2) Indra's three 'pechés' and the three sins of Herakles (cf. Dumézil, 1956b) do not reflect an I-E tripartition and perhaps mirror, rather, a 'widespread' tendency in popular literature toward a threefold characterization of 'ancient heroes'; and (3) the concepts *Dharma*, *Kāma*, and *Artha* are not necessarily linked to the tripartite system for he claims that Dumézil has not only mistranslated their respective meanings (i.e. 'morale,' 'passion,' and 'intérêt économique') but has also overlooked the fact that the traditional Indian order of presentation is *Dharma*, *Kāma*, and *Artha* (i.e., first, third, and second functions)."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Gonda was my teacher's teacher in my Dutch connection, and my teacher's teacher's teacher in my American connection.

<sup>116</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.196

### criticisms by F.B.J. Kuiper

Franciscus Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper [1907-2003] was also a Dutch Indologist who obtained his doctorate at Leiden University in 1934. He taught Greek and Latin briefly in the Dutch East Indies [present-day Indonesia] and became professor of Sanskrit at Leiden in 1939 and taught there until his retirement in 1972. He was not only a Sanskrit specialist but was also a linguist in the Dravidian and the aboriginal languages of India.

"Concerning himself solely with Indic literature (especially the *Vedas* and the *Mahābhārata*), Kuiper feels he has found such a system in a progressive series of polar dichotomies based upon geographic orientations."<sup>117</sup> As examples of this polarized dichotomies, Kuiper believes that the "upper world" belongs to the gods, and the "lower world" to the demons. Also, the hyphenated deities Mitra and Varuṇa though both belong to the western direction, are still internally opposed as Mitra stands "for sunrise (or life) and Varuṇa representing sunset (or death)."<sup>118</sup> As far as the *Mahābhārata* is concerned, Kuiper states that "north and east are represented, respectively, by Arjuna and Bhīma, west and south by Nakula and Sahadeva; the center (or totality) is represented by Yudhiṣṭhira."<sup>119</sup> In the final analysis, Kuiper's main thrust is that the Dumézilian tripartite scheme is secondary in Indo-European tradition, and that his polarized dichotomies are the principal hallmarks of the Indo-European ideology.

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<sup>117</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.197

<sup>118</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.197

<sup>119</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.198

### criticisms by John Brough

John Brough [1917-1984] was a British Indologist who received his Doctor of Letters degree from Cambridge University in 1945. He became professor of Sanskrit at the University of London in 1946 and served in that capacity until 1967 when he moved over to accept the same job at Cambridge University where he taught until his accidental death in 1984. He was a very eminent Sanskritist and published many scholarly works.

Brough tried to debunk the Dumézilian view that the tripartite ideology was uniquely Indo-European by pointing out triadic patterns of the Dumézilian type in the Hebrew scriptures. "He gives as an example the persons and events in the Book of Judges: Ehud and Deborah may be viewed as representatives of the first function (cf. Mitra and Varuṇa respectively); Gideon and Sampson may be seen as representing the chivalrous and brutish aspects of the second function (cf. Indra and Vāyu, Arjuna and Bhīma); and the 'wives of the Benjaminites' (Judges 31:16) would seem to belong to the third function. A second trifunctional scheme, Brough asserts, occurs in the two Books of Samuel and the first book of Kings with Eli and Samuel representing the first function; David (as king) and Saul, the second; and David (as shepherd), the third; Solomon is seen as a summation of all three."<sup>120</sup>

Brough almost challenges Dumézil to show that his "analysis of the Old Testament material is incompetent and radically wrong."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.199

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

### Assessment of the criticisms

In the case of H.J. Rose, Dumézil points out that the Roman concept of *numen* was never the same as the Polynesian *mana* which was a general impersonal force. In the case of Jan Gonda, the reason why *dharma* comes first in the Indian context is that the Indians want the two material values of *artha* and *kāma* to be tempered and encumbered by *dharma*. Also, it provides a linguistic lubrication in terms of pronunciation. In the case of John Brough, Dumézil has pointed out that the Book of Judges, and the two Samuels are chronologically well after the formation of the Indo-European tripartite hallmark and that Indo-European institutional borrowings by non-Indo-European peoples like the Semites due to cultural, commercial and political interactions are not thus inconceivable.

No scholar should go unchallenged, and in that very broad sense, what these scholars have done to Dumézil's Indo-European tripartite theory by way of critiquing it, in principle, is right. This vetting process is both proper and necessary.

However, these scholars (each of whom is an extra-ordinary one in his own right) have not understood the depth, breadth, vastness in scope and the profound implications of Dumézil's scholarship. They seem to look for the slightest inconsistency in his tripartite scheme in order to debunk it. Dumézil has not just slapped together a string of threes wherever he can find it. It is a systematic and well thought out theory. These critics have not themselves thought of local and temporal adjustments from one group of Indo-Europeans to the next, not to speak of interactions with other non-Indo-European ethno-linguistic groups. Afterall the Greeks have been influenced by the Minoans, the Latins by the Etruscans and the Vedic Hindus by the Dravidians. Hence there are bound to be differences here

and there. Further, they offer no really solid viable alternatives to Dumézil's theory to show so much commonality of mythology, religion, customs etc. among each of the Indo-European peoples. As Littleton says in regards to Kuiper's theory:

"It seems extremely doubtful that these geographical polarities will ever be shown to be the dominant focus of I-E ideology as a whole or that of the Indians in particular. Until Kuiper is able to document their presence in all the areas wherein Dumézil has demonstrated the presence of tripartition, I must continue to agree with Frye that Dumézil is the only one at present to have a system by which to interpret I-E religion."<sup>122</sup>

Also, if these scholars (especially Brough) took the time to look into other ethno-linguistic groups like the Semitic and the Sinitic, they will find that those groups have their own numerical and ideological leitmotifs. The Semitics have 1, 5 and 7, and the Sinitic peoples have 3, 5 and 8. So, there is no need for people like Brough to be desperate to seek to gain entrance on behalf of the other non-Indo-European groups into the Dumezilian tripartite club.

In my humble opinion, I find the criticisms of these scholars interesting. However, I find the discovery of Georges Dumézil much more interesting, original and profound. That is why I have chosen to apply his discovery to the Hindu epics where I have found his theory well founded.

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<sup>122</sup> Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 3rd Ed., 1982), p.198

## **Chapter 5**

### **Asceticism-Violence-Eroticism tripartite scheme**

#### **Section 5.1**

##### **Asceticism in the Indian cultural context**

When one hears the word "asceticism", the images that come to one's mind are of an individual who practices celibacy, self-mortification, fasting, contemplation, wears simple vestments, engages in vows of silence and penance, one who is deeply committed to a spiritual quest, and pursues a wandering life-style with an attitude of total detachment to worldly concerns and social conventions.

The clergy of the religions stemming from the Indian context seem to perfectly fit this image described above. Many scholars see the institution of asceticism as the hallmark of Indian religiosity. Oman points out that "it is the ascetic profession that time out of mind has been of pre-eminent dignity in the eyes of the Indian people."<sup>123</sup> Renou regards Hinduism to be "a religion of renunciation" which is "a global characterization" of it.<sup>124</sup> Deussen remarks in the context of asceticism and the Indian people "that the phenomenon of asceticism made its appearance

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<sup>123</sup> Oman, *The Mystics, Ascetics and Saints of India* (London:1903), pp. 271-272

<sup>124</sup> Renou, *Hinduism* (New York:1963), Introduction, p.5

among them earlier and occupied a larger place than among any other known people."<sup>125</sup> Dutt writes that "it is to the ascetics that India owes largely all that is valuable and enduring in her cultural and spiritual life."<sup>126</sup> Radhakrishnan observes that "from the beginning of her history India has adored and idealized not soldiers and statesmen, not men of science and leaders of industry, not even poets and philosophers but those rarer and chastened spirits.....time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten every one else but the saints remain."<sup>127</sup> Elliot says that "in India no religious teacher can expect a hearing unless he begins by renouncing the world."<sup>128</sup> Dutt clinches the issue by enunciating that "one who has need to sway the group-mind whether a religious preacher, a social reformer or even a political leader----finds it to his purpose to appear in *sannyāsī's* likeness in this country, for in that semblance he is able to command the highest respect and the readiest following."<sup>129</sup>

The question is: when did this practice and way of life emerge and then develop in the Indian context. Many Indologists are of the view that the institution of asceticism in India is pre-Aryan. There are two main reasons behind this conclusion. Firstly, the most famous seal of the Indus Valley civilization depicts a yogi like figure sitting in a meditative posture. Secondly, any semblance of asceticism in the Vedas does not occur until the tenth book of the Ṛgveda which scholars consider to be of very late origin in comparison to the other books of that same Veda. Let me elaborate on each one of these points in detail.

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<sup>125</sup> Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads* (Edinburgh:1908), pp. 65

<sup>126</sup> Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism* (Bombay:1960), Preface, p. ix

<sup>127</sup> Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, p.35

<sup>128</sup> Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, (London:1921), Vol. I, Introduction, p. xvi

<sup>129</sup> Dutt, *Buddhist monks and monasteries of India* (London:1962), p.44

Sir John Marshall [1876-1958], the British archaeologist who discovered the Indus Valley civilization in 1922, notes the following about the "yogi" seal depicted below:

"The God, who is three-faced, is seated on a low throne in a typical attitude of *Yoga*, with legs bent double beneath him, heel to heel and toes turned downwards. His arms are outstretched, his hands with thumb to front, resting on his knees. From wrist to shoulder, the arms are covered with bangles, eight smaller and three larger; over his breast is a triangular or perhaps a series of necklaces or torques, like those of the later class of Goddess figurines from Baluchistan and round his waist a double band. The lower limbs are bare and the phallus (*urdhva medhrā*) seemingly exposed. Crowning his head is a pair of horns meeting in a tall head-dress. To either side of the god are four animals, an elephant and tiger on his proper right, a rhinoceros and buffalo on his left. Beneath the throne are two deer standing with heads regardant and horns turned to the center."<sup>130</sup>

This figure needs to be contrasted with the religion described in the earliest parts of the Ṛgveda to understand the evolution of asceticism in India. The religion of the Ṛgveda, in general, seems to be one that is based on *stotra* [hymns of praise] and *yajña* [fiery sacrifices] to the gods. The religion is materialistic and life-loving in every sense. The request of the votary to the goddess Śrī in the 20th verse of the Śrīsūkta of the Ṛgveda makes it very clear:

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<sup>130</sup> Marshall, '*Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*', (London:1931), Vol. I, p.52



*"putra pautra dhanam dhānyam hastāsādi gaveratham prajānām bhavasi mātā  
āyusmantam karotu mām."*

"O Mother of all beings, bless me with sons, grandsons (through the sons),  
wealth, grains, elephants, horses, cows, chariots and longevity."

Some more examples of this attitude of seeking prosperity, pleasure,  
progeny and perpetuation of life in early Vedic literature are:

*sam gomad indra vājavad asme pṛthu śravo bṛhat.  
viśvāyur dhehy akṣitam.*

"Give, Indra, wide and lofty fame, wealthy in cattle and in strength,  
Lasting our life-time, failing not." [Ṛgveda I:9:7]

*asme dhehi śravo bṛhad dyumnam sahasrasātamam.  
indra tā rathinīr iṣaḥ.*

"Grant us high fame, O Indra, grant riches bestowing thousands, those  
Fair fruits of earth borne home in wains." [Ṛgveda I:9:8]

*juṣṭo hi dūto asi havyavāhano'gne rathīr adhvarāṇām.  
sajūr aśvibhyām uṣasā suvīryam asme dhehi śravo bṛhat.*

"For thou art offering-bearer and loved messenger, the charioteer of  
sacrifice:

Accordant with the Aśvins and with Dawn grant us heroic strength and lofty fame." [Ṛgveda I:44:2]

*viśvām aryo vipaścito 'ti khyas tūyam ā gahi.  
asme dhehi śravo bṛhat.*

"You, the lord, pass over all other worshippers and come quickly to us, and bestow on us abundant fame." [Ṛgveda VIII:65:9]

*sahasre pṛṣṭīnāmaghiścandram bṛhatpṛthu.  
śukram hiraṇyamā dade.*

"Upon a thousand cows I obtain gold, abundant, delightful, wide-spread and pure." [Ṛgveda VIII:65:11]

It is very clear from these sample verses that the early Vedic Aryans had a very simple, direct and practical view of life. Besides progeny, prosperity and longevity, they looked for protection from calamities, tragedies and sins so that they may be free from these impediments in order to live a joyous and abundant life to its fullest measure. Bhagat describes the attitude of the early Vedic Aryans best by saying that "they were conscious of the might of the gods who symbolized power, strength, wealth and vigor and whom they evoked for the attainment of worldly comforts with a view to enjoy the blessings of the world. Their worship was sincere but utilitarian. Their ideal of happiness

was quite simple and materialistic on the whole. It comprised mainly a desire to live a natural duration of human life which was hundred years, full term of life of a hundred autumns, hundred springs, hundred winters and a keener desire for progeny and cattle. The desire for sons was so dominant that they longed to see sons of their sons. The prayers of the R̥gvedic people thus mainly centered round the desire for prosperity, progeny and safety from misfortunes. Life was thought of as a blessing which they loved in all its fullness and the joys and pleasures of this world deeply interested them."<sup>131</sup>

Anyway, this view of life was the very opposite of a world-negating, life-denying ideal of asceticism.

Even though the origins of Indian asceticism lie in pre-Aryan Indus Valley culture, and the worldview of the early Aryans was clearly anything but ascetic, yet the roots of asceticism are to be found in middle Vedic culture and it becomes fully grown and institutionalized by the late Vedic period. The reason for the finding of asceticism in middle Vedic culture is perhaps due the assimilation and the incorporation of certain Dravidian institutions by the middle-period Vedic Aryans. These Aryans saw the power of certain ascetic and occult practices and eventually allotted these esoteric practices the status of the fourth Veda, i.e. the *Atharvaveda*. It was a sort of a begrudging acceptance of the alien institutions and way of life without completely giving up their own.

Fire, the central focal point of Vedic Aryan ritualistic religiosity was looked upon by them as the oblation-bearer to the gods as well as something they could propitiate to seek destruction of their foes. Below are

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<sup>131</sup> Bhagat, '*Ancient Indian Asceticism*' (Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi:1976), p.101

some passages from the *Ṛgveda* that give insights into such an attitude on the part of the Aryans.

1. *tapanti śatrūn svarṇa bhūmā mahāsenāso amebhireṣām.*

"Leaders of the great armies, by the power of these (gods), burn their foes, as the sun (scorches) the regions." [VII:34:19]

2. *abhīhi manyo tavastavīyāntapasā yujā vi jahi śatrūn.*

"Come to us *Manyu*, who are the strongest of the strong; with *tapas* as your ally overthrow our enemies." [X:83:3]

3. *tamajarebhirvṛṣabhistava svaistapā tapiṣṭha tapasā tapasvān.*

"Burn with your own imperishable flames him who injures us abiding in secret, or when near to us design us harm." [VI:5:4]

4. *tapo ṣvagne antarām amitrān tapā śamsamararuṣaḥ parasya. tapo vaso cikitāno accittānvi te tiṣṭhantāmajarā ayāsaḥ.*

"Burn thoroughly, O Agni, our assailing enemies, burn the purpose of the adversary who does not offer worship; grantor of homes of those who

know, burn who have no thought, so that your undecaying, all-pervading beams may eternally endure." [III:18:2]

The key word here is "*tapas*", for in this word lies the seed of Vedic asceticism. The noun "*tapas*" is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root "*tap*" meaning "to burn, to boil". Hence the Vedic Aryans, in perhaps trying to incorporate the meditative practices of the Dravidians, internalized the heat of the external *yajña* fire. They must have become keenly aware of the extraordinary spiritual benefits and the immense occult powers that one could acquire in the pursuit of such a disciplined practice. The Vedic Aryans must have also observed that the Dravidians in their practice of asceticism gave up a lot of worldly pleasures in order to obtain these enormous powers and benefits. Hence the early Vedic Aryan *weltanschauung* of life-loving materialism soon gave rise to a world-view that spurned such a worldly attitude. Hence we can see this change in attitude in the Vedas themselves. Below are some examples:

1. *ṛtam ca satyam cābhīddhāttapasō'dhyajāyata.*

"Righteousness and Truth were generated from austerities." [*Rgveda* X:190:1]

2. *tapasā ye anādhṛṣyāstapasā ye svaryayuh. tapo ye cakrire mahastāmscīdevāpi gacchatāt.*

"To those who through austerities are untouched (by sin), to those who through austerities have gone to heaven, to those who have performed abundant penance, do you proceed." [Ṛgveda X:154:2]

3. *tubhyedamindra pariṣicyate madhum.....tvam tapaḥ paritapyājayaḥ svaḥ.*

"O Indra, for you is this honey poured forth.....you won heaven by performing extreme austerities." [Ṛgveda X:167:1]

4. *yā angirasastapaseha cakrustābhyaḥ.....*

"Those whom the Angirasas created by austerities." [Ṛgveda X:169:2]

5. [Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa X:4:42]

Tapas thus becomes "the unflagging, unsparing effort in the achievement of higher things; the infinite pains that one has to take to do something really worthwhile."<sup>132</sup> As the life-loving worldly attitude of the early Vedic Aryans gives way to the world-negating ascetic ideal of the later Vedic period and beyond, the entire set of institutions of the *apavarga* fourth estate began to take shape in Indian religious culture when the early Vedic Aryans had the three stages of *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, and *vānaprasthā*, now the fourth stage of *sannyāsa* got ushered in. Similarly, the ritual and deity criticizing metaphysical and mystical texts known as

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<sup>132</sup> Bose, 'Call of the Vedas' (Bombay:1954), p.56

the *Upaniṣads* came into being. To the three *puruṣārthas* of *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma*, got tagged on the fourth *puruṣārtha* of *mokṣa*. The goal was no longer *yajña* [religious ritual] and *svarga* [heaven], but *niṣkāmasadkarma* [selfless ethical action] and *mokṣa* [salvation]. The later Vedic Aryans realized that their gods of old such as *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Soma*, *Rudra*, *Vāyu*, *Agni* etc. are ultimately part of one universal metaphysical principle called *Brahman* who could be realized only mystically through the twin spiritual disciplines of renunciation and meditation. *Brahman* was the ultimate truth that equalized the gods, sages and men in one Supreme Reality. The gods did not want men to realize this because the latter would stop sacrificing to them. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* I:4:10 makes all this clear.

*tadātmānam evāvet aham brahmāsmīti tasmāt tat sarvam abhavat tad yo yo devānām pratyabudhyata sa eva tad abhavat tathā ṛṣīṇām tathā manuṣyānām.....tasmād eṣām tanna priyam yadetan manuṣyā vidyuḥ.*

"It knew itself only as 'I am *Brahman*'. Therefore it became all. Whoever among the gods became awakened to this, he, indeed, became that. It is the same in the case of the sages, same in the case of men.....Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods that men should know this."

*"The gods are not pleased that men should know the ultimate truth, for then they would know the subordinate place the gods hold and give up making them offerings."*

[Radhakrishnan, 'The Principal Upaniṣads' (Harper-Collins, New Delhi:1994), pp.168-169]

The earlier aspirations of home, wife, children, wealth, kin and kine in the light of an impermanent existence full of suffering gave way to the peace and freedom of total renunciation of the world.

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* IV:4:22 makes this change in attitude very clear.

*"etam eva viditvā munir bhavati, etam eva pravrajino lokam icchantaḥ pravrajanti. etad ha sma vai tat pūrve vidvāmsaḥ prajāṃ na kāmayante: kim prajāyā kariṣyāmaḥ; yeṣāṃ no'yam ātmāyam lokaiti. te ha sma putraiṣaṇāyāśca vittaiṣaṇāyaśca vyutthāya, atha bhikṣācaryam caranti; yā hyeva putraiṣaṇā sā vittaiṣaṇā, yā vittaiṣaṇā sā lokaiṣaṇā; ubhe hyete eṣaṇe eva bhavataḥ sa eṣa neti netyātmā."*

"On knowing It in truth, one becomes an ascetic. Desiring It only as their worlds, monks wander forth. Verily, because they know this the ancient sages did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring (they said), we who have attained the Supreme Soul, this world. They having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds; both these are, indeed, desires only. This Universal Soul is (that which has been described as) not this, not this."

Also, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* IV:4:6 shows the great spiritual result of one who has no material desires.



"*yokāmo niṣkāma āptakāma ātmakāmaḥ, na tasya prāṇā, utkrāmanti, brahmaiva san brahmāpyeti.*"

"He who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose desire is the Supreme Soul; his breaths do not depart. Being the Supreme Soul, he goes the Supreme Soul."

There is an old saying that "speech is silver, but silence is golden." Unbeknownst to them, or as a natural process of spiritual maturity, the Vedic Aryans seemed to have followed this dictum in their religious history. The sonorous chanting of the hymns of the Vedas by the early Vedic Aryans praising their various gods for bountiful earthly blessings, now gave way in the late Vedic period of the Upaniṣads to the deep silence of meditation practiced by austere ascetics spurning all earthly pleasures and material amenities in order to seek a permanent mystical union with the Supreme Primal Universal Cosmic Principle termed "Brahman" through the contemplation of the sacred syllable "Om". To this end, the first type of Vedic ascetics came to be referred to as "*munis*" (silent ones) as they practiced the austerity of "*mauna vrata*" (the vow of silence).

*Ṛgveda* X:136 is known as the *Munisūkta*. Some of the chief characteristics of a *muni* are:

1. He is long-haired (*keśin*), clad in soiled yellow (*piśangā vasate malā*), gridled with wind (*vātaśanāḥ*) and into whom the gods enter (*deveṣito*). He supports Agni and moisture, heaven and earth; he resembles the sky and the light.

2. He proclaims: "In the intoxication of ecstasy we are mounted on the winds. You mortals can see only our body."
3. He flies through the air and is the friend of the gods.
4. He is the steed of the wind (*vāta*) and a friend of Vāyu, impelled by the gods, he inhibits the two seas, that of the rising and that of the setting sun.
5. He travels by the path of the Apsarases, the Gandharvas and wild beasts and he knows thoughts or secret desires.
6. He drinks with Rudra from the cup of poison.<sup>133</sup>

It is interesting to note that the *muni* is chiefly associated with the Vedic atmospheric gods like Indra, the Maruts and Rudra. *Ṛgveda* VIII:17:14 clearly describes Indra as "the eternal friend of the *munis*" with the words "*śāśvatīnāmindro muninām sakhā*". In *Ṛgveda* VII:56:7-8, the Maruts are compared to the *munis* in terms of their prowess. In *Ṛgveda* X:136:5, the *muni* is described as the "one who drank poison with Rudra" with the words "*keśī viśasyasya pātreṇa yadrudreṇāpibatsaha*." The vow of silence together with other ascetic practices seems to give the *munis* the ability to magically partake in the power of the atmospheric gods in terms of having special powers such as the ability to transport oneself through space rapidly and even to be unaffected by poison that is capable of destroying the cosmos.

On another track, a slow skepticism is emerging within the Vedic tradition itself in regards to the gods and the efficacy of the sacrifices. *Ṛgveda* VIII:100:3 boldly ventures to question the very existence of the god Indra with the words:

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<sup>133</sup> Bhagat, 'Ancient Indian Asceticism' (Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi:1976), p.108

*"pra su stomam bharata vājayanta indrāya satyam yadi satyamasti. nendro astīti nema u tva āha ka īm dadarśa kamabhi ṣṭavam."*

"Offer fervently, may war-loving companions, true praise of Indra, *if he truly exists*; Nema says '*verily, there is no Indra*', *who has ever seen him?* Whom shall we praise."

Similarly, *Ṛgveda* X:129:6 questions the origins of the universe with a dismayed skepticism with the words:

*"ko addhā veda ka iha pra vocatkuta ājātā kuta iyam viṣṣṭiḥ. arvāgdevā asya visarjanenāthā ko veda yata ābabhūva."*

"Who really knows? Who in this world may declare it! Whence was this creation, whence was it engendered? The gods (were) subsequent to the world's creation; so who knows whence it arose?"

Again, bewildered by the polytheism of their religion, the Vedic votaries in *Ṛgveda* X:121:1-9 rhetorically ask themselves in a chorus-like fashion nine times as to which god ought they to make their oblations with the words:

*"kasmāi devāya haviṣā vidhema?"* meaning "To what deity may we sacrifice?"

There were already segments within Vedic Aryan society which realized the later evolved religious ideal of pantheism and monism than the prevailing polytheism with its cult of magically-oriented sacrificial ritualism. Thus expressions and utterances such as:

"*ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*" [Ṛgveda I:164:46] meaning "The priests call the one Reality by many names."

"*ekam santam bahudhā kalpayanti*" [Ṛgveda X:114:5] meaning "They imagine the one as multiple."

This transition from polytheism to pantheism was the realization of a "growing sense of helplessness of the individual and the poverty and wretchedness of his life in the presence of universal forces"<sup>134</sup> the insignificance of the individual in contrast to the awesome might of the universal becomes increasingly clear. It is a sort of mystic realization. This sort of spiritual awakening is cogently expressed in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* IV:4:22

"*tam etam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti, yajñena, dānena, tapasānāśakena; etam eva viditvā munir bhavati, etam eva pravrajino lokam icchantaḥ pravrajanti. etad ha sma vai tat pūrve vidvāmsaḥ prajāṃ na kāmāyante: kim prajāyā kariṣyāmaḥ; yeṣāṃ no'yam ātmāyam lokaiti. te ha sma putraiṣaṇāyāśca vittaiṣaṇāyaśca vyutthāya, atha bhikṣācaryam caranti; yā hyeva putraiṣaṇā sā vittaiṣaṇā, yā vittaiṣaṇā sā lokaiṣaṇā; ubhe hyete eṣaṇe eva bhavataḥ sa eṣa neti netyātmā; agrhyaḥ, na hi*

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<sup>134</sup> Urquhart, 'Pantheism and the value of life' (London:1919), p.83

*gr̥hyate; aśīryaḥ, na hi śīryate; asangaḥ, na hi saḥyate; asito na vyathate, na riṣyati"*

"The priests seek to know It by the study of the Vedas, by sacrifices, by gifts, by penance, by fasting. On knowing It in truth, one becomes an ascetic. Desiring It only as their worlds, monks wander forth. Verily, because they know this the ancient sages did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring (they said), we who have attained the Supreme Soul, this world. They having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds; both these are, indeed, desires only. This Universal Soul is (that which has been described as) not this, not this. It is incomprehensible for It is never comprehended. It is indestructible for It cannot be destroyed. It is unattached for does not attach Itself. It is unfettered for it does not suffer, It is not injured."

*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* I:2:7 points out that the Vedic sacrifices performed by the sixteen priests, the patron of the sacrifice and his wife just put them all into the cycles of births and deaths with the words:

*"plavā hyete adṛḍhā yajñarūpā aṣṭādaśoktam avaram yeṣu karmā. etacchreyo ye'bhinandanti mūḍhāḥ jarāmṛtyum te punar evāpiyanti."*

"Unsteady, verily, are these boats of the eighteen sacrificial forms, which are said to be inferior karma. The deluded who delight in this as leading to good, fall again and again into old age and death."

Vasiṣṭha himself who is one of the seven great Vedic seers, is purported to have told Rāma, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa epic, that rituals of various sorts are inferior and even a hindrance to the ultimate spiritual goal of salvation with the words:

"*kālam yajñatapodānatīrthadevācaraṇa bhramaiḥ. ciram ādhi śatopetāḥ kṣapayanti mṛgā iva.*"

"Deluded by sacrifice, austerity, alms-giving, pilgrimage and worship of gods, men pass many years in misery, like unto beasts."<sup>135</sup>

Even in the highly ritualistic Brāhmaṇa Period of the Vedic Age, there seems to have been a distinction between two types of ascetics, i.e. the *munis* and the *yatis*. The *munis* were those who were friendly to the god Indra [*R̥gveda* VIII:17:14], and the *yatis* were those who were ascetics who opposed and rejected him. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII:28:1 refers to the incident of Indra throwing down the *yatis*. The *Pañcavimsa Brāhmaṇa* VIII:1:4 mentions the survival of the three *yatis* who managed to survive the slaying of their kind by Indra. Scholars like D.R. Bhandarkar and P.V. Kane think that the *munis* were Aryan ascetics, and the *yatis* were non-Aryan.<sup>136</sup>

It is equally important to note that the gods themselves begin to engage in austerities. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* I:2:6 mentions that Prajāpati performed austerities. *Taittirīyopaniṣad* II:6:1 narrates that Brahman engaged

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<sup>135</sup> Radhakrishnan, '*The Principal Upaniṣads*' (Harper-Collins, New Delhi:1994), p.676

<sup>136</sup> Bhandarkar, '*Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture*' p.18

in austerities to create the Universe. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X:4:42 also mentions that Prajāpati engaged in austerities prior to every creation.

In the Araṇyaka Period of the Vedic Age, a compromise between ritualism and asceticism is forged with the invention of the *vānaprasthāśrama* as the third stage of the Vedic Aryan life. In this stage, the individual leads the life of a hermit in the forest together with his wife performing sacrifices to the gods. The seven great ṛṣis of the Vedic tradition are examples of this lifestyle. The sage Vasiṣṭha lived with his wife Arundhati; the sage Atri with his wife Anasuyā; the sage Gautama with his wife Ahalyā; and the sage Jamadagni with his wife Reṇukā. The whole purpose of the *vānaprasthā* stage of life seems to have been instituted in order that the individual while performing sacrifices also reflect on the inner esoteric symbolism behind these rites in the serene setting of the forest. It was meant to ease the transition from the very worldly stage of the householder to that of a total ascetic who completely disengaged himself from mundane concerns and conventions. The first two stages of the student and the householder got an individual into life, while the last two stages, i.e. the hermit and the ascetic, debriefed him from life and prepared him for salvation. The four stages or *āśramas* were a well-chalked out agenda to navigate life successfully and then complete and terminate it spiritually. However, the Vedic Aryans knew the society was made up of different types of individuals, and therefore the four *āśramas* were modified in terms of the four castes. The brahmins alone were allowed to go through all four stages. The *kṣatriyas* only three. They could not become ascetics. The *vaiśyas* only the first two, i.e. student and householder. The non-Aryan *śūdra* only one, i.e. that of the householder.

Both the *Dharmasūtras* as well as the *Dharmaśāstras* have laid down varying regulations with regard to the life of a *vānaprasthin*. The *Gautama Dharmasūtra* III:28 states that the hermit should perform the five great sacrifices and live the life of an ideal householder. *Āpasthamba Dharmasūtra* II:9:22 allows the hermit to live with his family outside of the village and perform the sacrificial fiery rites. *Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra* II:6:11 and II:6:14-17 requires the hermit to tend the sacred fires, honor the guests and practice austerities. *Manu Smṛti* VI:5-12 enjoins that the hermit must live in the forest tending the sacred fires subsisting on a vegetarian diet, recite the Vedas and offer oblations of boiled rice-cakes to the gods. Further, *Gautama Dharmasūtra* III:33 requires hermits to have braided hair and wear deer-skin. *Āpasthamba Dharmasūtra* III:3:19-22 mandates that hermits must bear the cold-weather, be non-violent, live on a day-to-day basis and eat bitter foods.

As regards the fourth stage, i.e. *sannyāsa*, the ascetic, *Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra* II:10:35 points out the circumstances under which one may become an ascetic. These are:

- a] a householder who has no children
- b] a widower
- c] a person who has completed his 70th birthday

Several *upaniṣads* narrate the methodology of becoming an ascetic. The *Kaṇṭhaśruti Upaniṣad* points out the candidate should first secure the permission of his teachers and relatives, then proceed to the forest and perform the *Agnihotra* sacrifice for 12 nights, then make offerings to Agni, Prajāpati and Viṣṇu, throw the wooden pots into the fire, earthen ones into the water and metal pots to be gifted to the teacher. Then after addressing



the sacred fires with the appropriate mantras, cut-off his tuft of hair, and cast-off his sacred thread with the mantra "bhūḥ svāhā".

The *Nārada-parivrājaka Upaniṣad* describes the rites for initiation into sannyāsa as per the following method. The candidate must undertake the *kṛcchra* penance and perform eight types of śrāddhas. These are:

- a] *Tridaiva* which is to the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Ādityas
- b] *Daśārṣa* which is the ten sages like Marīci, Atri, Angirasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhṛgu, Vasiṣṭha, Dakṣa and Nārada.
- c] *Divya* which is to the gods Hiraṇyagarbha, Vairāja etc.
- d] *Pitṛya* which is to the Kravyād fire, Soma, Aryaman and Pitṛs called Agniṣvāttā
- e] *Daśamātṛkā* which to the ten goddesses such as Gaurī, Padmā etc.
- f] *Mānuṣa* which is to the Sanakādi ṛṣis
- g] *Bhautika* which is to the five *mahābhūtas* like Earth, Water, Fire etc.
- h] *Ātmika* which is to the Supreme Soul

Two brahmins must be honored at each śrāddha. The candidate should shave his head except for seven strands of hair. After bathing, he must chant the *Gāyatrī mantra* 1000 times. He must listen to the Purāṇas through the course of the night, and after that take a bath. He must offer 16 oblations into the sacred fire while reciting the *Puruṣa-sūkta*. After performing the Virajā homa, the candidate should offer a cow, a gold jar, a cloth and requisite fees to the officiating priest. The candidate must then perform the *Brahmodvāsana* ceremony and meditate on the sacred fire. After this, he must cast-off the sacred thread, recite the *praiṣa* mantra thrice, cast-off his cloth and seven strands of hair into the water, and emerge out of it wearing the saffron-robe and carrying a staff and water-

pot. Neither he nor his relatives ought to shed any tears during this final act of renunciation.

Ascetics ought not to dwell in any one place for too long. They are to lead life as wandering mendicants living-off the charity of lay-people. They are to eat no more than eight mouthfuls a day. They are to dwell at night in a temple, at the edge of a village, a monastery or at the base of a tree. Except during the rainy season when they may dwell in a place for four months, ascetics are advised to stay no more than five nights in a place. They are to have an attitude of disinterestedness, contentment and engage themselves in the recitation of mantras or dwell in meditation. The *Dakṣa Dharmasāstra* I:3:12 states that the ascetic has four practices, i.e. meditation, purity, begging for food, and staying in seclusion.

The *Vaikhānasa Sūtra* VIII:9 mentions four types of ascetics. These are: *kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, *hamsa* and *paramahamsa*.

The *kuṭīcakas* eat eight morsels of food<sup>137</sup> and practice yoga. The *bahūdakas* wear saffron robes, carry a triple-staff and water-jar, beg for alms from the houses of seven brahmins, and are said to avoid meat, salt and stale food. The *hamsas* fast for a month or observe the *cāndrāyaṇa* fast, stay for one night in a village or five nights in a town. The *paramahamsas* stay in a vacant house, or under a tree or in a cremation ground and beg alms from all castes. According to the *Uśana Dharmasūtra*, five types of alms are acceptable for ascetics.<sup>138</sup> These are:

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<sup>137</sup> *Āpasthamba Dharmasūtra* II:4:9:13 and *Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra* II:10:18:13 state that eight mouthfuls make the meal of an ascetic, sixteen that of a hermit, thirty-two that of a householder, and an unlimited quantity that of a student.

<sup>138</sup> *mādhukaram asantaptam prākpraṇītam ayācitam. tātkālikopapannam ca bhaiṣṣam pañcavidham smṛtam*

1. *mādhukara* = obtained from three, five or seven houses without any previous resolution, just like honey collected from any flowers by bees. [*madhuvadāhāraṇam*]
2. *prākpraṇita* = when the lay persons request the ascetic to take food at their houses even before the latter gets up from bed. [*śayanotthāpanāt prāk*]
3. *ayācita* = when the ascetic is invited by someone to take food at their houses even before the latter gets up from bed. [*bhikṣāṭana samudyogāt prāk*]
4. *tātkālika* = the food which the brahmin announces as soon as the ascetic approaches [*upasthāne ca yat proktam bhikṣārtham brāhmaṇena ha*]
5. *upapanna* = cooked food brought to the monastery by devotees [*siddham annam bhaktajanairānītam maṭham prati*]

## Section 5.2

### Eroticism in the Indian cultural context

Eroticism is an institution of the world which is as old as humankind itself. It is natural and is the source of both pleasure and progeny.

In the Hindu context, the Sanskrit word '*kāma*' encompasses the world of eroticism. In fact, '*kāma*' is the word for both desire in general and sexual desire in particular. The Hindus recognized that the highest form of material desire was sexual desire. The word '*kāma*' is one of the four words used to describe the four values of man. These are the four *puruṣārthas*, i.e. *dharmārthakāmamokṣa*. The first two, i.e. *dharma* and *artha* are the means, while *kāma* and *mokṣa* are the ends. *Kāma* is the materialistic goal, and *mokṣa*, the spiritualistic goal. Right here lie the seeming opposition of eroticism and asceticism in the opposed goals of *kāma* and *mokṣa*. In fact, Hinduism in its two manifestations, i.e. popular and philosophical, have *kāma* and *mokṣa* as their respective aims. Yet with these two seemingly opposed goals, Hinduism operates as one corporate religion. The understanding of the word '*kāma*' to indicate sexual desire and its fulfillments reaches an iconic status in the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana. This treatise has become famous throughout the world.

However, we are not concerned with eroticism in itself in the Hindu context, but rather how it has coexisted and puzzlingly been intertwined with its opposite number, i.e. asceticism, throughout the history of Hinduism. Well within the context of the sourcebooks of Hindu asceticism, i.e. the Upaniṣads, are found the seeds of eroticism as well. Let us take

the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* for example. The very source of the highest mystical experience of "*aham brahmāsmi*" [I:4:10] is the source of graphic sexual descriptions as well. In *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* VI:4:9 the sexual act is fully described.

*"sa yām icchet kāmyetameti tasyām artham niṣṭhāya mukhena mukham  
samdhāya upastham asyā...."*

"If one desires a woman (with the thought) may she enjoy love with me: after inserting the organ in her, joining mouth to mouth, and stroking her lower part..."

However the centerpieces of the asceticism and eroticism dilemma are the legends and lore of the *ṛṣis* and their encounters and dalliances with celestial nymphs.

Vasiṣṭha, the great sage, fell in love with Arundhatī who was, in a sense his sister. Both Vasiṣṭha and Arundhatī were born of Brahmā. In another episode, Vasiṣṭha was the son of the nymph Ūrvaśī when she sexually aroused the gods Mitra and Varuṇa. From their semen was born Vasiṣṭha.

Vyāsa, the alleged compiler of the Vedas, the author of all the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata, was born out of the immediate falling in love of Sage Parāśara with the beautiful fisher-maiden Satyavatī. This Vyāsa himself one day saw the nymph Ghṛtācī and became sexually aroused. His semen fell on two sticks, and a son named Śuka was born. Further, Vyāsa, upon the request of his mother Satyavatī, had sexual

liaisons with the princesses Ambikā and Ambālikā. From them were born the princes Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu.

Viśvāmitra was born as the son of King Gādhi of the Puru dynasty. Thus he was a kṣatriya by birth. His former name as a prince was Viśvaratha. Through sheer persistence and enormous ascetic discipline, he finally attained the status of Brahmarṣi. His power was so great that he had rivals from both within the ranks of the ṛṣis like Vasiṣṭha, and from without by the gods such as Indra. The latter sent celestial nymphs to sexually distract Viśvāmitra in order to destroy his ascetic powers. On the first occasion, the nymph Vidyutprabhā tried to distract the sage. When she failed, the nymph Rambhā was sent on the second occasion. When Rambhā too failed, Indra got worried and dispatched the nymph Menakā with the explicit instruction that she ought not to return to the celestial regions without successfully breaking the ascetic discipline of Viśvāmitra. Menakā was successful as the sage was overcome with sexual desire upon seeing her. A child was born from this encounter. Also, according to Rāmāyaṇa IV:34:6-8, Viśvāmitra made love to the nymph Ghṛtācī for a decade.

In the Mahābhārata,<sup>139</sup> the Sage Bharadvāja who after performing the Agnihotra sacrifice, went to the River Gangā for ablutions. Upon seeing the celestial nymph Ghṛtācī, he got sexually excited and spilled his semen into a cup. From that semen was born Droṇa, the martial arts instructor of the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava princes.

The Sage Gautama once beheld a nude celestial nymph, and in his sexual excitement, his semen fell on the reeds which then turned into the twins Kṛpa and Kṛpī. The male child Kṛpa became the chaplain of the Kaurava court, and his twin sister, Kṛpī, became the wife of Droṇa.

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<sup>139</sup> I:5:88-90, I:121:3-9, I:154:1-12, V:54:47-48, IX:47:54

The Sage Dadhīci once engaged in severe austerities on the banks of the Sarasvatī river. There he beheld the nymph Alambuṣā who had been sent by the god Indra to distract the sage. The scheme succeeded and the sage's semen fell into the river.

It is very clear from each of the above episodes that asceticism and eroticism are clearly interlinked. The Hindu clergy is aware of this, and their usual programmed reply is that these episodes are meant to reveal the Advaitic [non-dualistic] truth which reconciles within itself worldly opposites and on another dimension, the episodes reveal *lokakalyāṇa*, i.e. happenings for the overall well-being of the world. The product of the Parāśara-Satyavatī encounter gave rise to the great Vyāsa, the compiler of the Vedas. The product of the Viśvāmitra-Menakā encounter gave rise to Śakuntalā, the mother of King Bharata from whom became descended the Kuru clan, and it is for him that the nation of India [Bhārata] is named after.

### **Section 5.3**

#### **Violence in the Indian cultural context**

Violence is the new third thematic element that I have discovered to add to the already well established dyad of Asceticism and Eroticism. This dyad was discovered, in the context of Hindu mythology in general, and in the mythology of the Hindu god Śiva in particular, by Wendy Doniger, a

well-known as well as controversial professor of Hinduism at the University of Chicago.

Without this third thematic element of violence, the Donigerian dyad mentioned above, in my opinion, is incomplete. In fact, with this third thematic element of violence added in, it mirrors the Dumézilian tripartite function perfectly. It actually fortifies Dumézil's famous discovery. Asceticism which is associated with religion and morality is part of the first function of the Dumézilian triadism. Violence which is associated with blood, battle, heroism, sacrifice etc. is in step with the second function. Eroticism which is associated with the feminine principle, fertility, happiness etc. coincides with the third function.

The question then is where is violence to be discovered in the episodes of Hindu mythology in the context of asceticism and eroticism.

Let me start by analyzing a sampling of the episodes presented by Wendy Doniger in her book *Asceticism and Eroticism in the mythology of Śiva*.

### **Myths presented on pp.30-32**

"When Brahmā's tapas [**asceticism**] failed to create, he made Kāma [**eroticism**], who wounded [**violence**] him. Brahmā desired his daughter [**eroticism**], who fled from him, taking the form of a deer. He pursued her in the form of a stag, and his seed [**eroticism**] fell upon the ground and was offered as an oblation into the fire, where it created various sages [**asceticism**] and animals. Rudra pursued Brahmā and beheaded [**violence**] him, and Brahmā cursed [**violence**] Kāma [**eroticism**], who had inspired this incestuous [**eroticism**] passion



in him, to be destroyed [**violence**] by Śiva, and Śiva who had mocked him to be excited by Kāma.

Dakṣa, a son of Brahmā, gave his daughter Satī in marriage [**eroticism**] to Śiva, but he did not invite Śiva to his sacrifice. Satī, in anger, burnt herself to death [**violence**]. Śiva destroyed [**violence**] Dakṣa's sacrifice and beheaded [**violence**] Dakṣa, but when the gods praised Śiva, he restored the sacrifice, and gave Dakṣa the head of a goat.

When Śiva learned that Satī had killed herself, he took up her body and danced in grief, troubling the world with his dance and his tears until the gods cut the corpse into pieces [**violence**]. Where the *yoni* [**eroticism**] fell, Śiva took the form of a *linga* [**eroticism**], and peace was re-established in the universe.

The demon Tāraka usurped [**violence**] the throne of Indra, for Brahmā had promised Tāraka that he could only be killed by a son born of Śiva, who was deeply absorbed in asceticism [**asceticism**]. Satī was then born again as Pārvatī, the daughter of the mountain Himālaya and his wife Menā. When Nārada told them that their daughter was to marry Śiva, they were at first displeased, for they did not consider Śiva to be a suitable husband, but Pārvatī wished to marry him [**eroticism**]. Indra sent Kāma (in the form of a breeze) to inspire Śiva with desire for Pārvatī [**eroticism**], but Śiva burnt Kāma to ashes [**violence**] with the fire of his third eye. Pārvatī then performed *tapas* [**asceticism**] to obtain Śiva for her husband [**eroticism**], and Śiva appeared before her disguised as a *brahmacārin* and tested her by describing all those qualities of Śiva which made him an unlikely suitor---his ashes, three eyes, nakedness, and antipathy to Kāma, his snakes and his garland of skulls and his home in the burning-grounds. When Pārvatī remained steadfast in her devotion to Śiva, the god revealed himself and asked her to marry him [**eroticism**]. He then sent the Seven Sages to Himālaya to ask for Pārvatī on his behalf.

When Śiva had burnt Kāma, the combined blaze of their fires had threatened to destroy the Universe [**violence**]. The gods begged Śiva for protection, and his fire was given to a river to carry to the ocean, where it

assumed the form of a mare with flames issuing forth from her mouth, devouring the ocean waters while waiting for a doomsday and the final flood.

Meanwhile the wedding preparations took place, and Śiva's ascetic garments [**asceticism**] served in place of the conventional ornaments of a bridegroom. At the wedding, Brahmā himself acted as a priest, but he was excited by the sight of Pārvatī and shed his seed [**eroticism**] upon the ground. Śiva threatened to kill [**violence**] him and replace Brahmā as the creator, but Viṣṇu placated Śiva and demonstrated to him the necessity of fulfilling his own role as destroyer. The seed of Brahmā was made into the clouds of doomsday in the sky.

After the wedding, Rati, the wife of Kāma, came to Śiva and begged him to revive Kāma. Pārvatī interceded on Kāma's behalf, and Śiva revived him. Śiva began to make love [**eroticism**] to Pārvatī, but one day he teased her for having a dark skin, and as her pride was hurt she departed in order to perform *tapas* [**asceticism**] to obtain a golden skin. While she was gone, the demon Āḍi came there in order to kill [**violence**] Śiva. Taking the form of a snake in order to elude the door-keeper, he then assumed the form of Pārvatī, having placed adamantite teeth within his *yonī*. Śiva made love [**eroticism**] to the false Pārvatī, but when he realized the deception, he killed [**violence**] the demon with his own *linga*.

When Pārvatī returned, having obtained great *tapas* and a golden skin, Śiva began to make love [**eroticism**] to her, but his own powers began to diminish after he had indulged in sexual pleasures for so many years, and for this reason he was challenged by the demon Andhaka. Śiva went away to the Pine Forest to perform a vow of *tapas* [**eroticism**], and while he was gone Andhaka came to Pārvatī in the form of Śiva in order to seduce [**eroticism**] her. Andhaka had been born one day when Pārvatī covered the three eyes of Śiva and a drop of sweat had fallen into the third eye; Pārvatī was thus his mother, but he was overcome with lust [**eroticism**] for her. Pārvatī recognized that he was not Śiva, and she disappeared. Śiva then returned and impaled [**violence**] Andhaka upon his

trident, burning [**violence**] him with the fire of his third-eye and purifying him of his sins. Andhaka then became the son of Śiva and Pārvatī.

While Śiva had been away performing his vow of *tapas* [**asceticism**], the earth had began to shake and the gods begged Śiva to discontinue his *tapas*. Śiva complied, but when the earth continued to tremble, he went to seek the cause and discovered the Sage Mankanaka who was dancing in joy because of a miracle: when he had cut [**violence**] his thumb on a blade of grass, vegetable sap flowed from the wound instead of blood. Śiva then pierced his own thumb, and ashes as white as snow flowed from the wound, and Mankanaka stopped dancing.

Śiva then wandered into the Pine Forest, and the wives of the sages [**asceticism**] there fell in love [**eroticism**] with him and followed him everywhere. Śiva was naked, ithyphallic [**eroticism**], dancing, and begging with a skull in his hand. The sages [**asceticism**] became furious and cursed [**violence**] his *linga* [**eroticism**] to fall to the ground. The *linga* fell but began to cause a terrible conflagration [**violence**]; Brahmā and Viṣṇu tried in vain to find the top and bottom of it, and peace was only restored when the sages [**asceticism**] agreed to worship the *linga* [**eroticism**] together with their wives.

When Śiva had entered the Pine Forest, Viṣṇu had assumed the form of Mohinī in order to seduce [**eroticism**] the sages [**asceticism**] while Śiva seduced [**eroticism**] their wives. When Śiva saw the beauty of Mohinī, he embraced her [**eroticism**] and a child was born from their seed.

When Śiva returned to Pārvatī and began to make love [**eroticism**] to her again, the gods were frightened of the friction generated by their great love-play and they worried that it would fail to produce the son they needed, or that the son produced in this way would be a danger [**violence**] to the universe. Indra sent Agni (in the form of a bird) to their bedroom, and when Agni interrupted them Pārvatī cursed [**violence**] the gods' wives to become barren as she was. Agni drank the seed of Śiva, and all the gods became pregnant with the seed. When they could bear it no longer, the seed was placed in the river Ganges, who threw it into a clump of reeds. This was taken up by the six Kṛttikās who

bathed there, and from them Skanda [**violence, because he is the marshal of the divine hosts**] was born."

### **Myth presented on pp.62-63**

"Anaraṇya was a great king who loved his daughter Padmā, more than his hundred sons. When she was of marriage age, a great sage named Pippalāda [**asceticism**] happened to come across a *gandharva* making love [**eroticism**] with great skill to a woman in the middle of Pippalāda's hermitage. Seeing this, the sage was full of lust [**eroticism**] and thought no longer of *tapas* [**asceticism**]. One day, he went to bathe in the river and saw Padmā there. Overcome by lust, he went to the palace and begged for Padmā as alms. When the king hesitated, Pippalāda threatened to burn [**violence**] everything to ashes. The king, grief-stricken, gave his daughter to the sage, handed his kingdom over to his sons, and went to the forest for *tapas* [**asceticism**]. After a short time, he and his queen died of sorrow.

Then the aged Pippalāda took Padmā to his hermitage, where he lived happily doing *tapas* [**asceticism**], without great lust, and Padmā served him devotedly. One day, Dharma saw her bathing, and he assumed the form of a magnificent young man, the very image of Kāma, adorned with precious ornaments, and he said to Padmā, in order to test the emotion of her heart, 'You lovely, desirable, enchanting creature [**eroticism**], you do not really shine properly in the presence of the senile Pippalāda who takes pleasure only in *tapas* and looks forward to old age, devoid of ardor. I am master of the *Kāmasūtra* [**eroticism**], the lover of a thousand beautiful women, troubled only by the force of my desire. Take me as your lover and leave your old husband.' He dismounted from his chariot and tried to take her [**violence**], but she was faithful to her husband, and she said, 'Go away, you evil man. If you look upon me with lust [**eroticism**], you will be destroyed [**violence**]. How could I leave Pippalāda, whose

form has been purified by *tapas* [**asceticism**], to make love with you, a womanizer and a libertine. You will be destroyed [**violence**] by the lust that causes you to speak to me in this way instead of regarding me as a mother.' Then Dharma was frightened, and revealing his true form, he said, 'Mother, I am Dharma, who considers every man's wife to be his own mother, I have come to test you, not to mislead you.' Then she said, 'Dharma, you are the witness of everyone's behavior, so how can you deceive me in order to know my mind?' Then Dharma said, 'You are a worthy and faithful woman, and therefore I will give you a boon for your husband. Let him become a young man, a master of sexual pleasure [**eroticism**], handsome youthful forever. Joined in marital bliss, you shall both remain eternally young, and you will be the mother of ten great sons.' Thus he blessed her, and thenceforth she knew constant pleasure in making love [**eroticism**] with her young husband, and they experienced every great joy'."

### **Myth presented on pp.71-72**

"Once when Brahmā wished to create he brought forth sons mentally. He told them to perform creation, but they disregarded their father's commands and went to do *tapas* [**asceticism**]. Then in anger [**violence**] Brahmā, the great yogi [**asceticism**], created eleven Rudras and more sons, and then he created a son Kāma, a beautiful daughter. Brahmā said to Kāma, 'I have made you for the sake of the pleasure of a man and a woman [**eroticism**]. Invade the hearts of all creatures by means of yoga [**asceticism**], and you will delude them and madden them always.' Having given magic arrows [**violence**] to Kāma, Brahmā looked at his daughter to give her a boon, but at this moment Kāma decided to test his weapons [**violence**], and he pierced the great yogi [**asceticism**] with his arrows. Brahmā pursued his daughter [**eroticism**], determined to possess her, but her brothers, the ascetics [**asceticism**], spoke angrily [**violence**] to their father, saying, 'What is this disgusting act that you are bent upon, to wish to enjoy your own

daughter [eroticism]?' Then Brahmā was so ashamed that he abandoned his body by means of yoga [asceticism], and the girl, seeing her father dead, wept and killed herself [violence] as he had. But Viṣṇu then appeared and revived them both, giving the girl in marriage to Kāma [eroticism], to become Rati, the goddess of sexual pleasure [eroticism]."

There are other stories in Hindu mythology that this triad of asceticism-violence-eroticism recur.

In the myth associated with the great Hindu pilgrimage center of Tirumala, it is said that the Sage Bhṛḡu [asceticism] was dispatched by the other sages to visit the Trimūrtis in order to determine as to who was the greatest, and therefore worthy of being offered a sacrifice. He first went to Brahmā's heaven where he found the god meditating [asceticism] while engrossed in goddess Sarasvatī's celestial music. Brahmā ignored Bhṛḡu. The sage became insulted and cursed [violence] Brahmā not to be worshipped anymore. The sage then proceeded to Śiva's heaven where he beheld Śiva making love [eroticism] to goddess Pārvatī. Śiva never acknowledged Bhṛḡu's presence. Bhṛḡu cursed [violence] Śiva to worshipped in the form of a *linga* [eroticism]. Bhṛḡu finally went to Viṣṇu's heaven where he found him making love [eroticism] to goddess Lakṣmī. Viṣṇu too ignored Bhṛḡu. The sage became so enraged that he kicked [violence] Viṣṇu in the chest.

Once, Reṇukā, the wife of Sage Jamadagni [asceticism] beheld Citraratha, the Gandharva king, making love [eroticism] to his wives. She was overcome with lust [eroticism], but nevertheless controlled herself. Jamadagni, however, came to know of his wife's lustfulness through his

yogic powers [asceticism]. He ordered his son Paraśurāma to cut-off his mother's head [violence] as punishment.

Diti, the wife of Sage Kaśyapa [asceticism] wanted to make love [eroticism] to her husband before dusk. Kaśyapa gave into her desire but later cursed [violence] his wife that she would become the mother of two evil sons.

Indra, the god of the rains, once lusted [eroticism] after Ahalyā, the wife of Sage Gautama [asceticism]. When the sage found out about this, he cursed [violence] Ahalyā to be turned into stone, and Indra to lose his penis.

Even the god Kṛṣṇa, who is so associated with eroticism as the lover of the 16,000 gopikās [cowherdesses], is also associated with asceticism and violence.

The erotic side of Kṛṣṇa as Gopālakṛṣṇa is to be found mainly in three major places among the Hindu scriptures. These are the tenth segment of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the fourth part of the Brahmāvaivarta Purāṇa, and the Nārada Pāñcarātra. In these sources, Kṛṣṇa is depicted with his cowherdess friend Rādhā and her eight mates Lalitā, Viśākhā, Campakalatā, Citrā, Tungādevī, Indulekhā, Rangadevī, and Śrīdevī. When these eight girls went for a public bath, Kṛṣṇa would take away their clothes kept on the river bank. He would promise to return it to them only if they came out naked.

The Vaiṣṇava theologians do not see all this as being erotic at all. They view this as being metaphysical. According to them, God [Kṛṣṇa] is

asking his devotees from all eight directions [eight gopikās] to shed their ignorance [clothes] and approach Him in faith, devotion and purity [nudity].

As far as violence is concerned, Kṛṣṇa, after much effort in trying to secure peace between the two sets of cousins, finally urges the relatively decent Pāṇḍavas through Arjuna (one of the Pāṇḍava brothers) to engage in *dharmayuddha* [righteous war]. Toward this end, right on the verge of the Kurukṣetra battle, Kṛṣṇa delivers the Bhagavadgītā sermon in which he is like an ascetically-oriented philosopher urging renunciation of worldliness. Thus, the asceticism and violence are combined in this image of Vāsudevakṛṣṇa.

The following passages of the Bhagavadgītā attest to the incitement of dharmically based violence by Kṛṣṇa.

*"dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate"* [II:31]

"There exists no greater good for a warrior than a battle enjoined by duty."

In fact, the Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata points out that "daṇḍa" [war] is better than "muṇḍa" [shaven head of an ascetic] for a warrior. [Mahābhārata XII:23:46]

*"yadṛcchayā co'papannam svargadvāram apāvṛtam. sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham īdṛśam."* [II:32]



"Happy are the warriors, O Arjuna, for whom such a war comes of its own accord as an open door to heaven."

*"atha cet tvam imam dharmyam sangrāmam na kariṣyasi. tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi."* [II:33]

"But if thou doest not this lawful battle, than thou wilt fail thy duty and glory, and thou will incur sin."

*"hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm. tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ."* [II:37]

"Either slain thou shalt go to heaven; or victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth; therefore, arise, Arjuna, resolved on battle."

*"tato yuddhāya yujyasva nai'vam pāpam avāpsyasi."* [II:38]

"Then, get ready for battle. Thus, thou shalt not incur sin."

Then, suddenly in the very same chapter Kṛṣṇa becomes an ascetically-oriented philosopher.

"*yadā samharate cā'yam kūrmo'ngānī 'va sarvaśaḥ. indriyāṇī  
'ndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.*" [II:58]

"He who draws away the sense-organs from the objects of sense on every side as a tortoise draws in his limbs (into the shell), his intelligence is firmly (in wisdom)."

"*dhyāyato viśayān pumsaḥ sangasteṣū'pajāyate. sangāt samjāyate kāmāḥ  
kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate.*" [II:62]

"When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire, and from desire comes anger."

In passages 31 through 33 of the second chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa is urging war which is very worldly, and is the ultimate expression of anger. Yet, in the same chapter in verses 58 and 62, he urges renunciation of worldliness that comes through the interaction of the sense-organs and their objects.

"*sankalpaprabhavān kāmāmstyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ. manasai  
've'indriyagrāmam viniyāmya samantataḥ.*" [VI:24]

"Abandoning without exception all desires born of selfish will, restraining with the mind, all the senses on every side."

*"tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva. jivā śatrūn bhunkṣva rājyam samṛddham. mayai'vai'te nihitāḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātram bhava sayasācin."* [XI:33]

"Therefore arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By me alone, they are slain already. Be thou merely the occasion, O Arjuna."

*"anekabāhūdaravaktranetram paśyāmi tvām sarvato 'nantarūpam nā'ntam na madhyam na punas tavā'dim paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa."* [XI:16]

"I behold Thee, infinite in form on all sides, with numberless arms, bellies, faces and eyes, but I see not Thy end or Thy middle or Thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form Universal."

*"yudhyasva jetasi raṇe sapatnān."* [XI:34]

"Fight, thou shalt conquer the enemies in battle."

Kṛṣṇa completes his incarnation while engaged in yogic mediation [asceticism] in the forest where he is mortally wounded [violence] mistakenly by a hunter.

The advocating of an ascetic ideal of "abandoning all desires without exception" in Bhagavadgītā VI:24 and the incitement of the individual to fight in a worldly violence clearly juxtaposes the asceticism and violence to the already erotically-oriented Kṛṣṇa of his early years.

Thus, the theme of asceticism-violence-eroticism is a perennial theme in Hindu tradition from the Vedic to the Epic eras and beyond.

## **Section 5.4**

### **Wendy Doniger's asceticism-eroticism dualistic scheme**

Wendy Doniger in her most important work dealing with the notions of asceticism and eroticism entitled *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* has initially outlined carefully the origins and the development of these two opposing concepts in the context of Śiva's mythology, and later on, thoroughly analyzed them both within and without Śaivite mythology, yet remaining clearly in the Indian context.

Her explanations in trying to resolve this paradox in the context of the mythology of Śiva are thorough, but they are resolved in a non-

dualistic [*advaitic*] manner. This solution is a very Indian one. Therefore, Doniger has failed to look at these concepts from an Indo-European Dumezilian angle. No where in her entire book has the Indo-European Dumezilian triadism even been entertained as a remote possibility in terms of explaining this issue.

Below are given some very important observations, analyses and solutions by Doniger on the concepts of asceticism and eroticism in the mythology of Śiva.

"Śiva the Creator and Destroyer, Life and Death, the *coincidentia oppositorum*--- this much was accepted as consistent with Indian metaphysical thought, and the apparent sexual ambiguity of the god was regarded as simply one more aspect of a basically ambiguous character or the result of a chance historical assimilation of two opposing strains, a process well-known in Indian religion."<sup>140</sup>

The above is resolved with a historical explanation in which Śiva being a god of composite character merging within himself the Aryan and the non-Aryan strains of culture in South Asia.

Doniger has identified the perennial problem of the Hindu non-historical attitude with regard to its own religio-cultural traditions when she cites the following:

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<sup>140</sup> Doniger, '*Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*' (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.5

"If he is naked, what need then has he of the bow? If armed with bow, then why the holy ashes? If smeared with ashes, what needs he with a woman? Or if with her, then how can he hate Love?"<sup>141</sup>

"When Himālaya learns that his daughter is to marry Śiva, he says, 'It is said that Śiva lives without any attachments and that he performs asceticism all alone. How then can he interrupt his trance to marry?'"<sup>142</sup>

"Śiva himself is said to be troubled by the ambivalence of his character, for when Kāma, the god of desire, wounds him, shattering his trance and stirring his desire, Śiva muses, 'I dwell ever in asceticism. How is it then that I am enchanted by Pārvatī?'"<sup>143</sup>

The paradox of the dually contradictory nature of Śiva is inquired into over and over again as the following passages and citations attest.

"Śiva says that if he marries, his wife must be a *yoginī* (female ascetic) when he does yoga, and a lustful mistress (*kāminī*) when he is full of desire."<sup>144</sup>

"The Sage Nārada describes Śiva: 'On Kailāsa Mountain, Śiva lives as a naked yogi. His wife Pārvatī is the most beautiful woman in the universe, capable of

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<sup>141</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.6, vide *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* v.103

<sup>142</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), vide *Kālikā Purāṇa* XLII:71-77

<sup>143</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), vide *Skanda Purāṇa* I:1:21:70

<sup>144</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.7, vide *Śiva Purāṇa* II:2:16:39 and *Kālikā Purāṇa* IX:49-50

bewitching even the best of yogis. Though Śiva is the enemy of Kāma and is without passion, he is her slave when he makes love to her'.<sup>145</sup>

"Devī says: 'Ever since I killed myself, Śiva has thought of me constantly, unable to bear his separation from me. He wanders naked, and has become a yogi, abandoning his palace, wearing unconventional clothing. Miserable because of me, he has abandoned the highest pleasure that is born of desire. He is tortured by longing and can find no peace as he wanders everywhere, weeping and behaving like a lover in distress'.<sup>146</sup>

"The Seven Sages say to Pārvatī, 'How can you enjoy the pleasures of the body with an ascetic like him, so terrifying and disgusting?'"<sup>147</sup>

"The Pine Forest sages say, 'If we have served Śiva from our birth with *tapas* [asceticism], then let the *linga* of this libertine [Śiva in disguise] fall to the earth'.<sup>148</sup>

Doniger echoes and reiterates the old Indian solution to this dualistically opposed characteristics of Śiva with the words:

"Thus they swear by Śiva the ascetic in order to destroy Śiva the erotic, *not realizing the two are one.*"<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), vide *Śiva Purāṇa* II:5:18:44-51

<sup>146</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), vide *Śiva Purāṇa* II:3:4:31-40

<sup>147</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), vide *Matsya Purāṇa* CLIV:332

<sup>148</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), pp.7-8, vide *Haracarita* X:74-75

<sup>149</sup> Doniger, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.8 (italics mine)

This view is further explained by Doniger:

"The Sanskrit word '*vai*' which frequently connects two terms as a kind of emphatic copula cannot be read as an equals sign. 'Indro *vai* Rudraḥ', 'Rudro *vai* Agniḥ', 'Agnir *vai* Indraḥ'---if the terms are taken as literally equal, the algebraic formula cancels out everything and one is left with simple pantheism. '*Vai*' implies an affirmation of relationship, and it can include various relations: 'Kāmo *vai* Śivaḥ', 'sun *vai* fire', 'man *vai* wife'. As the latter implies, it can frequently signify an essential relationship of opposites, for these are, in the Hindu view, as closely correlated as the so-called identities; the statement 'fire is water' must be taken in this sense."<sup>150</sup>

"In spite of this, one must avoid seeing a contradiction or paradox where the Hindu merely sees an opposition in the Indian sense---correlative opposites that act as interchangeable identities in essential relationships. The contrast between the erotic and the ascetic tradition in the character and mythology of Śiva is not the kind of 'conjunction of opposites' with which it has so often been confused. *Tapas* (asceticism) and *kāma* (desire) are not diametrically opposed like black and white, or heat and cold, where the complete presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other. They are in fact two forms of heat, *tapas* being the potentially destructive and creative fire that the ascetic generates within himself, *kāma* the heat of desire. Thus, they are closely related in human terms, opposed in the sense that love and hate are opposed, but not mutually exclusive."<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Doniger, '*Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*' (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.34

<sup>151</sup> Doniger, '*Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*' (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.35



There are two solutions to this complementary dualism. The first is the philosophical one where the two opposites are reconciled in a transcendental non-dual (*advaita*) reality. The second solution is a religious one through sheer devotion (*bhakti*). Doniger in trying to explain this second solution says:

"*Bhakti* justifies both sides of Śiva's nature: in spite of the fact that love for a woman is ostensibly incompatible with the goals of asceticism, Śiva is said to perform *tapas* in order to win the love of Pārvatī<sup>152</sup>, in order to keep the universe alive, for the sake of his devotees, or simply as part of his (irrational) divine sport, *līlā*. Similarly, Śiva's sexual activity is rationalized in spite of his ascetic commitments. After arguing against marriage for a yogi, Śiva concedes to the gods: 'Nevertheless, I will do what you ask, for the benefit of the world. Though the practice of marriage is not suitable for me, as I delight only in *tapas*, nevertheless I will marry for the sake of my devotees'<sup>153</sup>." <sup>154</sup>

Thus, the triadic scheme of the Dumézilian kind has not been addressed by Doniger, and in this sense, her analysis remains an incomplete one. But, if one adds the "violence" element which is the third form of heat in the mythology of Śiva and which is the natural outcome of the opposition between "asceticism" and "eroticism", one automatically has the Dumézilian triadism. I have shown plenty of evidence in the context of the myths presented by Doniger of the presence of this element of "violence". In fact, Śiva is known as having a *raudra* (wrathful) aspect. Wrath is a form of violence. Hence Śiva is called Rudra.

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<sup>152</sup> *Mahābhārata* IX:47:1-27

<sup>153</sup> *Śiva Purāṇa* II:2:5:1-68, II:2:6:1-62 and II:2:7:1-26

<sup>154</sup> Doniger, '*Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*' (Oxford University Press, New York:1973), p.39

Thus to conclude, 'asceticism' is a [Dumézilian] first function concept; 'violence' is a second function concept, and 'eroticism' is a third function concept. The Indo-European tripartite ideology indeed persists as late as the early medieval era as depicted in the Purāṇic lore.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Sattva-Rajas-Tamas tripartite scheme**

#### **Section 6.1**

##### **The triguṇas: a synoptic understanding**

The terms "sattva", "rajas" and "tamas" which literally mean "existence", "foulness" and "darkness" respectively, are not found together in early Vedic literature. In fact, the earliest reference to these three terms, either singularly or in a unified manner, is to be found only in the Upaniṣads.

##### **Sattva**

*"indriyebhyaḥ param mano manasas sattvam uttamam, sattvād adhi mahān ātmā mahato'vyaktam uttamam."* [Kaṭha Upaniṣad II:3:7]

"Beyond the senses is the mind; above the mind is its essence (intelligence); beyond the intelligence is the great self; beyond the great (self) is the unmanifest."

In this passage, the word "sattva" appears singularly, and it means "intelligence". This meaning is one of many such meanings and usages that the term "sattva" later retains in Hindu philosophical literature.

*"mahān prabhurvai puruṣaḥ sattvasyaiṣa pravartakaḥ. sunirmalām imām prāptim īśāno jyotir avyayaḥ."* [Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad III:12]

"That person indeed is the great Lord, the impeller of the highest being. (He has the power of) reaching the purest attainment, the ruler, the imperishable light."

In this passage, the word "sattva" appears singularly, and it means "the highest being". This is a very special usage of the term, and understanding that sattva is the highest of the three guṇas has the beginnings of such an implication here.

*"tapasā prāpyate sattvam, sattvāt samprāpyate manaḥ manasaḥ prāpyate hyātmā yam āptvā na nivartata iti."* [Maitrī Upaniṣad IV:3]

"By austerity goodness is obtained, and from goodness understanding is reached, and from the understanding is the self obtained, and he who obtains the self, does not return."

In this passage, the word "sattva" appears singularly, and it means "goodness". Again, this meaning is one of many such meanings and usages that the term "sattva" later retains in Hindu philosophical literature.

*"tejomadhye sthitam sattvam sattvamadhye sthito'cyutaḥ."* [Maitrī Upaniṣad VI:38]

"In the midst of the fire stands pure being; in the midst of pure being stands the indestructible one."

In this passage too, the word "sattva" appears singularly, and it means "pure being", a meaning slightly different from the term "highest being" above.

Eventually the term "sattva" came to stand for lucidity, lightness, subtleness, softness, purity, clarity, brightness, intelligence, wisdom, nobleness, truthfulness, goodness, non-injury, peacefulness, tranquility, contentment, blissfulness, generosity etc.

### **Rajas**

The term "rajas" is even rarer than sattva. It is not found singularly in the principal Upaniṣads.

Eventually the term "rajas" came to stand for passion, lust, dynamism, anger, belligerency, fierceness, injury, cruelty, maliciousness,

jealousy, vanity, anxiety, tension, bewilderment, ostentation, arrogance, deception, treachery etc.

## **Tamas**

The term "tamas" is found both singularly as well as in combination with rajas and especially with sattva.

*"tamaso mā jyotir gamaya iti, mṛtyur vai tamaḥ"* [Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I:3:28]

"From darkness lead me to light; darkness, verily is death"

In this passage, the word "tamas" stands for darkness, which remains one of the most fundamental and quintessential meanings of the word "tamas" throughout the history of the Hindu tradition.

Further, the first segment of the above passage is one of the most famous Hindu prayers coming from the Upaniṣadic literature. Even as we speak of triadism, this prayer is part of a trio, in which the other two parts are:

*"asato mā sad gamaya"* meaning "From untruth lead me to truth" and

*"mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya"* meaning "From death lead me to immortality."

*"rajastamobhyām viddhasya susamiddhasya dehinaḥ"* [Maitrī Upaniṣad VI:28]

"Afflicted with carnal passions and ignorance"

In this passage, the meaning "ignorance" is given to the word "tamas" especially as it appears in combination with the word "rajas".

With the singular exception of the above passage from the Maitrī Upaniṣad, in all the other passages in the principal Upaniṣads, "darkness" remains the sole meaning of the word "tamas".

Eventually the term "tamas" came to stand for inertia, lethargy, indolence, stupidity, evil, vileness, loutishness, blindness, darkness, ignorance, drunkenness, worldliness, sexual promiscuity, indecency etc.

In Chāndogya Upaniṣad VII:26:2, the words "sattva" and "tamas" appear together though in a disconnected way. Here, "sattva" means "nature" and "tamas" retains its perennial meaning of "darkness".

The three terms "sattva", "rajas" and "tamas" appear together in a connected way in Maitrī Upaniṣad V:2. Here, the three terms are connected cosmologically. The term "tamas" means "darkness", "rajas" is rendered as "passion", and "sattva" is translated as "goodness". According to this passage, the world existed in darkness. The Supreme Being, then brought

forth passion. From passion, emerged goodness. Further down in this passage, the three terms are equated with the gods Rudra who is tamas, Brahmā who is rajas, and Viṣṇu who is sattva. Later on in Hindu tradition, these terms become glued to these three gods permanently. The Purāṇas are divided into these three types depending upon which god is considered the supreme according to a given purāṇa.

However, the first systematic exposition of the three terms together appear in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedānta systems of Classical Hindu philosophy.

There are six systems of Classical Hindu philosophy. These are the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Of these, the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā have a one way of thinking, and their metaphysical and spiritual doctrines resemble each other. The alternate way of thinking to the above three are put forth by the Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta who share many similar views and doctrines. In this second group, the Sankhya and Yoga merged into one syncretic system, while the Vedānta expanded into three major rival schools, i.e. those expounded by the philosophers Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. Let us look at how the sattva-rajastamas trio are understood and enunciated by these Hindu schools of thought.



## Section 6.2

### The triguṇas in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga tradition

The Sāṅkhya and the Yoga are two of the most ancient and affiliated systems of Hindu thought. The Sāṅkhya-Yoga tradition is frankly and firmly dualistic in terms of its metaphysics. According to the system's theoreticians, Reality (*tattva*) is fundamentally divided into two irreducible and irreconcilable principles, i.e. Primordial Matter (*mūlaprakṛti*) and souls (*puruṣas*). These two ontological categories are opposite of each other in every sense. Primal Matter is one, non-conscious, ever-changing supernal entity that has as its constituent elements the trio of sattva, rajas and tamas. They are collectively termed as *guṇas* or "attributes", but they are not "attributes" in the conventional sense of the term. In fact, each *guṇa* itself has attributes. For example, sattva has the attributes of lucidity, intelligence, goodness etc. Rajas has dynamism, passion, bewilderment etc. And tamas has darkness, inertia, mass etc. In fact, each of the three *guṇas* is associated with a color. Sattva is white, rajas is red and tamas is black.

The three *guṇas* as aspects of Primal Matter are in a state of perpetual flux. When each of the three *guṇas* filter into themselves without intermixing, then that condition is referred to as homogenous change [*sajātīya pariṇāma*]. When the three *guṇas* intermix, then that condition is called heterogenous change [*vijātīya pariṇāma*]. This when evolution [*āvirbhāva*] of the material universe takes place.

So, how and why does Primal Matter undergo intermixing of its three *guṇas*? Let us answer the question how? According to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system, Primal Matter is both the efficient [*nimitta*] as well as the

material [*upādāna*] cause [*kāraṇa*] of the Universe. The system being staunchly dualistic rejects the existence of God. It is a non-theistic [*nirīśvara*] system. The collective karmas of those souls [*puruṣas*] who have yet to attain salvation becomes the instrumental [*sahakārī*] cause of the evolution of the universe. This third cause acts as a trigger mechanism for the three *guṇas* to intermingle, and then the evolutionary process is set in motion until the universe comes into being. Then, after a *kalpa* or cosmic period, Primal Matter in its natural pulsating rhythm, starts the involution [*tirobhāva*] process. This is when the three *guṇas* unshackle themselves from each other and commence the homogenous change status.

When Primal Matter evolves commencing a new *kalpa* or cosmic time period, the tamas aspect which is the "mass-stuff" of Primal Matter is aided by the rajas aspect which is the "energy-stuff" of Primal Matter. This gives rise to all the material entities of the universe including the human bodies. The sattva aspect which is the "intelligence-stuff" of Primal Matter is similarly aided by rajas in its evolution. This gives rise to things like the power of the senses, mind [*manas*] and the intellect [*buddhi*]. The latter is the most subtle evolute of Primal Matter. The soul [*puruṣa*] is "locked" in this psycho-physical organism on account of its primal ignorance [*anādi avidyā*] and past karmas.

It is precisely this that brings us to the question as to why Primal Matter evolves. Primal Matter though a non-conscious entity has an in-built teleological orientation. The reason why it evolves is for the redemption of the *puruṣas*. An evolved material universe acts as the "ground for spiritual pursuits" [*sādhana bhūmi*] for the bound souls seeking redemption from the cycle of births and deaths.

This then brings us to the next area of inquiry, i.e. the nature, role and destiny of the *puruṣas*. The *puruṣas*, as pointed out previously, are the opposite of Primal Matter in every sense. They are innumerable *puruṣas* each of whom are of the very essence of consciousness. They are all essentially alike though numerically different. Thus the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system believes in quantitative pluralism but qualitative monism of the souls. The *puruṣas* [souls] are essentially inactive except when they interact with Primal Matter. This interaction takes place on account of their individual karmas which are the result of primal ignorance. In this "entangled" condition, the soul is referred to as *jīva*. According to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophers, this "entanglement" is not real. It is akin to a "red-crystal" situation where the crystal merely appears to be red when a red cloth is placed in proximity to it. Similarly, the soul on account of its proximity to Primal Matter gets colored by it and acquires the characteristics of Primal Matter and this is the "entanglement". The soul in this sense accrues karma on account of its interaction with Primal Matter. This is the embodiment of the soul. This karmic cycle of the soul continues until the soul's spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. In the meantime as the soul is undergoing its karmic cycle, the universe is going through the kalpa cycle alternating between evolution and involution. Each time the collective karmas of the unredeemed souls becomes the catalyst for the evolution to begin thereby providing a ground for the souls to redeem themselves.

This enlightenment comes about when the soul realizes the fact that it has always been free and needs to "uncouple" [*viyoga*] itself from Primal Matter and its three *guṇas*. This spiritual agenda is called *kaivalya sādhana*. The eightfold path [*aṣṭāṅgayoga*] is embarked upon by the soul.

This eightfold program is divided into two unequal segments. The first five programs are called external [*bahiranga*], and the latter three programs are called internal [*antaranga*].

### **bahiranga sādhana**

#### 1. Yama [five abstentions]

- ahimsā [non-violence]
- satya [adherence to truth]
- asteya [not to steal]
- brahmacarya [celibacy or marital fidelity]
- aparigraha [non-possessiveness]

#### 2. Niyama [five observances]

- śauca [physical cleanliness]
- santosha [happiness]
- tapas [austerities]
- svādhyāya [self-study of scriptures]
- devatāpraṇidhāna [worship of the gods]

3. Asana [body postures]. This is for the purposes of keeping the body disease-free, preserve vital energy and make it fit for meditation. There are 84 asanas. Some of the important ones are:

- padmāsana [lotus posture]
- dhanurāsana [bow posture]
- nāgāsana [snake posture]
- halāsana [plough posture]
- śavāsana [corpse posture]
- śirāsana [head-down posture]
- matsyāsana [fish posture]
- simhāsana [lion posture]

4. prāṇāyāma [breath-control]. It steadies the body and highly conducive to meditation

5. pratyāhāra [withdrawal of the senses from external objects]

### **antaranga sādhana**

6. dhāraṇa [concentration on the object of meditation]

7. dhyāna [steadfast contemplation]

8. samādhi [concentrated absorption]

A] samprajñāta [4 states of early concentrated absorption, each more subtle than the previous]

- savitarka
- savicāra
- sānanda

- sāsmita

B] asamprajñāta [supra-conscious state]

The soul then remains in this self-absorbed state of radical isolation never ever to be re-entangled again into the clutches of Primal Matter. It is permanently redeemed from the cycle of births and deaths.

### **Section 6.3**

#### **The triṅṇas in the Vedāntic traditions**

The systems of Hindu philosophy may be classified into two trends of thought. On the one side are the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā traditions, and on the other side are the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedānta traditions. In fact, there is an organic connectedness in the vocabulary, terminology, concepts and notions of the systems within each of these two camps. The concept of the triṅṇas is one such clear example. This term and its connotations are purely of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedānta traditions. It is totally unknown to and unheard of by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā traditions.

There are three major schools of the Vedānta tradition. These are the Advaita Vedānta of Śankara, the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja

and the Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva. Each school has utilized the concept of the triguṇas in several ways in the doctrinal enunciations of their respective traditions.

### **The triguṇas in the Advaita Vedānta school**

This school of thought believes that there is only one Absolute and Ultimate Reality. This Reality is God [*Brahman*]. It is formless [*nirākāra*] and attributeless [*nirguṇa*]. It is identical with Being, Consciousness and Bliss [*saccidānanda*]. This Absolute appears as the gods, souls and matter through the Cosmic Illusory Principle called Māyā. This illusory principle of Māyā has three capacities. These are: the capacity to conceal the real [*āvaraṇa śakti*], the capacity to project the false [*vikṣepa śakti*], and the capacity to confuse the real with the false and vice-versa [*vibhrama śakti*]. The capacity to conceal is said to be from the tamas aspect of Māyā. The capacity to project is said to come from the sattva aspect of Māyā, and the capacity to confuse is said to arise from the rajas aspect of Māyā. These perfectly fit in with the intelligent, bewildering and dark aspects of sattva, rajas and tamas respectively. The three products of Māyā, i.e. gods [*deva*], souls [*jīva*] and matter [*jaḍa*] emanate from the sattva, rajas and tamas aspects of Māyā respectively. These too relate perfectly with the good, dynamic and inert aspects of sattva, rajas and tamas respectively.

## The triguṇas in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school

This school of thought believes that God, souls and matter are all equally real. Matter and souls constitute the body of God. All that exists is within God. There is nothing outside of God. It is a panentheism. Rāmānuja proclaims this ontology based on the following Hindu scriptural passages.

*"kṣaram pradhānam amṛtākṣaram haraḥ kṣarātmānaviṣate deva ekaḥ."*

[Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad I:10]

"Primal Matter is the mutable, God is both immortal and immutable. God rules over both Primal Matter and the souls."

*"ihai 'kastham jagat kṛtsnam paśyā 'dya sacarācaram. mama dehe, guḍākeśa, yaccā 'nyad draṣṭum icchasi."*

[Bhagavadgītā XI:7]

"Here today, behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving, and whatever thou desirest to see, O Arjuna, all unified in My Body."

Matter is of two types, i.e. ordinary and celestial. Ordinary Matter has as its attributes, sattva, rajas and tamas. They are not the constituent elements of Matter as the Sāṅkhya-Yoga tradition maintains. Since sattva,



rajas and tamas are the attributes of Ordinary Matter, they can never be found apart from one another. Hence, it is called *miśrasattva*. By contrast, Celestial Matter has as its attribute only sattva. It is devoid of rajas and tamas. Hence it is called *śuddhasattva*. It is the stuff out of which Heaven is made of. It is also the type of matter that the bodies of the redeemed souls is made of.

### **The triguṇas in the Dvaita Vedānta school**

In this school, God is distinct from Primal Matter and the souls. The triguṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas are neither the constituent elements of matter as the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system holds, nor are they the attributes of matter as the Rāmānuja school of Vedānta holds. Madhva regards them as evolutes of matter. He bases his views on the following scriptural citation.

"*sattvam rajas tamaiti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavaḥ.*" [Bhagavadgītā XIV:5]

"The three guṇas, sattva, rajas and tamas emerge out of Primal Matter."

Further, the Dvaita school of Vedānta classifies the souls in the samsāric cycle into three types. These are:

1. the sattvic souls who are salvation-oriented. The spiritual situation of these souls will improve from one lifetime to the next. They will steadily

progress towards God and goodness and eventually by the Grace of God will attain salvation.

2. the rajasic souls are morally mediocre beings. Their spiritual situation will neither improve nor deteriorate. They will never be redeemed. They are eternally doomed to the cycle of births and deaths.

3. the tamasic souls are damnation-oriented. The spiritual situation of these souls will deteriorate from one lifetime to the next. They will steadily move away from God and goodness and eventually will attain ever-lasting damnation.

Madhva bases this doctrine of the trifold classification of the bound souls on the following scriptural texts.

*"ūrdhvam gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ.*

*jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ."* [Bhagavadgītā XIV:18]

"Those who are established in sattva rise upwards, the rajas souls remain in the middle, the tamas souls steeped in lower affairs sink downwards."

The ultimate fate of the rajasic souls is further established on the basis of the following scriptural passage.

*"tān aham dviṣataḥ krūrān samsāreṣu narādhamān. kṣipāmyajasram*

*aśubhān āsurīṣveva yoniṣu."* [Bhagavadgītā XVI:19]

"These cruel haters, these worst of men, these evil-doers only, I hurl repeatedly into the wombs of demons in the cycle of births and deaths."

The ultimate fate of the tamasic souls is further established on the basis of the following scriptural passage.

*"āsurīm yonim āpannā mūḍhāḥ janmani janmani. mām aprāpyai 'va kaunteya tato yāntyadhamām gatim."* [Bhagavadgītā XVI:20]

"Fallen into the wombs of demons, these deluded beings, from birth to birth, do not attain Me, O Arjuna, but go down to the lowest state."

## Chapter 7

### Dharma-dharmādharma-adharma tripartite scheme

#### Introduction

The term "*dharma*" in the Indian cultural context is a multivalent word which can mean "religion", "righteousness", "norm", "law", "duty", "charity" etc. depending upon the circumstance and context in which it is used. Also, in Jainism and Buddhism, besides the various aforementioned meanings, the term "*dharma*" means 'motion' and 'element' respectively. These are special usages of the term which have no direct connections with either religion or ethics.

The etymology of the term "*dharma*" can be traced back to its Indo-European root *\*d<sup>h</sup>er-* meaning 'to hold'. In the Indo-Iranian group of the Indo-European family of languages, the root becomes *\*dhar* meaning 'to hold', 'to support' or 'to fasten'. Finally, in Sanskrit, the mother-language of the Indic branch of the Indo-Iranian group, the root becomes *\*dhṛ* meaning 'to hold' or 'to support'. From this, the noun stem '*dhárman-*' meaning 'foundation' or 'support' came to be derived which is found in the vocabulary of Vedic Sanskrit. The term '*dhárman*' in its various declensional permutations and combinations is found in some eighty places in the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, which is the earliest Hindu literary source.

Though the term is not a central concept in the *Ṛgveda*, it seems to be used in all of the above mentioned contexts. Let us look at a few examples.

*kavimaghiupá stuhi satyadhármāṇamadhvare. devamámīvacātānam.* [Ṛgveda I:12:7]

"Praise in the sacrifice, Agni, the wise, the upholder of truth, the radiant, the remover of diseases."

*te hi dyāvāpṛthivī viśvaśāmbhuva ṛtāvārī rajāso dhārayatkāvī. sujanmánī dhiṣaṇé antariyate devo devī dharmāṇā sūryaḥ śucīḥ.* [Ṛgveda I:160:1]

"Those two, the divine Heaven and Earth, are the diffusers of happiness on all, encouragers of truth, able to sustain the water (of the rains), auspicious of birth, and energetic (in action): in the interval between whom proceeds the pure and divine Sun for (the discharge of his) duties."

*pitum nu stóṣam mahō dharmāṇam taviṣīm. yasyá trito vyojāsā vṛtram vipārvamardayát.* [Ṛgveda I:187:1]

"I glorify Pitu, the great, the upholder, the strong, by whose invigorating power Trita slew the mutilated Vṛtra."

*yaḥ puṣpiṅśca prasvāśca dharmañādhi dāne vyavañvanīradhārayaḥ.  
yaścāsāmā ajāno didyutó diva ururūrvāñ abhitaḥ sāsyukthyāḥ. [Ṛgveda  
II:13:7]*

"You have caused, by norm, the flowering and fruition to spread over the field; who have generated the various luminaries in heaven; and who of vast bulk, comprehend vast (bodies); you are he who is to be praised."

*ghṛtavāntaḥ pāvaka te stokāḥ ścótayanti medāsaḥ. svadhármandevavítaye  
śreṣṭhām no dhehi vāryám. [Ṛgveda III:21:2]*

"The drops of marrow charged with butter fall to you for the food of the gods at your own rite, purifier; therefore, grant us excellent affluence."

*āprā rajāmsi divyāni pārhivā ślokam devaḥ kṛṇute svāya dhármaṇe. pra  
bāhu ásrāksavitā savímani niveśayanprasuvannaktubhirjagát. [Ṛgveda  
IV:53:3]*

"The divine (Savitā) fills (with radiance) the celestial and terrestrial regions, and boasts of his own function: Savitā puts forth his arms for (the work of) production, regulating the world, and animating it with light."

Closely associated with the concept of dharma, in the Ṛgveda, is a more central, prevalent and prolific concept known as 'ṛta'. The term 'ṛta' is derived from the Proto Indo-European stem \*h<sup>2</sup>r-to meaning "properly joined, right, true"<sup>155</sup>

The American Vedic scholar, Bloomfield, regards *ṛta* as "one of the most important religious conceptions of the Ṛgveda."<sup>156</sup> In the Vedic religion, *ṛta* is the principle of natural order which regulates and coordinates the operation of the universe and everything within it. "*Ṛta* is the ultimate foundation of everything; it is 'the supreme', although this is not to be understood in the static sense.....It is the expression of the primordial dynamism that is inherent in everything....."<sup>157</sup> *Ṛta* is a cosmic force that properly regulates the moral, sacrificial and natural orders as understood by the Vedic faith. One finds here the Dumézilian triadism.<sup>158</sup>

The concept of *ṛta* is mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* in the context of many gods.

1. Bṛhaspati is envisioned as mounting the chariot of *ṛta*.

*ā vibādhyā parirāpastamāmsi ca jyotiṣmantam rathāmṛtasyā tiṣṭhasi.*  
*bṛhāspate bhīmamāmitradambhanam rakṣohaṇām gotrabhidām svarvidām.*  
[Ṛgveda II:23:3]

"Having repelled revilers and (dispersed) the darkness, you stand, O Bṛhaspati, on the radiant chariot of sacrifice, (which is) formidable (to

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<sup>155</sup> Watkins, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, 2nd ed. (Houghton Mifflin, Boston:2000) p. 5

<sup>156</sup> Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda* (Putnam, New York:1908) pp. 12-13

<sup>157</sup> Panikkar, *Vedic Experience* (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi:2001) pp. 350-351

<sup>158</sup> Myers, *Brahman: a comparative theology* (Curzon Press, 2001) pp.176-178

foes), the humiliator of enemies, the destroyer of evil spirits, the cleaver of the clouds, the attainer of heaven."

2. Bṛhaspati is referred to as possessing a powerful bow with *ṛta* as its string.

*ṛtajyéna kṣipreṇa brahmáṇaspatiryatra vaṣṭi pra tadáśnoti dhanvánā. tasyá sādhvīriṣávo yābhirasyáti nṛcakṣáso dṛśaye karṇáyonayaḥ. [Ṛgveda II:24:8]*

"Whatever Brahmaṇaspati aims at, with the truth-strung quick-darting bow, that (mark) he surely attains: holy are its arrows with which he shoots (intended) for the eyes of men, and having their abode in the ear."

3. Agni is described as one who is desirous of *ṛta*.

*adhāyyagnirmānúsīṣu vikṣvaṁpām garbhó mitra ṛtena sādhan. ā háryato yájataḥ sānvásthādabhúdu vipro havyó matīnām. [Ṛgveda III:5:3]*

"Agni, the embryo of the waters, the friend (of the pious), accomplishing (all desires) with truth, has been placed (by the gods) amongst men, the descendants of Manu: desirable and adorable, he has taken his station on high, where the wise Agni is to receive the oblations of the devout."



4. Agni is said to be a *ṛta*-minded deity.

*atyā vṛdhasnū rohītā dhṛtasnū ṛtasyā manye manāsā javiṣṭhā. antarīyase aruṣā yújāno yuṣmāścá devānviśa ā ca martān. [Ṛgveda IV:2:3]*

"I celebrate the ruddy, food-bestowing, water-shedding, and swifter-than-thought-going steeds of him who is the truth: harnessing the brilliant pair (to your chariot), you pass between the human worshippers and the deities of whom you are one."

5. Agni is purported to have spread over heaven and earth by *ṛta*

*pra ṇu tyam viprámadhvareṣú sādhumagnim hotāramīlate namóbhiḥ. ā yastatāna rodāsi ṛtena nityám mṛjanti vājinám ghr̥tená. [Ṛgveda V:1:7]*

"They glorify, at present, with hymns that Agni who is intelligent, the fulfiller (of desires) at sacrifices, the offer of oblations, who has charged heaven and earth with water/truth, and whom they always worship with clarified butter as the bestower of food."

6. The Maruts, a set of wind atmospheric deities in the Vedas, are described as knowers of *ṛta*.

*haye naro marúto mṛṛatā́ nastuvímaghāso amṛ́tā́ ṛtájñāḥ. satyásrutaḥ  
kaváyoḥ yuvā́no bṛhád girayo bṛhadukṣamā́ñāḥ. [R̥gveda V:57:8, V:58:8]*

"Hey, Maruts, leaders (of rites), be propitious to us, you who are infinitely opulent, immortal, shedders of rain, renowned for truth, wise, young, greatly glorified, and worshipped with copious oblations."

7. The Maruts are said to have been born from *ṛta*.

*ko véda nūnaméṣām yatrā madánti dhūtáyaḥ. ṛtajátā arepasáḥ. [R̥gveda  
V:61:14]*

"Who knows of a certainty their (abode), where the intimidators (of their foes) rejoice? Born for the (the distribution/dissemination) of water/truth, exempt from defects."

8. The goddess Uṣas is said to be at the root of *ṛta*.

*asmākamatrā pitaró manuṣyá abhi pra sédurṛtamáśuṣāñāḥ. aśmāvrajāḥ  
sudughā́ vavre antarudusrā ájannuṣasó huvānāḥ. [R̥gveda IV:1:13]*

"In this world, our mortal forefathers departed after instituting the sacred rite, when calling upon the dawn, they extricated the milk-yielding kine, concealed among the rocks in the darkness (of the cave).

9. Varuṇa has the very form of *ṛta*.

*ā cikitāna sukratū devau mārta riśādāsā. varúṇāya ṛtapésase dadhīta  
prayāse mahe. [Ṛgveda V:66:1]*

"Man, endowed with intelligence, (adore) the two deities, the performers of good deeds, the destroyers of foes; offer (oblations) to the adorable acceptor of (sacrificial) food, to Varuṇa, whose form is water/truth."

10. Mitra and Varuṇa, the two affiliated Vedic gods, are reckoned to profess *ṛta* by *ṛta*.

*ṛtamṛtena sapánteṣiram dakṣámāsāte. adruhā devau vārdhete. [Ṛgveda  
V:68:4]*

"Rewarding with waters (rain) the holy rite, they favor the zealous worshipper: benevolent deities, may you prosper."

11. Mitra, Varuṇa and all the Ādityas are said to be the protectors of *ṛta*.

*stuṣa ú vo maha ṛtasyá gopānadītim mitram varúṇam sujātān. aryamaṇam  
bhagamadábdhadhītīnacchā voce sadhanyáḥ pāvakān. [Ṛgveda VI:51:3]*

"I praise you. protectors of the solemn sacrifice, the well-born Aditi, Mitra and Varuṇa, and Aryaman and Bhaga; I celebrate the gods whose acts are unimpeded, the bestowers of wealth, the dispensers of purity."

12. Mitra and Varuṇa are depicted as the destroyers of the foes of *ṛta*.

*tā hi śreṣṭhā devatātā tujā sūrāṇām śāvīṣṭhā tā hi bhūtam. meghonām mamhīṣṭhā tuviśuṣmā ṛtenā vṛtraturā sarvásenā.* [R̥gveda VI:68:2]

"You two are the principal (deities) at the worship of the gods; the distributors of wealth; the most vigorous of heroes, the most liberal among the opulent; possessed of vast strength; destroyer of foes by truth; entire hosts (of yourselves)."

13. Mitra and Varuṇa, by maintaining *ṛta* are said to have become the sovereigns of the universe.

*mahantā mitravarúṇa samrājā devavasúrā. ṛtāvānāvṛtamā ghóṣato bṛhat.*  
[R̥gveda VIII:25:4]

"The great Mitra and Varuṇa, the sovereign and powerful deities, the sustainers of truth, illumine our solemn rite."

14. Indra, the chief of the atmospheric gods, is said to be born of *ṛta*, and be the guardian of *ṛta*.

*nū citsa bhréṣate jano réṣanmano yo ásyā ghoramāvivāsāt. yajñairya indre dadháte duvāmsi kṣayatsa rāya řtapā řtejāḥ.* [R̥gveda VII:20:6]

"He who devotes his mind to the awesome Indra never falls (from his condition), nor will he perish: the protector of sacred rites, the progeny of sacrifice, bestows riches on him who offers to Indra praises and prayers with sacrifices."

Noting the importance of *řta*, Bloomfield remarks that "from the point of view of the history of religious ideas we may, in fact we must, begin the history of the Hindu religion at least with the history of this conception."<sup>159</sup>

The gods being products *řta* are merely its guardians and agents. They are not its creators. As Brown points out, the principle of *řta* "was not created or willed by any being or beings, the gods or any other above them. It existed before them but became known by them. They were powerless to alter it; they were only agents to execute it or supervise its execution."<sup>160</sup> Another scholar, Day, also notes this aspect of *řta*. Day states that the Vedic *devas* (gods) "do not govern *řta* so much as immanentize it through the particularities of divine ordinances and

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<sup>159</sup> Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda* (Putnam, New York:1908) pp. 12-13

<sup>160</sup> Brown, *Some Ethical Concepts for the Modern World from Hindu and Indian Buddhist Tradition* in Radhakrishnan, S. (Ed.) *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary (1861-1961) Volume* (Sahitya Academy, Calcutta:1992) p. 373

retributions concerning both rewards and punishments. In this sense, they do not 'govern' *ṛta*; they serve as its agents and ministers."<sup>161</sup>

Among all the Vedic deities, Varuṇa emerges as the chief protector, enforcer and sovereign of *ṛta*. The Ṛgvedic hymn VII:86 brings together quite well the role of Varuṇa in connection with the cosmic, ethical and sacramental senses of the term *ṛta*. Let us analyze this important *sūkta*. This hymn contains eight verses composed in the *triṣṭub* metre and is ascribed to the sage Vasiṣṭha. The hymn is addressed to Varuṇa. The first verse is cosmic in its orientation. Verses two through seven are ethical in content. The last verse is sacramentally petitionary in nature.

#### The cosmic verse

*dhīra tvāsya mahinā janūmṣi vi yastastambha rodāsi cidurvī. pra  
nākāmṛṣvam nūnude bṛhantām dvitā nakṣātram paprathācca bhūmā.*

[Ṛgveda VII:86:1]

"Permanent in greatness are the births of that Varuṇa who propped up the vast heaven and earth, who appointed to (their) two-fold (task) the glorious sun and beautiful constellations, who spread out the earth."

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<sup>161</sup> Day, 'The Conception of Punishment in Early Indian Literature' (Wilfred Laurier University Press, Ontario:1982) pp. 29-30

The ethical verses

*uta svayā tanvāñ sam véda tatkadā nvañntarvarúñe bhuvāni. kim mé  
havyamaṭṭāñāno juṣeta kadā mṛṭkam sumanā abhi khyam. [Ṛgveda  
VII:86:2]*

"When may I in my person converse with the deity? When may I (be admitted) to the heart of Varuṇa? By what means may he, without displeasure, accept my oblation? When may I, rejoicing in mind, behold that giver of felicity?"

*prcche tadenó varuṇa didṛkṣūpó emi cikituṣó viprcchám. samānamimé  
kavayáścidāhurayam ha tubhyam varúño ṭṭañīte. [Ṛgveda VII:86:3]*

"Desirous of beholding you, Varuṇa, that you should seek to destroy the worshipper, your friend? Insuperable, resplendent Varuṇa, declare it to me, so that, freed from sin, I may quick approach you with veneration."

*kimāgá āsa varuṇa jyeṣṭham yatstotāram jighāmsasi sakhāyam. pra tanmé  
voco dūlabha svadhāvo'vá tvānenā namásā tura íyām. [Ṛgveda VII:86:4]*

"What has that great wickedness been, Varuṇa, that you should seek to destroy the worshipper, your friend? Insuperable, resplendent Varuṇa, declare it to me, so that, freed from sin, I may quick approach you with veneration."

*avá dughdhāni pitryā sṛjā no'va yā vayam cákṛmā tanūbhīḥ. avá  
rājanpaśutṛpam na tāyum sṛjā vatsam na dāmno vasiṣṭham. [Ṛgveda  
VII:86:5]*

"Relax (the bonds) imposed by the ill deeds of our forefathers, and those incurred (by the sins) which we have committed in our persons: liberate, royal Varuṇa, like a calf from its tether, Vasiṣṭha like a thief nourishing the animal (he has stolen)."

*na sa svo dakṣó varuṇa dhruṭiḥ sā surā manyurvibhīdāko acītiḥ. asti  
jyāyānkanīyasa upāre svapnāścanedanītasya prayotā. [Ṛgveda VII:86:6]*

"It is not our own choice, Varuṇa, out of our condition, (that is the cause of our sinning); it is that which is intoxication, wrath, gambling, ignorance; there is a senior in the proximity of the junior: even a dream is a provocative to sin."

*arām dāso na mīlahuṣé karāṇyaham devāya bhūrṇaye'nāgāḥ. acétayadacito  
devo aryo gṛtsam rāye kavítáro junāti. [Ṛgveda VII:86:7]*

"Liberated from sin, I may perform diligent service, like a slave, to the divine showerer (of benefits), the sustainer of the world: may he, the divine lord, give intelligence to us who are devoid of understanding: may he who is most wise, guide the worshipper to wealth."



The sacramental verse

*ayam su tubhyám varuṇa svadhāvo hṛdi stoma upāśritaścidastu. śam naḥ  
kṣeme śamu yogá no astu yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sadā naḥ. [Ṛgveda  
VII:86:8]*

"May this laudation, food-conferring Varuṇa, be taken to your heart: may success be ours in retaining what we have, and in acquiring more: and do you, (deities), ever cherish us with blessings."

The key word '*anṛtasya*' meaning "of the inappropriate" appears in verse 6. What is considered inappropriate by the composer of this sūkta are enunciated in verse 6 itself. These are '*surā*' (liquor), '*manyuḥ*' (anger), '*vibhīdaka*' (gambling), and '*acittiḥ*' (ignorance). Also, in verse 5, the words '*drugdhāni pitryā sṛjā*' meaning "ill deeds done by the forefathers" are included in the list that will keep the worshipper from receiving the blessings of Varuṇa. It is very clear from the tone of these ethical verses that what constitutes the moral meaning of *ṛta* has a lot to do with the deeds of men. Thus, '*ṛta*' is that which is 'right' and 'appropriate', and Varuṇa being a guardian of this understanding of *ṛta* expects men to behave themselves in accordance with it or else suffer the consequences of their misdeeds. The notion of ancestral misdeeds burdening the descendants will linger on into general popular Indian ethical thinking but individual moral responsibility becomes the mainstay of the theodicy of Indian

religious culture as a whole. In short, *ṛta* gets intimately connected to the concept of karma. Though the connections between *ṛta* and karma become closer and stronger in the history of Hinduism, the seeds of this connection are to be found in the Ṛgveda itself in the context of the god Varuṇa.

*yacciddhi te viśó yathā pra déva varuṇa vratam. minīmasi dyavi dyavi.*

[Ṛgveda I:25:1]

"In as much as people commit errors, so do we, divine Varuṇa, daily disfigure your worship by imperfections."

*mā nó vadhāyá hṛtnavé jihīlānasyá rīradhaḥ. mā hīñānasyá manyavé.*

[Ṛgveda I:25:2]

"Make us not the objects of death, through your fatal indignation, through the wrath of you so displeased."

*yatkim cedam váruṇa daivye jané'bhidroham mánuṣyāñścarāmasi. acítī*

*yattava dhármā yūyopima mā nastasmādenáso deva rīriṣaḥ. [Ṛgveda*

VII:89:5]

"Whatever the offence which we men commit Varuṇa against divine beings, whatever law of thine we may, through ignorance, violate, do not you, divine Varuṇa, punish us on account of that iniquity."

And Varuṇa is to be propitiated because he is omniscient in these matters.

*ni śásād dhṛtavráto varuṇaḥ pastyāṁsvā. sāmṛájyāya sukratuḥ.* [Ṛgveda I:25:10]

"He, Varuṇa, the accepter of holy rites, the doer of good deeds, has sat down amongst the (divine) progeny, to exercise supreme dominion (over them)."

*ato viśvānyadbhūtā cikitvām abhi páśyati. kṛtāni yā ca kartvā.* [Ṛgveda I:25:11]

"Through him, the sage beholds all the marvels that have been or will be wrought."

Suffering of all types were the consequences of violating the law of *ṛta*. "For example, if a man got dropsy, he knew that he had violated the *ṛta*, and that the god Varuṇa, whose duty it was to supervise enforcement of *ṛta*, had sent the disease as punishment."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Brown, 'Some Ethical Concepts for the Modern World from Hindu and Indian Buddhist Tradition' in Radhakrishnan, S. (Ed.) 'Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary (1861-1961) Volume' (Sahitya Academy, Calcutta:1992) p. 373

The word '*karma*' needs to be explained before proceeding any further. The word '*karma*' is a common noun meaning 'action'. It is derived from the verbal root *\*kṛ-* meaning 'to do' in Sanskrit. Though the word '*karma*' can refer to action in general, it is most often used in the moral sense in the Indian cultural context. The term '*karma*' is, in this sense, a word that has a two-fold definition. On the one hand, it means human moral action in the initiating sense of the term. On the other hand, it also means human predicament in the retributive sense of the term. The two definitions are two sides of a coin, i.e. the action and its ensuing consequence. Action can be verbal, physical or mental. The consequences of these actions, good or bad, determine the condition of the individual in this life or the future ones until salvation is achieved. Simply put, the Law of Karma is "as one sows, so one reaps." Since the incubation period of deeds, like seeds, vary, all the consequences of one's deeds need not be experienced in the same lifetime. Because of death, the rebirth of the soul into another body becomes necessitated, and the soul then experiences the consequences of its deeds through this body. It is a thorough-going theodicy that is totally just, completely fair, and fully based on the moral actions of the individual. It was so fool-proof and iron-clad that even a very critical tradition like Buddhism accepted it. As reinforced by Day, it is noted that in the doctrine of Karma "acts are causally determinative in accordance with their good and evil nature, and their out-workings are inexorable; there is no intrusive or arbitrary factor which might overcome their potentiality for causing retribitional effects, or otherwise interfering with the strictly mechanical efficiency of *karma*. Since, moreover, an individual's fortunes and misfortunes are solely the outcome of his past

actions, he has no ground for believing that life is kindlier or harsher than is deserved."<sup>163</sup>

There are two passages in the Ṛgveda where the words 'ṛta' and 'dharma' are found together with a third important connecting term 'satya'. The passages are Ṛgveda V:51:2 and V:63:1.

*ṛtádhitaya ā gāta satyádharmaṇo adhvaram. agneḥ píbata jihvayā.* [Ṛgveda V:51:2]

"(Gods who are) devoutly praised and worshipped in truth, come to the sacrifice, and drink the libation with the tongue of Agni."

*ṛtásya gopāvadhí tiṣṭhatho ratham satyádharmaṇā parame vyómani. yamatrá mitravaruṇāváttho yuvam tasmaí vṛṣṭirmadhúmatpinvate divaḥ.* [Ṛgveda V:63:1]

"Guardians of waters/righteousness, upholders of truth, you ascend your chariot in the highest heaven: to him whom you, Mitra and Varuṇa, protect, the rain sends down the sweet (shower) from the sky."

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<sup>163</sup> Day, 'The Conception of Punishment in Early Indian Literature' (Wilfred Laurier University Press, Ontario:1982) p. 77

In both of these above passages, '*satya*' and '*dharma*' are found as one compound term. In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad passage I:11:1, the terms are found twice in sequence with *satya* coming first, and *dharma* following suit.

*satyam vada dharmam cara.* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:11:1]

"Speak the truth, practice virtue."

*satyān na pramaditavyam dharmān na pramaditavyam.* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:11:1]

"Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of virtue."

In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I:4:14, the two terms '*satya*' and '*dharma*' are not found either in a compound form or in sequence, but totally identified with one another.

*yo vai sa dharmah satyam vai tat: tasmāt satyam vadantam āhuḥ,  
dharmam vadaṭīti, dharmam vā vadantam, satyam vadaṭīti: etad hy evaitad  
ubhayam bhavati.*

"Verily that which is justice is truth. Therefore, they say of a man who speaks the truth, he speaks justice, or of a man who speaks justice that he speaks the truth. Verily, both these are the same."

The terms '*ṛta*' and '*satya*' appear in sequence four times in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad.

*ṛtam vadiṣyāmi satyam vadiṣyāmi* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:1:1]

"I will speak the right, I will speak the truth."

*ṛtam ca svādhyāya pravacane ca, satyam ca svādhyāya pravacane ca.*  
[Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:9:1]

"The right and also study and teaching; the true and also study and teaching."

*ṛtam avādiṣam satyam avādiṣam* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:12:1]

"I have spoken the right, I have spoken the truth."

*ṛtam dakṣiṇaḥ pakṣaḥ satyam uttaraḥ pakṣaḥ* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad II:4:1]

"The right is the right side, truth is the left side."

Thus through '*satya*' (truth), '*ṛta*' (right) is linked with '*dharma*' (virtue). Since the right is virtue, *dharma* finally assumes *ṛta* and replaces it as the multivalent term embracing the notions of righteousness, justice,

law, morality, duty etc. In the final analysis, the concepts of dharma and karma finally rule and dominate all of Indian religious culture.

Commenting on how dharma superseded *ṛta*, Day remarks that the concept of dharma "became so useful for framing religious, moral and social regulations, that interest in it and discussion of its applications to social and moral order eclipsed all discussions of metaphysical and theological ideas. Since, moreover, *Dharma* was made the central subject of a literary tradition which was to become vast and extensive throughout India, while the conception of *Ṛta* remained largely confined to the Vedas and their commentaries, it naturally took possession of brāhmaṇical thinking even at the expense of older, exalted concepts and conceptions."<sup>164</sup>

## **Section 7.1**

### **Dharma in the religious context**

The concept of dharma in the religious context of Hinduism may be divided into three segments, i.e. sacramental, moral and metaphysical.

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<sup>164</sup> Day, *The Conception of Punishment in Early Indian Literature* (Wilfred Laurier University Press, Ontario:1982) p.42



## **Dharma in its sacramental aspect**

Among the many meanings of the term 'ṛta' in the Ṛgveda, is the meaning of 'ritual sacrifice'. Here are a few examples:

*yāvayaddvēṣā ṛtapā ṛtejāḥ súmnāvarī sūnṛtā īrayānti. sumangalīrbibhrātī devavītimihādyoṣaḥ śreṣṭhātāmā vyūccha. [Ṛgveda I:113:12]*

"The beings hostile (to acts of devotion) now withdraw, for she is the protectress of sacred rites, who is manifested for their performance; she is giver of happiness, the awakener of pleasant voices, the enjoyer of felicity, and provider of food for the gods: most excellent Uṣas, dawn today on this (sacrificial hall)."

*vi macchrāthāya raśanāmivāgā ṛdhyāmā te varuṇa khāmṛtasyā. mā tantúśchedi vayāto dhiyam me mā mātrā śāryapasāḥ pura ṛtoḥ. [Ṛgveda II:28:5]*

"Cast off sin from me, O Varuṇa, as if it were a rope: may we obtain from you a channel (filled) with water: cut not the thread of me (engaged in) weaving pious works; blight not the elements of holy rites before the season (of their maturity)."

*na yātavā indra jūjuvurno na vandānā śaviṣṭha vedyābhīḥ. sa śárdhadaryo viśúnasya jantormā śiśnadévā apí gurṛtam ná. [Ṛgveda VII:21:5]*

"Let not the Rākṣasas, O Indra, do us harm: let not the evil spirits do harm to our progeny, most powerful (Indra): let not the sovereign lord (Indra), exert himself (in the restraint) of disorderly beings, so that the unchaste may not disturb our rite."

When *dharma* eclipsed *ṛta* in the middle and late Vedic periods, the term '*dharma*' inherited the meaning of ritual sacrifice as well.

The *Dharmasūtras*, which form the third part of the ancillary Vedic literature called the *Kalpasūtras*, use the term '*dharma*' in the sacrificial ritual sense besides other meanings. Let us look at some examples from the *Dharmasūtras* that will give us an insight to the term '*dharma*' used in this sense.

*aharaharbhūtabalirmanuṣyebhyo yathāśakti dānam. devebhyaḥ svāhākāra ā  
kāṣṭhātpitṛbhyaḥ svadhākāra odapātrātsvādhyāya iti.* [Āpastamba  
Dharmasūtra I:2:15 to I:13:1]

"Every day making a Bali offering to beings, giving food to men according to one's ability, offering at least a piece of wood in the fire as an oblation to the gods while saying Svāhā, making an offering of at least a pot of water to the ancestors while saying Svadhā, and doing one's private Vedic recitation."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Olivelle, '*Dharmasūtras*' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) pp. 22-23

*yatra kva cāgnimupasamādhāsyaṅsyāttatra prācīrucīśca tistrastisro lekhā  
likhatvādbhiravokṣayāgnimupasamindhyāt. utsicaitadudakamuttareṇa pūrveṇa  
vānyadupadadhyāt. nityamudadhānānyadbhirariktāni syurgrhamedhinorvratam.*

[Āpastamba Dharmasūtra II:1:13-15]

"On whatever occasion he is required to place the sacred fire on the altar, he should draw three lines from west to east and three lines from south to north, sprinkle water on them, and kindle the fire. He should pour out the water used for that towards the north or the east and draw fresh water. Their water vessels should never be empty---this is an observance incumbent on a couple living a household life."<sup>166</sup>

*uttarata upacāro vihāraḥ. tathāpavargaḥ. viparītam pitryeṣu pādopahatam  
prakṣālayet. angamupaspr̥śya sicam vāpa upaspr̥śet.  
evamchedanabhedanakhananiraranapitryarākṣassenairṣtaraudrābhicaraanīyeṣ  
u. na mantravatā. yajñāngenātmānamabhipariharet. abhyāntarāṇi yajñāngāni.  
bāhyartvijah. patniyajamānāvṛtviqbhyo'ntaratamau. yajñāngebhya  
ājyamājyāddhvimṣi havirbhyaḥ paśaḥ paśoḥ somaḥ somādagnayaḥ.  
yathākarmartvijo na vihārādabhiparyāvarteran.  
prānmukhaśceddakṣiṇamasamabhiparyāvarteta. pratyanmukhaḥ savyam.  
antareṇa cātvālotkarau yajñasya tīrtham. acātvāla āhavanīyotkarau. tataḥ  
kartāro yajamānaḥ patnī ca prapadyeran. visamsthite. samsthite ca  
sancaro'nutkaradeśāt. nāprokṣitamaprapannam klinnam kāṣṭham  
samidhamvābhyādadyāt. agreṇāhavanīyamityeke. dakṣiṇenāhavanīyam*

<sup>166</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.44

*brahmayatanam tadapareṇa yajamānasya. uttarām śroṇimuttareṇa hotuḥ.  
utkara āgnidhrasya. jaghanena gārhapatyam patnyāḥ. teṣu kalekāla eva  
darbhān samstr̥ṇāti. ekaikasya codakamaṇḍalurupāttaḥ syādācamanārthaḥ.*

[Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra I:15:1-28]

"One should enter the sacrificial arena from the north and leave it in the same direction. In rites for ancestors, however, one should do the opposite. One should wash anything one has touched with the feet. After touching one's body or the hem of the garment, one should touch water; as also after cutting or breaking something; after digging; after removing something; after a rite of the ancestors, fiends, Nirṛti, or Rudra; and after a rite of sorcery. When a sacrificial tool is used while reciting a ritual formula, a man should not move it around his body; sacrificial tools are more closely connected with the sacrifice, whereas the officiating priests are more distant. The patron of the sacrifice and his wife are closer to the sacrifice than the officiating priests; the ghee is closer than the sacrificial tools; the sacrificial oblations are closer than the ghee; the sacrificial animal is closer than the sacrificial oblations; the Soma is closer than the sacrificial animal; and the sacred fires are closer than the Soma. In accordance with the ritual acts they are performing, the officiating priests should not turn away from the sacrificial arena---if he is facing the east, he should turn towards his right shoulder, and if he is facing the west, towards his left shoulder. The passage way to and from the sacrificial area lies between the Cātvāla pit and the Utkara mound. In the absence of the Cātvāla pit, it lies between the offertorial fire and the Utkara mound. Those who carry out the ritual acts, as well as the patron of the sacrifice

and his wife, should walk through that passageway as long as the sacrifice is not completed. After it has been completed, however, the passageway lies on the side that does not contain the Utkara mound. One should not put into the sacred fire logs or kindling wood that have not been sprinkled with water, or that have not been dedicated, or that are wet. The Brahman priest and the patron of the sacrifice should walk in front of, or according to some, behind the offertorial fire. The seat of the Brahman priest is located to the south of the offertorial fire; the seat of the patron of the sacrifice, to the west of the Brahman priest's seat; the seat of the Hotṛ priest, to the north of the northern corner of the sacrificial arena; the seat of the Āgnīdhra priest, at the Utkara mound; and the seat of the patron's wife, behind the householder's fire. Each and every time any of these seats is used, one should spread Darbha grass on it. Each person should be provided with a pot of water to be used for sipping."<sup>167</sup>

*devapitṛmanuṣyabhūtarṣipūjakaḥ. nityasvādhyāyaḥ. pitṛbhyaścaudakadānam. yathā utsāham anyat. bhāryādir agnir dāyādirvā. tasmīn gṛhyāṇi karmāṇi. devapitṛmanuṣyayajñāḥ svādhyāśca balikarma. agnau agnir dhanvantarir viśvedevāḥ prajāpatiḥ sviṣṭakṛd iti homāḥ. digdevatābhyaśca yathāsvam. dvārṣu marudbhyaḥ. gṛhadevatābhyaḥ praviśya. brahmaṇe madhye. adbhya udakumbhe. ākāśāya iti antarikṣe balirutkṣepyaḥ. naktamcarebhyaśca sāyam.*  
[Gautama Dharmasūtra V:3-17]

<sup>167</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) pp. 156-157

"He shall pay homage to gods, ancestors, humans, spirits and seers. Everyday he shall perform his private Vedic recitation, the offering of water to his ancestors, and other rites, according to his ability. Let him set up his sacred fire either on the day of his marriage or upon the division of his paternal estate, and perform in it his domestic rites, as well as sacrifices to the gods, ancestors, and humans, private Vedic recitation, and Bali offerings. Fire oblations are offered to Fire, Dhanvantari, All-gods, Prajāpati, and Fire who makes the offering flawless. Oblations are offered also to the guardian deities of the directions, each in his respective place, to the Maruts at the doors to the house, to Brahman at the centre of the house, to the waters by the water pot, to space in the intermediate region, and to night-stalkers in the evening."<sup>168</sup>

*udakakriyāśaucam ca dvi varṣam prabhṛti. ā danta jananāt iti eke. śarīram agninā samyogyān avekṣamāṇās apas abhyavayanti. savya itarābhyām pāṇibhyām udakakriyām kurvīran ayugmāsu dakṣiṇāmukhās pāṇibhyām. pītṛṇām vai eṣā dikyā dakṣiṇā. gṛhān vrajītvā prastare tri aham anaśnantas āśīran. aśaktau krīta utpannena varteran.* [Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra IV:9-15]

"When those who are two years or older die, they are able to be offered libations of water, and their death creates a period of impurity; according to some, this is true from the time a child has teethed. After cremating the body, they should go away without looking back and enter a place of

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<sup>168</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p. 86

water. On uneven days they should pour libations of water with both hands facing the south. The south, clearly, is the direction of the ancestors. After returning home, they should remain seated on mats fasting for three days. If they are unable, they should live on food that they have purchased or has been given to them unasked."<sup>169</sup>

Thus one can begin to see the enormously complex ritualistic aspect of '*dharma*'.

### **Dharma in its moral aspect**

Whenever the term '*dharma*' is mentioned to the average Hindu, the first thing that occurs to that individual is that the term has something to do with righteousness. In short, it is the most prominent and distinctive meaning of the word '*dharma*'. According to the *Manu Smṛti*, *dharma* is so powerful that it always protects those who practice it.

*dharmo rakṣati rakṣitāḥ* [*Manu Smṛti* VIII:15]

"Dharma protects those who protect it."

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<sup>169</sup> Olivelle, '*Dharmasūtras*' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p. 262

The practicing of dharma is proper karma, and as such a person will indeed reap the benefits of such righteousness. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* highlights this though it is still using the term '*ṛta*' instead of dharma.

*ṛtam pibantau sukṛtasya loke* [Kaṭhopaniṣad I:3:1]

"There are two souls that drink the fruit of karma in the world of good deeds."

The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* I:3:11-24 provides the general ethical guidelines of conduct for a student undergoing Vedic-style education:

*anṛttadarśī. sabhāḥ samājāmscāgantā. ajanavādaśīlaḥ. rahaśśīlaḥ.  
gurorudācāreṣvakartā svaikarmāṇi. strībhiryāvadarthasambhāṣī. mṛduḥ.  
śāntaḥ. dāntaḥ. hrīmān. dṛḍhadhṛtiḥ. aglāmsnuḥ. akrodhanaḥ. anusūyuḥ.*

"He shall not watch dancing, nor visit casinos or fairs. He shall not be given to gossiping but keep things confidential. He shall not engage in recreational activities in places frequented by his teacher. He shall speak with women only as much as is required. He shall be gentle, calm, controlled, modest, firmly resolute, energetic, not given to anger, and free from envy."<sup>170</sup>

The *Manu Smṛti* points out that there are four sources of dharma:

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<sup>170</sup> Olivelle, '*Dharmasūtras*' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p. 10



*vedo akhilo dharmamūlam smṛtiśīle ca tadvidam. ācāraśca eva sādḥūnām  
ātmanas tuṣṭireva ca. [II:6]*

"The entire Veda is the (first) source of the sacred law, next the tradition and the virtuous conduct of those who know the (Veda further), also the customs of holy men, and (finally) self-satisfaction."

It also points out that there are ten characteristics of dharma:

*dhṛti kṣamā damo asteyam śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ. dhīrvidyā satyām  
akrodho daśakam dharmalakṣaṇam. [VI:92]*

"Patience, forgiveness self-control, abstention from misappropriation, cleanliness, control of the sense-organs, wisdom, knowledge, truthfulness, and control of temper are the ten marks of righteousness."

It also makes it clear that dharma (virtue) is the sole thing that accompanies the soul to the next world.

*nāmutra hi sahāyārtham pitā mātā ca tiṣṭhataḥ. na putradāram na jñātir  
dharmas tiṣṭhati kevalaḥ. ekaḥ prajāyate jantur eka eva pralīyate. eko  
anubhunkte sukṛtam eka eva ca duṣkṛtam. mṛtam śarīram utsṛjya kāṣṭha-  
loṣṭasam kṣitau. vimukhā bāndhavā yānti dharmastam anugaccati. tasmād  
dharmam sahāyārtham nityam sancinuyāt śanaiḥ. dharmeṇa hi sahāyena  
tamas tarati dustaram. dharmapradhānam puruṣam tapasā hata kilimbiṣam.  
paralokam nayatyāśu bhāsvantam kha śarīriṇam. [IV:239-243]*

"For the next world neither father, nor mother, nor wife, nor sons, nor relations stay to be his companions; spiritual merit alone remains (with him). Single is each being born; single it dies; single it enjoys (the rewards of its) virtue; single (it suffers the punishment of its) sin. Leaving the dead body on the ground like a log of wood, or a clod of earth, the relatives depart with averted faces; but spiritual merit follows (the soul). Let him therefore always slowly accumulate spiritual merit, in order (that it may be his) companion (after death); for with merit as his companion, he will traverse a gloom difficult to traverse. (That companion) speedily conducts the man who is devoted to duty and effaces his sins by austerities, to the next world, radiant and clothed with an ethereal body."

In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma, the hero of the epic is declared as the very manifestation of virtue.

*eṣa vīgrahavān dharmah* [I:21:10]

"This one is the icon of dharma."

In the Mahābhārata, dharma is defined as being eight-fold:

*aṣṭāṅgeṇa mārgeṇa viśuddhātmā samācāret samyak sankalpasambandhāt  
samyak cendriyanigrahāt samyag vrataviśeṣācca samyak ca guru sevānāt*

*samyag āhāra yogācca samyak cādhyayanāgamāt samyak karmopasamnyāsāt samyak cittanirodhāt. [III:2:73-75]*

"Performance of sacrifices, study (of the *Vedas*), gifts, penance, truth (in both speech and act), forgiveness, subduing the senses, and renunciation of desire, these have been declared to be the eight (cardinal) duties constituting true path."

The king of the relatively good side in this epic, Yudhiṣṭhira, is the literal incarnation of the god dharma. He is so virtuous that his feet never touches the ground. Ultimately, he alone reaches heaven in his bodily form showing the unassailable moral power of dharma.

### **Dharma in its metaphysical aspect**

The Hindu tradition accepts four major goals in life for man. They are collectively referred to as the *puruṣārthas*. These are dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kāma (material desires), and mokṣa (salvation). This is the traditional order in which these goals are enunciated. The important thing to notice in this order is that dharma is placed first thereby clearly emphasizing that the goals of artha and kāma must be grounded in dharma.

Manu Smṛti IV:176 clarifies this:

*parityajed arthakāmau yau syātām dharmavarjitau. dharmam ca apyasukha udarkam lokasankruṣṭam eva ca.*

"Let him avoid (the acquisition of) wealth and (the gratification of his) desires, if they are opposed to the sacred law, and even lawful acts which may cause pain in the future or are offensive to men."

Finally, these materialistic goals must be given up in order to pursue the spiritual goal of mokṣa while continuing to practice dharma. Thus, even though there are two materialistic goals and two spiritualistic goals, i.e. *artha* and *kāma*, and *dharmā* and *mokṣa* respectively, these are not all on an equal footing. Dharma is the basic ethical circuit that runs through and governs all of them. Dharma is an end as well as means to an end. It is a value that keeps an individual whole and proper in this world as it makes one ready to achieve the final other worldly goal of salvation. Dharma in all its senses is the principal purport of the entire Hindu scriptural corpus from the Vedas to the Purāṇas. Dharma as righteousness transformed as spiritual merit (*puṇya*) accompanies the soul (*ātman*) through the cycle of births and deaths until salvation is achieved.

The Mīmāṃsā system of Classical Hindu thought particularly pays attention to the category of dharma and fully expounds its operations in its spiritual metaphysics. Jaimini, the author of the Mīmāṃsā Sūtras and the founder of this system opens his work with the aphorism:

*athāto dharmā jijñāsā.* [Mīmāṃsā Sūtras I:1:1]

"Now (let us) investigate (the nature of) dharma."

In the very next aphorism, dharma is defined:

*codanālakṣaṇo'rtho dharmah.* [Mīmāmsa Sūtras I:1:2]

"Injunction is the mark of dharma."

The source of these injunctions, according to the Mīmāmsā system, is said to be the Vedas. Śabara, the chief commentator of the Mīmāmsa Sūtras, enunciates this:

*Sa hi niḥśreyasena puruṣam samyunaktīti pratijānīmahe tadabhidhīyate codanālakṣaṇo'rtho dharmah.* [Śabarabhāṣya]

"That injunction which is conducive to the highest good of man is dharma."

According to the Mīmāmsā system, it is actually first two sections of the Vedas, i.e. the *Mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas* that are considered to be most authoritative. The latter two sections, i.e. the *Araṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*, are to be interpreted in the light of the first two sections. Since the first two sections of the Vedas deal with Vedic rituals, the term '*dharma*' is understood as the command to obey the ritual mandates which would lead to the spiritual well-being of the sacrificer. The ritual act is

transformed into spiritual merit through the agency of *apūrva*, the metaphysical link which connects a ritual act with its spiritual result.

Thus the Mīmāṃsā system regards obedience to Vedic injunctions as dharma leading to merit, and disobedience as adharma leading to sin. Eventually, the Mīmāṃsā system puts the whole enterprise of prescriptions and prohibitions of the Vedas into the following format.

1. **vidhi** = prescribed actions. If one performs them, there is neither merit nor sin. However, their non-performance leads to the accrual of sin.
2. **niṣedha** = prohibited actions. If one performs them, there is accrual of sin. However, their non-performance leads to neither merit nor sin.
3. **kāmya** = optional actions. If one performs them, there is accrual of merit. However, their non-performance leads neither to the accrual of merit nor sin.

The two schools of Mīmāṃsā, i.e. the school of Prabhākara and the school of Kumārila show the relationship of dharma, mokṣa and the soul in the light of obedience to the Vedic injunctions in the following manner. The Prabhākara school offers the altruistic view. The soul by following the mandates of the Vedas upholds dharma. And anyone who upholds dharma is automatically entitled to mokṣa. In short, dharma is the end, and mokṣa is the perquisite. The Kumārila school, by contrast, offers the hedonistic view. The soul needs to pursue mokṣa. However, the means to that is to obey the injunctions of the Vedas which is dharma. In short, mokṣa is the end, and dharma is the means.

The author, Flood, integrates all the three religious aspects of dharma, i.e. the sacramental, the moral and the metaphysical in his long well-articulated definition with the words:

"*Dharma* is an all-encompassing ideology which embraces both ritual and moral behavior, whose neglect would have bad social and personal consequences. The philosopher of the Mīmāṃsā school, Jaimini, defines *dharma* as that of which the characteristic is an injunction (*vidhi*). This means that *dharma* is an obligation, declared by the Veda, to perform ritual action (*karma*), which brings of itself no reward other than its non-performance would be 'that which is not dharma' (*adhharma*) and result in retribution or 'sin' (*pāpa*). The rituals, particularly the solemn rites, are for their own realization: it is ritual for ritual's sake, though it does create reward in heaven for the ritual patron. A Brahman can also perform supererogatory rituals for gaining wealth and happiness in this world and the next, but these are not obligatory. *Dharma* is identified with Vedic obligation, which is eternal, and with action which is particular: the transcendent *dharma* is expressed or manifested at a human level in ritual action in order to produce that which is good."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Flood, '*An Introduction to Hinduism*' (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.53

## Section 7.2

### Dharma in the societal context

The concept of dharma in the societal context of Hinduism may be divided into three segments, i.e. social, political and legal.

#### Dharma in its social aspect

Vedic Hinduism in its social aspect may be described by the words *varṇāśrama dharma*. In other words, ancient Vedic Aryan society divided itself into four castes and the four stages of life. The four castes (*varṇas*) are the priest (*brahmin*), the soldier (*kṣatriya*), the farmer, artisan and merchant (*vaiśya*) and laborer (*śūdra*). The first three castes alone were Aryan and followed the Vedic tradition. The last group were the non-Aryan Dravidian peoples. The first three Aryan castes organized their lives in four stages called *āśramas*. These were the student (*brahmacārin*), the householder (*gṛhastha*), the hermit (*vānaprasthin*) and the monk (*sannyāsin*).

The four castes have their origins in the Vedas themselves. Ṛgveda X:90:12 is the classic citation in this regard. The sacrificial cosmic person referred to as '*puruṣa*' is said to be the entity from whose various body parts emerged the four castes. The passage reads:

*brāhmaṇó'sya mukhámāsīd bāhū rājanyáḥ kṛtaḥ. ūrū tadásya yadvaiśyáḥ  
padbhyām śūdro ájāyata. [Ṛgveda X:90:12]*



"His mouth became the Brāhmaṇa, his arms became the Rājanya, his thighs became the Vaiśya; the Śūdra was born from his feet."

The hierarchical social order is graphically set forth at the outset so that there is no doubt about the roles of each caste as emerging from the cosmic being. The brahmin's origin from the mouth or face (as the word '*mukha*' in Sanskrit can mean either) clearly shows the status of the priests as an intellectual sacerdotal caste. The soldiers emerging from the arms show their connections to physical strength and power. The farmers, artisans and merchants emerging from the thighs show their status as people of servitude in terms of the two upper castes collectively referred to as the *ubhayavīryas*. The emerging of the labor class from the feet shows their complete and utter serf-like status.

The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:1:4-8 clarifies this Vedic Aryan molding of its society in very clear terms. The passages declare:

*athātaḥ sāmāyācārikāndharmānvyākhyāsyāmaḥ. dharmajñāsamaya pramāṇam. vedāśca. catvāro varṇo brāhmaṇakṣatriyavaiśyaśūdrāḥ. teṣāṃ pūrvasyapūrvō janmataḥ śreyān. aśūdrāṇāmaduṣṭakarmanāṃmupāyanām vedādhyāyanamagnyādheyam phalavanti ca karmāṇi. śuśrūṣā śūdrasyetareṣāṃ varṇānām. pūrvasminpūrvasminvarṇe niḥ śreyasambhūyaḥ.*

"There are four classes: Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra. Among these, each preceding class is superior by birth to each subsequent. Those who are not Śūdras and are not guilty of evil deeds may undergo

initiation, undertake Vedic study, and set up the sacred fires; and their rites bear fruit. Śūdras are to serve the other classes; the higher the class they serve, the greater their prosperity."<sup>172</sup>

This dharmasūtra further enunciates the practices for each of the first three castes in the context of the four stages of life. Below are some interesting samplings of the *varṇāśrama dharma* as understood by this text.

For undergoing spiritual initiation:

*vasante brāhmaṇamupanayīta rīṣme rājanyam śaradi vaiśyam garbhāṣṭāmeṣu  
brāhmaṇam garbhaikādaśeṣu rājanyam garbhadvādaśeṣu vaiśyam.*

[Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:1:19]

"A Brahmin should be initiated in the spring, a Kṣatriya in the summer, and a Vaiśya in the autumn; a Brahmin in the eighth year from conception, a Kṣatriya in the eleventh, and a Vaiśya in the twelfth."<sup>173</sup>

In begging alms as a student:

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<sup>172</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.7

<sup>173</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.8

*bhavatpūrvayā brāhmaṇo bhikṣate bhavadmadhyayā rājanyaḥ bhavadantyayā vaiśyaḥ.* [Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:3:28-30]

"A brahmin should beg placing 'Madam' at the beginning, a Kṣatriya placing 'Madam' in the middle, and a Vaiśya placing 'Madam' at the end."<sup>174</sup>

When greeting another person:

*dakṣiṇambāhum śrotasamam prasārya brāhmaṇo'bhivādayītorah samam rājanyo madhyasamam vaiśyo nīcaḥ śūdraḥ prañjalim.* [Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:5:16]

"With joined hands, let a Brahmin greet by stretching his right hand level with his ears, a Kṣatriya level with his chest, a Vaiśya level with his waist, and a Śūdra very low."<sup>175</sup>

In terms of marriage, the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra opines:

*aṣṭau vivāhāḥ. śrutaśīle vijñāya brahmacāriṇe'rthine dīyate sa brāmaḥ. ācchādyālamkṛtaya. eṣā saha dharmāścaryatāmiti. prājāpatayaḥ. pūrvam lājāhutim hutvā gobhyām sahārṣaḥ. dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsvantarvedyṛtvije sa daivaḥ. dhanenopatoṣyāsuraḥ. sakāmena sakāmāya mithaḥ samyogo*

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<sup>174</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.11

<sup>175</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.13

*gāndharvaḥ. prasahya haraṇādrākṣaḥ. suptām mattām pramattām  
vopagacchediti paiśācaḥ. teṣām catvāraḥ pūrve brāhmaṇasya teṣvapi pūrvaḥ  
pūrvaḥ śreyān. uttareṣāmuttara uttaraḥ pāpīyān. atrāpi ṣaṣṭhasaptamam  
kṣatradharmānugatautatpratyyatvātḥkṣatrasya. pañcamāṣṭamau vaiśyaśūdrā  
bhavanti. karṣaṇaśuśrūṣādhiḥkṛtatvāt. gāndharvamapyeke praśāmsanti  
sarveṣām srehānugatatvāt. [Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra I:20:1-16]*

"There are eight types of marriages. When a girl is given to a Vedic student who requests her, after enquiring into his learning and character, it is a 'Brahma' marriage. After dressing her up and adorning her with jewelry, when a girl is given with the formula, 'Here she is! May you jointly fulfill the Law', it is a 'Prajāpati' marriage. When the groom first offers parched grain in the sacred fire and gives a cow and a bull to the girl's father, it is a 'Seer's' marriage. When a girl is given to the officiating priest within the sacrificial arena while the sacrificial gifts are being taken away, it is a 'Divine' marriage. When the groom takes the girl after gratifying her parents with money, it is a 'Demonic' marriage. When a lover has sex with his beloved through mutual consent, it is a 'Gandharva' marriage. When a man takes away a girl by force, it is a 'Fiendish' marriage. When a man has intercourse with a girl who is asleep, intoxicated, or insane, it is a 'Ghoulish' marriage. Of these, only the first four are suitable for Brahmins, and even among these each preceding type is better than each following. Of the last four, each subsequent type is worse than the preceding. Among the latter, moreover, the sixth and seventh flow from the Kṣatriya nature, because that is the dominant feature of the Kṣatriyas: while the fifth and eighth are suitable for Vaiśyas and

Śūdras, for Vaiśyas and Śūdras are lax about their wives because they are occupied with agricultural and servile work. Some commend the 'Gandharva' form of marriage for all, because it flows from love."<sup>176</sup>

In case of death in a household, the purification of the individuals of such a place is also caste-based.

*brāhmaṇo daśarātreṇa. pañcadaśarātreṇa rājanyaḥ. vimśatirātreṇa vaiśyaḥ. śūdro māsenā śudhyati.* [Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra IV:27-30]

"A Brahmin becomes pure after ten days, a Kṣatriya after fifteen days, a Vaiśya after twenty days, and a Śūdra after a month."<sup>177</sup>

Besides the varṇa system, there is also the jāti system. This is a subset of the varṇa system. It's especially true of the Vaiśya and Śūdra castes as they include a vast array of professions. The jāti system like the broader varṇa system is based on hierarchy, purity, endogamy and commensality on the basis of one's birth. According to the Manu Smṛti, the system of jātis came about as a result of inter-caste marriages.

Moving on to the *āśrama* system, the stage of the householder (*gṛhastha*) is considered the best of the four stages.

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<sup>176</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) pp.161-162

<sup>177</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.263

*yasmāt trayo apyāśramaṇo jñāenānna ca anvaham. gṛhasthena eva  
dhāryante tasmājjyeṣṭhāśramo gṛhī.* [Manu Smṛti III:78]

"Because of the three (other) orders are daily supported by the householder with (gifts of) sacred knowledge and food, therefore (the order of) householders is the most excellent order."

Since the stage of the householder is the best, it is important for the married couple to be mutually satisfying to each other in every way but also for men in the house to honor, respect and the women of the household happy.

*santuṣṭo bharyayā bhartā bhartrā bhāryā tathaiva ca. tasminneva kule  
nityam kalyāṇam tatraiva dhruvam.* [Manu Smṛti III:60]

"In that family, where the husband is pleased with his wife, and the wife with her husband, happiness will assuredly be lasting."

*jāmāyo yāni gehāni śāpantyapratipūjitāḥ. tāni kṛtyāhalāni eva vinasīyanti  
samantataḥ.* [Manu Smṛti III:58]

"The houses on which female relations, not being duly honored, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic."

*tasmād etāḥ sadā pūjyā bhūṣaṇāccādanāsanaiḥ. bhūtikāmairnarairnityam  
satkareṣūtsaveṣu ca.* [Manu Smṛti III:59]

"Hence men who seek (their own) welfare, should always honor women on holidays and festivals with (gifts of) ornaments, clothes, and (dainty) food."

Husband and wife in the three upper castes (*varṇas*) in Hinduism constituted one ritual unit termed as '*dampati*'. In this sense, the wife was the inseparable half of her husband.

"The Hindu woman as life partner has a fourfold character: she is *ardhāṅgiṇī*, one half of the her husband, metaphorically speaking; *sahadharmiṇī*, an associate in the fulfillment of human and divine goals; *sahakarminī*, a part to all her husband's action and *sahayoginī*, a veritable cooperator in all his ventures. Husband and wife together are called *dampati*, joint owners of the household, sharing work in terms of their biological, psychological and individual dharma. The former provides the seed (*bīja*) and the latter the field (*kṣetra*) for its fructification, so that humans could be perpetuate in the cosmic process of evolution. Both have the joint responsibility of helping their children grow in all respects, but the contribution of the wife is always immense.

As life partner the Hindu woman has equal right to participate in religious right to participate in religious rites and ceremonies; in fact, certain sacrifices like the Sītā harvest sacrifice, the Rudrayāga for suitable sons-in-law or the Rudrabali sacrifice for material prosperity are performed by women alone. Hindu lawgivers like Gobhila and Āśvalāyana ordain that

no ritual or sacrifice can be complete (sampūrṇa) without the presence of the wife. Even Rāma had to order for Sītā's statue in gold to make up for her absence during this aśvamedha sacrifice. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma's mother Kausalyā offers oblations to the fire god Agni and Tārā performs the Svastyāyana ritual for the success of her husband Vālī against Sugrīva. Women of those days were quite learned in the Vedic lore. Draupadi was a brahmavādinī and Tāra an adept at reciting mystic syllables. Oghavatī, Arundhati and Sulabhā possessed a thorough knowledge of the Vedas and imparted religious knowledge even to ṛṣis. The spiritual attainments of Sāvitrī and Anasuyā have become legendary. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad one meets women of wisdom such as Maitreyī and Gārgī. The former abandoned wealth for wisdom and the latter entered into a debate with sage Yājñavalkya at the court of King Janaka. Much later, Bhāratī, the wife of Maṇḍana Miśra, carried forward the tradition by acting as judge in the philosophic debate between her husband and Śankarācārya. When she found her husband losing the debate, she emphatically told Śankarācārya that his victory would be complete only if he could defeat her, since she constituted her husband's better half."<sup>178</sup>

### **Dharma in its political aspect**

The dharma of a Hindu monarch is called '*rājadharmā*'. The term '*dharma*' here is used in the sense of duty. The king (*rājā*) in Hindu society has a very special status. He is considered as the incarnation of the

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<sup>178</sup> Kapoor, '*Hindu woman as a life partner*' (*Prabuddha Bharata*, August 2005)



Vedic gods and is always deemed as pure. Manu Smṛti makes these aspects very clear.

*somāgnyarkāgnyarkaānilendrāṇām vittāppatyor yamasya ca. aṣṭāṇām lokapālānām vapur dhārayate nṛpaḥ. (V:96)*

"A king is an incarnation of the eight guardian deities of the world: the Moon-god, the Fire-god, the Sun-god, the Wind-god, the god of Thunder and Lightning (Indra), the lords of Wealth and the Waters (Kubera and Varuṇa), and the god of Death (Yama)."

*lokeśādhiṣṭhato rājānāsyāśaucam vidhīyate. śaucāśaucam hi martyānām lokebhyaḥ prabhavāpyayau. (V:97)*

"Because the king is pervaded by those lords of the world, no impurity is ordained for him; for purity and impurity of mortals is caused and removed by (those) lords of the world."

*arājake hi loke asmin sarvato vidruto bhayāt. rakṣārtham asya sarvasya rājānam aṣṭjat prabhuh. (VII:3)*

"For, when these creatures, being without a king, through fear dispersed in all directions, the lord created a king for the protection of their whole (creation)."

The seventieth chapter of the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata points out the thirty-six attributes of a good king. The ideal Hindu king, as per the Hindu tradition itself, is reckoned to be Rāma, the hero god-king of the Rāmāyaṇa epic. In the Yuddhakāṇḍa 128:98-104, his kingdom is described as one in which there was freedom from terror, robbery, envy, diseases, sorrows, famine etc. There was peace and plenty of wealth, happiness and goodness. This ideal political condition of utter well-being of the nation, the Hindus to this day refer to as '*rāmarājya*'.

The king in his discharge of dharma had three main functions:

1. to maintain order in his kingdom and to administer justice in his subjects [Dumezilian first function]
2. to protect his people [Dumezilian second function]
3. to promote prosperity and general well-being of his subjects [Dumezilian third function]

The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra II:25:11 points out that in an ideal king's realm:

*na cāsya viṣaye kṣudhā rogeṇa himātapābhyām  
vāvasīdedabhāvādbuddhipūrvam vā kacit.*

"And in his realm, no one should suffer from hunger, illness, cold, or heat, either through want or by design."<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Olivelle, '*Dharmasūtras*' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.69

According to the Gautama Dharmasūtra XI:1-6:

*rājā sarvasyeṣṭe brāhmanavarjam. sādrukārī sādhuvādī. trayyāmānvikṣikyā  
vābhivinītaḥ. śucirjitendriyo guṇavatsahāyopāyasampannaḥ. samaḥ prajāsu  
syāt. hitamāsām kurvati. tamuparyāsīnamadhastādūpāsīrannanye  
brāhmaṇebhyaḥ.*

"The king rules over all except Brahmins. He should be correct in his actions and speech and trained in the triple Veda and logic. Let him be upright, keep his senses under control, surround himself with men of quality, and adopt sound policies. He should be impartial towards his subjects and work for their welfare."<sup>180</sup>

### **Dharma in its legal aspect**

The law books of ancient Hinduism that were in force during the Hindu period of Indian history were called *Dharmaśāstras*. These books are distinct from the *Dharmasūtras* which are earlier and closer to the Vedic Era. The Dharmasūtras also contain legal matters. Below are a few

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<sup>180</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.96

examples of crime and punishment (*daṇḍa*) from both the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras*.

*jihvācchedanam śūdrasyāryam dhārmikamākrośataḥ. vāci pathi śayyāyāmāsana iti samībhavato daṇḍatādanam. puruṣavadhe styeye bhūmyādāna iti svānyādāya vadhyaḥ cakṣunirodhastveteṣu brāhmaṇasya. niyamātikramaṇamanyam vā rahasi bandhayet ā samāpatteḥ. asamāpattau nāśayaḥ. [Āpastamba Dharmasūtra II:27:14-20]*

"If a Śūdra hurls abusive words at a virtuous Ārya, his tongue shall be cut out. If, while he is speaking, walking on the road, lying in bed, or occupying a seat, a Śūdra pretends to be equal to the Āryas, he should be flogged. If a Śūdra kills a man, steals, or appropriates land, he should be executed and his property confiscated. If a Brahmin is guilty of these crimes, however, he should be blindfolded. Alternatively, those who transgress their specific duties should be kept in secret confinement until they relent. If they do not relent, they should be banished."<sup>181</sup>

If a man rapes a woman, then:

*samnipāte vṛtte śīśnacchedanam savṛṣaṇasya kumāryām tu svānyādāya nāśayaḥ. atha bhṛte rājñā. [Āpastamba Dharmasūtra II:26:20-22]*

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<sup>181</sup> Olivelle, '*Dharmasūtras*' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.71

"If intercourse took place, his penis should be cut-off along with the testicles. If it was a young woman, he should be banished and his property confiscated. Thereafter, the king should support those women."<sup>182</sup>

The atonement for a man who has killed either a Brahmin or a Kṣatriya is that:

*araṇye kuṭim kṛtvā vāgyataḥ śavaśiradhvajo'rdhaśāṇī  
pakṣamadhonābhuparijānvācchādya. tasya panthā antarā vartmanī. dṛṣṭvā  
cānyamutkrāmet. khaṇḍena lohitaṅka śārāveṇa grāme pratiṣṭheta. ko'bhi  
śastāya bhikṣāmiti saptāgārāṇi caret. sā vṛttiḥ. alabdhopavāsaḥ.*

[Āpastamba Dharmasūtra I:24:11-17]

"He should build a hut in the wilderness, curb his speech, carry a skull as a banner, and cover himself from the navel to the knees with a scrap of hempen cloth. His path is the gap between the tracks of cartwheels, and if he happens to see another person, he should step aside. He should set out to the village carrying a broken metal bowl and visit seven houses, saying: 'Who will give alms-food to a heinous sinner?' That is how he maintains himself. If he does not receive anything, he should fast."<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.70

<sup>183</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) pp.34-35

*ūrdhvam pituḥ putrā vikṭham bhajeran. nivṛtte rajasi maturjīvaticcheti.  
sarvam vā pūrvajasyetarāmbibhṛyāt. pitṛvat.* [Gautama Dharmasūtra  
XXVIII:1-3]

"After their father's death, the sons may divide the estate, or, if the father so wishes, even during his lifetime but after their mother has reached menopause. Alternatively, the eldest son may inherit the entire estate, and he should maintain the others just as the father."<sup>184</sup>

*surāpasya brāhmaṇasyoṣṇāmāsiñceyuḥ. surāmāsyemṛtaḥ śudhyet. amatyā  
pāne payo ghṛtamudakam vāyum pratitryahamtaptāni sa kṛcchrastato'sya  
samskāraḥ.*

[Gautama Dharmasūtra XXIII:1-2]

"They should pour hot liquor into the mouth of a Brahmin who has drunk liquor. He is purified after he dies. If he has drunk it inadvertently, he should subsist on hot milk, hot ghee, hot water, and hot air, for a period of three days each; this is the arduous penance. After that, he should undergo initiation."<sup>185</sup>

*payovrato vā daśarātram ghṛtena dvitīyamabhidaṣṭṛtīyam divādiṣvekabhaktiko  
jalaklinnavāsā lomāni nakhāni tvacammāmsām śeṇitam snāyvasthi*

<sup>184</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.123

<sup>185</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.117

*mattamamiti homa ātmano mukhe mṛtyorāsyējuhomiyityantataḥ sarveṣām  
prāyaścittam bhrūṇahatyāyāḥ.* [Gautama Dharmasūtra XXIV:6]

"The penance for performing an abortion is this. He should live on milk for ten days, on ghee for a second ten day period, and on water for a third ten-day period, partaking of these only once a day in the morning. During this period, he should keep his clothes wet and make offerings of his hair, nails, skin, flesh, blood, sinews, bones, marrow in the sacred fire, saying at the conclusion of each offering: 'I offer in the mouth of the self, in the jaws of death'."<sup>186</sup>

*aprajām daśame varṣe strīprajām dvādaśe tyajet. mātṛprajām pañcadaśe  
sadyastrapriyavādinīm. samvatsara pretapatnī madhumāmsamadyalavaṇāni  
varjayedadhaḥ śayita. ṣaṇmā sāniti maudalyaḥ. ata ūrdhvam  
gurubhiraṇumatā devarājjanayetputramaputrā.* [Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra  
II:4:6-9]

"In the tenth year a man may dismiss a wife who bears no children, in the twelfth year a wife who bears only daughters, and in the fifteenth year a wife all of whose children die; a wife who is sharp-tongued, however, he should dismiss immediately. When her husband dies, a wife should abstain from honey, meat, liquor, and salt, and sleep on the floor for one year; for six months according to Maudgalya. After that time, if she has

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<sup>186</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.119

no son, she may bear one through a brother-in-law with the consent of her elders."<sup>187</sup>

*nagno muṇḍaḥ kapālī ca bhikṣārthī kṣutpipāsitaḥ. andhaḥ śatrukule gacched yaḥ sākṣyamanṛtam vadet. [Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra XVI:33]*

"When a man bears false witness, he will end up naked, shaven-headed, and blind; racked with hunger and thirst; and going to his enemy's house with a begging bowl to obtain alms-food."<sup>188</sup>

*svamānjārakulasādardura mūṣakān hatvā kṛcchran dvādaśarātram caretkimciddadyāt anasthimatām tu sattvānām gomātram rāśim hatvā kṛcchram dvādaśarātram caretkimciddadyāt. [Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra XXI:24-25]*

"If someone kills a dog, a cat, a mongoose, a snake, a frog, or a rat, he should perform an arduous penance for twelve days and give a little something as a gift. If he kills a quantity of boneless animals equal in weight to a cow, however, he should perform an arduous penance for twelve days and give a little something as a gift."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.176

<sup>188</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.292

<sup>189</sup> Olivelle, 'Dharmasūtras' (Oxford University Press, New York:2009) p.309



*tasya ca brahmahatyāyāmaśiaskam puruṣam lalāṭe kuryāt. surādhvajam  
surāpāne steye. bhagam gurutalpagamane. [Viṣṇu Dharmaśāstra V:4-7]*

"For murdering another Brahmin, let (the figure of) a headless corpse be impressed on his forehead; for drinking spirits, the flag of a seller of spirituous liquor; for stealing gold, a dog's foot, for incest, (the mark of) a female part."

*daṇḍaḥ śāsti prajā sarvā daṇḍaivābhirakṣati. daṇḍaḥ sapteṣu jagarti  
daṇḍam dharmam vidurbudhāḥ. [Manu Dharmaśāstra VII:18]*

"Punishment alone governs all created beings, punishment alone protects them, punishment watches over them while they sleep; the wise declare punishment (to be identical with) the law."

*sarvo daṇḍajito loko durlabho hi śucirnaraḥ. daṇḍasya hi bhayāt sarvam  
jagadbhogāya kalpate. [Manu Dharmaśāstra VII:22]*

"The whole world is kept in order by punishment, for a guiltless man is hard to find; through fear of punishment the whole world yields the enjoyments (which it owes)."

To conclude, the entire concept of *dharma* in its multi-natured contexts may be encapsulated as follows:

Dharma "is the essential foundation of something or things in general. It is the way things are: factual, authentic, actual and which signifies truth: It is that which is established, customary and proper and therefore traditional or ceremonial. It refers to one's duty and responsibility and hence imperative and everyone is morally obliged to follow. It is that which is right, virtuous, meritorious and, therefore, ethical. It is that which is required, precepted or permitted through religious authority and thus legal. In a descriptive sense, dharma would mean 'the way things are' and in a prescriptive sense it would refer to 'the way things ought to be'.

Historically, three categories of meaning have been given to dharma: (1) It is the law governing the natural order; hence it may mean the natural law or the universal order; (2) It is the normative principle on which the moral and social orders are established and by which the ethical quality of human actions (karma) is to be determined and evaluated; and (3) It is the body of injunctions and prohibitions governing religious life, primarily the performance of sacramental rites. It originates from the hoary past and spread through the Vedic and post-Vedic periods. Most orthodox Hindu traditions affirm three sources (*mūla*) for ethical and legal decisions: divine revelation, sacred tradition and the practice of the wise. Some texts add a fourth, namely, conscience."<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Sekhar, '*Dharma in the early Brahmanic, Buddhist and Jain traditions*' (Satguru Publications, Delhi:2003) p.47

Dharma is, in short, based on *śruti* (revelation), *smṛti* (law), *sampradāya* (tradition) *sadācāra* (custom), and *sākṣī* (conscience). As against dharma, anything which is disorderly, unlawful, immoral, unnatural, self-serving, evil, unrighteous, irreligious, untraditional and going against the norms of customs, piety, wisdom and goodness is deemed as '*adharma*'. And lastly, that category in which most of humanity fits in as well as many characters from the two Hindu epics, is the 'grey zone' between the extremes of dharma and adharna that may be termed as '*dharmādharna*'. There are no specific traditional treatises and tracts dealing with these two latter categories. They are merely pointed to in terms of falling short of the ideal of dharma as described above.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Rāmāyaṇa**

#### **a synopsis**

#### **Bālakāṇḍa**

In the city of Ayodhyā there lived a monarch by the name Daśaratha. He had three queens. Kausalyā was the chief queen, Sumitrā was the middle and least important queen, and Kaikeyī the youngest, the most beautiful and favorite queen. Despite having three queens, Daśaratha was childless. Then, upon the advise of his ministers, the king decided to perform the Horse-sacrifice [Aśvamedha] in order to obtain children.

As the fire-sacrifice was being performed, there arose from among the flames, a huge figure carrying a golden vessel containing a heavenly porridge. King Daśaratha gratefully received this heavenly porridge and went to the chambers of the three queens. He gave one half of the porridge to Kausalyā asking her to share it equally with Sumitrā. Then the king went to Kaikeyī and gave the remaining half to her. He also requested Kaikeyī to share the porridge equally with Sumitrā. Thus Sumitrā received a double-share from each of her two co-queens.

Then on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the bright half of the month of Caitra, the three queens gave birth to four male infants. Kausalyā gave birth first to Rāma. Next, Kaikeyī gave birth to Bharata. Finally, Sumitrā gave birth to

twin boys, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. Of these four princes, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa formed one pair, and Bharata and Śatrughna formed the second pair.

Once the Sage Viśvāmitra visited the court of King Daśaratha to request his protection from demonic harassers during the performance of a Vedic fire-sacrifice. The king promises the sage his protection. The sage then requests the king to send Rāma with him to protect the sacrificial area. The king is afraid for his crown prince and asks the sage to reconsider. However, the sage is insistent upon Rāma alone, and finally the king hesitatingly yields. The sage finally departs the palace with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

At the behest of Sage Viśvāmitra, Rāma kills the demoness Tāḍaka and the demon Subāhu. The sage then proceeds to the kingdom of Mithilā together with the two princes. Having reached the outskirts of Mithilā, the party arrived at seemed to be an abandoned hermitage.

The hermitage belonged to the Sage Gautama who after discovering his wife Ahalyā's adultery with the god Indra had pronounced a curse on each of them and had left for the Himalayas to meditate. Sage Gautama's curse on his wife Ahalyā was that she would remain invisible in the hermitage for many thousands of years filled with remorse and feeding only on air. She would be redeemed from the curse and become visible again only when Rāma enters the hermitage and she is able to offer him respects and hospitality. Thus, when Rāma

together with Lakṣmaṇa and Sage Viśvāmitra enters the hermitage, Ahalyā is redeemed from the curse. Sage Gautama is able to envision this through

his yogic powers, and is able to arrive at the hermitage by his spiritual powers to seek the blessings of Rāma.

After this, the Sage Viśvāmitra and the two princes reach the palace of King Janaka in Mithilā. There Sage Viśvāmitra asks King Janaka to show the great bow of the god Śiva which had been entrusted to Janaka's ancestors by the gods. Janaka had made it a condition that only the person who is able to bend and string the great bow of Śiva would be able to marry his beautiful adopted daughter Sītā whom he had accidentally discovered in a field while performing the annual plowing rite. Many a suitor had come earlier with the hopes of winning Sītā's hand by stringing the bow, but had failed and left disappointed. When this very same bow was shown to Rāma, he was easily able to bend it and string it. It also broke in the process. King Janaka was pleased and decided to give Sītā's hand in marriage to Rāma. He also decided to give his own daughter Urmiḷa in marriage to Lakṣmaṇa. Janaka's younger brother, Prince Kuśadhvaja also decided to give his two beautiful daughters, Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti, in marriage to Bharata and Śatrughna respectively. After the arrival of King Daśaratha, his queens and the princes Bharata and Śatrughna, the wedding of the four princes was duly performed.

Suddenly, the Sage Paraśurāma appeared at the scene of the wedding challenging Rāma to a duel. The sage had heard of the breaking of Śiva's bow. He now brought Viṣṇu's bow for the duel. Seeing all the gods appear and Rāma's anger, Paraśurāma recognized the divine nature of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and upon begging Rāma's pardon promptly withdrew from the scene.

After the conclusion of the wedding, Daśaratha, his three queens and the four princes with their brides left for Ayodhyā.

## **Ayodhyākāṇḍa**

After twelve years of happy married life, Rāma hears from King Daśaratha that he has decided to crown him king and handover the reins of power to him. Daśaratha makes it very clear to Rāma that he wants to do this in Bharata's absence. Bharata and Śatrughna are now in visiting their maternal uncle.

Mantharā, the hump-backed chambermaid of Queen Kaikeyī, hears of the news and is beside herself with envy, hatred and rage. She quickly goes to Queen Kaikeyī and thoroughly brainwashes her. She reminds Queen Kaikeyī that King Daśaratha owes her two boons. Kaikeyī had been given these two boons by King Daśaratha when she had nursed him back to health. The circumstance was that King Daśaratha had helped the god Indra in his battle against the demon king Timidhvaja. Daśaratha had been gravely wounded during this battle. Kaikeyī had bravely rescued him from the battlefield and tended to his wounds. When the joyous Daśaratha conferred two boons on her, she decided to redeem them at a later date. Now, Mantharā asks Kaikeyī to redeem them.

Though Kaikeyī initially rejects this idea, she ultimately succumbs to Mantharā's evil persuasions. Mantharā before leaving the queen tells her that the two boons ought to be that she must first demand that Rāma be exiled to the forest for fourteen years, and secondly demand the installation of Bharata on the throne. She tells the queen to put on rags, take-off all her jewelry and enter the "chamber of wrath" and cry incessantly. The brainwashed queen does precisely that, and King Daśaratha comes in search of her to tell her the good news of Rāma's upcoming installation. When the king finds Kaikeyī in the chamber in a totally disheveled condition, he

is anxious to know the reasons. After much indirect talk, the queen makes her point and decides to redeem her two boons by reminding the king of them. The king innocently promises to grant her any wish. However, when the king hears about the two demands of Kaikeyī, he is stunned with disbelief. He requests repeatedly for the queen to reconsider her demands. However, Kaikeyī remains firm and unmoved. Kaikeyī in her request swiftly sneaks in an addendum to her two boons. She demands that Rāma wear garments of bark during his exile. He is to wear no princely clothing or jewelry. This is something Mantharā had not told her. So, she got three boons with the third demand embedded clearly in the first.

Seeing no way out, Daśaratha summons Rāma, and informs him of the situation. Rāma readily agrees. He proceeds to inform Sītā who promptly expresses her desire to join him in exile by convincing Rāma that it is the duty of the wife to be with her husband. Rāma tries to dissuade her to no avail. He finally agrees to her joining him in exile. Lakṣmaṇa is beside himself with rage when he hears the sad news. He wants to slay both Bharata and Kaikeyī. Rāma restrains him. Lakṣmaṇa too decides to join his brother and sister-in-law in exile. Rāma's mother, Kausalyā, too wishes to join him in exile. However Rāma successfully convinces her otherwise.

Finally, Rāma together with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa decide to leave for their fourteen year exile in the forest. Not being able to bear his oldest son's departure into exile, Daśaratha dies a broken man.

In the meanwhile, Bharata returns from his uncle's house, and after finding out the cause of his father's death, goes and chastises his mother. He curses her profusely. He refuses to accept the throne, and instead sets-



off with a large contingent of citizens of Ayodhyā in search of Rāma in order to plead with him to return back to Ayodhyā.

Bharata finally manages to locate Rāma at a place called Citrakūṭa. He begs and pleads with Rāma to return and become king. Rāma refuses. Finally, a compromise is reached. Bharata requests that Rāma give him his sandals. Bharata tells Rāma that he will place these on the throne until the return of Rāma. Bharata also tells Rāma that he would stay at a village called Nandigrāma located just outside Ayodhyā like an ascetic until Rāma's return. If Rāma were not to return from his exile fourteen years to date, he would immolate himself in the fire. Rāma agrees and promises to return in fourteen years. Bharata is satisfied, and returns to Ayodhyā with the sandals of Rāma. On reaching Ayodhyā, Bharata installs the sandals on the throne with the utmost reverence.

### Aranyakāṇḍa

The trio, i.e. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, enter the dense Daṇḍāraṇya Forest. There they encounter the demon Virādha who wishes to have Sītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa engage him in a fight and eventually kill him. The trio then proceed to Pañcavaṭī and settle down there at a hermitage. There, Śūrpaṅakhā, the sister of the demon-king Rāvaṇa of Lankā, approached Rāma with a proposal of marriage. Rāma sends her to Lakṣmaṇa who refuses her as well. She tries to nag Lakṣmaṇa who finally gets irritated with her and cuts-off her nose and ears. She goes crying-off

to her brother Khara who sets-off with force against Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to avenge his sister. The two brothers easily slay Khara and his entire force except for Akampana who promptly goes to the court of Rāvaṇa at Lankā and narrates to the demon-king all that has transpired.

Rāvaṇa then sets-off toward the place of the trio. On the way, he stops-off at the place of his friend, Mārīca, who upon knowing Rāvaṇa's intentions warns him about Rāma and advises him to drop his plans and return to Lankā. Rāvaṇa heeds his advice and returns to Lankā. In the meanwhile, Śūrpaṇakhā arrives at Rāvaṇa's court at Lankā, and starts to complain of what the two brothers did to her. She begins to revile Rāvaṇa for not doing anything, and being so unconcerned. She describes to him the beauty of Sītā. This arouses Rāvaṇa. He then promptly resolves to avenge his sister and to obtain Sītā for himself. He then departs for Rāma's hermitage. He once again stops-off at Mārīca's place where again the latter advises Rāvaṇa not to bother Rāma. This time Rāvaṇa not only ignores the advice but solicits his help in trying to abduct Sītā. Mārīca finally agrees to help Rāvaṇa with his evil intentions.

The plot is that Mārīca would transform himself into a golden spotted deer and roam about Sītā. She would get so enticed by it that she would ask Rāma to get it for her. Mārīca would then entice Rāma into a long chase well away from the hermitage. As the arrow of Rāma hits him, he would scream out the names of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. Having heard this, Lakṣmaṇa would come looking for Rāma leaving Sītā vulnerable and alone. Rāvaṇa would then get dressed as a mendicant and abduct Sītā.

The plan worked perfectly. Everything transpired as per the devious plot. Sītā went to the extent of accusing Lakṣmaṇa of trying to get her for himself when Lakṣmaṇa refused to go after hearing the phony cries of

distress let out by Mārīca. Lakṣmaṇa is caught in a real dilemma. Finally, when he does go in search of Rāma, Rāvaṇa is able to abduct Sītā disguised as a mendicant.

As Rāvaṇa carries-off Sītā, the eagle Jaṭāyu encounters Rāvaṇa. Jaṭāyu is mortally wounded in the fight. Sītā manages to throw-off her jewels from the celestial car of Rāvaṇa so as to leave a trace for Rāma. In the meanwhile, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa return to Pañcavaṭī, and upon seeing that Sītā is missing, Rāma is plunged into grief. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa depart from Pañcavaṭī in search of Sītā. On the way, they encounter Jaṭāyu who is barely alive. The eagle tells Rāma about Sītā's abduction and dies. The brothers then encounter a demon named Kavandha who is slain by them. He before dying, however, tells the brothers to seek the assistance of the monkey-king Sugrīva in trying to rescue Sītā from the clutches of Rāvaṇa.

### **Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa**

Sugrīva, the regent of the Vānara tribes who has been exiled by his brother Vālī, perceives the two princes coming towards his safe haven in the Ṛṣyamūka mountain. He becomes suspicious of the two princes, and thinks that they have been dispatched by his brother Vālī to seek him out and kill him. Thus Sugrīva dispatches his most trusted and intelligent minister, Hanumān, to go and find out as to who the two princes are, and what their ultimate objective is in this dense forest. Hanumān then disguises himself and presents himself in front of the two brothers. Once

he learns as to what their objective is, Hanumān escorts them into Sugrīva's haven, and introduces the two brothers to his boss.

Rāma tells Sugrīva of his situation, and Sugrīva tells Rāma of his plight. As people in exile and distress, they readily recognize each other's troubles and seal a pact of friendship to help each other out. Sugrīva then asks the Vānara tribals to bring out some jewels that had fallen from the sky and which they had collected, and shows them to the two brothers. Rāma readily recognizes them as Sītā's jewels.

Sugrīva in turn tells Rāma as to how his arrogant older brother Vālī had thoughtlessly and cruelly thrown him out despite the fact he had faithfully served him.

Rāma then asks Sugrīva to challenge Vālī to a duel and that Rāma would kill Vālī from behind a tree. In the duel, Rāma is unable to tell the two brothers apart, and the stronger Vālī clobbers the weaker Sugrīva. Rāma then discloses to Sugrīva as to why he could not kill Vālī and requests Sugrīva to challenge Vālī to a second duel. This time Sugrīva wore a garland. Rāma then aims his arrow and kills Vālī. He then coronates Sugrīva as king of the Vānaras.

The rainy season arrives and passes, and Sugrīva as king is completely engrossed in his own affairs thereby forgetting his obligations to Rāma. This enrages Lakṣmaṇa. Rāma then dispatches Lakṣmaṇa to Sugrīva's court to remind him of his unfulfilled obligations. Sugrīva apologizes and pledges to press the entire Vānara forces to help Rāma.

## **Sundarakāṇḍa**

Finally Sugrīva dispatches Hanumān to go out to Lankā, seek out Sītā, and present her the ring of Rāma. Hanumān arrives in Lankā and is wonderstruck at the opulence and splendor of Rāvaṇa's capital and palace. Hanumān finally seeks out Sītā in the Aśoka Garden. Sītā initially thinks that Hanumān is a trickster sent by Rāvaṇa. However, Hanumān manages to calm her fears by presenting to her the signet ring of Rāma. Sītā, in turn, gives one of her ornaments to be given to Rāma to Hanumān who after offering his salutations takes leave of her.

Just before returning to Kiṣkindhā, Hanumān wrecks havoc in the Aśoka Grove. When the news reaches Rāvaṇa's ears, he is deeply enraged. He dispatches his generals and princes against Hanumān. Despite three major clashes, they are unable to subdue Hanumān. Finally, Rāvaṇa dispatches his crown princes, Indrajit, to capture Hanumān and bring him to Rāvaṇa's presence.

Indrajit with his special weapons is finally able to subdue Hanumān and bring him in chains before Rāvaṇa. Hanumān takes the opportunity to warn Rāvaṇa about Rāma. However, Rāvaṇa merely insults Hanumān and orders his henchmen to set fire to Hanumān's tail. Hanumān takes his fiery tail and burns all of Lankā. As he is cooling his tail in the sea, he suddenly remembers about Sītā. He is overwhelmed with remorse of not having thought about Sītā when he set out to burn Lankā. Having ascertained that Sītā is safe, he returns to Kiṣkindhā.

## **Yuddhakāṇḍa**

On the orders of Sugrīva, the Vānara army begins the construction of a causeway across the ocean strait into Lankā as a prelude to the invasion. On hearing about this, Rāvaṇa summons his council of ministers to a meeting to deal with the impending crisis. Rāvaṇa's youngest brother Vibhīṣaṇa, offers his benign advice to Rāvaṇa to let Sītā go and to avoid the confrontation with Rāma whose impeccable character and prowess Vibhīṣaṇa knows all too well. Rāvaṇa is deeply insulted by this and kicks Vibhīṣaṇa out of Lankā.

Vibhīṣaṇa arrives at Rāma's place with four ministers and seeks refuge in Rāma. He concludes a pact with Rāma in order to help the latter to serve the release of Sītā. Kumbhakarṇa, the other younger brother of Rāvaṇa, also advises the latter to give up Sītā, but when he refuses, Kumbhakarṇa pledges his support to Rāvaṇa in fighting Rāma based on the principle of "blood is thicker than water."

Armed with this assurance and full of confidence, Rāvaṇa dispatches one by one of his generals to engage Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the Vānara forces in battle. All that happens is that each general gets killed and the forces of Lankā go into a retreat each time.

Rāvaṇa then dispatches his son Indrajit who is confronted by Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield. Indrajit is able to overcome Lakṣmaṇa who faints as one of the arrows discharged by Indrajit strikes him. Rāma is deeply saddened. Rāma is told that only a particular herb can revive Lakṣmaṇa. Hanumān is dispatched to fetch the herb. This herb is eventually administered to Lakṣmaṇa who revives. Lakṣmaṇa then

challenges Indrajit to engage in battle once more. This time Lakṣmaṇa kills Indrajit. Rāvaṇa is heart broken.

Kumbhakarṇa then proceeds to engage Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in battle. Kumbhakarṇa too is eventually killed by Rāma. Finally, Rāvaṇa himself decides to take on Rāma. After much fighting, Rāvaṇa is finally killed. Sītā is finally freed. However, Rāma asks her to prove her chastity by going through the fire. When Sītā comes out unscathed, Rāma accepts her. Rāma then coronates Vibhīṣaṇa as king of Lankā and returns by aerial vehicle with Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān and others back to Ayodhyā. The fourteen years of exile is about to come to an end. Rāma is fearful that Bharata may immolate himself if Rāma is not back at the precise end of the 14 year period. So, he sends Hanumān in advance to inform Bharata of Rāma's impending arrival. Bharata is beside himself with joy. With Rāma's arrival, Bharata embraces him and duly hands over charge of the kingdom. Rāma along with Sītā takes the throne of Ayodhyā and is formally coronated.

### **Uttarakāṇḍa**

Rāma sends out spies throughout Ayodhyā to find out what they think of his rule. Many of the spies return with various types of criticism. One particular spy returns with the news that most hurts him. The spy reports that some people think that Rāma accepted a wife who had lived with another man. Immediately, Rāma sends for Sītā and exiles her from

his palace. The pregnant Sītā is heartbroken and dutifully leaves the palace. The Sage Vālmīki offers her refuge in his hermitage. There, Sītā delivers twin sons who are named Lava and Kuśa.

Rāma, in the meanwhile, performs the Aśvamedha sacrifice and dispatches his horse across neighboring kingdoms. Lava and Kuśa oppose the imperial horse and the armies that follow it. Rāma hears of this news and arrives at Vālmīki's hermitage. He is reunited with Sītā and his twin sons. He asks Sītā to prove her chastity once more. Sītā prays to the Earth Goddess who receives her and takes her away permanently from Rāma.

Rāma returns to Ayodhyā with his twin sons. Once Rāma holds a secret conference wherein he delegates Lakṣmaṇa to be in charge of not letting anyone in. At that time the Sage Durvasas arrives and demands to be seen by Rāma.

Lakṣmaṇa is caught in a dilemma. He enters Rāma's chambers and disturbs the conference. Rāma is angered that Lakṣmaṇa has disobeyed him. He exiles Lakṣmaṇa who is heartbroken and decides to end his life by entering the Sarayū River which flows by the city of Ayodhyā. Seeing Lakṣmaṇa gone, Rāma too becomes saddened, and he decides to do the same by entering the Sarayū River. Bharata and Śatrughna follow suit in the same manner.



## **Chapter 9**

### **Mahābhārata**

#### **a synopsis**

#### **Ādi Parva**

King Parikṣit was out hunting, and had just wounded a deer which had run-off. The king going in search of the wounded animal came across a sage named Śamīka who was engaged in penance. The king asked the sage as to whether the latter had seen a wounded deer. The sage who was observing a vow of silence remained calm and did not reply. The king felt insulted. He then took a dead snake and put it around the sage's neck and departed from the scene.

Sage Śamīka's son, Śṛṅgī, came to know about his father's situation when his friend, Kṛśa, teased Śṛṅgī about it. Śṛṅgī became enraged, and thereupon cursed the person who was disrespectful to his father to die of snake-bite within a week.

Śṛṅgī informed his father that he had cursed the king. The sage reminded Śṛṅgī that they both, as citizens, were in the king's domain and that Śṛṅgī should have known better than to act in such a fashion towards the ruler of the land. The compassionate sage Śamīka immediately dispatched an emissary named Gauramukha to the king informing him of the curse laid on him by his son Śṛṅgī.

On hearing this, the king became extremely penitent and arranged to take every precaution against the snakebite. However, the snakes came in the form of a group of hermits and presented him with fruits. As the king partook of one of the fruits, a copper colored insect with black eyes emerged from it, and bit the king killing him instantly.

The ministers then coronated the young prince Janamejaya to succeed his father, King Parikṣit, on the throne. Janamejaya then vowed to avenge his father's death and began to perform the snake sacrifice. At this time the Sage Vyāsa walked in and the young king Janamejaya requested the sage to narrate the story of his ancestors. The Sage Vyāsa requests his disciple, Vaiśampāyana, to do so.

Once a king named Pratīpa and his wife performed a penance as they had no son. Eventually a son was born and they named him Mahābhīṣa. He was also known as Śantanu. When Śantanu came of age, his father told him of a beautiful girl who had asked him about Śantanu's well-being. King Pratīpa told his son that if he ever came across this girl and if she asked him to marry her, Śantanu ought to do so without inquiring of her background, her intentions and not to be judgmental about her if she does something he does not particularly like.

Once Śantanu was out hunting and he came across a beautiful damsel. Śantanu was immediately filled with desire and asked the damsel to marry him. The damsel too was smitten by Śantanu's handsome physique and readily agreed.

The only condition that she put forth to him was that Śantanu ought not to be judgmental about her behavior. She would remain with him as long as he does not inquire into or object to whatever she might do. Śantanu

agreed, and they got married. This beautiful damsel was none other than the River Gangā in human form.

Śantanu and Gangā spent many years in marital bliss. Gangā gave birth to seven sons over a period of time. However, as each son was born, Gangā threw the child into the river. Śantanu remembering his promise to his wife did not object on any of the seven occasions. But when the eighth son was born and Gangā was about to repeat her strange behavior, Śantanu had had enough of it and broke his silence and asked Gangā not to kill their eighth son. She then told Śantanu that since he had violated their agreement, she will leave him but spare the eighth son. Gangā told Śantanu who she was and why she did what she did with their seven sons. The Sage Vasiṣṭha had earlier cursed the eight Vasus who were now redeeming themselves by taking human births. Having said this, Gangā departed with her son.

One day Śantanu was again out hunting and he came across a strong young man whom he recognized to be his son. The young man through his celestial powers disappeared. Śantanu called upon his ex-wife to show him their son. Gangā appeared together with their son, Devavrata, and presented him to Śantanu telling him that their son had received his education from the sages Vasiṣṭha and Paraśurāma. He could now take Devavrata and teach him the art of statecraft. Śantanu gladly received his son and upon taking him back to his capital appointed him crown-prince.

Then again one day when Śantanu was out hunting on the banks of the River Yamunā, he was attracted by a strong fragrance. Desiring to know the source of the pleasant smell, the king traced it to its origin. It was coming from a beautiful dark-complexioned girl who belonged to the fishermen's community. Śantanu was smitten and overcome with desire for

the girl. He immediately expressed his wish to wed her. He then sought out the girl's father to ask for her hand in marriage. The girl's father was the chief of the fishermen community. He was happy to see Śantanu and glad to offer his daughter to the king. However, he put one condition. He wanted the first child born of the marriage to be the inheritor of the throne. Since Śantanu already had appointed Prince Devavrata to succeed him, he was not willing to give that promise to the fisherman chief. Dejected, the king returned to his palace.

Prince Devavrata eventually came to know of his father's grief as the king just could not forget the beautiful fisher-maiden. Prince Devavrata then set out to meet the fisher-chief himself. The fisher chieftain received Devavrata very respectfully and restated his conditions to the prince. Devavrata then expressed his vow to the fisher-chief that the child born of his father, Śantanu, and the fisher-chief's daughter, Satyawatī, will be the inheritor of the throne. Devavrata would forever relinquish the rights to the throne. The crafty and farsighted fisher-chief accepted this promise but laid one more condition on the prince. If the prince were to marry, his children might then claim the throne. Seeing the fisher-chief's concern, Devavrata took a second vow. He vowed to remain celibate. The fisher-chief was now totally satisfied that the throne would go to his grandchild. He agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Śantanu. The gods in heaven proclaimed Prince Devavrata as "Bhīṣma" or the one with a "terrible resolve".

King Śantanu was now happy and weds Satyawatī. He grants to Bhīṣma a boon that he could not be killed by anyone. He could die only at his own time and will.

Eventually, Śantanu and Satyawatī have two sons. The older son is named Citrāngada. He becomes the crown prince. The younger son is

named Vicitravīrya. Not too long after Śantanu dies. Bhīṣma installs Citrāngada on the throne. The Gandharva king challenges Citrāngada, and after a three-year battle, Citrāngada is killed. Bhīṣma then installed Vicitravīrya on the throne. Bhīṣma then arranges for Vicitravīrya's wedding. He goes to Kāśī where the king is holding court where any ruler could come and seek the hand of any three of his beautiful daughters.

Bhīṣma abducts the three princesses in order to get them married to Vicitravīrya. The oldest princess named Ambā has a lover called Śālva who is a king. Bhīṣma defeats Śālva in battle. Ambā then confronts Bhīṣma and tells him of her love for King Śālva. Bhīṣma then lets her go. Her two younger sisters Ambikā and Ambālikā, then are wedded-off to Vicitravīrya. Soon Vicitravīrya develops tuberculosis and dies. Satyavatī is full of sorrow that both of her sons are dead and that the lineage has somehow to be perpetuated. She requests Bhīṣma to marry the two widowed princesses to continue the lineage. Bhīṣma reminds her of his vow of celibacy. Satyavatī then tells Bhīṣma of her other son Vyāsa whom she had through the Sage Parāśara who too like Śantanu, but only much earlier, had a lust for her. Bhīṣma agrees to Vyāsa becoming the father. Satyavatī invokes Vyāsa who appears on the scene. Satyavatī requests Vyāsa to sleep with his step-brother's widows. Vyāsa agrees.

Vyāsa first enters Ambikā's chambers. She is so taken aback by Vyāsa's ugly looks that she closes her eyes during sex. The child that is eventually born of this sexual relation was born blind. He was named Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

Vyāsa then enters Ambālikā's chambers. Seeing the ugly visage of Vyāsa, she turned pale. So, the child born of this union was also born pale. So, he was called Pāṇḍu [the pale one]. Seeing the disaster in each

case, Satyavatī again requested Vyāsa to go to bed with Ambikā. However, Ambikā refusing to go through that experience again, sent a maid-servant in her stead to Vyāsa. The maid-servant happily spent the night with Vyāsa who predicted that the son born of their union would be a very wise person. After the birth of the child, it was named Vidura. Each of the three princes had a particular distinguishing feature. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was a person of enormous strength, Pāṇḍu was a good archer, and Vidura was an extremely moral and wise person.

Princess Gāndhārī, the daughter of King Subala, constantly worshipped the god Śiva who granted her a boon that she would one day bear a hundred sons. Bhīṣma had heard about the young lady and sent emissaries to King Subala seeking his daughter's hand in marriage to Prince Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Subala hesitated on account of the prince being blind. However, on account of the noble lineage, Subala ultimately agreed to the alliance. Gāndhārī was so devoted to her husband that in order not to be more privileged than her husband in any way, she bandaged her eyes permanently. Vyāsa too blessed Gāndhārī to have a hundred sons.

King Śūrasena had a son and a daughter. He had a cousin who was King Kuntibhoja. This cousin was childless, and so Śūrasena, on the request of Kuntibhoja, gave his daughter Pṛthā to him for adoption. Having adopted Pṛthā, Kuntibhoja renamed her Kuntī.

Once when the Sage Durvasas visited King Kuntibhoja, the princess Kuntī was assigned to attend on the sage during his stay. Kuntī did her job very dutifully. Pleased by this, Durvasas bestowed a boon to her in which she could invoke any deity by merely chanting a mantra.

Being young and curious, Kuntī invoked the god Sūrya [Sun-god]. Kuntī was stunned when Sūrya appeared and asked her what she wanted of him. When Kuntī told the Sun-god that she did not desire anything but was merely testing the efficacy of the mantra, the Sun-god said that he could not return without granting her a boon. Sūrya gave Kuntī a son who was born with protective armor and earrings. Afraid of what people might say, Kuntī took her son, put him in a basket which she set afloat on the river. Thankfully, a charioteer found the child in the basket and raised him as his own child. The charioteer and his wife named their adopted child Vasuṣeṇa.

Vasuṣeṇa grew up to be a skilled archer. He would constantly worship the Sun-god and give away anything the priests requested of him. His generosity became legendary.

Seeing this, the god Indra once tried to test Vasuṣeṇa. Indra appeared before him in the guise of a priest, and requested that he give him the armor and earrings that he was born with. Vasuṣeṇa did not hesitate for a single moment. He gave him his earrings and armor by cutting it off from his body. Indra was pleased and granted him a special weapon which could kill anyone if hurled against them. Also, from that point on, Vasuṣeṇa became known as Karṇa [the cutter] because of his sense of generosity.

King Kuntibhoja held a marriage court for his beautiful adopted daughter Kuntī who had now come of age. Many royal suitors came to seek her hand in marriage. Kuntī chose Prince Pāṇḍu. Bhīṣma also obtained for Pāṇḍu the hand of the beautiful princess Mādrī in marriage. Thus Pāṇḍu had two wives.

One day, Prince Pāṇḍu was out hunting. He espied a deer making love to a doe. Taking aim, Pāṇḍu shot both with five arrows. The deer and the doe were actually the Sage Kindama and his wife who had assumed such a form. Kindama cursed Pāṇḍu saying that since he tried to kill them in the act of mating, Pāṇḍu would die if he attempted to make love to either of his wives. Pāṇḍu tells of this curse to his two queens. Kuntī comforts Pāṇḍu by telling him that she had special powers on account of the boon given to her by Sage Durvasas.

Kuntī thus invokes the god Dharma who promptly appears before her and grants her a son. He is named Yudhiṣṭhira. Gāndhārī who is also pregnant at that time, and who is Kuntī's rival, in a sheer fit of jealousy and anxiety hits her own womb. Gāndhārī delivers a hard mass of flesh like an iron ball. Gāndhārī complains to Vyāsa about his boon not having come true. Why was there this iron like ball instead of a hundred sons? What happened? Sage Vyāsa confronted her and instructed that the ball be first cooled by sprinkling water on it, then split into one hundred parts, each the size of a thumb. Then one hundred jars filled with melted butter be made ready whereupon the hundred parts of the ball should be placed one in each jar. They should not be touched for two years and must be carefully watched over.

As the two years came to an end, the oldest son emerged. He was named Duryodhana. As he emerged, all kinds of ominous signs and sounds occurred. On seeing such phenomena, Vidura advised Dhṛtarāṣṭra to get rid of this child. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra refused to do so. In a month, the other sons plus a daughter emerged. The only daughter was named Duḥśalā.



Kuntī invoked Vāyu, the wind-god, and through him had a son who was named Bhīma. Then she invoked the god Indra and had a son who was named Arjuna. Pāṇḍu requested Kuntī to help Mādrī also obtain children. Kuntī then asked Mādrī to think of some god. She invoked the Aśvin gods. Thus, she had twins. These twins were named Nakula and Sahadeva.

Once when Mādrī had dressed herself beautifully, Pāṇḍu was overcome with sexual desire towards her. The moment he touched Mādrī, the curse of the Sage Kindama took effect, and Pāṇḍu died instantly. Mādrī felt responsible for this. So, she handed over to Kuntī the custody of her twin sons and ascended the funeral pyre of her husband's corpse.

Once the Sage Bharadvāja saw the nymph Dhṛtācī. He was excited and dropped his semen in a vessel [droṇa]. That semen became a child, and it was named Droṇa. Sage Bharadvāja had a royal friend named Pṛṣṭa. This monarch had a son named Drupada. Droṇa and Drupada became good friends and played together. Droṇa learnt the military sciences from the Sage Paraśurāma. Droṇa married a woman named Kṛpī and had a son through her whom he named Aśvatthāmā. When Drupada became king, he rebuffed Droṇa who came to him for help. Droṇa left that area and settled in the kingdom of the Kurus.

Bhīṣma comes to know of Droṇa's arrival and his expertise. He sends for Droṇa and appoints him tutor to the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. On account of this, Yudhiṣṭhira becomes a good chariot-warrior; Bhīma and Duryodhana, good mace fighters; Arjuna, a superb archer;

Duḥśāsana, a wrestler; and Nakula and Sahadeva, good swordsmen. Karṇa who also had learnt archery challenges Arjuna.

Kṛpa, the brother-in-law of Droṇa, stops Arjuna from taking on Karṇa as the latter is not a person of royal blood. Duryodhana, seeing the situation, immediately embraces Karṇa, and makes him a member of the family.

After their education was accomplished, Droṇa asked his royal students for his fee. He told them that the only fee he wanted was that the princes should go and challenge King Drupada to a battle, defeat him, and bring him in chains to the presence of Droṇa.

The princes agreed and accomplished this task. When Drupada was brought before Droṇa, the latter took the northern half of Drupada's kingdom and released the king after granting him sovereignty over the southern half. Drupada never forgot this humiliation and bore in mind to await the time for a proper revenge against Droṇa.

King Drupada, with the help of two sages named Yaja and Upayaja, performed a fire-sacrifice with the express aim of destroying Droṇa. In the course of the sacrifice, a boy emerged from the flames. Thereafter, a girl emerged. The sages named them Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Kṛṣṇā respectively. Because the girl became the adopted daughter of Drupada, Kṛṣṇā came also to be known as Draupadī.

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra sent the five Pāṇḍava brothers and Kuntī to attend the festival of the god Paśupati in the city of Vāraṇāvaṭa. Duryodhana, seeing this as an opportunity to get rid of the Pāṇḍava brothers for good, summoned a minister named Purocana to go to Vāraṇāvaṭa and build a palace for the Pāṇḍavas out of wax. Then, when the unsuspecting

Pāṇḍavas were sleeping, Purocana was to set fire to it, thereby killing the Pāṇḍavas. Purocana did as he was directed by Duryodhana. He received the Pāṇḍavas on their arrival and housed them there. Meanwhile, Vidura, the well-wisher of the Pāṇḍavas, sent word to them about Duryodhana's evil intentions, and made plans for their secret evacuation from the palace.

One night Kuntī and her five sons had a banquet in the palace. A woman from the Niṣāda tribe and her five sons also came to the banquet. After the banquet, the Niṣāda woman and her five sons decided to spend the night in the wax palace. It is that very night that the minister Purocana decided to put his evil plan into action. However, Yudhiṣṭhira came to know of this and related this to Bhīma. But Bhīma outsmarted Purocana and set fire to the place where Purocana was dwelling. Soon, the whole city was on fire. However, the Pāṇḍavas escaped. Seeing the burnt bodies of Purocana and the Niṣāda woman and her five sons, the people of Vāraṇāṣa concluded that the five Pāṇḍavas and their mother Kuntī had died during the blaze.

The Pāṇḍavas went to a forest where a demon named Hiḍimba espied them. He wanted to eat them. He asked his sister to seek them out. This sister, named Hiḍimbā, was smitten by the handsome physique of Bhīma when she saw him and requested him to marry her. The demon Hiḍimba saw this and became angry. Bhīma challenged him to a fight. In the ensuing fight, Hiḍimba was killed. Bhīma then married Hiḍimbā. The couple soon had a son whom they named Ghaṭotkaca. This son grew up to be as strong and powerful as his father.

The Pāṇḍavas eventually arrived at the city of Ekacakra. There they learnt from a brahmin man that a great wedding feat was being arranged by King Drupada for the marriage of his daughter Draupadī. Many kings

had been invited to this wedding feat. In order to win Draupadī's hand, the princes and kings had to attempt to shoot the eye of the moving target above while seeing its image below in a pan of oil. The Pāṇḍava brothers decided to go to the event disguised as brahmins. The entire set of important people from the Kaurava group including Karṇa came to the event at the King Drupada's court. Prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the brother of Draupadī, finally made known all the details of the contest that the princes that had gathered must fully and properly fulfill in order to win his sister's hand in marriage.

One by one the princes tried their hand to fulfill the requirements, but in the end all failed. Finally, Arjuna stood up and came to the area where the feat needed to be performed. He firmly took the bow, strung it, took the five arrows and hit the eye of the moving target with both skill and ease.

All the princes while feeling aghast were also filled with jealous rage that a brahmin could perform such a feat with ease. They all rushed forward to smash Arjuna. However, Bhīma came to his assistance. Before all hell broke loose, Drupada quickly declared that Draupadī had been won fairly, and that the wedding feat was over. Draupadī was married-off to Arjuna. The five Pāṇḍava brothers returned home with Draupadī. Hearing them arrive but not seeing them, their mother Kuntī assumed that they had returned home with alms for that day. So, she unknowingly asked her sons to share equally amongst themselves whatever they had brought. Thus Draupadī became the wife of all five Pāṇḍava brothers. A little while later, King Drupada arrived and saw the princes in dilemma caused by their mother's ordinance. Finally, the Sage Vyāsa resolved the matter by

giving various reasons as to how it is alright for Draupadī to have five husbands.

Later on Arjuna set off on a pilgrimage that was to last a dozen years. He arrived at Prabhāsa which was near Kṛṣṇa's capital at Dvārakā. There, Arjuna happened to meet Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā. He was smitten by her beauty. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to elope with his sister. Arjuna does that, and Balarāma, the older brother of Kṛṣṇa, becomes angry. Kṛṣṇa, however, manages to calm his brother. Eventually, Arjuna marries Subhadrā and the couple later have a son who they named Abhimanyu. Draupadī too gives each of the Pāṇḍava brothers a son.

## **Sabhā Parva**

Yudhiṣṭhira wanted to perform the Rājasūya Sacrifice. In order to do this, Kṛṣṇa tells Yudhiṣṭhira that Jarāsandha, the King of Magadha, must be defeated. Kṛṣṇa asks Bhīma to take on Jarāsandha. Finally, after a fortnight of battle, Bhīma slays Jarāsandha.

After the successful completion of the Rājasūya Sacrifice, Duryodhana and his uncle Śakuni were surveying the palace. Suddenly, Duryodhans fell into the water, and all present there laughed. Duryodhana felt deeply insulted. He plans to avenge this insult.

Śakuni tells Duryodhana of a plan wherein the Pāṇḍavas would lose their kingdom. They reveal the plan to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra who immediately

agrees. He sends his brother Vidura to invite the Pāṇḍavas to a dice match. Yudhiṣṭhira agrees to come and play dice.

As the game progresses, Yudhiṣṭhira first stakes his kingdom and wealth, and loses. Then he stakes each of his brothers and loses. He then stakes himself and loses. Finally, he stakes Draupadī and loses.

Duryodhana then sends an attendant to go and fetch Draupadī and bring her into the assembly hall where all the elders had gathered. Draupadī, who was in her monthly periods, sent word that she cannot come. The enraged Duryodhana then sends Duḥśāsana to fetch Draupadī. Duḥśāsana goes and drags Draupadī by the hair and brings her into the assembly hall. All gathered there were aghast at such uncivil behavior. Only Duryodhana, Śakuni, Karṇa and Duḥśāsana were amused by this plight of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī.

Karṇa, then ordered Duḥśāsana to disrobe Draupadī in front of all. Duḥśāsana, then began to disrobe Draupadī. As she was being disrobed, a miracle took place. Duḥśāsana found himself endlessly attempting to disrobe Draupadī to no avail. The more he attempted, the garment seemed to never end always protecting Draupadī in the process. Seeing this miraculous spectacle, all present in the court were truly amazed. Bhīma, however, became angry and vows to kill Duḥśāsana one day and drink his blood. His anger next turns to Duryodhana when the latter bares his left thigh in an obscene gesture and asks Draupadī to come and sit on it. Bhīma vows to one day smash those very thighs of Duryodhana. When Duḥśāsana falls down from exhaustion and Draupadī takes all the elders to task for allowing such public indecency, Dhṛtarāṣṭra puts an end to the whole ugly event, and grants Draupadī three boons. In the first boon, she asks that Yudhiṣṭhira be set free. When that is granted, Draupadī asks her

second boon that her remaining four husbands be set free. When that too is granted, Draupadī asks her final boon that the kingdom and wealth of her husbands, which they had lost during their gambling match, be returned. When Dhṛtarāṣṭra grants that as well, the evil quartet of Śakuni, Karṇa, Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana are totally disappointed.

Again the evil quartet scheme and manage to invite Yudhiṣṭhira for another gambling match. This time the condition is that the losers will not only lose their kingdom but be exiled to the forest for twelve years and the thirteenth year they shall spend incognito. If their identity is to be discovered in the thirteenth year, they would have to spend another dozen years in exile in the forest. Yudhiṣṭhira agrees to these conditions. The Pāṇḍavas, however, lose the dice match and as such go into exile for twelve years.

### **Āraṇyaka Parva**

The Pāṇḍava brothers and their common wife Draupadī wander about in the forest. The Kauravas are, in the meantime, fighting the Gandharvas. They get defeated by the Gandharvas. Yudhiṣṭhira hears of this and asks his brothers to go and defeat the Gandharvas and set their Kaurava cousins free.

The god Indra who was pro-Pāṇḍava approaches Karṇa in order to obtain his immortal armor. The god Sūrya had already warned Karṇa about

Indra's intentions. Karṇa, who was known for his deep sense of generosity, ignored the warnings of the god Sūrya. Indra, seeing the opportunity, comes disguised as a brahmin and requests Karṇa for his protective and immortal armor and earrings. Karṇa, in turn, asks Indra for the special śakti weapon. Indra agrees, but tells Karṇa that he can only use the weapon just once against a powerful enemy when he [Karṇa] is in great danger. If Karṇa were to misuse it, the śakti weapon would turn against him. Karṇa then handed over the earrings and armor over to Indra.

### **Virāṭa Parva**

Just before the commencement of the thirteenth year, Yudhiṣṭhira called his brothers to tell them that they would spend the thirteenth year incognito in the palace of King Virāṭa.

Yudhiṣṭhira would act as brahmin named Kanka, and become the king's advisor. Bhīma would become a cook named Ballava, and become employed in the palace kitchen. Arjuna would be a dance instructor named Bṛhannada, and seek employment in the palace teaching the princess. Nakula would be a stable-keeper named Granthika, and Sahadeva would call himself Tantripāla seeking employed in the palace cow-pen. Draupadī would call herself Mālinī, and work as the queen's chamber-maid.

When the Pāṇḍava brothers and Draupadī approached the king and queen separately, they all became employed at the palace. Kīcaka, the



brother of Queen Sudeṣṇā and the commander-in-chief of the Virāṭa army, saw Draupadī, desired her and expressed his wishes to her. Draupadī, however, rejects Kīcaka and tells him not to bother or molest her. Draupadī goes and complains to the king who ignores her. When she complains to Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna and the twins, they all ignore her as they wanted to keep their respective identities secret. Finally, in desperation, she approaches Bhīma who decides to avenge her. Bhīma hatches a plan in which he tells Draupadī to agree to Kīcaka's advances. She asks Kīcaka to come to her chambers that night. However, Bhīma goes dressed as Draupadī at night and awaits Kīcaka's arrival. As the unsuspecting and lustful Kīcaka approaches, Bhīma pounces on him and slays him.

Seeing the mighty Kīcaka slain, Suśarmā, the king of the Trigartas, plans to attack the Virāṭa kingdom. In the meanwhile, the thirteenth year ends for the exiled Pāṇḍavas. Prince Uttara discovers who his father's employees are. The five Pāṇḍava brothers agree to defend the Virāṭa kingdom. They defeat the Trigartas. Princess Uttarā, who had been taught dance by Arjuna in disguise, eventually becomes his daughter-in-law by marrying Arjuna's son Abhimanyu.

### **Udyoga Parva**

Abhimanyu and Uttarā get married. During the occasion, Kṛṣṇa and his older brother Balarāma together with their close associate Sātyakī discuss the possibilities of peace between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.

However, Duryodhana has already planned for war with the Pāṇḍavas. With this in mind, he arrives at Dvārakā to seek Kṛṣṇa's help. He enters the palace and makes his way to Kṛṣṇa's chamber only to find him asleep. He places himself near a seat at the head of Kṛṣṇa's bed. Arjuna too, in trying to ready his side for the eventual and inevitable battle also arrives at Dvārakā to seek Kṛṣṇa's help. He too enters Kṛṣṇa's chambers and finding him asleep takes a seat near the foot of Kṛṣṇa's bed. Kṛṣṇa gets up and upon seeing Arjuna first, embraces him. Duryodhana gets very upset seeing this. Kṛṣṇa immediately consoles him by saying that he saw Arjuna first and that he was not playing favorites. Kṛṣṇa then asks Duryodhana as to what he came for. Kṛṣṇa similarly asks Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa then tells Duryodhana that he'll help them both, but Arjuna will be given the first choice as he is the younger of the two. Duryodhana reluctantly agrees. Kṛṣṇa then enunciates his choice. One of them can have him alone as a non-combatant, while the other can have his entire powerful army. Arjuna, being given the first choice, without a second thought, chooses Kṛṣṇa. Duryodhana, who was anxious at first, is pleasantly relieved at Arjuna's choice. He even smirks at Arjuna's choice. Duryodhana, thus by default, gets the powerful Yādava army. Arjuna then requests Kṛṣṇa to be his charioteer during the ensuing battle. Kṛṣṇa readily agrees. Duryodhana immediately contacts Śalya, the brother of Mādrī, to become Karṇa's charioteer.

Kṛṣṇa and the other well-wishers who would like to avoid the battle try their best to resolve things peacefully between the two parties who were getting ready for battle. With this in mind, Kṛṣṇa goes to the Kaurava court and does everything from pleading and arguing, to getting angry, and eventually showing his cosmic form. Kṛṣṇa asks Duryodhana to

grant the Pāṇḍavas just five villages, but the latter is not prepared to give a square inch of land to the Pāṇḍavas.

Later, Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī separately approach Karṇa to not engage in combat, but the latter stands firm in his commitment to the Kauravas. Śikhaṇḍin, a eunuch who will fight for the Pāṇḍavas, becomes an issue when Bhīṣma says that he will not kill Śikhaṇḍin in battle.

### **Bhīṣma Parva**

The Kauravas, the Pāṇḍavas and their respective allies elaborately discuss the nature of the dharmayuddha [righteous war]. The Sage Vyāsa makes a final appeal to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra to call-off the war. The Kauravas are firm in their resolve to battle the Pāṇḍavas. The eleven divisions of the Kauravas, and the seven divisions of the Pāṇḍavas get ready at Kurukṣetra to begin the battle. While on the battlefield, as all is set to commence, Arjuna has second thoughts and does not want to fight the Kauravas, who are his relatives, for a piece of land. Kṛṣṇa, who is his charioteer, then advises him at length about the nature of life, duty and spirituality. This becomes the Bhagavadgītā. Arjuna, then agrees to fight.

Yudhiṣṭhira announces that before the commencement of the battle, he is prepared to accept any last minute defectors from the Kaurava side. Yuyutsu, the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra through a chamber-maid, defects. The battle then commences.

No matter how many times Arjuna destrings Bhīṣma's bow, the latter recovers. Kṛṣṇa, in a fit of rage, tries to destroy Bhīṣma, thus violating his vow as a non-combatant. Bhīṣma refuses to fight Kṛṣṇa as per the codes of the dharmayuddha agreement between the two warring parties.

On the tenth day of battle, Śikhaṇḍin, the eunuch, who is the re-incarnation of Ambā, rushes forth on Bhīṣma. Seeing this, Bhīṣma refuses to fight anyone who is not fully a man. Arjuna strikes Bhīṣma with twenty-five arrows and finally breaks Bhīṣma's bow into three.

Because of the boon that he received from his father, Bhīṣma cannot be killed. Bhīṣma lies in a yogic state. As his body is sticking out with arrows, Bhīṣma asks Arjuna for a pillow. Three arrows are shot into the ground in order to give support to Bhīṣma's head. Bhīṣma urges the Kauravas to call-off the battle and make peace with the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana and Karṇa refuse to do so.

## **Droṇa Parva**

After the withdrawal of Bhīṣma from the battlefield scenario, the Kauravas look to Karṇa for advice in selecting their next marshall. Karṇa promptly chooses Droṇa. Under Droṇa's leadership, the Kauravas corner Abhimanyu and slay him.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sole son-in-law, Jayadratha, had received a boon from his father saying that if anyone who cuts off the head of Jayadratha in

battle, and if that head were to fall to the ground, the slayer's head itself would break-up into one hundred pieces. The Pāṇḍavas were particularly interested in slaying Jayadratha, as he had at an earlier occasion, tried to molest and rape Draupadī. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna on how to slay Jayadratha because of the boon. The father of Jayadratha was engaged in penance in the forest. Arjuna is thus advised to use a special weapon which would not only slay Jayadratha, but would make sure that the head of Jayadratha fell on his father's lap. Arjuna is able to accomplish this feat. The head of Jayadratha falls on the lap of his father. Startled by this, it next falls to the ground when Jayadratha's father gets up in fright. When this happens, the father's head splits into a hundred pieces.

Karṇa uses the śakti weapon given by Indra to kill Ghaṭotkaca, the son of Bhīma. Kṛṣṇa then hatches a plan involving Yudhiṣṭhira to stop Droṇa from fighting. The plan works. Droṇa mistakes the killing of an elephant which had the same name as his son. He stops fighting. Dhṛṣṭadyumna then slays Droṇa.

## **Karṇa Parva**

On the death of Droṇa, the Kauravas quickly install Karṇa as their next marshall. Karṇa wants Śalya as his charioteer, and Duryodhana goes and requests him. Śalya is insulted, but eventually agrees.

On the seventeenth day of battle, Bhīma and Duḥśāsana engage in a mace fight. Bhīma eventually clubs Duḥśāsana to death and as vowed drinks his warm blood. Karṇa and Arjuna engage in a tournament. Karṇa's chariot-wheel gets stuck in the mud. Karṇa asks for a pause. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to take the opportunity to slay Karṇa. But Karṇa protests saying that it's unfair. Kṛṣṇa promptly reminds him of the immoral and lewd way in which he ordered the public disrobing of Draupadī. Arjuna reminded of this, lets lose his arrow, and Karṇa is slain.

### **Śalya Parva**

On the advice of Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa, Duryodhana requested Śalya to be the next marshall of Kaurava army.

On the eighteenth and last day of battle, Yudhiṣṭhira and Śalya engaged in battle. Yudhiṣṭhira slayed Śalya. Next, Sahadeva engaged Śakuni in battle. Finally, Sahadeva slayed Śakuni. After this, Duryodhana and Bhīma began a mace fight. Balarāma is partial toward Duryodhana, while Kṛṣṇa favors Bhīma. Kṛṣṇa tells Bhīma to strike Duryodhana in his thighs which is his weakpoint. Balarāma protested that it was unfair to do so. Bhīma tells him of Duryodhana's immorality over the years. The enraged Bhīma then struck Duryodhana in his thighs, and the latter falls cursing Kṛṣṇa. Duryodhana ultimately lies incapacitated. The Kauravas have

only three leaders left. They ultimately acknowledge that the battle is lost and accept defeat.

### **Sauptika Parva**

The three Kaurava chiefs remaining alive are Aśvatthāmā, Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā. They go off into the forest. While Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā went to sleep, Aśvatthāmā could not fall asleep. While awake, he saw an owl creep up and kill a lot of crows. From this incident, Aśvatthāmā gets an idea and informs the other two of his plans when the other two wake up.

Aśvatthāmā quietly enters the Pāṇḍava encampment and kill Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the children of the five Pāṇḍava brothers while they were asleep. He kills Śikhaṇḍin as well. Aśvatthāmā informs the dying Duryodhana of what happened. Duryodhana is pleased and finally dies. Only six people on the Pāṇḍava side now remain. Draupadī wants Yudhiṣṭhira to avenge the death of her sons. As the Pāṇḍavas approach Aśvatthāmā, the latter takes a blade of grass and empowers it as a weapon. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to use the celestial weapon. Seeing this, the Sages Nārada and Vyāsa come and stand between these weapons since only they have the powers to stop it. Arjuna withdraws his weapon. Vyāsa asks Aśvatthāmā to withdraw his weapon as well. Vyāsa asks Aśvatthāmā to give up his protective gem to the Pāṇḍavas, and in return his life would be spared.

Aśvatthāmā gives up his protective gem but does not withdraw the weapon. He redirects the weapon to the wombs of the Pāṇḍava women. Kṛṣṇa accuses Aśvatthāmā as a child-killer and curses him to wander the earth for three thousand years without friends and unable to talk with anyone. Bhīma brings the protective gem of Aśvatthāmā and places it near Draupadī who then asks Yudhiṣṭhira to wear it on his crown as a gift from the preceptor.

### **Strī Parva**

After the war, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was grieving over the loss of all his sons. The Pāṇḍavas came to comfort him. As Dhṛtarāṣṭra was about to embrace Bhīma, Kṛṣṇa nudges Bhīma aside and puts an iron statue in the place of Bhīma. Dhṛtarāṣṭra crushes the iron statue thinking it to be Bhīma. When he hears Bhīma's voice, Dhṛtarāṣṭra laments. Gāndhārī weeps before the Pāṇḍavas and accuses Bhīma of unfairness. Gāndhārī tells the Pāṇḍavas that at least one son could have been spared. Gāndhārī sees Yudhiṣṭhira's toenail which gets scorched on account of her spiritual powers gained through devotion to her husband. Finally, Gāndhārī curses Kṛṣṇa for not stopping the carnage. She tells Kṛṣṇa that he would die in thirty-six years from the time of the curse.

Gāndhārī's curses and boons are powerful. Just before the war, she had asked Duryodhana to come naked in front of her so that she could see him. Her very sight, due to her spiritual powers, would make him invincible. However, Duryodhana then came covering his private parts and



upper thighs. Thus when Gāndhārī's vision fell on him, everything in Duryodhana's body became protected except the upper thighs. It is that part that Bhīma hit at the direction of Kṛṣṇa during his mace fight with Duryodhana.

### **Śānti Parva**

Yudhiṣṭhira along with Draupadī is finally coronated in the presence of Vyāsa, Nārada, Kaṇva, Kṛṣṇa and others. Bhīma is appointed heir-apparent.

### **Anuśāsana Parva**

The Pāṇḍavas, the sages and Kṛṣṇa proceeded to the place where Bhīṣma lay dying. Bhīṣma breathes his last and is cremated. When the ashes are about to be thrown into the Gangā river, the goddess Gangā emerges and receives them. It was after all the ashes of her own son. When she laments, the sages and Kṛṣṇa console her.

## **Aśvamedha Parva**

Kṛṣṇa revives Uttarā's baby. Yudhiṣṭhira then performs the horse-sacrifice.

## **Āśramavāsika Parva**

Fifteen years after the coronation, Dhṛtarāṣṭra tells Yudhiṣṭhira that he'll retire to the forest. Clad in rags and bark garments, Kuntī, Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra depart to the forest. When the Pāṇḍavas and Vyāsa visit the trio in the forest, Gāndhārī requests Vyāsa to show her and all the others gathered, the people who died in the war. Vyāsa then asks everybody to come to the Gangā river that night and through his powers makes the war-dead arise from the waters. All see the war-dead and feel satisfied. Two years pass by. Nārada then relates to Yudhiṣṭhira that one day there was a forest fire in which Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the two queen-mothers perished.

## **Mausāla Parva**

Thirty-six years after the battle at Kurukṣetra, the sages Viśvāmitra, Kaṇva, and Nārada visited Dvārakā. As the sages approached, the locals decided to test them. So, they dressed up a man named Sāmba as a

pregnant woman. Then they took the “pregnant woman” to the three sages and asked them as to whether the “woman” will have a boy or a girl? The sages through their spiritual powers came to know of the prank that was being pulled at them and said that the “pregnant woman” will give birth to an iron mace. Everybody, except Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa would perish on account of this.

Eventually the locals engaged in an orgy of drinking including Balarāma. The inebriated Sātyakī accused Kṛtavarmā of unheroic acts of killing the children of the Pāṇḍavas. Kṛtavarmā, in turn pointing to Sātyakī with his left hand counter-accused the latter of unheroic practices in battle. The enraged Sātyakī cut-off Kṛtavarmā’s head. Thereupon, the supporters of Kṛtavarmā fell upon Sātyakī and Pradyumna, the son of Kṛṣṇa, and killed them both. Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa left the scene in disgust. Balarāma went to a solitary place where he went into deep yogic meditation. While in meditation, a long snake came out of his mouth and entered the ocean. Kṛṣṇa went into the forest and went into deep yogic meditation as well. A hunter who was passing the area, mistook the leg of Kṛṣṇa for a bird, and shot it. Soon the hunter realized his mistake and begged for Kṛṣṇa’s pardon. Kṛṣṇa forgave him, and thereafter Kṛṣṇa’s spirit ascended towards the sky in a brilliant splendor. Later on, the Pāṇḍavas came to know of what took place at Dvārakā.

## **Mahāprasthānika Parva**

When Yudhiṣṭhira heard of what happened to the people of Kṛṣṇa's kingdom, he informed his brothers that it was time to abdicate and retire to the Himālayas. They coronated their grandson, Parikṣit, and departed. The five Pāṇḍava brothers and Draupadī began their journey. Soon a dog started to follow them.

As they started to ascend the Himālayas, Draupadī fell. Bhīma asked Yudhiṣṭhira as to why this happened. Yudhiṣṭhira replied that Draupadī fell and died because she was partial to Arjuna. After sometime, Sahadeva fell. Again, Bhīma asked Yudhiṣṭhira the reason. To this, Yudhiṣṭhira replied that Sahadeva thought himself too wise. Shortly after, Nakula fell. When asked by Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira said that Nakula thought himself too handsome. Thereafter, Arjuna fell. When asked by Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira said that Arjuna was too proud. Then Bhīma himself fell, and just before he died asked Yudhiṣṭhira the reasons for such a fate. Thereupon Yudhiṣṭhira replied that Bhīma had been too gluttonous and boastful.

Soon only Yudhiṣṭhira and the dog proceeded further. The god Indra appeared and asked Yudhiṣṭhira to ascend his aerial chariot abandoning the dog. Yudhiṣṭhira declined. Thereafter the dog transformed itself to the god Dharma. All the gods as well as the Sage Nārada appear in the sky and praised Yudhiṣṭhira. He becomes one of the few humans to have ascended bodily into heaven. They ask Yudhiṣṭhira to ascend Indra's chariot. Yudhiṣṭhira says that he wants to be with his brothers and Draupadī.

## **Svargārohaṇika Parva**

Yudhiṣṭhira reached heaven and saw all the Kauravas. Yudhiṣṭhira was made to see hell where he saw all the Pāṇḍavas. Yudhiṣṭhira was filled with righteous indignation for the gods for their dharmic lopsidedness. As he was grief-stricken, the gods appeared again and told him that all this was an illusion. They showed him the truth by the sight of the Pāṇḍavas worshipping Kṛṣṇa. Yudhiṣṭhira was pleased.

King Janamejaya was filled with wonder hearing the story of his great ancestors and thus completed the snake-sacrifice.

## **Chapter 10**

### **An Analysis of some of the important characters of the Rāmāyaṇa**

This chapter gives the profiles of some sixteen important characters of the Rāmāyaṇa epic. These are not meant to be exhaustive biographies. They are meant to be merely cross-sectional sketches presented in the context of some interesting anecdotal incidents involving these characters occurring in various places throughout the epic. Some analyses of the characters are traditional, while others are novel. The reader is therefore requested to peruse these partial pen-portraits of these characters with that perspective in mind.

#### **10.1**

##### **DAŚARATHA**

For somebody who is familiar with the character of King Daśaratha in the Rāmāyaṇa, there are three English sayings that immediately come to mind.

1. haste makes waste
2. crying over split milk
3. three strikes and one's out

King Daśaratha was one in a long line of monarchs of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. This lineage was a solar one. Other important kings of this dynasty were: the 7th king Triśanku, the 15th king Sagara, the 18th king Dilīpa, the 19th king Bhagīratha, the 21st king Raghu, the 29th king Ambarīśa, the 30th king Nahuṣa, and the 31st king Yayāti besides the first king, Ikṣvāku himself. King Daśaratha was the 34th monarch, and as an ideal *kṣatriya*, he had three wives as enunciated in the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra I:16:2-5.

*teṣāṃ varṇānupūrvyeṇa catasro bhāryā brāhmaṇasya tisro rājanasya. dve vaiśasya. ekā śūdrasya.*

"Of these, according to the order of the classes, a Brahmin may have four wives, a Kṣatriya three, a Vaiśya two, and a Śūdra one."

The three wives of Daśaratha were: Kausalyā, the chief queen, Sumitrā the middle queen, and Kaikeyī, the youngest, most beautiful and favorite queen. Despite his having three queens, Daśaratha was issueless for a long time. Upon the performance of a Vedic rite called *Putrakāmeṣṭi yajña*, at the recommendation of Sage Vasiṣṭha, the royal chaplain. On account of the spiritual blessings received at this rite, Daśaratha became the father of four sons through his three queens. Kausalyā bore Rāma, Kaikeyī bore Bharata, and Sumitrā had twins, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna.

### **The tragic incident and its deadly consequences**

King Daśaratha appears only in the first two books of the Rāmāyaṇa. His demise takes place at the end of the second book. His death was tragic, an outcome of his hasty nature. The very first strike of haste makes waste took place when Daśaratha was still an unwed young prince. This episode is however narrated as a flashback just before Daśaratha's tragic demise. Daśaratha himself narrates that the circumstances of losing his beloved son Rāma to exile for fourteen years was the fruitioning of a deadly curse pronounced by a blind old couple who had lost their only child (Śravaṇakumāra) and source of support because of Daśaratha's hastily shot arrow. Daśaratha who is said to have had the skill of shooting his quarry merely by listening to the sound of it, let lose his shaft that ended in a great tragedy for all concerned this time around. No matter how regretful he seemed, the blind old couple were unforgiving of Daśaratha. As far as they were concerned, he had killed their son thus ending their will to live. Before dying, the blind old man pronounced a curse on Daśaratha that he too would lose his son one day.

Related to this first strike is the third strike that ended Daśaratha's life. This third strike came about when Daśaratha's favorite queen, Kaikeyī, under the brain-washing of her chamber-maid, demanded the redemption of her two boons which she had gotten because she had rescued her husband from the battlefield some time back. When Daśaratha had granted her the two boons, she requested postponement of their redemption to a later date. That date of redemption came about on the eve of Rāma being appointed as Daśaratha's heir-apparent to the throne. Without inquiring as to what Kaikeyī had in mind, Daśaratha hastily promised to redeem Kaikeyī's boons



no matter what they were. However, once Kaikeyī spells out her demands of Rāma going into exile into the forest in ordinary garb for fourteen years and that her son Bharata should become the heir-apparent, Daśaratha is stunned beyond belief, and begs her to change her demands. Kaikeyī remains unmoved and unrelenting. Again, all his crying over spilt milk remains useless. Daśaratha has to bend to Kaikeyī's demands or else suffer the fate of going down in the annals of Hindu sacred history as a promise-breaker. Ultimately, Kaikeyī has her way. The boons are redeemed, and Daśaratha dies heart-broken. The blind old man's curse had come true.

The death of Daśaratha as a man who kept his word and therefore died with honor has become the moral ideal for the Hindus. Tulasīdāsa (1532-1623 CE) in his old Hindi opus, *Rāmacaritamānasa*, has immortalized this ideal with the words:

*raghukula rīti sadā chali āyī, prāṇa jāhu baru bacana na jāyī.*

[*Rāmacaritamānasa* II:27 (in the 4th line of the caupāī to 27th dohā of Ayodhyākāṇḍa)]<sup>191</sup>

"The tradition of the Raghu clan has come down in this way that even if life were to be lost, the promised word is to be kept."

The second strike or hasty act is in between the first and the third strikes and is unrelated to either. It is not tragic, and actually ends in

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<sup>191</sup> dohā: *magu magu pai kahahu piya kahahun na dehu na lehu. den kahehu baradāna dui teu pāvata sandehu.*

something quite auspicious, i.e. the wedding of Rāma. However, despite the benign ending, Daśaratha's hasty nature shows up again. In this situation, Sage Viśvāmitra visits Daśaratha's court, and even before the sage opens his mouth, the king in his anxiety to be hospitable to his august guest hastily promises to fulfill the sages's request. And when the sage makes his request, Daśaratha, characteristically goes into his "make a different request, I beg of you" mode of pathos. Finally, his chaplain, the sage Vasiṣṭha had to intervene in order to break the impasse and resolve the issue.

## **10.2**

### **KAUSALYĀ**

One does not get too much information about Kausalyā in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. She is a princess of the kingdom of Kośala who became the chief queen of King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā.

She is first introduced to the readers of the epic in the context of the Aśvamedha sacrifice where as the chief queen "she circumambulates and then slays the sacrificial horse with three strokes in great delight."

*kausalyā tam hayam tatra paricarya samantataḥ. kṛpāṇairvisasāraiṇam  
tribhiḥ paramayā mudā. [I:14:33]*

She spends the night keeping watch over the sacrificial horse.

*avasad rajanīmekām kausalyā dharmakāmyayā. [I:14:34]*

Then Kausalyā becomes the first and chief recipient of the celestial pāyasa.

*so'ntaḥpuram praviśyaiva kausalyāmidamabravīt. pāyasam pratigṛhṇīṣva  
putrīyam tvidātmnaḥ [I:16:26]*

King Daśaratha gives her one half of this celestial nectar.

*kausalyāyai narapatiḥ pāyasārdham dadau tadā. [I:16:27]*

Nine months later, Kausalyā becomes the mother of the eldest son of King Daśaratha who is named Rāma.

*kausalyājanayad rāmam divyalakṣaṇasamyuktam. [I:18:10]*

Kausalyā is a deeply religious person. She is depicted in the epic as someone highly committed to ritual proprieties and austerities. The imagery of her religiosity, presented in the epic, is very Vedic.

*kausalyāpi tadā devī rātrim sthitvā samāhitā. prabhāte cakarot pūjām  
viṣṇoḥ putrahitaiṣiṇī. [II:20:14]*

"Worshipful Kausalyā, seeking her husband's well-being, stayed up the whole night being absorbed in meditation, and was, in the morning, worshipping the god Viṣṇu." [II:20:14]

*sā kṣaumavasanā hṛṣṭā nityam vrataparāyaṇā. agnim juhōti sma tadā  
mantravad kṛtamangalā. [II:20:15]*

"Wearing silk-cloth, pleased, and accustomed to the performance of religious rites everyday, she, performing benedictory ceremonies, was offering oblation to the fire." [II:20:15]

*praviśya tu tadā rāmo māturantaḥ puram śubham. dadarśa mātaram tatra  
hāvayantīm hutāśanam. [II:20:16]*

"Rāma entering the auspicious abode of his mother, beheld her thus engaged in the sacrifice to the fire." [II:20:16]

*devakāryanimittam ca tatrāpaśyat samudyatam. dadhyakṣataghṛtam caiva  
modakān haviṣastathā. [II:20:17]*

"For the purposes of offering oblations to the gods, curd, grains, clarified butter, sweets, and other things fit for oblations." [II:20:17]

*lājān mālyāni śuklāni pāyasam kṛsaram tathā. samidhaḥ pūrṇakumbhāśca  
dadarśa raghunandanaḥ. [II:20:18]*

"Rāma saw fried paddy, white garlands, rice boiled in milk and sugar, sesame rice, pea mixtures, sacrificial fuels and jars full of water."  
[II:20:18]

*tām śuklakṣaumasamvītām vratayogena karśitām. tarpayantīm  
dadarśadbhīrdevatām varavarṇinīm. [II:20:19]*

"Wearing white silk, pulled down by the austere performance of religious rites, she was engaged in propitiating the deities with the offering of water." [II:20:19]

Kausalyā may be best described as a refined lady with the emotions of a normal human being. Whenever the trying circumstances present themselves, Kausalyā patiently accepts them in stride. However, given the context of the predicament in which Kausalyā particularly finds herself on the eve of Rāma's banishment, her expressions of grief and anger are all quite natural. Barring this, she is otherwise a very decent person, and there is nothing devious or scheming about her.

Upon learning from her son Rāma that he is about to go into exile, Kausalyā confides in him, her fears and sorrows:

Kausalyā said:

*sā bahūnyamanojñāni vākyāni hṛdayacchidām. aham śroṣye  
sapatnīnāmvarāṅām parā satī. [II:20:39]*

"Myself, being the eldest of all queens, shall have to hear unpleasant and heart-rendering words from the co-wives who are all younger than I."  
[II:20:39]

*tvayī samnihite'pyevamahamāsām nirākṛtā. kim punaḥ proṣite tāta dhruvam  
maraṅgam eva hi. [II:20:41]*

"You being present, they have reduced me to this miserable plight, I do not know what else they'll do, you being away; there is death certain for me." [II:20:41]

*atyantam nigṛhītāsmi bharturnityamasammatā. parivāreṇa kaikeyyāḥ samā  
vāpyathavāvarā. [II:20:42]*

"Being disregarded by my husband, I have been greatly insulted, I'm equal to the maid-servants of Kaikeyī or even inferior to them." [II:20:42]

*apaśyantī tava mukham paripūrṇaśaśiprabham. kṛpaṇā vartayiṣyāmi katham  
kṛpaṇajīvikā. [II:20:47]*

"How shall I, of miserable life, pass my days in grief not seeing your face  
effulgent like the full moon." [II:20:47]

When Bharata comes to see Kausalyā after Rāma's departure into  
exile, she while embracing Bharata, purely out of unbearable grief, assails  
him. The only downside to this is that, she does so without knowing the  
true feelings of Bharata. This hurts him deeply.

Kausalyā said:

*idam te rājyakāmasya rājyam prāptamakaṇṭhakam. kaikeyī kam guṇam tatra  
paśyati krūradarśinī. [II:75:11]*

"Thus have you, that had desired the kingdom, received it rid of its thorn.  
Alas! it has been speedily obtained through the crooked act of Kaikeyī."  
[II:75:11]

*idam hi tava vistīrṇam dhanadhānyasamācitam. hastāśvarathasampūrṇam  
rājyam niryātitam tayā. [II:75:16]*

"This spacious kingdom abounding in grains and wealth and endowed with elephants, horses and chariots, is yours, having been conferred upon you."

[II:75:16]

Thereafter she quickly reconciles with Bharata showing her decency and refined nature.

One does not hear about Kausalyā in any major way after that.

Thus Kausalyā has fit into the major aspects of the first level of the Dumézilian triadism. She is the chief queen giving birth to the crown prince who is deemed as the epitome of morality. She herself is also a very religiously oriented person. She is a person with noble qualities.

### **10.3**

#### **SUMITRĀ**

Sumitrā is the middle, the quietest, most insignificant yet the most mature of the three queens of King Daśaratha and certainly the most productive in terms of progeny.



Sumitrā is first seen in the epic as being one of the recipients of the heavenly pāyasa given by King Daśaratha to his three queens. She is the only queen who receives a double portion from her husband. The result of this is that, she is the only queen who bears two infants. These are twins.

*ardhārdham dadau cāpi sumitrāyai narādhipaḥ.* [I:16:27]

"Then he conferred upon Sumitrā a fourth of it." [I:16:27]

*anucintya sumitrāyai punareva mahāmatiḥ. evam tāsām dadau rājā  
bhāryāṇām pāyasam pṛthak.* [I:16:29]

"And then having reflected, the high-minded one gave to Sumitrā the remaining portion of the pāyasa." [I:16:29]

*atha lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrājanayatsutau.* [I:18:14]

"Then Sumitrā gave birth to Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna." [I:18:14]

When Lakṣmaṇa is about to go into exile with Rāma and Sītā, he takes leave of his mother. At this time, Sumitrā shows great maturity when she tells the following to her son:

Sumitrā said:

*sṣṣtastvam vanavāsāya svanuraktaḥ suhṛjjane. rāmo pramādam mā kārṣīḥ  
putra bhrātari gacchati. [II:40:5]*

"Although attached to your friends here, you have my permission to go to the forest. When Rāma shall have gone, do not, O son, neglect him."  
[II:40:5]

*lakṣmaṇam tvevavakmuktvasau samsiddhim priyarāghavam. sumitrā gaccha  
gaccheti punaḥ punaruvāca tam. [II:40:8]*

"Having spoken to Lakṣmaṇa who had made up his mind to leave, Sumitrā, again and again said to him, Go! Go!" [II:40:8]

*rāmam daśaratham viddhi mām viddhi janakātmajam. ayodhyāmaṭavīm  
viddhi gaccha tāta yathāsukham [II:40:9]*

"Consider Rāma as Daśaratha, and Janaka's own-begotten as myself; do you regard Ayodhyā as wilderness, go my son, with pleasure." [II:40:9]

The next major encounter of Sumitrā in the epic is in the 44th sarga of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa where she consoles Kausalyā, equally again, with a deep sense of maturity. Even here, she mentions a triadism:

Sumitrā said:

*pṛthivyā saha vaidehyā śriyā ca puruṣarṣabhaḥ. kṣipram tiṣṭbhiretābhiḥ  
saha rāmo'bhiṣekṣyate. [II:44:17]*

"And the best of men, Rāma, will soon be installed in the kingdom, in company with these three, the Earth, Sītā and the goddess Śrī." [II:44:17]

Here Sītā symbolizes the first Dumezilian level as she is the sovereign future queen, the goddess Śrī represents the second Dumezilian level as she is the goddess of victory [indicating victory in battle and conquest], and the Earth represents the third Dumezilian level as it symbolizes fertility.

One does not encounter Sumitrā in any major way after these episodes in the epic.

Thus Sumitrā has fit into the major aspects of the third level of the Dumezilian triadism. She is the insignificant but fertile queen giving birth to twins. One twin son serves the son of Kausalyā, and the other twin, the son of Kaikeyī. Pious Hindus often refer to the twins as representing bhagavatsevā [Lakṣmaṇa in the service of the Lord], and bhāgavatasevā [Śatrughna in the service of the devotee of the Lord]. Here, Rāma is deemed the Lord and Bharata as his model devotee. The word "Sumitrā" means "good friend" in Sanskrit. Her sons were indeed "good friends" of

Rāma and Bharata respectively. Also, Sumitrā herself is a very ripe and mature person as seen in the above situations.

## **10.4**

### **KAIKEYĪ**

Kaikeyī was the youngest, the most beautiful and the most favorite of the three queens of King Daśaratha. She is also the most militant, the most adamant and the most arrogant of the three queens.

The readers of the epic are first introduced to Kaikeyī in the context of the receiving the pāyasa from King Daśaratha who gives her a portion of the remnant after apportioning it between Kausalyā and Sumitrā.

*kaikeyyai cāvaśiṣṭārdham dadau putrāthakāraṇāt.* [I:16:28]

"Then in order that she might have a son, King Daśaratha made over to Kaikeyī an equal portion of what remained." [I:16:28]

Kaikeyī becomes the mother of Prince Bharata who is indicated as somebody who would grow-up to be a very righteous person.

*bharato nāma kaikeyyām jajñe satyaparākramaḥ. [I:18:13]*

Kaikeyī has a chambermaid named Mantharā who brainwashes her mistress into demanding that King Daśaratha install Bharata as the heir-apparent and banish Rāma into exile for fourteen years. Mantharā tells Kaikeyī that she can accomplish this by redeeming the two boons bestowed on her by the king because she had rescued him in battle a long time ago, and which was put on hold for "cashing-in" at a later date. It is in this situation that Kaikeyī becomes raw, adamant and arrogant.

*sā dahyamānā krodhena mantharā pāpadarśinī. śayānāmeva kaikeyīmidam vacanamabravīt. [II:7:13]*

"Burning in ire, the sinful Mantharā addressing Kaikeyī, lying down, saying" [II:7:13]

Mantharā said:

*akṣayam sumahaddevī pravṛttim tvadvināśanam. rāmam daśaratho rājā yauvarājye'bhiṣekṣyati. [II:7:20]*

"O worshipful one, an enduring and terrible destruction is imminent to you. King Daśaratha will install Rāma as heir-apparent." [II:7:20]

*purā devāsūre yuddhe saha rājarṣibhiḥ patiḥ. āgacchat tvāmupādāya  
devarājasya sahāyakṛt. [II:9:11]*

"Formerly, during the wars of the gods and the demons, your husband taking you along, went with the royal saints for the purposes of assisting the celestials." [II:9:11]

*apavāhya tvayā devi sangrāmānnaṣṭacetanaḥ. tatrāpi vikṣitaḥ śastraiḥ  
patiste rakṣitastvayā. [II:9:11]*

"O worshipful lady, losing his senses in consequence of wounds received from the weapons, was removed from the battlefield by you. In that imminent danger, your husband, sadly cut by weapons, was preserved by you." [II:9:11]

*tuṣṭena tena dattau te dvau varau śubhadarśane. sa tvayoktaḥ patirdevi  
yadiccheyam tadā varam. [II:9:17]*

"Thereupon gratified, he, O, you of gracious presence, granted you two boons. Whereupon you did say 'I shall receive from my lord the boon whenever I shall wish'." [II:9:17]

*gṛhṇīyām tu tadā bhartastatheyuktam mahātmanaḥ. [II:9:18]*

"Thereupon that high-souled one said: 'So be it.'" [II:9:18]

*tau yācasva bhartāram bharatasyābhiṣecanam. pravṛājanam ca rāmasya  
varṣāṇi ca caturdaśa.* [II:9:20]

"And ask your husband for these two boons, the installation of Bharata, and the exile of Rāma into the forest for fourteen years." [II:9:20]

The adamancy, the arrogance, the hard-heartedness, the merciless nature, the slyness and treachery of Kaikeyī become very clear when she enters the chamber of wrath, toys with her husband's very affectionate feelings towards her for a while and then like a merciless thunderbolt lets lose her demands. Even when redeeming her two boons, taking advantage of her husband's vulnerable condition, through cunning and sly, slips in an addendum to her second boon turning it into three boons unbeknownst to either her husband or Rāma or anyone else for that matter.

Kaikeyī's hold over her husband is very clear through his own words:

Daśaratha said:

*aham ca hi madīyāśca sarve tava vaśānugāḥ. na te kamcidabhiprāyam  
vyāhantamahamutsahe.* [II:10:34]

"I and mine are at your command. I dare not cross any wish of yours."  
[II:10:34]

*ātmano jīvitēnāpi brūhi yanmanasi sthitam. balamātmani jānantī na mām  
śaṅkitumarhasi.* [II:10:35]

"Tell me your mind, and I will satisfy you by laying down life itself. You know the influence you have upon me, therefore, it behoves you not to entertain any apprehension." [II:10:35]

*kariṣyāmi tava prītim sukṛtenāpi te śape.* [II:10:36]

"By all my good deeds, I swear that I will compass your pleasure."  
[II:10:36]

It is interesting to note that Kaikeyī invokes the thirty-three gods of the Vedic pantheon to bear witness as she unleashes her demands on her husband who has sworn to abide by her wishes.

Kaikeyī said:

*yathākrameṇa śapase varam mama dadāsi ca. tacchṛṇvantu trayatrimśad  
devāḥ sendrapurogamāḥ.* [II:11:13]



"You swear repeatedly, and confer on me a boon. Let the three and thirty deities headed by Indra, hear this." [II:11:13]

Finally, Kaikeyī reveals her the redemption of her two boons sneaking in the third one slyly as a subset of the second.

### **Redemption of the first boon**

*anenaivābhiṣekeṇa bharato me'bhiṣicyatām.* [II:11:25]

"Do you with the provisions made ready, install Bharata in the kingdom."  
[II:11:25]

### **Redemption of the second and "third" boons**

*nava pañca ca varṣāṇi daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ.* [II:11:26]

"Let him live in the Daṇḍaka Forest for nine and five years." [II:11:26]

*cīrājinadharo dhīro rāma bhavatu tāpasaḥ.* [II:11:27]

"Let Rāma, clad in deer-skin, lead the life of a mendicant." [II:11:27]

However, the "third" boon could not be completely fulfilled as Rāma went with his wife, and perhaps because he did not fully abide by

the "third" demand, he lost his wife to abduction forcing Rāma to live like a mendicant.

Once Kaikeyī is able to "redeem" her boons, except for Rāma, ironically, she comes to be detested by everyone. Her husband, Daśaratha, considers it his misfortune for having married her. Her son Bharata reviles her, and even the minister Sumantra disparagingly comments on her arrogance and obstinate nature. Having thus become an object of such detestation, Kaikeyī becomes at first defensive, and eventually totally deflated in terms of her power and prominence. She becomes an utterly muted and a total non-person in terms of further story line of the epic. Here are some examples from each of the above person's detest for Kaikeyī.

### **Daśaratha's detest for Kaikeyī**

Daśaratha said:

*nṛśamse duṣṭacāritre kulasyāsya vināśinī. [II:12:7]*

"You cruel one! You of vile ways! You destroyer of this race! O wicked woman!" [II:12:7]

*avijñānānṛpasutā vyālā tīkṣṇaviṣā yathā. [II:12:9]*

"Through ignorance, I brought to this house you like a serpent of virulent poison." [II:12:9]

### **Bharata's detest for his mother**

Bharata said:

*māṭṛrūpe mamāmitre.....na te'hamabhibhāṣyo'smi durvṛtte patighātini*  
[II:74:7]

"O you enemy of mine, in the guise of a mother!.....Do not speak to me, O wicked wretch, O slayer of your husband!" [II:74:7]

*sātvamagnim praviśa vā.....rajjum baddhvāthavā kaṅṭhe nahi te'nyat*  
*parāyaṇam.* [II:74:33]

"Enter the fire or.....wind a rope around your neck; there is no other desirable way for you." [II:74:33]

Bharata's rejection of Kaikeyī's adamantly won prize is the real Achilles' heel that drives her eventually into total oblivion in terms of her role in the rest of the epic. She just does not have any hold over Bharata in any manner. She cannot brain-wash him nor can she get her chambermaid Mantharā to brainwash him.

## Sumantra's disparaging comments against Kaikeyī

Sumantra said:

*tava māturasadgrāham vidma pūrvam yathā śrutam. pituste varadaḥ kaścīd  
dadau varamanuttamam. [II:35:18]*

"I remember what I have heard from old men concerning the vicious inclinations of your mother. Someone intent upon conferring boons conferred an excellent one on your father." [II:35:18]

*sarvabhūtarutam tasmāt samjajñe vasudhādhipaḥ. [II:35:19]*

"By virtue of this (boon), the king (your father) could understand the utterances of all creatures."

*tato jṛmbhasya śayane virutād bhurivarcasaḥ. pituste vidito bhāvaḥ sa tatra  
bahudhāhasat. [II:35:20]*

"One day, as your father was lying down, he understanding the thoughts of the Jṛmbha bird, from its chirps, laughed heartily." [II:35:20]

*tatra te janani kruddhā mṛtyupāśamabhīpsatī. hāsam te nṛpate saumya  
jijñāsāmīti cābravīt. [II:35:21]*

"Thereat your mother getting angry, wishing for the noose of death, said 'O king, O placid one, I ask you the reason for your laughter.'" [II:35:21]

*nṛpaścovāca tām devīm hāsam śamsāmi te yadi. tato me maraṇam sadyo bhaviṣyati na samśayaḥ.* [II:35:22]

"The king replied, 'O worshipful lady, if I unfold to you the reason for my laughter, then I shall, without doubt, die today.'" [II:35:22]

*mātā te pitaram devī punaḥ kekeymabravīt. śamsa me jīva vā mā vā na mām tvam prahasiṣyasi.* [II:35:23]

"But that revered one, your mother, again urged Kekeya saying 'tell it to me whether you live or die; for you will not be able to laugh at me again.'" [II:35:23]

*satyaścātra pravādo'yam laukīkaḥ pratibhāti mā. pitṛn samanujāyante narā mātaramanganāḥ.* [II:35:28]

"In this connection, I remember a saying, viz. 'men take after their fathers, and women their mothers'." [II:35:28]

In short, like mother like daughter. Kaikeyī's name has such a bad reputation, that no Hindu woman to this day would like to be her namesake.

### **Can Kaikeyī be given the benefit of the doubt?**

What can be meant by the above question? What is the benefit of doubt about?

Well, it is about the view among many Hindus that Kaikeyī was a good person who loved Rāma as much as she did Bharata, and that she got totally brainwashed by her chambermaid Mantharā. The followings passages of the epic bear testimony to this view.

Kaikeyī said:

*rāme vā bharate vāham viśeṣam nopalakṣaye. tasmāttuṣṭāsmi yadrājā  
rāmam rājye'bhiṣekṣyati. [II:7:35]*

"I find no difference between Rāma and Bharata. Therefore, I'm delighted that the king proposes installing Rāma in the kingdom." [II:7:35]

*tām dr̥ṣṭvā paramaprītām bruvantīm mantharām tataḥ. rāmasyaiva  
guṇāndevī kaikeyī praśaśamsa ha. [II:8:13]*

"Seeing Mantharā dead-set against Rāma, and speaking in this manner, the noble Kaikeyī praised the virtues of Rāma." [II:8:13]

*yathā vai bharato mānyastathā bhūyo'pi rāghavaḥ. kausalyāto'tiriktam ca  
mama śuśrūte bahu. [II:8:18]*

"Surely, Rāma is dearer to me than Bharata; and he loves me more than he does Kausalyā." [II:8:18]

*rājyam yadi hi rāmasya bharatasyāpi tattadā. mānyate hi yathātmānam  
tathā bhrātṛmstu rāghavaḥ. [II:8:19]*

"And if the kingdom be Rāma's it will also be Bharata's at the same time. Rāma regards his brothers even as his own self." [II:8:19]

Despite this, Sumantra's comments about Kaikeyī "like mother, like daughter" cannot be overlooked. Further, Bharata did not have a good opinion his mother even before all this crown-prince installation mayhem took place at Ayodhyā. This is borne out by the fact that when the messengers come to the Kekeya kingdom seeking Bharata to return immediately to Ayodhyā, Bharata even before he knows anything about the mayhem caused by his mother at Ayodhyā, addresses the envoys with the following words vis-à-vis his mother:

Bharata said:

*ātmakāmā sadā caṇḍī krodhinā prājñamāninī. arogā cāpi me mātā kaikeyī  
kim uvāca ha. [II:70:10]*

"And that one who is full of self-love, eternally vicious, wrathful and having a high-opinion of herself, that mother of mine, Kaikeyī, is she well, and what did she say?" [II:70:10]

Thus, Kaikeyī was not a good person. She merely went along until, the evil inclination in her was brought out by her maid under the right conditions at the opportune time.

## **10.5**

### **VIŚVĀMITRA**

The story of Sage Viśvāmitra is one initially of arrogance, power, desire, and eventually one of enlightenment, penance, austerities, laced with temptations, and yet achieving final spiritual victory.

Viśvāmitra is one of those eternal beings who appears in many a situation whatever be the aeon in the annals of Hindu mythology. He is present both in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

There was once a king named Gādhi who was a monarch in the Yadu clan. He had a daughter named Satyavatī. However, he had no sons. Gādhi eventually gave his daughter in marriage a brahmin named Ṛcīka



who was the grandson of the sage Cyavana. Ṛcīka was a person who possessed spiritual powers. So, when he came to know that his father-in-law desired a son, he performed a Vedic rite and prepared two bowls of *pāyasa* (rice-porridge). The *pāyasa* of the first bowl, which was formulated by Ṛcīka to produce a brahmin with kṣatriya-like powers, was meant for his mother-in-law. The *pāyasa* of the second bowl, which was formulated to produce a kṣatriya with brahmin-like qualities, was meant for Satyavatī. Ṛcīka then gave both the bowls of *pāyasa* to Satyavatī with specific instructions. But somehow in the confusion the two bowls got interchanged. Thus by the twist of fate, Gādhi's wife gave birth to a son who was named *Viśvaratha*, and Satyavatī gave birth to a son who became known as *Jamadagni*.

When Satyavatī realized her mistake, she went to her husband Ṛcīka and requested him to rectify her error. When Ṛcīka said that he could not, Satyavatī pleaded with him to use his spiritual powers to at least postpone the kṣatriya-like effects of her son by at least one generation. Ṛcīka agreed to this and did the needful. Thus, Jamadagni continued to behave like a brahmin, and his son Paraśurāma, the sixth incarnation of the god Viṣṇu, acquired these kṣatriya-like powers and started to behave accordingly.

King Viśvaratha's turning point in life came when he visited the hermitage of the sage Vasiṣṭha. When Viśvaratha together with his vast army encamped there, the sage Vasiṣṭha was able to miraculously feed the entire army with every imaginable delicacy. Viśvaratha naturally became curious as to how the sage was able to accomplish this amazing feat. Sage Vasiṣṭha then showed him his treasured possession, the wish-fulfilling cow called *Nandinī*, the daughter of the celestial cow *Kāmadhenu*. At this, Viśvaratha expressed his desire to buy *Nandinī* for any price. However,

Vasiṣṭha refused all offers. Thereupon, the greedy Viśvaratha got enraged and attacked Vasiṣṭha in order to possess Nandinī. The enormous spiritual powers of Vasiṣṭha and Nandinī were able to fend-off all the assaults of Viśvaratha who then came to realize that spiritual powers are far superior to any level of physical power. Humiliated and admitting defeat, Viśvaratha vowed to become equal to Sage Vasiṣṭha in spiritual powers no matter what it took.

After installing his son on the throne, Viśvaratha renounced the world, took the mendicant name of *Viśvāmitra* and resorted to the Himalayas to perform austerities and meditate on the god Śiva. After a few years, Śiva was pleased with Viśvāmitra's penances, appeared before him and gave him special types of weapons with great spiritual powers. Greatly pleased, Viśvāmitra then went to Vasiṣṭha's hermitage and once again attempted to defeat him in order to acquire Nandinī. However, again Sage Vasiṣṭha's spiritual powers proved superior, and he was able to defeat Viśvāmitra.

Disappointed, Viśvāmitra again performed austerities while meditating on the god Brahmā for a thousand years. Pleased with this, Brahmā appeared before him and recognized him as a royal sage (*rājarṣi*). Not satisfied, Viśvāmitra again engaged in penances for ten thousand years. Brahmā again appeared and recognized him as a divine sage (*devarṣi*).

In the meanwhile, the Ikṣvāku king Triśanku who was so fond of his youthful appearance and handsome physique that he wanted to ascend to heaven in his bodily form. When Triśanku asked the royal chaplain Vasiṣṭha to use his powers to accomplish this, Vasiṣṭha refused. Triśanku then went straight to Viśvāmitra for help. Viśvāmitra agreed to help him and decided to perform a sacrifice. However, all the gods led by Indra

nullified the spiritual effects of Viśvāmitra's sacrifice. Then Viśvāmitra declared that he would use his entire store of accrued spiritual merit acquired through his millennia of arduous penances to make Triśanku ascend bodily to heaven. As Triśanku began to rise upwards, the gods were stunned. Quickly, the gods asked Brahmā to intervene and a compromise was reached. Triśanku remained in a world between earth and heaven created exclusively for him by Sage Viśvāmitra.

His spiritual powers being totally expended, Viśvāmitra once again engaged in austerities. To thwart his penances, Indra dispatched the celestial nymph Menakā to his hermitage. Indra's plan worked as Viśvāmitra was utterly bewitched by the peerless beauty of Menakā. She lived with him for a decade and had a daughter named Śakuntalā by him. This episode is narrated in the Mahābhārata.

Thereafter, Viśvāmitra again began his austerities with even greater intensity than before. Becoming increasingly afraid of Viśvāmitra's spiritual abilities, Indra dispatched the celestial nymph Rambhā with two male assistants Manmatha and Vasanta to thwart the penances of Viśvāmitra. When Viśvāmitra realized this, he cursed Rambhā to be turned into a rock for ten thousand years. Her assistants became terrified and fled the scene.

Looking at all this, Indra himself descended on the hermitage in the guise of a brahmin just when Viśvāmitra was about to conclude his penance and break his fast. Indra as a brahmin begged for the food that Viśvāmitra was about to partake for breaking his fast. Immediately, Viśvāmitra gave away all that food to Indra and began his austerities all over again. The gods were immensely pleased at this and gave him the title of brahminical sage (*brahmarṣi*). However, Viśvāmitra insisted that

Sage Vasiṣṭha recognize him as a *brahmarṣi*. The sage arrived at the scene, embraced Viśvāmitra and recognized him as a *brahmarṣi*.

This same Viśvāmitra came to King Daśaratha's court and asked for Rāma to protect his sacrifice while he was engaged in the meticulous performance of the rites. Viśvāmitra pointed out to Daśaratha that even though he was fully capable of vanquishing the demons himself, he was not supposed to vent his wrath while engaged in religious rites, and as such he needed Rāma's help. Finally, Daśaratha agreed and sent for both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to go with Viśvāmitra and protect him.

When the demoness Tāṭakā attacked the sacrifice, Rāma killed her. Thereafter, the demons Mārīca and Subāhu attacked the sacrifice. Rāma killed Subāhu, and Mārīca was vanquished and fled. Upon the completion of the sacrifice, Viśvāmitra took the two princes towards the kingdom of Videha.

On the way, the trio came to the abandoned hermitage of the Sage Gautama. There, Viśvāmitra showed Rāma a rock, and asked him to touch it with his right toe. When Rāma did so, the rock turned into the lady Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama who had been cursed by her husband for her illicit sexual liaisons with the god Indra. Gautama had told his wife that her curse would end when Rāma came and redeemed her.

At Videha, King Janaka welcomed the trio. Soon, Janaka was to hold a bow contest in which the winner would get married to his very beautiful adopted daughter Sītā.

On a side note, the verse from the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa cited below was recited by Viśvāmitra to wake up Rāma when he stayed at his hermitage just prior to his marriage to Sītā. This verse was immortalized by Vedānta Deśika [1269-1370 CE] the Hindu theologian of the Rāmānujite tradition when he made it the first verse of his *Venkaṭeśa Suprabhāta*. This morning invocatory liturgical prayer is recited every morning in the second most-visited pilgrimage center of the world<sup>192</sup>, i.e. the Venkaṭeśvara Temple at Tirumalai, Andhra Pradesh, India.

*kausalyā suprajā rāma pūrvām sandhyā pravartane. uttiṣṭha naraśārdūla  
kartavyam daivamahnikam. [I:23:2]*

"O Rāma, the excellent son of Kausalyā, the first sandhyā-prayer should now be performed. Do you, O Tiger among men, arise! You should perform the purificatory rites and contemplate on the gods."

Viśvāmitra's story in full of the triadism of ascetism-violence-eroticism

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<sup>192</sup> Vatican is the first most-visited pilgrimage center. Mecca is seasonal as a pilgrimage center and hence yields its spot to Tirumalai. Bodh-Gayā is fourth in sequence.

## **10.6**

### **RĀMA**

Rāma is presented and understood in the Hindu tradition as an ideal person in every way. He is considered by the Hindus as the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal king, the ideal friend, the ideal spouse and even the ideal foe. In the entire story of Rāma as depicted in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, his ideal nature has come into very serious question just thrice, i.e. once when he killed the Vānara king Vālin from behind a tree, the second time when he banished his pregnant wife Sītā, and the third time when he banished his brother Lakṣmaṇa for allegedly disobeying his orders. The Vālī episode, to this day, remains the most serious blotch on his otherwise sterling and unimpeachable character even among the most pious and devout of the Hindus. Even they feel uncomfortable with this episode and try their level best to explain it away rather than explain it. I have provided a solution to this dharmasankaṭa [righteousness in crisis] episode in Section 14 of this work.

Rāma is such an important sterling character that Vālmīki eventually named his epic "Rāmāyaṇa" [The Wanderings of Rāma] rejecting two other titles, namely, "Paulastyavadhā" [The Killing of the descendent of Pulastya] and "Sītāyām mahadcaritam" [The Great Story of Sītā], that were being considered by him. The rejection of the first title by Hindu moral standards was understandable as it had the inauspicious word "killing" in it. The rejection of the second is nothing short of good old-fashioned male chauvinism.

Anyway, Vālmīki in his dialog with the Sage Nārada clearly lays down the conditions under which he will write his story. The hero of his tale has to be ideal in every sense of the term. With this in mind, Vālmīki inquires of Nārada:

Vālmīki said:

*ko nvasminsāmpratam loke guṇavānkaśca vīryavān. dharmajñāśca kṛtajñāśca satyavākya dhṛḍhavrataḥ. [1:1:2]*

"Who is there in this world now that is a person of character and who is heroic; who knows righteousness, one who is grateful, truthful in speech and firm in resolve?" [1:1:2]

*cāritreṇa ca ko yuktaḥ sarvabhūteṣu ko hitaḥ. vidvānkaḥ kaḥ samarthaśca kaścaikapriyadarśanaḥ. [1:1:3]*

"One who is well-mannered and who is concerned about the welfare of all beings; who is a scholar, who is capable and pleasing to look at." [1:1:3]

*ātmavānko jitakrodho matimānko'nasūyakaḥ. kasya bibhyati devāśca jātaroṣasya samyuge. [1:1:4]*

"One who is self-composed, has control over his temper, intelligent and who is free from jealousy; and one whom even the gods tremble." [1:1:4]

To this, Nārada replies:

*bahavo durlabhāścaiva ye tvayā kīrtitā guṇāḥ. mune vakṣyāmaham buddhvā  
tairyuktaḥ śrūyatām naraḥ. [1:1:7]*

"It is extremely difficult to find someone with these types of qualities described by you. [1:1:7]

*ikṣvākuvamśaprabhavo rāmo nāma janaiḥ śrutaḥ. [1:1:8]*

"However, there is an eminent one in the Ikṣvāku dynasty whose name is heard as 'Rāma' by the people." [1:1:8]

Rāma has a deep sense of filial piety. When Kaikeyī sends for Rāma, he not only comes right away, but is eager to fulfill her directives when he learns that he is at the center of the fulfillment of the two boons given to her by Daśaratha. Rāma says:

*aham hi vacanād rājñāḥ pateyamapi pāvake. bhakṣeyam viṣam tīkṣṇam  
pateyamapi cārṇave. niyukto guruṇā pitrā nṛpeṇa ca hitena ca. [II:18:28-  
29]*



"I can, at the king's words, jump into the fire. Being ordered by him, who is my father and who is my king especially, I can drink virulent poison and drown into the ocean."

When Rāma learns about the nature of the boons, he is least perturbed and readily agrees to depart to the forest.

*śrutvā na vivyathe rāmaḥ kaikeyīm cedamabravīt. [II:19:1]*

"Upon hearing the unpleasant words of Kaikeyī, Rāma was not pained."

Rāma said:

*evamastu gamiṣyāmi vanam vastumaham tvitaḥ. jaṭācīradharo rājñāḥ  
pratijñāmanupālayan. [II:19:2]*

"As you say, I shall repair to the forest from this place wearing bark and matted hair carrying out the promise of the king."

When his mother Kausalyā threatens suicide, and when his brother Lakṣmaṇa wants to take action against both Daśaratha and Kaikeyī, Rāma calmly dissuades them both respectively by merely appealing to a sense of dharma.

When Rāma tries to dissuade Sītā by telling her that life in the forest would not only be hard and harsh, but outright dangerous, he

nevertheless yields to Sītā's dharmic insistence that a wife ought to share the fate of her husband.

Similarly, when Lakṣmaṇa wants to accompany him into exile into the forest, Rāma tells him to stay back in order to take care of their mothers Kausalyā and Sumitrā in case Bharata neglects them both. However, this is merely a ploy to dissuade Lakṣmaṇa from coming to the forest. It does not work. Lakṣmaṇa insists, and Rāma finally yields.

Rāma, as we already know, is a man of firm resolve. He does not look for an opportunity to turn things around in his favor if a situation proves to be marginal in nature. One such situation takes place when Sumantra the minister acting as charioteer stands confused as to whether he should obey Daśaratha who is asking him to halt the chariot from departing, and on the other hand, Rāma urging Sumantra to proceed without delay. Sensing Sumantra bewilderment, Rāma tells Sumantra to tell a 'white lie' upon returning to the palace if the Daśaratha were to ask him as to why he disobeyed him. The 'white lie' would be that he did not hear the king's orders amidst the tumult during Rāma's departure.

*tiṣṭhate rājā cukrośa yāhi yāhīti rāghavaḥ. sumantrasya babhūvātmā  
cakrayoriva cāntarā. [II:40:46]*

"The king exclaimed, 'Stay', Rāghava said, 'On, on'. Sumantra's mind vacillated like that of one placed between two hosts burning to encounter each other."

*nāśroṣamiti rājānamupālabdho'pi vakṣyasi. ciram duḥkhasya pāpiṣṭhamiti  
rāmastamabravīt. [II:40:47]*

"Rāma said to him, 'when taxed by the monarch (on your return), you will say 'I did not hear you'. But delay will impart me terrible pain'."

Rāma is respectful of sages, and denies every opportunity for comfort during his exile. This is clearly seen when the sage Bharadvāja offers him the safety of the hermitage to spend his years in exile. Rāma gives the reason that if people come to know of his sojourn in the hermitage, they will bring him all the amenities and the vow will be broken. He wants a lonely place, whereupon the sage directs him to the Citrakūṭa mountains.

Whenever Lakṣmaṇa becomes suspicious or enraged, Rāma quickly and calmly pacifies him. One instance stands out most of all in this connection. It happens when Bharata is approaching with his army to request Rāma to return back to Ayodhyā and ascend the throne. Rāma knows Bharata's real intentions, and thus pacifies Lakṣmaṇa. Further, keeping in stride with his nature of filial piety and firm resolve, Rāma, without hesitation, rejects the kingdom once again when Bharata offers it to him.

As a husband, he does his spousal duty to recover the kidnapped Sītā. He is always faithful to her. In an age of religiously sanctioned polygamy especially for kings, Rāma remains a person with just one wife,

a trait that has not gone unrecognized in the Hindu tradition to this day as one of the extra-ordinary attributes of Rāma's sterling character.

Rāma is also a great judge of character and is readily able to size up the nature of people. He correctly assesses the nobility of Jaṭāyu, the piety of Śabarī, the learned nature of Hanumān, the sincerity of Vibhīṣaṇa etc.

Another great nature of Rāma is his sense of forgiving people for their transgressions or errors in judgment. He never takes Lakṣmaṇa to task for abandoning Sītā, Sugrīva for his lackadaisical attitude, Hanumān for his amnesia etc. He is even prepared to forgive Rāvaṇa if he were to rectify his ways.

Rāma said:

*ānayaṇam hariśreṣṭha dattamasyābhayaṃ mayā. vibhīṣaṇo vā sugrīva yaḍi vā rāvaṇaḥ svayaṃ. [VI:18:34]*

"O Sugrīva, O foremost of monkeys, you bring him here soon, whether he be Vibhīṣaṇa or Rāvaṇa himself, I shall declare to him, 'no fear'."

Yet, in spite of all this, Rāma remains humble and always recognizes himself as just an ordinary man.

Rāma said:

*ātmānam mānuṣam manye rāmam daśarathātmajam* [VI:117:11]

"I know myself to be the man Rāma, the son of Daśaratha."

Only once does he show that he is Almighty.

Rāma said:

*adya yuddhena mahatā samudram pariśoṣaye.* [VI:21:20]

"Today, in this terrible battle, I'll dry up the ocean."

Rāma is thus a sovereign who is moral, noble, dharmic in his ways and sattvic in character.

## **10.7**

### **BHARATA**

Bharata is introduced to the readers of the Rāmāyaṇa epic as the son born of Kaikeyī under the Hindu astrological asterism of Puṣya.

Ironically, it is in the same asterism of Puṣya that Daśaratha was preparing to install Rāma as the heir-apparent.

*puṣye jātastu bharato mīnalagne prasannadhīḥ.* [I:18:25]

"And Bharata of happy disposition was born under the asterism Puṣya when the Sun had entered the zodiacal sign of Pisces." [I:18:25]

*śvaḥ puṣyeṇa jitakrodham yauvarājyena cānagham. rājā daśaratho rāmamabhiṣektā hi rāgham.* [II:7:11]

"Tomorrow under the asterism of Puṣya, King Daśaratha will install the sinless Rāghava, the one who is having anger under control, as heir-apparent to the throne." [II:7:11]

There was no scheming or malicious intentions on the part of King Daśaratha. It was done under the advice of the royal astrologers who chose this day for him. However, the choosing of the Puṣya asterism date certainly provided a lot of ammunition for the turmoil-making Mantharā. It became of the elements used to brainwash Kaikeyī and arouse the evil instincts in her.

Bharata is second oldest of the four sons of Daśaratha. As one begins to read the epic, there is a feeling that he is a rival of Rāma in the making.

*bālyāt prabhṛti susnigdho lakṣmaṇo lakṣmivardhanaḥ.* [I:18:28]

*rāmasya lokarāmasya bhrāturjyeṣṭhasya nityaśaḥ.* [I:18:29]

"And even from early youth, that enhancer of auspiciousness, Lakṣmaṇa, was ever attached to his elder brother Rāma, the delight of all." [I:18:28-29]

*bharatasyāpi śatrughno lakṣmaṇāvarajo hi saḥ.* [I:18:32]

*prāṇaiḥ priyataro nityam tasya cāsīt tathā priyaḥ.* [I:18:33]

"And that younger brother of Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna, likewise became ever dearer to Bharata than life itself." [I:18:32-33]

However, all of that becomes totally unfounded and just vanishes when he vitriolically assails his mother for obtaining the kingdom for him by sending Rāma to exile. Hindu tradition considers him the greatest devotee [parama bhakta] of Rāma. Bharata's only "rival" in this regard is Hanumān. In fact, Hindu tradition acknowledges that Bharata and Hanumān are the only two people that Rāma affectionately embraces in the entire Rāmāyaṇa epic.

Bharata actively pursues his exiled brother to his forest camp at Citrakūṭa and begs Rāma to return to take up the throne ill-gotten to him by his mother Kaikeyī. Rāma refuses to return, and Bharata has to be content with the sandals of Rāma which he places on the throne as a much-revered proxy entity of Rāma and rules as regent from Nandigrāma in the guise of an ascetic. He promises to immolate himself fourteen years to date if Rāma does not return and assume kingship of Ayodhyā. As Rāma is returning back to Ayodhyā after his fourteen-year exile, he makes sure to dispatch Hanumān to inform the anticipating Bharata of Rāma's impending arrival and that he ought not to do anything hasty and drastic with his life such as self-immolation.

Bharata's sacrifice is passive in that he stays in Ayodhyā taking care of the kingdom as temporary regent and plenipotentiary until his brother's return. Bharata's sacrifice was of three kinds:

1. He sacrificed the right to the throne ill-gotten for him by his mother
2. He sacrificed a life of royal luxury and lived like an ascetic just like his exiled brother
3. He performed sacrifices in Nandigrāma, and was ready to sacrifice himself into the fire if Rāma did not return.

## **10.8**

### **LAKṢMAṆA**

Lakṣmaṇa is the very portrait of selfless service, dedication, honesty and sincerity on the positive side, and quick-tempered and suspicious of all on the negative side.



Though married, Lakṣmaṇa is uncomfortable and shy in his dealings with women. His dealing with Śurpanakhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa, is the most comical of all such dealings. His two other major dealings with women are his sister-in-law Sītā and with Tārā, the wife initially of Vālī and later of Sugrīva.

In his dealing with Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa is put into a very awkward situation when she, upon hearing the demon Mārīca's pseudo cries imitating Rāma, orders Lakṣmaṇa to go and help his brother. On the other hand, Rāma had given him strict orders not to leave Sītā alone at any time. When Lakṣmaṇa makes the better judgment to not leave Sītā unguarded, she accuses him falsely and viciously of waiting for an opportunity to have her for himself and also being an agent of Bharata. These accusations were truly painful to Lakṣmaṇa as he never remotely harbored such intentions.

Sītā said:

*ākramdamānam tu vane bhrātaram trātumarhasi. tam kṣipramabhidhāva  
tvam bhrātaram śaraṇaiṣiṇam. [III:45:3]*

"It behoveth you to save your brother who is crying aloud in the forest; do you immediately repair hence to save him, who is in need of your help."

*na jagāma tathoktastu bhrāturājñāya śāsanam. [III:45:4]*

"Remembering the ordinance of his brother, Lakṣmaṇa did not go."

Sītā said:

*lobhāttu matkṛte nūnam nānugacchasi rāghavam. vyaśanam te priyam  
manye sneho bhātari nāsti te. [III:45:7]*

"Truly being under the influence of lust for me you did not follow Rāma!  
For this you did welcome Rāma's disaster; you have no affection for him."

*suduṣṭastvam vane rāmamekameko'nugacchasi. mama hatoḥ praticchanaḥ  
prayukto bharatena vā. [III:45:24]*

"Verily you are a monster of wickedness, that Rāma repairing to the  
woods, you have, being lustful for me, followed him alone. Or hast you  
been engaged by Bharata to act thus?"

Utterly pained of hearing these accusations, Lakṣmaṇa finally departs  
from their cottage seeking Rāma and thus leaving Sītā vulnerable,  
unguarded and alone.

The above episode is one of two great dilemmas that Lakṣmaṇa is  
put through in his lifetime. The second dilemma takes place towards the  
end of the Rāmāyaṇa epic when Rāma in conference with Kāla, at the  
latter's behest asks Lakṣmaṇa not to let anyone in. Kāla puts a condition  
that if anyone were to disobey this condition, Rāma should slay him.

However, during the conference, the sage Durvāsā arrived demanding to see Rāma. Afraid of being cursed by the sage, Lakṣmaṇa let him in, thus disobeying Rāma's orders. Compelled by the conditions laid down by Kāla, Rāma renounces Lakṣmaṇa. Unable to bear this separation from his brother, Lakṣmaṇa goes to the banks of the Sarayū river. There he halts his breathing and gives up his mortal frame. The gods shower flowers and their blessings on Lakṣmaṇa. He is taken up into heaven by Indra. He thus becomes the first of the four brothers to enter heaven.

Kāla said:

*yaḥ śṛṇoti nirīkṣedvā sa vadhyo bhavitā tava. bhavedvai munimukhasya vacanam yadyavekṣase. [VII:103:12]*

"And if you have any regard for the words of that foremost of ascetics, do you so order that whosoever shall hear or see us, when we shall converse in a solitary place, shall be slain by you."

*tatheti ca pratijñā rāmo lakṣmaṇamabravīt. dvāri tiṣṭha. [VII:103:13]*

"Thereupon Rāma promised and said to Lakṣmaṇa, stay at the door."

*tathā tayoh samvādordurvāsā bhagavānṛṣiḥ. rāmasya darśanākāṅkṣī rājadvāramupāgamat. [VII:105:1]*

"While the two (Rāma and Kāla) were thus conversing, the great ascetic Durvāsā arrived at the door expecting to see Rāma."

Durvāsā said:

*asminkṣaṇe mām saumitre rāmāya pratedaya. viṣayam tvām puram caiva śapiṣye rāghavam tathā. [VII:105:6]*

"O Lakṣmaṇa, if you do not go at this very moment to tell Rāma of my arrival, I'll curse Rāma and your kingdom."

*visarjaye tvām saumitre bhūddharmaviparyayāḥ. [VII:106:13]*

Rāma said:

"O Lakṣmaṇa, it is not proper to go against dharma. I therefore renounce you."

*sa gatvā sarayūtīramupaspr̥śya kṛtāñjalih. nigṛhya sarvasrotamsi niḥśvāsam mumoca ha. [VII:107:15]*

"Having reached the banks of the Sarayū and rinsed his mouth he stood there with folded palms. And having obstructed all passages he did not breathe anymore."

Lakṣmaṇa is suspicious of all people coming to see his brother Rāma. In the cases of Bharata, Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa, he is outright wrong. Rāma has to both pacify him and rectify his perceptions of these people all of whom are very devoted to Rāma.

Rāma tests Lakṣmaṇa by asking him if he recognizes any of the jewelry of Sītā that he had thrown down while being abducted by Rāvaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa makes a statement in reply to Rāma's query that has become the ideal model of the older sister-in-law and younger brother-in-law relationship in Hindu society.

Lakṣmaṇa said:

*nāham jānāmi keyūre nāham jānāmi kuṇḍale. nūpure tvabhijānāmi nityam pādābhivandanāt. [IV:6:22-23]*

"I do not know (her) bracelets, I do not know (her) earrings. But I do know full well her toe-ring on account of my always bowing down to (her) feet."

When Lakṣmaṇa faints during the battle with Rāvaṇa who used the Śakti weapon against him, Rāma is deeply sad. Rāma makes a statement that has also become the standard citation in Hindu society of the affection between brothers.

Rāma said:

*deśe deśe kalatrāṇi deśe deśe ca bāndhavāḥ. tam tu deśam na paśyāmi  
yatra bhrātā sahodaraḥ. [VI:101:14]*

"In land after land one meets with wives, in land after land one meets relatives, but there is no place a brother may be met with."

Lakṣmaṇa, in comparison with his brother Rāma, is a realist. Rāma, by contrast, is an idealist. These two opposite perspectives on life become most apparent during their debate that takes place after Kaikeyī has demanded the exile of Rāma.

### **Rāma's idealism, conservatism and fatalism**

Rāma said:

*nāham arthaparo devī lokamāvastumutsahe. viddhi māmṛṣibhistulyam  
vimalam dharmamāsthitam. [II:19:20]*

"O lady, not being addicted to wealth, I do not long for living in this world like the sages. Know me as one who is well-grounded in dharmic affairs."

*na hyato dharmacaraṇam kimcidasti mahattaram. yathā pitari śuśrūṣā tasya  
vā vacanakriyā. [II:19:22]*

"There is no greater virtue than serving one's father and carrying out his words."

*anukto'pyatrabhavatā bhavatyā vacanādaham. vane vatsyāmi vijane  
varṣāñīha caturdaśa.*

"Even though not commanded by him, I shall, for your words, live solitarily in the forest for fourteen years."

*katham prakṛtisampannā rājaputrī tathāguṇā. brūyāt sā prākṛteva strī  
matpīḍyam bhartṛsamnidhau. [II:22:19]*

"That which is above comprehension is Destiny and it is beyond the power of creatures to avert its consequences; and evidently it is through this Destiny that have sprung up this distemper of Kaikeyī and my loss of kingdom."

*asamkalpitameveha yadasmāt pravartate. nivartyārabdhamarambhairnanu  
devasya karma tat. [II:22:24]*

"Hindrance in this world to the completion of works undertaken, and the origination of an unthought-of-event in its stead is nothing but the action of this Destiny."

*daivābhīpannā na pitā kathamcijjānāsi daivam hi yathāprabhāvam.  
[II:22:30]*

"Know the mighty power of Destiny, and therefore do not blame (our) father laboring under its influence."

### **Lakṣmaṇa's realism, pragmatism and activism**

Lakṣmaṇa said:

*devakalpamṛjum dāntam ripūṇāmapi vatsalam. avekṣamāṇāḥ ko dharmam tyajet putramakāraṇāt. [II:21:6]*

"Observing which dharma does the king, without any cause, renounce such a son who is like to celestials, simple, well disciplined and beloved even of the enemies?"

*protśāhito'yam kaikeyā samtusṭo yadi naḥ pitā. amitrabhūto niḥsangam vadhyatām vadhyatāmapi. [II:21:12]*

"If father being propitiated and excited by Kaikeyī, turns out to be our enemy, he shall be slain without any hesitation."

*dharmadoṣaprasaṅgeṇa lokasyānatiśankyā. katham hyetadasambhrāntastvadvidho vaktumarhati. [II:23:6]*

"To avoid infraction of dharma and the degradation of the people you are eager to comply. This eagerness is misplaced and erroneous."



*yathā hyevamaśauṇḍīram śauṇḍīraḥ kṣatriyaṣabhaḥ. kim nāma kṛpaṇam  
daivaśaktamabhiśamsasi. [II:23:7]*

"How could one like yourself, being heroic among kṣatriyas, and capable of overcoming Destiny, speak in such a strain as behoves one that is impotent. Why do you extol Destiny that is powerless and weak."

*yenaivamāgatā dvaidham tava buddhirmahāmate. so'pi dharmo mama  
dveṣyo yatprasangād vimuhyasi. [II:23:11]*

"Even that so-called dharma do I loathe, which has, O high-souled one, fascinated you, and made your mind run from one extreme to another."

*adya me pauruṣahatam daivam drakṣyanti vai janāḥ. yairdaivadāhantam  
te'dya draṣṭam rājyābhiśecanam. [II:23:19]*

"People will witness, before the prevention of your installation by Destiny, its defeat this very day by my manliness."

Lakṣmaṇa is most definitely a dharmādharma, rajasic and second function Dumezilian character.

## 10.9

### JANAKA

There are four *puruṣārthas* or goals in the Hindu view of life. These are *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. There are four kingdoms in the Rāmāyaṇa. These are Ayodhyā, Kiṣkindhā, Lankā and Videha. These four kingdoms symbolize the above four goals.

1. Ayodhyā = Dharma (because Rāma the scion of the Ikṣvāku dynasty that ruled over Ayodhyā was the very icon of dharma)
2. Kiṣkindhā = Artha (the wealth or *artha* of the Kiṣkindhā kingdom was its population which was needed in order to defeat the forces of Rāvaṇa)
3. Lankā = Kāma (Lankā under Rāvaṇa represented lust or *kāma*)
4. Videha = Mokṣa (King Janaka was a royal sage or *rājarṣi*. He was always a noble and detached soul yearning for salvation). His is the only kingdom not involved in the Rāmāyaṇa war, and as such represents the *apavarga* (off the line) from the worldly triad of *dharma-artha-kāma*.

Janaka was king of Videha. His kingdom's name *Videha* has a symbolism associated with salvation for the very word '*videha*' made up of two words '*vi*' (away) and '*deha*' (body) means 'disassociated from the body'. Janaka was truly a king who lived the name of his kingdom. Hindu tradition recognizes him as a *rājarṣi* (royal sage). In this sense, he was the very opposite of Daśaratha whose oldest son Rāma married Janaka's oldest (adopted) daughter, Sītā. His second daughter, Ūrmilā, became Lakṣmaṇa's

wife. Janaka's younger brother Kuśadhvaja had two daughters named Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti who became the wives of Bharata and Śatrughna respectively.

Janaka's first name was Sīradhvaja. He was the twenty-third monarch in the dynasty descended from the king Nimi whose grandson was named Janaka. From his time onwards, it became the family name. Sīradhvaja himself mentions this fact to Sage Vasiṣṭha, the royal chaplain of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, just before the wedding of Rāma and Sītā.

*tasya putro mithirnāma janako mithiputrakaḥ. prathamo janako rājā janakādapyudāvasuḥ. [I:71:4]*

"His (Nimi's) son was named Mithi, and Mithi's son was Janaka. And from this Janaka have we derived that word as applied to every one of us. And from Janaka sprang Udāvasu."

The Janaka monarchs possessed the bow given by the god Śiva. Sīradhvaja-Janaka had made a vow that he would confer his (adopted) daughter Sītā only on that man who would be able to lift and string the bow. According to Sīradhvaja-Janaka, many men had tried and failed. When he saw Rāma easily do the impossible, he was ready to confer Sītā on Rāma.

This same Janaka was the disciple of the sages Aṣṭavakra and Yājñavalkya, both of whom taught him the nature of *ātman* (the individual soul) and *Brahman* (the Universal Soul). In the case of Sage Aṣṭavakra,

Janaka seemed to have had the compassion of preventing this sage argue with the polemicist Bandi who was the unchallenged champion of his art. Nevertheless, Janaka allowed the debate to take place in his court when Aṣṭavakra insisted and was able to defeat Bandi. The *Aṣṭavakra Samhitā* is the record of the metaphysical teachings imparted by the sage to King Janaka.

Janaka said:

*katham jñānamavāpnoti katham muktirbhaviṣyati vairāgyam ca katham prāptametad brūhi mama prabho. [Aṣṭavakra Samhitā I:1]*

"Tell me, O Master, how knowledge is attained, how liberation is attained, and also how non-attachment is attained."

Sage Aṣṭavakra replied:

*yadi deham pṛthak kṛtya citi viśrāmya tiṣṭhasi. adhunaiva sukhī sānto bandhamukto bhaviṣyasi. [Aṣṭavakra Samhitā I:4]*

"If you detach yourself from the body (*videha*) and rest in consciousness, you'll become content and peaceful and free from (worldly) bondage immediately."

The entire fourth chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* contains the teachings imparted by Sage Yājñavalkya to King Janaka about the nature of Brahman and ātman. In the first section of the fourth chapter, the sage

tells Janaka that Brahman is beyond all descriptions. The second section introduces the subject matter of ātman. The third section contains teachings about spiritually luminous nature of the soul, the different states of the soul, the nature of the soul in deep sleep, and the nature of the soul at the time of death. The fourth section contains teachings about the soul of the unliberated beings after death. In the end, Janaka is so pleased with the utterly profound knowledge imparted to him by the sage Yājñavalkya that he turns over the Videha kingdom to him with the words:

*so'ham bhagavate videhān dadāmi.* [Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV:4:23]

"Venerable Sir, I give you the kingdom of the Videhas."

This is the actual relinquishing of the highest material possession for the highest goal, i.e. salvation.

The following verse from the Mahābhārata epic clearly shows how detached a ruler King Janaka was:

Janaka said:

*anantam bata me vittam yasya me nāsti kiñcana. mithilāyām pradīptāyām na me kiñcit pradahyate.* [Mahābhārata Śānti Parva VII:1]

"Infinite indeed is my wealth of which nothing is mine. If Mithilā is burnt, nothing that is mine is burnt."

In this sense, King Janaka was the ideal *karmayogī*, for he did his work as a ruler with total detachment. He becomes so much of an icon of karma-yoga that Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā recognizes him as such.

Kṛṣṇa said:

*karmanai'va hi samsiddham āsthitā janakādayaḥ. lokasamgraham evā'pi sampaśyan kartum arhasi. [Bhagavadgītā III:20]*

"It was even by works that Janaka and others attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works also with a view to the maintenance of the world."

Ānandagiri, a savant of the Advaita school of Vedānta, and a biographer of Śankara, the founder of the school, while commenting on Śankara's commentary on Kaṭha Upaniṣad I:2:19 insightfully writes:

*vivekī sarvadā muktaḥ kurvato nāsti kartṛtā. alepavādam āśritya śrīkṛṣṇa janakau yathā.*

"An enlightened person is always free because even while engaged in work has no sense of doer-ship. Having taken refuge in the pure teaching, that person is like Kṛṣṇa and Janaka."

To be the only person compared to Kṛṣṇa who is regarded as God-Incarnate, Janaka has a mere human being must have been a karmayogin of a very exalted type.

## **10.10**

### **SĪTĀ**

The word '*sītā*' means 'furrow'. The lady who bore this name got so named because the man who found her as a baby in a casket was ceremonially plowing the field when this incident happened. This man was none other than King Janaka of Videha who at that time was engaged in the ceremonies of an agricultural rite. He decided to adopt this baby girl. Because of the fact that she became his adopted daughter, the baby was also known by the names of Jānakī (daughter of Janaka), Vaidehi (princess of the Videha kingdom), and Maithilī (princess of the capital city of Mithilā). In fact, in a vast majority of verses of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Sītā is referred to as 'Jānakī'.

When Rāma lifted and strung Śiva's bow thus breaking it in the process, King Janaka gave away his adopted daughter Sītā in marriage to him as he had fulfilled the conditions.

A happy yet affectionate but concerned father that Janaka was, gave away Sītā with the following spontaneous words to Rāma.

*iyam sītā mama sutā sahadharmacarī tava. pratīccha cainām bhadram te  
pāṇam gṛhṇīśva pāṇinā. pativratā mahābhāgā chāyevānugatā sadā.*

[I:73:26-27]

"This Sītā, my daughter, you accept with good tidings, as your life-partner in the observance of every duty; take her hand by yours. May she be one of deep piety, and devoted to her husband, ever following you like a shadow."

These above words have become fossilized and have become an integral part of the Hindu wedding liturgy when the bride's father is made to recite this by the officiating priest as he gives away his daughter to his new son-in-law.

Sītā follows these words and indeed eagerly accompanies her husband Rāma like a shadow into the forest-exile for fourteen years. Sītā is no meek woman. She argues with her husband when he attempts to dissuade her from going into exile with him. She does not get frightened by the scary scenarios that Rāma paints of forest-life. She confronts her brother-in-law Lakṣmaṇa quite caustically when he hesitates to go looking for Rāma.

Sītā is equated with suffering in the Rāmāyaṇa. She is separated from her husband twice. The first occasion is when Rāvaṇa, the king of



Lankā, abducts her and holds her in captivity. There Sītā is constantly tormented by the demonesses who guard her. Rāvaṇa too comes often to molest and threaten her so that her will-power crumbles and finally she will agree to go to bed with him. Her captivity comes to an end when Rāvaṇa is vanquished by Rāma. Before Rāma re-accepts her, he asks her to go through a fire-ordeal. If she had been faithful and pure, she would have nothing to fear and she would not only come out unscathed but get re-united with Rāma. Sītā is so pure that the fire-god himself appears and offers her back to Rāma.

After returning to Ayodhyā and getting coronated as the queen along with her husband as king, Sītā is once again exiled by her husband because of some comment passed on Rāma by a citizen who denigratingly spoke of his king as someone who accepts his woman back despite the fact she was in some other man's house. When Rāma comes to hear of this passing remark, he sees it as a sullification of his "perfect" kingdom. So, he mercilessly banishes the pregnant Sītā who finds refuge in Sage Vālmīki's hermitage where she gives birth to twin boys who are named Lava and Kuśa. Finally, she is never reunited with her husband. The earth-goddess comes and reclaims her daughter so that she does not suffer anymore.

## **10.11**

### **VĀLĪ**

Vālī, the chief of the Vānaras and the ruler of the Kiṣkindhā kingdom, was an extremely powerful person. He not only could defeat any challenger, but also had defeated the mightiest terror of his time, i.e. Rāvaṇa, the ruler of the Lankā kingdom, who had obtained a boon from the god Brahmā of not being vanquished by any god or demon. So, how was Vālī able to defeat Rāvaṇa who had such a formidable boon? The answer to this lies in the fact that Rāvaṇa while asking Brahmā his boons had ignored animals. They were too lowly for him. Vālī was a monkey, and hence powerful enough to vanquish Rāvaṇa.

The episode is that Rāvaṇa once saw Vālī meditating. Vālī ignored him. At this, Rāvaṇa got enraged and caught hold of Vālī's tail in order to have some fun. However, once he grasped the tail, he could not un-clutch himself from it. Vālī, after his prayers, flew thousands of miles over mountains and seas with Rāvaṇa clinging on to his tail. Rāvaṇa was thus utterly humiliated. He later asked Vālī to forgive him. At this, Vālī graciously and magnanimously released him. They both solemnized and contracted friendship in front of the sacred fire.

Below are some select passages from the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa which gives us an insight to what happened in the Vālī-Rāvaṇa encounter.

*hastagrāham tu tam matvā pādaśabdena rāvaṇam. parānmukho'pi jagrāha vālī sarpamivāṇḍaja. [VII:34:20]*

"Vālī was seated with his back (towards Rāvaṇa) and on knowing Rāvaṇa's footsteps, he quickly got hold of him like the eagle catches a serpent."

Rāvaṇa said:

*vānarendra mahendrābha rākṣasendro'smi rāvaṇa. yuddhepsuriha samprāptaḥ sa cādyāsāditastvayā. [VII:34:36]*

"O king of monkeys, resembling Mahendra, I'm Rāvaṇa, the king of Rākṣasas. I came here to fight, but alas, I have been defeated by you."

*aho balamaho vīryamaho gāmbhīryameva ca. yenāham paśuvadṛhya bhrāmitaścaturo'rṇavān. [VII:34:37]*

"What strength of yours! what prowess! what gravity! Holding me like a beast, you have journeyed over four oceans."

*so'ham dṛṣṭabalastubhyamicchāmi haripungava. tvayā saha ciram sakhyam susnigdham pāvakāgrataḥ. [VII:34:40]*

"Your prowess has been sufficiently displayed. But I wish to bow (to you), O king of monkeys, to make friends with you for ever before the (sacred) fire."

It is because of the above episode, Vālī, when mortally wounded by Rāma, says that he could have gotten Sītā released from Rāvaṇa's captivity within a day if only Rāma had sought his help.

Vālī says:

*māmeva yadi pūrvam tvametadarthamacodayaḥ. maithilīmahamekāhvā tava cānītavanbhaveḥ. rākṣasam ca durātmānam tava bhāryāpahāriṇam. kaṅṭhe baddhvā pradadyām te'nihatam rāvaṇam raṇe. [IV:17:49-50]*

"Hadst you appraised me beforehand of your objective, I would have gotten you your Maithilī in the course of a single day. And I would have brought to you, by the neck, that vicious-souled demon (named) Rāvaṇa, the ravisher of your spouse, without putting an end to his life in battle."

Despite this, Vālī lacked compassion, understanding, and goodwill when it came to dealing with his utterly obedient younger brother Sugrīva. Vālī's only justification of getting angry with Sugrīva is that after killing

the demon Māyāvī, he could find a way out of the cave, and yelled out in vain to Sugrīva for help.

Vālī said:

*sūdayitvā tu tam śatrum vikrāntam tamaham sukham. niṣkrāmam neha paśyāmi bilasya pihitam sukham. [IV:11:22]*

"Having with ease slain my powerful foe, I could not find the outlet of the cavern, its mouth having been closed."

*vikrośamānasya tu me sugrīveti punaḥ punaḥ. yataḥ prativaco nāsti tato'ham bhṛśaduḥkhitaḥ. [IV:11:23]*

"Then as I again and again cried 'Sugrīva, Sugrīva', I became exceedingly sorry for not receiving any reply.

Even if the subsequent banishment of Sugrīva can be justified in light of the above statement of Vālī, the misappropriation of Sugrīva's wife, Rumā, by Vālī is totally adharmic. Rāma notes this fact when dialoging with the mortally wounded Vālī.

Rāma said:

*bhrāturvartasi bhāryāyām tyaktvā dharmam sanātanam. asya tvam  
dharmaṇasya sugrīvasya mahātmanaḥ. rumāyām vartase kāmāt snuṣāyām  
pāpakarmakṛt. [IV:18:18-19]*

"You have ravished your brother's wife renouncing that eternal virtue. You, the perpetrator of many evil deeds, have ravished, out of lust, Rumā, the wife of your high-souled brother Sugrīva."

Vālī is a rajasic, adharmic and a violent figure.

## **10.12**

### **SUGRĪVA**

Sugrīva became ruler of the Kiṣkindhā kingdom with Rāma's help. In turn, he pressed his entire kingdom at the service of Rāma for the rescuing of Sītā from Lankā. Later on, Bharata recognized him as the "fifth" brother for this assistance.

Sugrīva was a good-natured individual honestly and truly serving his powerful older brother Vālī who was the ruler of Kiṣkindhā. It was Vālī who undid the relationship due to his unbounded arrogance, wrathful nature and lack of understanding. When Sugrīva followed Vālī, when the latter

was engaged in a duel with the demon Māyāvī, Sugrīva did everything that he could.

1. He dissuaded Vālī from going into battle with Māyāvī

Sugrīva said:

*sa tu vai niḥsṛtaḥ krodhāttam hantumasurottamam. vāryamāṅastataḥ  
strībhirmayā ca prāṅatātmanaḥ. [IV:9:7]*

"And as he rushed out in wrath, for the purpose of slaying that foremost of Asuras, he was opposed by his wives as well as myself, who humbled himself before him."

2. When Vālī did go, Sugrīva followed him out of fraternal love

Sugrīva said:

*sa tu nirdhūya tāḥ sarvā nirjagāma mahābalaḥ. tato'hamapi  
sauhārdānniḥsṛto vālinā saha. [IV:9:8]*

"But moving them aside, that exceedingly powerful one sallied out. Thereupon out of affection I also went out with Vālī."

3. Sugrīva obeyed his brother dutifully when he asked to stand at the mouth of the cave.

Vālī said:

*iha tiṣṭhādya sugrīva biladvāri samāhitaḥ. yāvadatra praviśyāham nihanmi samare ripum. [IV:9:13]*

"Do you, O Sugrīva, carefully stay at the mouth of the cave, while I entering in, slay my foe in battle."

4. Sugrīva waited in this manner for an entire year.

Sugrīva said:

*tasya praviṣṭasya bilam sāgraḥ samvatsaro gataḥ. sthitasya ca biladvāri sa kālo vyatyavartata. [IV:9:15]*

"After he entered the cave, and as I remained at its mouth, a space of over a complete year rolled away."

5. When Sugrīva returned back to Kiṣkindhā disheartened, he tried his best to keep it a secret.

Sugrīva said:



*śokārtaścodakam kṛtvā kiṣkindhāmāgataḥ sakhe. gūhamānasya me tat tvam  
yatnato mantribhiḥ śrutam. [IV:9:20]*

"Afflicted with grief and after performing his watery rites, I came back to Kiṣkindhā, O my friend. And although I carefully concealed (the matter), the counselors heard it all."

6. It was the counselors who finally made him king. And he ruled justly.

Sugrīva said:

*tato'ham taiḥ samāgamya sametairabhiṣecitaḥ. rājyam praśāsatastasya  
nyāyato mama rāghava. [IV:9:21]*

"There, they assembled together, installed me (in the kingdom). And, as I was ruling the kingdom with justice, O Rāma."

7. When Vālī returned, Sugrīva welcomed him back, bowed down to him and placed his crown at Vālī's feet.

Sugrīva said:

*natvā pādāvaham tasya mukuṭenāspṛśam prabho. api vālī mama krodhānna  
prasādam cakāra saḥ. [IV:9:26]*

"And, O Lord, I, bowing touched his feet with my crown; yet from anger Vālī did not extend to me his grace."

Despite all this, Vālī banished his brother with literally a loin cloth. He appropriated even Sugrīva's wife. Luckily for Sugrīva, he managed to get to R̥ṣyamūka mountain which was one place Vālī could not enter on account of the curse of Sage Mātanga. Also, Sugrīva had with him, one extra-ordinary person as his faithful minister and dharmic ally, i.e. Hanumān.

## **10.13**

### **HANUMĀN**

#### **The internal dynamics of the Hanumān tradition in Hinduism**

Hanumān is one of the *saptaciraṅjīvīs* (seven immortals) according to the Hindu tradition.<sup>193</sup> Among all of them, only Hanumān is adored, venerated, and worshipped by the broad masses throughout the Hindu world. This is because Hanumān is one of three deities<sup>194</sup> in the Hindu

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<sup>193</sup> the *saptaciraṅjīvīs* are Bali, Paraśurāma, Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa, Vyāsa, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāmā

<sup>194</sup> the other two being Gaṇeśa and Durgā

tradition that seems to grant quick boons to his devotees as well as protect them from all harm and danger. Hanumān is for this reason meditated upon by mystics for the attainment of special spiritual powers called *siddhis*. The poet Tulasīdāsa [1532-1623 CE] praises Hanumān as the grantor of the eight *siddhis* and the nine *nidhis*.

*aṣṭasiddhi navanidhi ke dātā*. [verse 31 Hanumān Cālīsā]

These eight *siddhis* according to Yogic tradition are:

1. aṇimā = power to become infinitesimal
2. mahimā = power to become infinite
3. garimā = power to become heavy
4. laghimā = power to become weightless
5. prākāmya = power to appear invisible and go anywhere freely
6. prāpti = power to attain far-off objects, clairvoyance, telepathy, ability to know all languages (human and non-human), power to cure diseases and ward-off evil spirits
7. īsatva = power of lordship over all beings
8. vaśatva = power of control over all objects

Tulasīdāsa especially calls attention to the *prāpti* aspect of Hanumān with the words:

*bhūta piśāca nikaṭa nahī āvai. mahābīra jaba nāma sunāvai. nasai roga harai saba pīrā. japai nirantara hanumata bīrā. sankāṭa te hanumāna chuḍāvai. mana krama vacana dhyāna jo lāvai.* [verses 24-26 Hanumān Cālīsā]

"Ghosts and goblins will not come close (to you) when they hear the name of the Great Hero (Hanumān). All diseases will be destroyed and all difficulties will be warded-off when one chants endlessly on the hero Hanumān. Hanumān will free you of all problems when one meditates (on him) in thought, deed and word."

In the Sanskrit tradition, the most famous prayer to Hanumān is:

*buddhirbalaṃ yaśodhairyaṃ nirbhayaṭvaṃ arogaṭaḥ. ajāḍyaṃ vāḱpaṭutvaṃ hanuṃadsmaraṇād bhavet.*

"Due to meditating on Hanumān, one's gains sharp intellect, physical strength, fame, courage, fearlessness, freedom from diseases, agility, and skillfulness in speech."

It is this very practical and effective outcome which touches the lives of a great number of people that has made the cult of Hanumān a sustained and viable spiritual enterprise in the Hindu tradition over the ages.

There are two versions of the nine nidhis.

The Yogic version is:

1. parakāya praveśa = ability to enter spiritually the body of another person
2. hādi vidyā = ability not to feel hunger or thirst for any length of time
3. kādi vidyā = ability not to be affected by either heat or cold of any degree
4. vāyu gamana siddhi = ability to fly physically for great distances with ease
5. madālasa vidyā = ability to physically expand and contract
6. kanakadhārā siddhi = ability to acquire immense wealth
7. prakhyā sādhana = ability to fertilize spiritually barren women
8. sūrya vijñāna = ability to transform objects using the power of the sun's rays

9. mṛtsanjīvanī vidyā = ability to revive the dead through mantras

The Tantric version is:

1. padma = lotus
2. mahāpadma = great lotus
3. makara = crocodile
4. nīla = sapphire
5. mukunda = mercury
6. kunda = arsenic
7. kharva = baked cups
8. kacchapa = tortoise
9. śankha = conch

These nine objects having immense spiritual powers are supposedly in the possession of the god Kubera, the guardian-deity of the northern direction.

### **The mythological story of Hanumān**

In the hermitage of Sage Gautama, there lived several apes. They used to pick fruits and flowers for the sage and his disciples for use in their religious rites. Among them was a couple named Kesari (male) and Anjanā (female). One day, a rogue elephant came into the hermitage and started to ransack the place. Kesari and Anjanā took the initiative and chased away the elephant. The sage and all his disciples were greatly pleased with the ape-couple. They blessed them with a boon that they would get a very powerful, courageous and intelligent son. The wind-god, Vāyu, perceiving the beauty of Anjanā also desired a son by her. All coincided and Anjanā gave birth to a son.

Then one day when the young child, Ānjaneya, was in a playful mood, he spotted the Sun and wanted to grab it. He leaped toward the Sun when the solar eclipse was about to take place. Rāhu who was about to eclipse the Sun ran away seeing the lad. Rāhu went and complained to Indra, the king of the gods, about Ānjaneya. Angered by this, Indra came and hit the child with his special *vajra* (thunderbolt) weapon. Ānjaneya fell to the ground and broke his chin. This gave him the name '*Hanumān*' or 'the one with a broken chin'.

Vāyu, the wind-god, was angered at the treatment of his son. So, he stopped performing his function of providing air in the world. The gods got frightened and pleaded with Vāyu to resume his functions. Vāyu agreed and each of the gods blessed him with a boon. The three special boons however came from the gods Brahmā, Śiva and Sūrya. Brahmā blessed Hanumān with the boon that he would be unaffected by any

weapon used against him. Śiva blessed him with immortality, and Sūrya, the Sun-god, agreed to teach him all types of spiritual knowledge which would empower him. During the course of education, whenever he had free time, Hanumān would play tricks on the disciples of the hermitage. At first, the disciples laughed. Then as the mischievous behavior grew, they became annoyed and cursed Hanumān saying that he would forget his powers unless someone reminded him of them.

After his education, Sūrya told Hanumān that he (Sūrya) would be born as Sugrīva when Viṣṇu incarnated as Rāma. Hanumān could pay the teacher's fee (*gurudakṣiṇā*) by serving him as his minister in Kiṣkindhā. When the age of Rāma did finally come, Hanumān served Sugrīva initially at Kiṣkindhā, and later at the Ṛṣyamūka mountain haven when Sugrīva went into exile.

As the exiled brothers from Ayodhyā after losing Sītā headed towards Lake Pampā and the Ṛṣyamūka mountain, Sugrīva spotted them from afar and became nervous. He was almost sure that these men had been dispatched by Vālī to hunt him down as Vālī, on account of a curse, could not himself set foot in the Ṛṣyamūka mountain area. To ascertain for himself as to who the two were, Sugrīva dispatched Hanumān who went in the guise of a monk. Initially Hanumān praises the brothers in a left-handed manner to see their reaction, but the brothers do not react. In fact, after Hanumān introduced himself, Rāma describes Hanumān in a glowing manner to Lakṣmaṇa. Hanumān then takes the brothers to Sugrīva to introduce them.

The next great event in Hanumān career is to fly to Lankā. However due to the curse of the disciples of Sage Gautama, Hanumān had to be reminded of his prowess. This was done by one Jāmbavān who was



part of Sugrīva's inner circle of counselors. Rāma gave Hanumān a ring to take to Sītā. On his way to Lankā, he encountered the demoness Simhikā who had the ability to swallow people by their shadow. She caught Hanumān's shadow and swallowed him. Hanumān became so small that he cut her up from the inside. Next at entrance of Lankā, he encountered its guardian goddess Lankiṇī. She tried to prevent Hanumān from entering Lankā. However, Hanumān hit her and she fell. Lankiṇī remembered the prediction that the day she would be defeated by an ape would be the beginning of the doom of Lankā.

Once in Lankā, he beheld Rāvaṇa's youngest brother, Vibhīṣaṇa, praying to Rāma. Hanumān and he became friends. Vibhīṣaṇa asked Hanumān to carry his message of peace to Rāma. Hanumān finally spotted Sītā in a special garden where she was being held captive. Sītā became terrified of Hanumān at first. However, he calmed her fears and presented her with Rāma's ring to put her at ease. Sītā in turn gave Hanumān her hair ornament to take to Rāma.

Before exiting Lankā, Hanumān spotted an orchard. He ravaged the place. The guards under the leadership of Rāvaṇa's son finally took Hanumān captive and placed him before Rāvaṇa. Hanumān assumed a large form and looked down on Rāvaṇa. This made the latter angry especially when he came to know that Hanumān was Rāma's messenger and when Hanumān asked Rāvaṇa to return Sītā. Rāvaṇa ordered Hanumān's tail set on fire.

Hanumān decided to teach Rāvaṇa a lesson and set all of Lankā on fire. Later, Hanumān went to the ocean to extinguish the fire on his tail. Then, he suddenly remembers Sītā and as to what might have happened to her in the burning of Lankā. However, Sītā herself is like fire on account

of her purity. Fire cannot burn fire. Hanumān finally returns to Kiṣkindhā giving Rāma the good news. Rāma embraces Hanumān for this.

During the course of the war with Rāvaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa faints when Rāvaṇa uses the Śakti weapon. The doctor Suṣeṇa orders that a set of medicinal herbs be brought from the Himalayas. The only one that can fly that far was Hanumān. So, Hanumān flies to the Himalayas. Once there, he forgets the name of the herb. So, Hanumān carries back the entire Gandhamādana mountain where the herb was located.

Hanumān final major act is to go and tell Bharata that Rāma is on his way back from his exile of 14 years. Hanumān reaches Bharata in the nick of time as he was about to immolate himself. This was a promise he had made to himself if Rāma did not return 14 years to date.

Finally, towards the end of Rāma's incarnation, Rāma asks Hanumān to stay on in this earth to spread the message of dharma.

Hanumān becomes known for several important things in the Rāmāyaṇa. In all of the prayers addressed to him in the Hindu tradition, the following events are recalled:

1. As the introducer of Rāma to Sugrīva
2. As the messenger of Rāma to Sītā
3. As the messenger of Vibhīṣaṇa to Rāma
4. As the warner to Rāvaṇa
5. As the burner of Lankā
6. As the reviver of Lakṣmaṇa
7. As the messenger of Rāma to Bharata

His role of the being the messenger has important theological significance as being the intermediary between God and man as well as his "life-saving" role echoing back on him being an incarnation of the god of Air (Vāyu), the vital life-giving breath-force (*prāṇa*). Both of these roles have been doctrinalized in the Madhvite sect of Hinduism.

### **Pañcamukhī Hanumān**

There is a special aspect to Hanumān that is considered very powerful by many in the Hindu tradition. This is Hanumān with five-faces. The main face is Hanumān's, but the other four belong to Hayagrīva, Narasimha, Garuḍa and Varāha. Except for Garuḍa, the other three are incarnations of Viṣṇu. Even here, Varāha and Narasimha are the third and fourth incarnations among the traditional ten manifestations (*daśāvatāras*) of Viṣṇu. Hayagrīva is the odd one out.

The significance of Pañcamukhī Hanumān is as follows:

1. Hayagrīva rescued the Vedas from a demon named Hayagrīva. Hanumān is the learned in the three Vedas, grammar, rhetoric etc. Both Hayagrīva and Hanumān are associated with learning and matters of the intellect.

Rāma said:

*nānṛgvedavinītasya nāyajurvedadhāriṇaḥ. nāsāmavedaviduṣaḥ śakyamevam  
vibhāṣitum. [IV:3:28]*

"None can speak thus who has not mastered the Ṛgveda, borne well the Yajurveda, and acquainted himself thoroughly with the Sāmaveda."

*nūnam vyākaraṇam kṛtsnāmanena bahudhā śrutam. bahu vyāharatānena na  
kimcidapaśabditam. [IV:3:29]*

"Forsooth he has studied well all the grammars, for he has not used a single inelegant word though he has addressed me much."

2. Varāha, the third incarnation of the god Viṣṇu, after killing the demon Hiraṇyākṣa, redeemed the earth from the primeval waters just as Hayagrīva had done for the Vedas. By comparison, Hanumān lifted a mountain (part of the earth) thus showing he is powerful though not as much as Viṣṇu to whom he is subordinate.

3. Narasimha, the fourth incarnation of Viṣṇu, is a fierce protector of his devotees. Hanumān too is of like-nature. There is a certain spiritual fear that both of these deities evoke in the mind of the average Hindu. Devotees of both gods feel that they are free of any dangers in life.

Hanumān even acts like the almighty when he says:

*sāgarān śoṣayiṣyāmi dārayiṣyāmī medanīm. parvatāmścūrṇayiṣyāmi.*

[IV:67:17-18]

"I can dry up the mighty ocean, rip up the earth and powder the mountains."

4. Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu, is swift. Hanumān is said to be the only one equal to him.

Hanumān said:

*vainateyamaham śaktaḥ parigantum sahasraśaḥ. [IV:67:14]*

"I can go around the sky a thousand times more than Vainateya (Garuḍa)."

Jāmbavān said:

*ariṣṭaneminaḥ putro vainateyo mahābalaḥ. garutmāniva vikhyāta uttamaḥ sarvapakṣiṇām. [IV:66:4]*

"Ariṣṭanemi's son, the mighty Vainateya, famous by the name of Garutmān, is the foremost of birds."

*pakṣayoryad balam tasya bhujavīryabalam tava. vikramaścāpi vegāśca na te tenāpahīyate. [IV:66:6]*

"The strength that is in his wings, is equal to the might and virtues of your arm. Your energy and prowess are not surpassed by him."

*kramamāṇam samīkṣyātha bhujagāḥ sāgaramgamāḥ. vyomina tam kapiśārdūlam suparṇamiva menire. [V:1:73]*

"And the sea-serpents, seeing that tiger-like monkey proceeding in the sky, took him for Suparṇa (Garuḍa) himself."

Jāmbavān said:

*nahi tam paripaśyāmi yastareta mahodadhim. anyatra garuḍādvāyoranyatra ca hanūmataḥ. [VI:1:3]*

"Save Garuḍa and Vāyu (the Wind-god), and save also Hanumān, I cannot find anyone that can cross the wide ocean."

In the Rāmānujite sect of Hinduism, Garuḍa is referred to as *perīyatiruvaḍi* (Tamil: "big foot") of their Supreme Being, Viṣṇu, and Hanumān as *cinnatiruvaḍi* (Tamil: "little foot") of that same deity. Iconographically, Garuḍa and Hanumān are placed of the right and left of Viṣṇu respectively.

By contrast, in the Madhvite sect of Hinduism, Hanumān is considered the highest of deities after Viṣṇu and his consort the goddess Lakṣmī, and as such in their iconography Hanumān is depicted to the right and Garuḍa to the left of Viṣṇu.

### **Hanumān from an anthropological perspective**

The "monkeys" in the Kiṣkindhā kingdom represent the Dravidian peoples of the subcontinent. To Aryan eyes, these people seemed as such. Another possibility is that they might even have been the aboriginal tribes of India who had monkeys and bears as their tribal totems. Similarly was the case of the various demons including the peoples of Rāvaṇa's Lankā. Perhaps, there was mutual conflict among the Dravidian peoples, or between the aboriginals (Kiṣkindhā) and the Dravidians (Lankā), and the Aryans from the north took advantage of such situations to solidify alliances and thereby expand their influence in the southern regions of the subcontinent. The Aryans recognized powerful people in the south whether friend (Hanumān) or foe (Rāvaṇa) as being learned in the Vedas. This was

one way to justify as to why somebody from a non-Aryan background could be good, humble, powerful and wise like Hanumān, or powerful, evil, wealthy and invincible like Rāvaṇa. As the Indians tended to mythologize history, it is difficult to discern where fantasy ends and reality begins.

## **10.14**

### **RĀVAṆA**

If Kaikeyī represents evil in the first third of the Rāmāyaṇa epic, Rāvaṇa, the king of Lankā, represents evil in the remaining two-thirds of that same epic.

Rāvaṇa is an ancient, powerful, charismatic and grand individual who is utterly vicious and totally devious. Through enormous egotistical will-power and spiritual stamina, Rāvaṇa managed to get boons from the god Brahmā that he should be invincible. In his sheer arrogance, he ignored man. This became a loophole in the boon that made his destruction possible. Another situation that broke his arrogance was the curse he received from Nandī, the simion-visaged head of god Śiva's hosts. When Rāvaṇa laughed at Nandī, the latter cursed him that he would meet



his doom through a powerful set of apes. So, Rāvaṇa ultimately got destroyed by men and monkeys.

Nandī said:

*yasmādvānararūpam māmavajñāya daśānana. aśnīpātasamkāśamapahāsam  
pramuktavān. tasmānmadvīryasamyuktā madrūpasamatejasah. utpatsyanti  
vadārtham hi kulasya tava vānarāḥ. [VII:16:16-17]*

"O Daśānana (Rāvaṇa), by deriding me for my monkey form, you have indulged in laughter resembling the bursting of thunder, do monkeys endowed with prowess, and possessed of my form and energy, shall be born for compassing the destruction of your race."

Rāvaṇa has ten heads that can never be destroyed. If one head is destroyed, it is immediately and magically replaced. His ten heads represent ten types of arrogance. These are:

1. *dhana mada* = arrogance of wealth
2. *kula mada* = arrogance of lineage
3. *yauvana mada* = arrogance of youth
4. *vidyā mada* = arrogance of learning
5. *saundarya mada* = arrogance of good looks
6. *bala mada* = arrogance of physical strength
7. *padvī mada* = arrogance of position
8. *tapo mada* = arrogance of spiritual powers

9. *yaśo mada* = arrogance of fame  
10. *kuśala mada* = arrogance of talent

### **Rāvaṇa's arrogance of his prowess, grandeur and majesty**

Rāvaṇa reveals the arrogance of his prowess, grandeur and majesty to Sītā just before he abducts her.

Rāvaṇa said:

*bhrātā vaiśravaṇasyāham sāpatno varavarṇinī. rāvaṇo nāma bhadram te  
daśagrīvaḥ pratāpavān. yasya devāḥ sagandharvāḥ piśācapatagoragāḥ.  
vidravanti sadā bhītā mṛtyoriva sadā prajāḥ. [III:48:2-3]*

"O Ye of beautiful face, I am the step-brother of the Lord of wealth and my name is the mighty Ten-necked Rāvaṇa. May good betide you! Like to people fearing Death, the celestials, Gandharvas, Piśācas, Pannagas and serpents fly in diverse being frightened of me."

*yatra tiṣṭhāmyaham tatra māruto vāti śankitaḥ. tīvramśuḥ śiśirāmsūśca  
bhayāt sampadyate divi. niṣkampapatrāstaravo nadyaśca stimitodakāḥ.  
bhavanti yatra tatrāham tiṣṭhāmi ca carāmi ca. [III:48:8-9]*

"Wherever I live, the Wind bloweth cautiously, and the Sun (with piercing rays) out of fear for me appeareth in the welkin like the Moon. What shall I say more? Wherever I live, even the leaves of the trees do not flutter and the currents of the rivers are stopped."

*mama pāre samudrasya lankā nāma purī śubhā. sampūrṇā  
rākṣairdhorairiyathendrasyāmarāvātī. prākāreṇa parikṣiptā pāṇḍureṇa  
virājitā. hemakakṣyā purī ramyā vaidūryamayatoraṇā. [III:48:10-11]*

"Beyond the ocean stands my beautiful capital Lankā, like Indra's Amarāvātī, guarded on all sides by the terrible night rangers and encircled by yellow walls. That beautiful city has gateways of ornamented and jeweled arches and golden apartments."

Even Hanumān<sup>195</sup> and Rāma are enchanted by Rāvaṇa's grandeur. Hanumān after being captured and brought in front of Rāvaṇa is awe-struck by the latter's charisma and majesty.<sup>196</sup>

Hanumān thought to himself:

*bhrājamānam tato dṛṣṭvā hanumān rākṣaseṣvaram. manasā cintayāmāsa  
tejasā tasya mohitaḥ. aho rūpamaho dhairyamaho sattvamaho dyutiḥ. aho*

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<sup>195</sup> V:6:1 to V:12:35

<sup>196</sup> V:49:1-13

*rākṣasarājasya sarvalakṣaṇayuktatā. yadyadharmo na balavān syādayam  
rākṣaseśvaraḥ. syādayam suralokasya saśakrasyāpi rakṣitā.*

"Seeing the sovereign of Rākṣasas, appearing splendid, Hanumān bewildered by his effulgence, mentally reflected. Ah! what form! Ah! what patience! Ah! what strength! Ah! what splendor! Ah! the entire auspiciousness of the king of the Rākṣasas! If the Lord of the Rākṣasas were not impious to the height, this one could well be the protector themselves of the celestial regions with Śakra."

Rāma in the battlefield facing Rāvaṇa for the first time observes the following about his foe to Vibhīṣaṇa.

*aho dīptamahātejā rāvaṇo rākṣeśvaraḥ. āditya iva duṣprekṣyo  
raśmibhirbhāti rāvaṇaḥ. na vyaktam lakṣaye hyasya rūpam tejaḥ  
samāvṛtam. [VI:59:26-27]*

"Alas! Rāvaṇa, the lord of the Rākṣasas, is of exceedingly glowing splendor and Rāvaṇa shine in glory, and is incapable of being gazed at like the Sun himself. And his grace, being enshrouded in his own splendor, I cannot view plainly."

### Rāvaṇa the great womanizer

Rāvaṇa regularly lusted after women, raped them and moved on. No woman, human, demi-divine or divine was immune from his erotic grasp. In fact, many extremely beautiful women came to him to voluntarily be a part of his harem. Only Puñjikasthalā, Rambhā and later Sītā totally rejected him. The only difference between the first two and Sītā was that while Puñjikasthalā and Rambhā was raped by Rāvaṇa, Sītā was not touched by him. Brahmā on behalf of Puñjikasthalā, and Nalakūbara on behalf of Rambhā, pronounced almost the same curse on Rāvaṇa. In fact, he was not able to have Sītā precisely because of the curses of Brahmā and Nalakūbara.

Brahmā's curse to Rāvaṇa was:

*adyaprabhṛti yāmanyām balānnārīm gamiṣyasi. tadā te śatadhā mūrdhā phaliṣyati na samśayaḥ. [VI:13:14]*

"If from this day, you ravish a female by force, your head certainly shall be riven in a hundred pieces."

Nalakūbara's curse to Rāvaṇa was:

*yadā hykāmām kāmārto dharṣiṣyati yoṣitam. mūrdhā tu saptadhā tasya śakalībhavitā tadā. [VII:26:55-56]*

"Whenever he shall, stricken by lust, ravish a reluctant damsel, his head shall be sundered into seven pieces."

### **Rāvaṇa the cunning villain**

Despite all his prowess and grandeur, Rāvaṇa is basically a cowardly deceitful villain when it came to the abduction of Sītā. He sends Mārīca against his will in the guise of an enchanting deer to lure Sītā. As part of the scheme, he asks Mārīca to yell out a lie as if it were a mortally wounded Rāma calling on Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa for help. Once Lakṣmaṇa is out of the way, Rāvaṇa descends on the scene when Sītā is alone in the guise of a mendicant in order to abduct her. At Lankā, Rāvaṇa shows Sītā the counterfeit head of Rāma in order to convince her that her husband is dead.

Many people warn Rāvaṇa about Rāma and Sītā. By keeping Sītā, Rāvaṇa is quickening his end. The people who issue warnings to Rāvaṇa are Mārīca, Jaṭāyu, Sītā, Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Mālyavān, Kumbhakarṇa, Dhānyamālinī and Maṇḍodarī. However, Rāvaṇa is utterly adamant. It is this arrogant attitude that ultimately spells his doom.

## 10.15

### KUMBHAKARṆA

Kumbhakarṇa was the younger brother of Rāvaṇa. Kumbhakarṇa appears only in the Yuddhakāṇḍa. He is introduced into the epic as someone who needed to be woken up from his deep perennial slumber in order to help Rāvaṇa in his battle with Rāma. It is pointed out in the epic that Kumbhakarṇa, on account of a curse he received from the god Brahmā, he slept all the time except for one day when he was awake. Even this one day came after a full six-month slumber. This curse from Brahmā came about because all the gods led by Indra went to Brahmā and told him of how Kumbhakarṇa was devouring all creatures and emptying the earth of all beings. Upon hearing the complaint of the gods, Brahmā summoned all the Rākṣasas including Kumbhakarṇa through a special mantra and cursed Kumbhakarṇa to fall asleep forever. Rāvaṇa who was present there became extremely agitated on hearing the curse. He pleaded with Brahmā to amend the curse. Brahmā agreed saying that Kumbhakarṇa would wake up for only a single day after six months of slumber.

Indra said:

*evam prajā yadi tveṣa bhakṣayiṣyati nityaśaḥ. acireṇaiva kālena śūnyo loko bhaviṣyati. [VI:61:20]*

"If this one (Kumbhakarṇa) devour creatures constantly, in a short space (of time) the world would be bereft of any."

Brahmā summoned the Rakṣasas:

*vāsavasya vacaḥ śrutvā sarvalokapitāmahaḥ. rakṣāmsyāvāhayāmāsa  
kumbhakarṇam dadarśa ha. [VI:61:21]*

"Hearing the speech of Vāsava (Indra), the Great-Father of all creatures called up the Rākṣasas and beheld Kumbhakarṇa before him."

Brahmā said:

*dhruvam loka vināśāya paulastyenāsi nirmitaḥ. tasmāttvamadyaprabhṛti  
mṛtakalpaḥ śayiśyase. [VI:61:22]*

"Forsooth for compassing the destruction of creatures, have you been begot by Paulastya (Viśravas). Therefore, from this day forth, you shall lie down as one dead."

Rāvaṇa said:

*na naptāram svakam nyāyyam śaptumevam prajāpate. na mithyāvacaṅsca  
tvam svapsyatyeva na samśayaḥ. kālastu kriyatāmasya śayane jāgare tathā.  
[VI:61:26]*



"Your words will never go for naught; sleep he will, without doubt. But do you appoint a time for his sleeping and one for his waking."

Brahmā said:

*śayitā hyeṣa ṣaṇmāsamekāham jāgariṣyati. [VI:61:27]*

"Having slept for six months, he shall be awake for one day."

Despite his demonic nature, Kumbhakarṇa has more brains than Rāvaṇa. He counsels his brother not to fight Rāma, and he has enough foresight to know that both he and Rāvaṇa will die if they confront Rāma.

Kumbhakarṇa said:

*mām nihatya kila tvām hi nihaniṣyati rāghavaḥ. [VI:63:40]*

"Rāma, forsooth, shall slay you after slaying me."

## **10.16**

### **VIBHĪṢAṆA**

Vibhīṣaṇa was the youngest of the three brothers of the Lankā kingdom. However, Vibhīṣaṇa totally disagreed with his brother Rāvaṇa on the issue of the abduction and confinement of Sītā against her will. Having counseled his brother several times to return Sītā back to Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa was ultimately thrown out of Lankā by his brother.

Vibhīṣaṇa immediately went over to Rāma. At Vibhīṣaṇa's arrival with four sympathizers from Lankā, Lakṣmaṇa suspected him to be a spy from Rāvaṇa's camp. However, Rāma assured his brother that it was not so. At this occasion, Rāma declares:

*sakṛdeva prapannāya tavasmīti ca yācate. abhayam sarvabhūtebhyo  
dadāmyetad vratam mama. [VI:18:33]*

"I always declare 'no fear' to all creatures, whenever any, approaching me, says 'I am thine' and seeks my shelter. This is my vow."

In the Rāmānujite sect of Hinduism, this above verse is one of the four sacred ones that are cited as scripturally authoritative in order to substantiate their soteriological doctrine of unconditional surrender (*prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati*) to God for the sake of attaining salvation. This above verse

is referred to by the Rāmānujites as the '*Rāma caramaśloka*',<sup>197</sup> and as the '*Vibhīṣaṇa śaraṇāgati śloka*'.

### **Vibhīṣaṇa and Sugrīva**

Traditional scholars (*paṇḍitas*) and populist story-tellers (*harikathākāras*) of the epic have always compared Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa as they were the two chief allies of Rāma in the defeat of Rāvaṇa and the winning back of Sītā.

Firstly, whereas Rāma sought refuge in Sugrīva, it was Vibhīṣaṇa who sought refuge in Rāma. Secondly, while Sugrīva pressed his mighty army and generals into Rāma's service, Vibhīṣaṇa brought four sympathizers who did not play any significant role in the battle. Thirdly, whereas Sugrīva was indispensable to the defeat of Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa's help wasn't even expected though, in the final analysis, his arrival proved to be very helpful. Fourthly, whereas Sugrīva did not even know Rāma and even tested the latter, Vibhīṣaṇa knew all about Rāma and worshipped him. Fifthly, whereas Sugrīva's service to Rāma was subsequent to the killing of Vālī and Sugrīva's coronation, Vibhīṣaṇa's service to Rāma was prior to the killing of Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa's coronation. Sixthly, Bharata

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<sup>197</sup> The other three are Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad VI:18, Bhagavadgītā XVIII:66 and one allegedly from the Varāha Purāṇa. The one of the Bhagavadgītā is referred to as the '*Kṛṣṇa caramaśloka*'.

considers Sugrīva as the "fifth" brother, he considers Vibhīṣaṇa as just a good friend.<sup>198</sup>

### **Comparing the relationships between the three sets of brothers**

#### **The Rāma-Bharata relationship in the context of rulership**

*yaddhi mātrā kṛtam pāpam nāham tadapi rocaye. ihastho vanadurgam  
namasyāmi kṛtāñjaliḥ.* [II:82:25]

"I do not at all relish the sin that has been committed by my mother. Remaining here, with joined palms, I bow down to Rāma gone to the dense forest." [II:82:25]

*rāmamevānugacchāmi sa rājā dvipadām varaḥ. trayāṇāmapi lokānām  
rāghavo rājyamarhati.* [II:82:26]

"I will follow Rāma. That best of men is the king. Rāghava deserves not only this kingdom but the triple worlds themselves." [II:82:26]

When Lakṣmaṇa warns his brother's impending approach to the Citrakūṭa hermitage with all his hosts, Rāma, knowing Bharata all too well reacts with gentleness and goodwill. The benefit of doubt that Rāma gives to Bharata is truly amazing. And Bharata does not let him in anyway.

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<sup>198</sup> I am indebted to Pandit B. Srinivasacharya of Bangalore for this analysis and information.

*manye'hamāgato'yodhyāyām bharato bhrāṭṛvatsalaḥ. mama prāṇaiḥ  
priyatarāḥ kuladharmamanusmaran. [II:97:9]*

"I think Bharata, attached as he is to his brothers had come to Ayodhyā;  
and then, following the morality regulating our lineage, that one dearer to  
me than life" [II:97:9]

*śrutvā pravrajitam mām hi jaṭāvalkaladhāriṇam. jānakyā sahitam vīra tvayā  
ca puruṣottamam. [II:97:10]*

"Hearing of me banished, bearing matted locks and bark, together with  
Jānakī, O hero, and yourself, O best of men." [II:97:10]

*snehenākrantaḥṛdayaḥ śokenākulitendriyaḥ. draṣṭumabhyāgato hyeṣa bharato  
nānyathā"gataḥ. [II:97:11]*

"With his heart surcharged with affection, and his senses overwhelmed by  
grief, he has come hither for seeing us. He cannot have come on any  
other account." [II:97:11]

*ambām ca kaikeyī ruṣya bharataścāpriyam vadan. prasādyā pitaram śrīmān  
rājyam me dātumāgataḥ. [II:97:12]*

"And having got angry with Kaikeyī, and having given her harsh words,  
that auspicious one, having gratified my sire, has come hither to make the  
kingdom over to me." [II:97:12]

### **The Vālī-Sugrīva relationship in the context of rulership**

When Vālī, the ruler of the Kiṣkindhā Kingdom, returns to his capital after killing a demon named Māyāvī who had challenged him to a duel, he finds that his younger brother Sugrīva is now king. When Vālī confronts Sugrīva, the latter tries to explain to Vālī the circumstances of how he became king. However Vālī refuses to believe him, and banishes him from the Kiṣkindhā kingdom. Sugrīva emotionally describes his predicament to Rāma when he meets him.

In his narration to Rāma, Sugrīva begins his plea to Vālī by telling him that he waited at the entrance to the cave where Vālī was dueling Māyāvī for a whole year before returning to Kiṣkindhā.

*ārtastasya biladvāri sthitaḥ samvatsaram nṛpa. dṛṣṭvā ca śeṇitam dvāri  
bilāccāpi samutthitam. [IV:10:4]*

"O king, suffering greatly, I remained for a whole year at the mouth of the cave, and seeing blood issuing from the cave." [IV:10:4]

*śokasamvignahṛdayo bhṛśam vyākulitendriyaḥ. apidhāya biladvāram  
śailaśṛṅgeṇa tat tadā [IV:10:5]*

"I had my heart agitated with grief and my senses extremely overwhelmed.  
Then closing up the mouth of the cavern with a mountain summit"  
[IV:10:5]

*tasmād deśādapākramya kiṣkindhām praviśām punaḥ. viśādātviha mām  
dṛṣṭvā paurairmantribhiraiva ca. abhiṣikto na kāmēna tanme kṣantum  
tvamarhasi* [IV:10:6-7]

"And returning from that place, I again came back to Kiṣkindhā. Seeing  
me enter in a dejected mood, the citizens and ministers installed me. This  
was not done by my will. Therefore, it behoves you to forgive me."  
[IV:10:6-7]

*strigdhamevam bruvāṇām mām sa vinirbhartsya vānaraḥ. dhiktāmiti ca  
māmuktavā bahu tataduvāca ha.* [IV:10:11-12]

"As I said this softly, the monkey reproaching me, said to me 'Fie on  
you,' and censured me greatly." [IV:10:11-12]

*evamuktavā tu mām tatra vastraiṇaikaṇa vānaraḥ. tad nirvāsayāmāsa vālī  
vigatasādhvasaḥ.* [IV:10:26]

"Saying this, that monkey, the shameless Vālī, exiled me with a single  
cloth on." [IV:10:26]

The contrast with the Rāma-Bharata relationship is very clear. Vālī, being the elder brother, gives no benefit of the doubt to his younger brother Sugrīva even when the latter clearly pleads with him that he remained for a whole year at the mouth of the cavern awaiting Vālī's return, that he was much agitated, and it was not his intention to become king. Vālī not only assails and exiles Sugrīva, but also steals Sugrīva's wife for himself. Sugrīva, for his part, gives up all respect for Vālī, and starts referring to his older brother as a "monkey" as if he himself were not. Eventually, when Sugrīva agrees to a deal in which Vālī would be killed by Rāma by unfair means, the adharmic aspect beams on Sugrīva. The relationship between the royal brothers of the Kiṣkandhā kingdom is a mixture of dharma and adharmā, and as such, the transference of power from the older brother to the younger brother becomes permanent upon the death of Vālī.

### **The Rāvaṇa-Vibhīṣaṇa relationship in the context of morality**

When Vibhīṣaṇa advises [thrice] his older brother Rāvaṇa, the king of Laṅkā, to give up Sītā, the wife of Rāma, whom Rāvaṇa has abducted and holding her hostage in Laṅkā. Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother, advises Rāvaṇa to return Sītā as it is adharmic to abduct somebody, to confine them against their will, especially a woman who is someone else's spouse, and constantly terrorize her with sexual harrassment. For his benign



counsels, Rāvaṇa kicks Vibhiṣaṇa out of Laṅkā. Vibhīṣaṇa leaves Laṅkā and seeks refuge with Rāma.

### **Vibhīṣaṇa's first plea**

*na tu kṣamam vīryavatā tena dharmānanuvartinā. vairam nirarthakam kartum dīyatāmasya maithilī. [VI:9:16]*

"And (Rāma) possessed of prowess, yet ever abiding in morality, is incapable of initiating hostilities for no purpose. Therefore, do you give him his Maithilī." [VI:9:16]

### **Upon seeing ominous signs, Vibīṣaṇa's second plea**

*tadevam prastute kārye prāyaścittamidam kṣamam. rocaye vīra vaidehī rāghavāya pradīyatām. [VI:10:22]*

"Things having come to this condition, I fancy, is capable of removing the evil omens. Please render back Vaidehī to Rāghava." [VI:10:22]

### **Vibhīṣaṇa's final plea**

*narendra putrāya dadātu maithilīm. [VI:14:21]*

"Please make over Maithilī to the son of the king." [VI:14:21]

### **Rāvaṇa assails Vibhīṣaṇa**

*yo'nyastvevamvidham brūyādvākyametanniśācara. asminmuhūrte na bhavettvām tu dhikkulapāmsana. [VI:16:16]*

"Fie on you, O night ranger, O you that bring disgrace on the family. Had anyone else spoken thus, he would have ceased to live by this time."

[VI:16:16]

Despite Vibhīṣaṇa's good counsels, Rāvaṇa steadfastly continues his adharmic ways. Rāvaṇa was totally adharmic to the very end. Hence, the transference of power in the Laṅka kingdom too from the older brother to the younger upon the death of the former is permanent as it was in the case of the Kiṣkindhā kingdom.

Bharata's only major drawback is his relationship with his mother. The general opinion of the Hindus is that no matter how wrong his mother was, and no matter who else assailed her, Bharata as her son had no right to talk back to his mother that too in such an abusive manner saying such things as "the rope around your neck is the only way out" etc. Emotion ought not to be so overwhelming so as to cross all limits of dharmic morality. It certainly goes against the Vedic ordinance of "*mātrī devo bhava, pitṛī devo bhava*" [Taittirīyopaniṣad I:11:2] meaning "Be one who regards one's mother as a deity. Be one who regards one's father as a

deity." [Cp. "Honor thy father and mother" (5th Commandment) Exodus 20:12]<sup>199</sup>

Despite this, there was a redeeming feature in Bharata in the context of the events at his mother's chambers. When Śatrughna was prepared to kill both Kaikeyī and Mantharā, Bharata, though deeply hurt and angered himself, seems to have had enough presence of mind to intervene and stop Śatrughna from committing such a heinous and unchivalrous act.

*tairvaikyaiḥ puruṣairduḥkhaiḥ kaikeyī bhṛśaduḥkhitā.*

*śatrughnabhayasantrastā putram śaraṇamāgatā. [II:78:20]*

"Extremely hurt by those rough words, Kaikeyī terrified on account of Śatrughna, took refuge with her son." [II:78:20]

*tam prekṣya bharataḥ kruddham śatrughnmidamabravīt. avadhyā*

*sarvabhūtānām pramadāḥ kṣamyatāmiti. [II:78:21]*

"Thereupon casting his eyes on Śatrughna, Bharata said, 'A woman is incapable of being slain by any. Do you therefore excuse her.'" [II:78:21]

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<sup>199</sup> The Indic view on this issue seems truer to the conditions of human life than the Biblical one in terms of giving precedence to the mother over the father. It is after all the mother who bears the burden of nine months of pregnancy, the labor pains during delivery and the arduous work of post-natal care of the infant including the giving of mother's milk. Also, in the pre-DNA world, while the paternity of an infant could have been in doubt, the maternity was never in doubt.

*hanyāmahamimām pāpam kaikeyīm duṣṭacāriṇīm. yadi mām dhārmiko rāmo  
nāsūyenmātrghātakam. [II:78:22]*

"I myself would have slain this wicked Kaikeyī of impious deeds, if the righteous Rāma should not be displeased with me on account of slaying my mother." [II:78:22]

*imāmaṇi hatām kubjām yadi jānāti rāghavaḥ. tvām ca mām caiva  
dharmātmā nābhibhāṣiṣyate dhruvam. [II:78:23]*

"If Rāghava knows that the hump-backed one has been slain, that noble-soul surely will never again speak either with you or me." [II:78:23]

Bharata's relationship to Rāma when compared with Vālī and Sugrīva and with Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa is totally dharmic. Bharata as the younger brother returns the kingdom to his elder brother Rāma who never either questions the character or motives of his younger brother, is totally trusting of him in every way and never once insults him in anyway. Bharata in return holds up to that unsuspecting trust above and beyond all expectations. Such a thing could never be said of the relationship between the brothers of either the Kiṣkindhā or Laṅkā kingdoms.

## **Chapter 11**

### **An Analysis of some of the important characters of the Mahābhārata**

This chapter gives the profiles of some twelve important characters of the Mahābhārata epic. These are not meant to be exhaustive biographies. They are meant to be merely cross-sectional sketches presented in the context of some interesting anecdotal incidents involving these characters occurring in various places throughout the epic. Some analyses of the characters are traditional, while others are novel. The reader is therefore requested to peruse these partial pen-portraits of these characters with that perspective in mind.

#### **11.1**

#### **BHĪṢMA**

The word "*Bhīṣma*" means "awesome" in the Sanskrit language. It was a title given to him by the gods for the awesome vow (*bhīṣma pratijñā*) that he took out of deep filial piety at a young age especially being born as the heir-apparent of a very illustrious and powerful royal house. In fact, one of the ancestors in that royal clan was Bharata after whom the nation of India (*Bhārata*) eventually got so named.

Bhīṣma's given name at birth was Devavrata. He was the son of King Śantanu and the river goddess Gangā. When Śantanu married the beautiful Gangā, she laid down a pre-nuptial condition which was that he should never ask the reasons for or object to any of her actions. The moment he were to do so, Gangā would leave him. The lovelorn Śantanu readily agreed. Gangā eventually gave birth to eight children. However, as she gave birth to each child, Gangā would kill it. This she did seven times. Śantanu though sick of her actions, never questioned her or raised any objections as per the agreement. Finally, when Gangā was about to kill her eighth born child, Śantanu objected thereby violating the pre-nuptial agreement. Gangā let the eighth child live, but promptly left Śantanu. That eighth child was Devavrata.

The eight children were actually the eight Vasus<sup>200</sup>. The eight Vasus are Fire, Earth, Air, Sky, Sun, Moon, Heaven and the stars.<sup>201</sup> It is said that once the eight Vasus with their respective spouses went on a romantic outing in the forest near the vicinity of Sage Vasiṣṭha's hermitage. During their course of the forest frolic, the wife of Dyaus (one of the Vasus) saw Nandinī, the divine cow of Vasiṣṭha, and asked her husband to get it for her. When he and the other seven Vasus attempted to do so, the sage became angry and cursed them for their transgression of *dharma*. The Vasus realized their mistake and placated the sage who having taken

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<sup>200</sup> The Vasus are the lowest ranking set of deities of the 33 Vedic gods mentioned in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* III:9:2-3. The 33 gods are the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, Indra and Prajāpati. The Vasus are, for the most part, terrestrial gods, the Rudras are atmospheric deities, and the Ādityas the celestial divinities, a tripartite pattern that is fully in consonance with the Dumézilian Indo-European triadic scheme.

<sup>201</sup> *katame vasava iti. agniśca pṛthivī ca vāyuścāntarikṣam cādityaśca dyauśca candramāśca nakṣatrāṇi ca ete vasavaḥ eteṣu hīdam sarvam hitamiti tasmād vasavāiti.* [Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III:9:3]

compassion on them amended the curse. According to the amendment, each of the other Vasus except Dyaus would spend just one year each as humans and return to their divine state. Dyaus alone would have to spend an entire lifetime bereft of a family (wife and children). However, he would be a very moral and highly upright celibate renowned for both his virtue and wisdom.

The seven infants killed by Gangā soon after their birth were the seven Vasus. It was Dyaus who became Devavrata (eventually Bhīṣma).

In this above tale itself is found the triadism of asceticism-violence-eroticism. Sage Vasiṣṭha represents asceticism, the transgression of the Vasus and the curse of the sage represents violence, and the amorous outing of the Vasus with their spouses represents eroticism.

After the divorce of Gangā, Śantanu went on a hunting trip. By the banks of the Yamunā river, he spotted a beautiful fisher-maiden named Satyavatī who ferried people from one river-bank to the other. Śantanu had to have her for his wife. So, he went to the maiden's father, the chief fisherman, and asked for Satyavatī's hand in marriage. The fisher-chief laid down conditions that Satyavatī ought to be made the chief queen and that her children alone should inherit the kingdom. With Devavrata as his son, Śantanu could not readily agree to the conditions. Śantanu was internally torn. Devavrata eventually found the cause of his father's sorrow and decided to approach the fisher-chief. Having heard the fisher-chief's conditions, Devavrata promised him that he would give up his rights to the throne. When the fisher-chief asked that if Devavrata's children were to claim the throne in the future, his grand-children's situation could be jeopardized. To this, Devavrata promised that he would not to marry at all.

It is this awesome vow that earned him the name "*Bhīṣma*". When Śantanu came to know of this, he blessed his son with the power that Devavrata could choose the time of his own death (*icchāmarāṇasakti*).

After their marriage, Śantanu and Satyawatī had two sons who were named Citrāngada and Vicitravīrya. Citrāngada was killed after a three-year battle with another king who was his namesake. Therefore, Bhīṣma quickly arranged for the marriage of Vicitravīrya. When Bhīṣma heard that the king of Kāśī was holding a *svayamvara*,<sup>202</sup> he went there, fought-off all the assembled suitors successfully, and abducted the three daughters of the king of Kāśī in order to marry them off to his half-brother. The oldest daughter Ambā did not like this abduction because she had a lover. Bhīṣma let her go after the court clergy agreed that Ambā should be released. However, the lover rejected Ambā. She then went back to Bhīṣma and asked him to marry her. He told of her vow. When this happened, Ambā was deeply hurt and angered. She was brimming with revenge against Bhīṣma for her current plight. She went away to the forest and sought shelter in the hermitage of a sage. Her grand-father, the sage Hotṛvāhana, arrived there hearing of Ambā's plight. He directed her to go and seek the help of Sage Paraśurāma who was Bhīṣma's teacher to convince the latter to marry her. Paraśurāma approached Bhīṣma and ordered him to marry Ambā. When Bhīṣma refused citing his vow of celibacy, Paraśurāma threatened to curse him or to engage in a duel. Bhīṣma chose the latter option. After a mighty duel which lasted for many days, Paraśurāma accepted defeat. He then advised Ambā to perform austerities propitiating the god Śiva. Pleased

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<sup>202</sup> an approved form of Hindu marriage especially for royalty where the girl chooses among a host of royal suitors.



with Ambā's sincere penances, Śiva appeared before her and told her that she would be re-born a woman undergo sex-change and become a "man". She would then be eventually able to avenge herself against Bhīṣma by being ultimately responsible for his downfall.

In the meanwhile, Bhīṣma had Vicitravīrya wedded to the remaining two Kāśī princesses named Ambikā and Ambālikā. After seven years of wedded life, Vicitravīrya contracted the disease of consumption and died issueless. The fisher-chief's adharmic demands had thus come to a naught. Ironically, Satyawatī asked Bhīṣma to impregnate her widowed daughters-in-law in order to perpetuate the royal lineage. Bhīṣma refused again citing his vow of celibacy. Satyawatī had to call upon her son Vyāsa whom she had had through Sage Parāśara. Vyāsa had a son named Dhṛtarāṣṭra through Ambikā, another son named Pāṇḍu through Ambālikā, and yet another son named Vidura through Ambikā's maid. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was born blind and as such Bhīṣma again entered into the scene to arrange for a suitable bride for him. Vyāsa had told him that Dhṛtarāṣṭra would be the father of a hundred sons. It was known that through Śiva's blessing that the daughter of King Subala of Gāndhāra would bear a hundred sons. Bhīṣma quickly sent emissaries to the court of King Subala asking for Princess Gāndhārī's hand in marriage. Subala for a while was torn between the handicap of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the enormous prestige of the Kuru clan of Bhīṣma. The latter won and Subala gave his daughter to Dhṛtarāṣṭra in marriage. The couple had a hundred sons. Pāṇḍu also married and had sons. He however died on account of a sage's curse. When Droṇa, a great martial arts instructor, arrived at the Kuru court after being insulted elsewhere, it was Bhīṣma who welcomed him and made him the instructor for the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu.

Quarrel soon erupted between the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra known as the Kauravas and the sons of Pāṇḍu known as the Pāṇḍavas over rights to the throne. The kingdom was divided with great reluctance on the part of the Kauravas who wanted it all to themselves. When the Pāṇḍavas held a royal consecration sacrifice (*rājasūya yajña*) at their capital and invited all including Kṛṣṇa, it was Bhīṣma who insisted that Kṛṣṇa be honored first. Eventually when the Pāṇḍavas lost their kingdom to the Kauravas out of their own folly, Bhīṣma tried many times to convince the Kauravas to compromise with Pāṇḍavas because the latter and their well-wisher Kṛṣṇa will eventually be victorious. Despite knowing this fact, Bhīṣma decided to stay with the Kauravas.

When the great battle between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas took place, Bhīṣma was the marshal of the Kauravas for ten days. The ninth day was crucial. As Arjuna and his non-combatant charioteer Kṛṣṇa faced Bhīṣma, Arjuna was no match for the Grand Sire (*pitāmaha*). Kṛṣṇa, who deeply loved the Pāṇḍavas, seeing the enormous losses inflicted to their army by Bhīṣma, suddenly got down from his chariot and called upon his *cakra* (discus) weapon-accouterment and ran towards Bhīṣma who upon seeing Kṛṣṇa rush towards him and knowing the latter's incarnational nature, threw down his weapon and folded his palms in a prayer-like fashion and said:

*uvāca caiva govindamasambhrāntena cetasā. ehyehi puṇḍarikākṣa devadeva  
namo'stu te. mamadya sātvatasreṣṭha pātayasva mahāhave. tvayā hi deva  
samgrāme hatasyāpi mamānagha. śreya eva param kṛṣṇa loka bhavati*

*sarvataḥ. sambhavitō'smi govinda trailokenādyā samyuge. praharsva  
yatheṣṭam vai dāsau'smi tava cānagha. [Bhīṣma Parva 107:64-67]*

"Then addressing Govinda (Kṛṣṇa) with a dauntless heart, he said 'Come, come, O You of eyes like lotus petals! O God of gods, I do bow down unto you. Lay me low, O foremost of the Sātvata lineage, this day in this dreadful fight! O sinless one, slain by you in this battle, O God! I shall reap great good, O Kṛṣṇa, in every respect in this world. O Govinda, today in the three worlds, have I attained great honor in battle. Strike me as it pleases you, O sinless one, as I am merely a slave of yours."

Arjuna quickly intervened and stopped Kṛṣṇa reminding the latter of his vow of remaining a non-combatant. Then on the tenth day of battle, Arjuna placing the eunuch Śikhaṇḍin (the re-incarnated Ambā) in front of him, knowing fully well that Bhīṣma would never fight anyone who is not a man, pierced Bhīṣma with so many arrows that the latter fell and remained lying on a bed of arrows. No body could kill Bhīṣma as he had the boon of "dying at his own will" (*icchāmarāṇa*). Bhīṣma would give up his life only after the sun commenced its northerly course (*uttarāyaṇa*) after the winter solstice. Bhīṣma remained on his bed of arrows for 48 days.

During this period Bhīṣma narrated to the Pāṇḍavas (in the presence of Kṛṣṇa) the Almightyness of Kṛṣṇa through a thousand epithets which is

known as the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* that is recited by pious Hindus to this day. Bhīṣma also narrated the agenda of peace which is known as the Śānti Parva (the 12th book of the Mahābhārata) and the methodology of righteous governance and general ethics known as the Anuśāsana Parva (the 13th book of the Mahābhārata). Bhīṣma is indeed the true hero of the epic.

Last but not least, it is in the Bhīṣma Parva (6th book) of the Mahābhārata wherein is contained one of the greatest Hindu scriptural texts, i.e. the *Bhagavadgītā*.

## **11.2**

### **DRONA**

The word "*Droṇa*" in Sanskrit literally means "cup". It is said that once the sage Bharadvāja had gone to the banks of the Ganges River to perform ablutions. There he beheld the beautiful nymph Ghṛtācī who had come there to bathe. Sage Bharadvāja was overcome with desire for her and dropped his semen in a cup (*droṇa*). The child that was born from this semen was named Droṇa.

Sage Bharadvāja was the good friend of King Pṛṣata of Pāñcāla and came to live in that kingdom. Pṛṣata sent his son, Drupada, to study under Sage Bharadvāja. Droṇa and Drupada, became good friends and learned

and played together. Drupada told Droṇa in the zenith of their youthful friendship that he would share his kingdom, wealth and joys equally with Droṇa when he became the king. Eventually, Drupada went back to the palace after completing his training, and Droṇa too went to Sage Paraśurāma to continue his further studies. After completing his training, Paraśurāma gave away all his prized weapons to Droṇa. After this, Droṇa married Kṛpī the twin-sister of Kṛpa, the royal chaplain of the Kaurava kingdom. Droṇa and Kṛpī had a son whom they named Aśvatthāmā. One day, Aśvatthāmā (whose father could not get milk for his son) saw some rich children of his age drinking milk. When he asked them for milk, they played a cruel joke on Aśvatthāmā by giving him rice-flour mixed in water. Aśvatthāmā innocently drank it and went and told his parents that he had tasted milk. When Droṇa found out the truth, he decided to give a better life for his family. He remembered what Drupada had told him. With this in mind, he went to Drupada who was now the king. However, Drupada wanted nothing to do with Droṇa who felt totally humiliated by this rejection. Seeing no future for himself in the Pāñcāla kingdom, and wanting to avenge himself against Drupada, Droṇa departed Drupada's domain with his family and headed toward the Kuru kingdom.

As Droṇa was approaching the Kuru capital, he saw some lads trying unsuccessfully to retrieve their play ball which had fallen into the well. Droṇa went to the spot and started to throw blades of grass with the chanting of mantras. The blades of grass stiffened to form a rope as Droṇa chanted. He eventually retrieved the ball to the amazement of the lads. These stunned lads were none other than the Kuru princes, i.e. the Kauravas and the Pāñḍavas, who promptly went and reported the incident to Bhīṣma.

Bhīṣma sent for Droṇa and hired him as the martial arts instructor to the young princes. Droṇa taught the Kuru clan princes archery, swordsmanship, equestrian skills, mace fighting, wrestling etc.

Once a member of the Niṣādha tribe came to Droṇa for seeking instruction in archery skills. The young tribal lad introduced himself by the name of Ekalavya. Droṇa rebuffed him by saying that he would not teach people of lower castes. Ekalavya left disappointed. However, Ekalavya went and made a clay image of Droṇa and starting to hone his archery skills after bowing to this image daily. Ekalavya soon excelled so much that he rivaled Arjuna, the best archer among the Kuru princes and Droṇa's favorite.

Once Ekalavya shut the mouth of a dog so that it could not bark by shooting arrows into the sides of its mouth in a skilful manner. The Kuru princes were amazed. When they told Droṇa about Ekalavya, Droṇa went to the Niṣādha lad and asked for his "teacher fee" (*gurudakṣiṇā*) which was the right thumb of Ekalavya. The lad without a second thought cut of his right thumb and gave it to Droṇa. This treatment of Droṇa of Ekalavya certainly make him not only a caste conscious bigot, but also a partial and unfair human being.

After their training, Droṇa asked the Kuru princes for his teacher's fees. The Kuru princes wanted to know what their teacher desired. To this, Droṇa asked them to go and attack Pāñcāla and bring Drupada in chains. The Kauravas went first and were defeated. Finally, the Pāṇḍavas went

and not only brought back Drupada in chains to Droṇa, but also rescued the embarrassed Kaurava princes.

Droṇa forgave Drupada. However, he took the northern half of his kingdom reminding Drupada of the childhood promise of the latter. Drupada went back humiliated but brimming with revenge against Droṇa. He vowed to do Droṇa in one day when the chance came.

Drupada sought the help of two priests with special spiritual powers to perform sacrifices so that he may beget children with special prowess. Among these children was a son named Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the future killer of Droṇa.

In the great battle of Kurukṣetra between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, Droṇa became marshal of the Kaurava army after the fall of Bhīṣma. He was marshal for five days, i.e. from the eleventh through the fifteenth day.

Since Droṇa too seemed invincible, Indravarman, an ally of the Pāṇḍavas devised a plan. He asked Bhīma to kill an elephant named Aśvatthāmā which was one of the elephants taking part in the battle and declare loudly within earshot distance of Droṇa that he had killed "Aśvatthāmā". Bhīma did the needful. When Droṇa heard of "Aśvatthāmā being killed", he wanted to know this for certain.<sup>203</sup> So, he asked Yudhiṣṭhira, who it is said had never lied, whether Aśvatthāmā had been killed. Yudhiṣṭhira replied that "an elephant named Aśvatthāmā had been

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<sup>203</sup> One begins to wonder as to how a man of Droṇa's calibre could have fallen for such a trick and lie because his son, Aśvatthāmā, is one of the Seven Immortals (*saptaciraṅjīvīs*) of the Hindu tradition.

killed." Right at the juncture where the words "an elephant named" were being said, Kṛṣṇa blew the conch. So, Droṇa heard the partial truth. He immediately became dejected and stopped fighting. He began to meditate right in the battlefield. At this juncture, Drupada's son, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, chopped off Droṇa's head. Drupada had taken his revenge. After the battle, Aśvatthāmā avenges his father by killing Dhṛṣṭadyumna while the latter was asleep.

The words "Aśvatthāmā has been slain" has become synonymous with partial truth in Hindu culture. Droṇa who performed an *adharmic* act, paid for his life through an *adharmic* act of another person.<sup>204</sup>

### **11.3**

#### **DHṚTARĀṢṬRA**

The name *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* means "firm nation". The blind king who bore this name had anything but a firm kingdom. Further, this king's blindness was symbolic of the fact that his sons who ran the show in his name were paragons of moral ignorance.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra was the son of Sage Vyāsa and princess Ambikā. It is said that the visage of Vyāsa was so horrible that Ambikā closed her eyes as he had sexual intercourse with her. Hence her child, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, was

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<sup>204</sup> Cp. the words of Jesus: "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52)



born blind. When Dhṛtarāṣṭra came of age, his step-uncle, Bhīṣma, sent emissaries to the court of King Subala of Gāndhāra to arrange for the wedding of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with Gāndhārī, the daughter of Subala. The king of Gāndhāra, though initially reluctant on account of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness, finally agreed to give his daughter in marriage to the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra due to the prestige of the Kuru royal household. Subala's son, Śakuni, gave away his sister.

Gāndhārī immediately bandaged her eyes permanently so that she could be like her husband in this respect. Once when her father-in-law, Vyāsa, came home fatigued and tired, Gāndhārī took good care of him. For this kindly act, Vyāsa blessed her to have a hundred sons. When Gāndhārī became pregnant, her pregnancy was unusual in that she carried her fetus for two agonizing years. When she heard that her step sister-in-law, Kuntī, had a son, she in frustration hit her own womb and delivered a hard ball of flesh. When she confided this to Vyāsa, he asked that cool water be sprinkled on the hard mass of flesh. Then he asked that a hundred jars filled with clarified butter be placed in a cool place. The hard ball of flesh having been sprinkled with cool water became a hundred pieces, each the size of a thumb, over the course of time. Vyāsa asked that these one hundred pieces to be put into the jars of clarified butter and covered for two full years. These then emerged as the one hundred sons of Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Vyāsa in addition blessed Gāndhārī with an extra child which became a daughter.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra could not do much to prevent the mischief which the evil quartet of his first two sons (Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana), his brother-in-law (Śakuni) and Karṇa engaged in. When war between his sons and the Pāṇḍavas came, his charioteer, Sanjaya, was empowered with a special

vision by Sage Vyāsa, through which he was able to narrate to Dhṛtarāṣṭra in details all the happenings. However, the most important aspect of this was that Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard the entire Bhagavadgītā as it unfolded. Also, at the time of the commencement of the war, Yuyutsu, who was Dhṛtarāṣṭra son through a chamber-maid, went over to the Pāṇḍava side. Yuyutsu survived the war.

After the death of all his sons, Dhṛtarāṣṭra reluctantly received the victorious Pāṇḍavas. As Bhīma was about to be embraced by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Kṛṣṇa intervened and pushed back Bhīma and placed in his stead an iron image of Bhīma which Duryodhana had used for practicing his mace. Dhṛtarāṣṭra thinking it was Bhīma crushed it so hard with all his might and anger that the iron image shattered into pieces. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was particularly angry at Bhīma because he had killed practically all his hundred sons.

After ruling for eighteen years after the war, Dhṛtarāṣṭra turned over the kingdom to the oldest Pāṇḍava, Yudhiṣṭhira, and headed with Gāndhārī, Kuntī and Sanjaya to the forest. There he, Gāndhārī and Kuntī perished in a forest fire.

## **11.4**

### **YUDHIṢṬHIRA**

Pāṇḍu whose name means "pale" was the son of Sage Vyāsa and Princess Ambālikā. He was so named because his mother turned pale

looking at the ugly visage of Sage Vyāsa. Pāṇḍu eventually got married to Kuntī, the daughter of King Kuntibhoja, and also to Mādrī, the sister of King Śalya.

It is said that Pāṇḍu once shot a deer which was mating with its doe. The deer and the doe were actually a sage and his spouse who had magically assumed such forms. The sage cursed Pāṇḍu saying that the latter would never be able to make love to his spouses. If he did so, he would instantly die.

After this curse, Pāṇḍu studiously avoided contact with his spouses lest he be sexually aroused. He began to spend his time in penance in the company of forest hermits. Kuntī, his senior spouse, reminded Pāṇḍu that a childless man can never attain heaven. Pāṇḍu realized this and asked Kuntī to bear children through the power of mantras. Kuntī had such powers. She invoked the gods Dharma, Vāyu and Indra in succession. Each of the gods appeared before Kuntī and granted her a son. From Dharma's blessings was born Yudhiṣṭhira. From Vāyu's blessings was born Bhīma, and from Indra's blessings was born Arjuna. Seeing this, Mādrī too requested Kuntī to invoke some deity so that she too can have children. Kuntī agreed and invoked the twin Aśvins. From the blessings of the Aśvin gods were born the twins Nakula and Sahadeva.

Once Pāṇḍu who saw his spouse Mādrī dressed in a very seductive form became overcome with sexual desire for her. Pāṇḍu made love to Mādrī forgetting the sage's curse. The curse took effect and Pāṇḍu died instantly. Mādrī requested Kuntī to take custody of her twins and died on the funeral pyre with her husband. Mādrī's rationale for doing so was that she was responsible for her spouse's death, and therefore she ought not to live after his death.

Yudhiṣṭhira being an incarnation of Dharma, is presented in the epic as the paragon of virtue. He was wise, never uttered falsehood and exemplary in righteous conduct. On account of this, it is pointed out that his feet nor his chariot ever touched the ground. This came to an end when Yudhiṣṭhira uttered a lie about the death of "Aśvatthāmā" to Droṇa.

*tasya pūrve rathaḥ pṛthvyāścaturangulamucchitaḥ. babhūvaivam ca tenokte tasya bāhāḥ spr̥śanmahīm.* [Droṇa Parva 191:56]

"Until now the chariot of Yudhiṣṭhira had remained at a height of four fingers' breadth from the earth's surface. After he had uttered that lie, his steeds touched the earth."

When it became an issue between Drupada and Yudhiṣṭhira as to whether Draupadī can engage in polyandry, the dialog between Yudhiṣṭhira and Drupada went as follows:

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

*sarveṣām mahiṣī rājan draupadī no bhaviṣyati. evam pravayāhṛtam pūrvam mama mātrā viśāmpate.* [Ādi Parva 195:23]

"O king, Draupadī shall be the queen of all of us. O great king, it has been thus ordered by our mother.

Drupada said:

*ekasya bahvayo vihitā mahiṣya kurunandana. naikasyā bahavaḥ pumsaḥ  
śrūyante patayaḥ kvacit. [Ādi Parva 195:27]*

"O descendent of Kuru, it is ordained that a husband can have many wives, but we have never heard that a wife can have many husbands."

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

*sūkṣmo dharmo mahārāja nāsya vidmo vayam gatim. pūrveṣāmānupūrvyeṇa  
yātam vartmānuyāmahe. na me vāganṛtam prāha nādharme dhīyate matiḥ.  
evam caiva vadatyambā mama caitanmanogatam. eṣa dharmo dhruvo  
rājamścarainamavicārayan. mā ca śankā tatra te syāt kathamcidapi  
pārthiva. [Ādi Parva 195:29-31]*

"O great king, morality is subtle. We do not know its course. Let us therefore follow the path trod by the illustrious men of former ages. My tongue never utters an untruth. My mind never turns to that which is sinful. It has been commanded by our mother and my mind also approves it. O king, it is certainly comfortable to virtue. Therefore, act accordingly without any scruple. O king, do not entertain any fear in this matter."

Even if Yudhiṣṭhira could somehow place the burden of such a polyandrous arrangement on the basis of "obeying" his mother, he definitely had a weakness which has indeed become a serious blemish on his character. This was the weakness of gambling. Yudhiṣṭhira fell victim to this vice not once but twice with very serious consequences. However, gambling is one of the four vices that is an acceptable part of the dharma observed by the Hindu royalty (*rājadharmā*). The sage Nārada in a specific dialog with Yudhiṣṭhira remarks:

*kaccinna pāne dyute vā krīḍāsu pramadāsu ca. pratijānanti pūrvāhaṇe vyayam vyasanajam tava.* [Sabhā Parva 5:70]

"Can anybody know in the forenoon any of your extravagance in drink, in gambling and in women?"<sup>205</sup>

This is further made clear when Vikarṇa, one of the Kaurava brothers, breaking rank with his brethren, supports the Pāṇḍavas and while protesting their treatment during the second dice game, reconciles himself by announcing that the four vices of hunting, drinking, gambling and womanizing are traditionally approved aspects of royal behavior.

Vikarṇa says:

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<sup>205</sup> the italics and underlining of the word 'your' is mine. It is meant to bring attention to the fact that Yudhiṣṭhira was probably into all three (mentioned above) of four 'vices' as part of his *rājadharmā*. Was Sage Nārada saying this in a general way is hard to tell.

*catvāryāhurnaśreṣṭhā vyasanāni mahīkṣitām. mṛgayām pānamakṣāmśca grāmye caivātiraktatām.* [Sabhā Parva 68:20]

"O best of men, it has been said that hunting, drinking, gambling, and enjoying women are the four vices of the kings."

In either of the above two situations, does Yudhiṣṭhira make any attempt to protest or deny this characterization of him either directly (in the first case) or obliquely (in the second case).

As a result of losing the dice-game the second time and after a compromise was brokered by King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the new terms were that the Pāṇḍavas were to go into exile in the forest for thirteen years with the thirteenth year to be spent incognito. If per chance, their real identity was discovered during the incognito year, the Pāṇḍavas would have to remain in exile for another thirteen years.

During this exile period, there came an occasion where Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers seeking out a deer became exhausted and thirsty. Yudhiṣṭhira asked Nakula to go and fetch water from a nearby lake. Nakula went and found a crystal clear lake. As he was about to drink some water before taking back some in his empty quiver, a crane, which was the sole inhabitant of that body of water spoke out to Nakula that if he drank from this pool without answering the questions posed by the crane, the water would turn into poison, and that he would instantly die. Nakula arrogantly ignored the crane and drank the water only to die instantly as forewarned. Having seen that Nakula had not returned in quite

some time, Yudhiṣṭhira dispatched Sahadeva. He too met the same fate. Arjuna and Bhīma were sent in sequence thereafter. They too followed and met the same fate as their twin younger brothers. Finally, Yudhiṣṭhira himself went. When he heard the voice of the crane, he, unlike his brothers, did not ignore the voice. He stood back and agreed to answer the questions. Very many spiritually-oriented questions were posed by the crane which was actually the god Dharma in disguise. However, while asking the questions, the god presented himself as a genii (*yakṣa*). Having successfully answered all the questions of the *yakṣa* to its satisfaction, the *yakṣa* asked Yudhiṣṭhira as to which one of his brothers would he want revived. Yudhiṣṭhira promptly chose Nakula. The genii asked why not any of the other brothers. To this, Yudhiṣṭhira replied that it was his duty to ensure that one offspring from each mother (Kuntī and Mādrī) survived. The genii was pleased with this answer and revived all the brothers. The god Dharma cast-off his *yakṣa* form and revealed himself to Yudhiṣṭhira.

In their thirteenth incognito year of exile, the Pāṇḍavas sought employment with the Virāṭa king. Yudhiṣṭhira became the king's confidant and advisor under the assumed name of 'Kanka'. Bhīma became a cook in the palace kitchen under the name of 'Ballava'. Arjuna assumed the guise of a eunuch dance-teacher to the king's daughter, Princess Uttarā, and her friends under the name of 'Bṛhannaḷā'. Nakula became the chief of the palace cow-pen under the name of 'Granthika', and Sahadeva became the chief of the palace horse-stables under the name of 'Tantripāla'. Draupadī became Queen Sudeṣṇā's coiffure and beautician.



During the war, Yudhiṣṭhira was responsible for the killing of Śalya, the brother of Mādrī and the marshal of the Kaurava forces for just one day, i.e. the eighteenth day. Śalya had gone over to the Kauravas at the start of the war.

Towards the end of the epic, Yudhiṣṭhira, after handing over the kingdom to his grand-nephew Parīkṣit, left with his brothers and Draupadī towards the Himalayas on their way to heaven. As they began their ascent, a dog began to follow the six people. Then, Draupadī fell first and died from exhaustion, Sahadeva and Nakula followed in sequence, Arjuna fell and passed away bit later, and even Bhīma finally collapsed and died. Only Yudhiṣṭhira and the dog kept going. Finally, the god Indra appeared in his celestial chariot and told Yudhiṣṭhira that he is ready to take Yudhiṣṭhira to heaven. Yudhiṣṭhira then requested Indra if his wife and brothers could join him. Indra replied that all of them were already in heaven. He (Yudhiṣṭhira) alone was entitled to go to heaven in bodily form because of his dharmic character. Yudhiṣṭhira then asked the dog to jump into Indra's chariot. To this, Indra objected saying that dogs being unclean and polluting are not allowed in heaven. Yudhiṣṭhira told Indra that if that be the case, he is not coming as the dog has been his faithful companion. Pleased at this reply, the dog which was the god Dharma in disguise, showed his true form. Yudhiṣṭhira got into Indra's chariot and went away to heaven in his corporeal form.

### **Indo-Iranian dog motif**

The dog is the most sacred animal in Zoroastrianism, the sister religion of Vedic Hinduism. In Zoroastrianism, the dog is always used in both purificatory and funerary rites. It is called *sagdid* (literally, "dog-gaze"). In the highest level of purification in Zoroastrianism called *bareshnum*, a dog is made to see the whole purification rite of the individual. In funerary rites, the *sagdid* rite is performed three times. Also, in the Zoroastrian doctrine of Interim Judgment of the soul, the Chinvat Bridge is guarded by dogs where Mithra a *yazata* (angel) awaits to judge the soul.

All this shows an Indo-Iranian connection in this episode of the epic. The fact that Yudhiṣṭhira is the son of Dharma who came as a dog in a end-of-life incident, and that Dharma is associated with *ṛta* whose guardian is Varuṇa who is associated always with Mitra, is significant. It is further important to note that Indra who displaced Varuṇa as the king of the gods in epic and Purāṇic mythology, is present in this epic incident. It was over the supremacy issue of Varuṇa versus Indra that the Avestan Iranians and the Vedic Indians split. The Avestan Iranians as worshippers of Varuṇa became the *aris*, and the Vedic Indians as worshippers of Indra became the *sūris*. The fact that Indra rejected a dog, an animal so dear to the worshippers of Varuṇa (Ahura Mazda)<sup>206</sup> in this episode is indeed a very significant clue.

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<sup>206</sup> "Varuṇa becomes Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), the supreme God and Creator of the world." Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (Harper-Collins India, Delhi:1994), p.32f

## **11.5**

### **BHĪMA**

It is said that when Bhīma was born, Kuntī accidentally dropped him on a bare stone floor. The worried mother found out that the baby was fine. It was the stone floor where the baby fell that had been shattered. This is the classic citation given of Bhīma's legendary strength. In fact, in days of yore, children from orthodox Hindu homes uttered a bedtime prayer in which Bhīma was one of the five divines invoked to keep away nightmares from happening during sleep. The bedtime prayer is:

*rāmaskandam hanumantam vainateyam vṛkodaram. śayaneya smare nityam  
dussvapnam tasya naśyati.*

"Rāma, Skanda<sup>207</sup>, Hanumān, Vainateya<sup>208</sup> (Garuḍa), and Vṛkodara<sup>209</sup> (Bhīma), I remember to you all, always at bedtime, because it destroys any bad dreams (that I may have)."

This is the level of populist awesome reverence that Bhīma is held in within the current day Hindu religious context.

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<sup>207</sup> Kārtikeya or Subramaṇya, the second son of Śiva and Pārvatī, and the younger brother of Gaṇeśa.

<sup>208</sup> so-called because his mother's name was Vinatā. He is the eagle vehicle (*vāhana*) of Viṣṇu.

<sup>209</sup> meaning "wolf-bellied", an epithet that Bhīma earned for having an enormous and voracious appetite.

Bhīma right from the start was the protector of his family and the source of pain and fear to his rivals, i.e. the Kauravas. Bhīma's specialty was mace and club combat against any opponent. His chief rival was Duryodhana, the oldest of the one hundred Kaurava brothers. This rivalry was to continue all the way to the end.

Early in the epic, the Pāṇḍavas, on account of the cunning and scheming of the Kauravas, were sent off to Vāraṇāvata where a special house had been built for them by the Kauravas. This house was actually made of lac and was highly flammable. Duryodhana's plan was to burn the Pāṇḍavas alive while they would be asleep. Bhīma discovered this and had a tunnel dug, through which the Pāṇḍavas could escape. The Pāṇḍavas escaped in the nick of time. Bhīma was chiefly responsible in ensuring the safe escape of his brothers and their mother Kuntī.

Another situation was when Hiḍimbī, a demoness, fell for Bhīma. She wanted to marry him and eat up the rest of the family. Hiḍimba, her brother, also needed food. A terrible fight occurred between Bhīma, the sole protector of the Pāṇḍavas, and the demon Hiḍimba until the latter was killed. Hiḍimbī now gave her intentions and requested Kuntī her permission to marry her son Bhīma. Kuntī granted the permission, and Bhīma and Hiḍimbī were married. The couple had a son whom they named as Ghaṭotkaca, because his head was as bald as the bottom of a clay-pot. He was as powerful as his father and also possessed magical powers like his mother. Ghaṭotkaca became such a family asset of the Pāṇḍavas on account of the love they showered upon him that he

remained a force to be reckoned with by the Kauravas in the great Kurukṣetra battle.

Further in their itinerations, the Pāṇḍavas came to the town of Ekacakra where they lived with a certain brahmin family. One day, the family started to cry as it was their turn to send a member of their family<sup>210</sup> to the demon Baka who would eat not only the cartload of food that the victim brought but also the beasts that pulled the cart and the human driver victim as well. Bhīma agreed to go instead of one of the members of the brahmin's family. Bhīma purposefully arrived late at Baka's place and the latter was utterly enraged. The two fought a duel until Baka was vanquished and killed.

Before Yudhiṣṭhira could perform the *Rājasūya yajña* (royal consecration sacrifice), Kṛṣṇa pointed out that Jarāsandha, the king of Magadhā, needs to be defeated. Bhīma takes on Jarāsandha and kills him.

When after the first dice-match when Draupadī is dragged by her hair into the assembly-hall by Duḥśāsana who in order to publicly humiliate the Pāṇḍavas attempts to disrobe her, it is Bhīma who makes the terrible vow that he will not only kill Duḥśāsana, but will tear open his chest and drink his blood. Also, Bhīma made another vengeful vow that since Duryodhana, also in trying to humiliate the Pāṇḍavas, had asked Draupadī, as she was being dragged into the assembly-hall, to come and sit on his left thigh while baring it in a lewd manner; that he (Bhīma) would one day break that very thigh (of Duryodhana) with his powerful

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<sup>210</sup> an agreement the townspeople of Ekacakra had made with Baka for their protection.

mace, and with the blood oozing out of it, soak Draupadī's hair in that blood and then comb her hair with Duryodhana's teeth, and only then allow Draupadī to tie it. Until then, Draupadī was to leave her hair untied as a mark of that vow.

Duryodhana was once fighting a battle with the Gandharva king Citrasena while the Pāṇḍavas were in exile. Citrasena captured Duryodhana. As the Pāṇḍavas learnt about it, Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīma to go and rescue the Duryodhana as blood was thicker than water. As Bhīma was about to engage Citrasena, the latter saw Arjuna whom he had known quite well. Based on this, Citrasena immediately released Duryodhana.

During the course of the exile, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sole son-in-law, Jayadratha, who was on his way to the kingdom of Śalva, eyed Draupadī alone in the forest fetching water. He tried to molest her and convince her to become his wife. When Draupadī after rebuffing Jayadratha managed to reach the safety of her spouses, Jayadratha demanded the hand of Draupadī. Bhīma began to fight against Jayadratha almost to the point of killing him. Both Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna stopped him. Bhīma then captured Jayadratha and shaved the latter's head leaving just strands of hair and made him confess in public that he was a slave of the Pāṇḍavas. After Bhīma had received the satisfaction of humiliating Jayadratha, Yudhiṣṭhira ordered Jayadratha released.

In the thirteenth incognito year of their exile, the Pāṇḍavas sought employment at the palace of the Virāṭa king. This king's brother-in-law and commander-in-chief was a person named Kīcaka whose eyes were

bewitched by the beauty of Draupadī who was working as the queen's beautician under the pseudonym of Mālinī. Kīcaka asked his sister to send Mālinī over to him. When Mālinī went to Kīcaka, he tried to molest her despite her rejecting him. He tried to confront her many times. Finally, in desperation, Draupadī went to Bhīma who was working as a chef in the palace kitchen under the name of Ballava. Bhīma told Draupadī to invite Kīcaka to her bed that night. Bhīma told Draupadī to sleep elsewhere that night. Bhīma then dressed himself like a woman and awaited the arrival of Kīcaka in Draupadī's bedroom. As soon as Kīcaka arrived and began to fondle what he thought was Draupadī, Bhīma cast-off his disguise and pounced on Kīcaka and killed him.

In the great battle of Kurukṣetra, Bhīma's son Ghaṭotkaca was killed by Karṇa. Bhīma killed and tore open Duṣṣāsana's chest and drank his blood. Bhīma finally went after Duryodhana and had a great mace-fight (*gadā-yuddha*) with him. Duryodhana seemed invincible. Both Kṛṣṇa and his older-brother Balarāma were present during the Bhīma-Duryodhana club combat. Balarāma was Duryodhana mace-fight teacher as well as his son's father-in-law. Kṛṣṇa heavily favored the Pāṇḍavas. When it seemed that Duryodhana would not go down, Kṛṣṇa gestured to his own thigh subtly implying that Bhīma should strike there. The moment he did that, Duryodhana's thighs broke<sup>211</sup> and he fell and eventually died. Bhīma soaked Draupadī's hair in Duryodhana's blood and did the rest as he had vowed in the Kuru assembly-hall.

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<sup>211</sup> the 4th century CE Sanskrit playwright Bhāsa has beautifully retold this incident in his play entitled *Ūrubhanga* (Breaking of the thighs).

## 11.6

### ARJUNA

When its frighteningly thundering and lightning in the sky, every orthodox Hindu recites the following prayer:

*arjunaphalguṇapārthaḥ kirīṭī śvetavāhanaḥ bībhatsuvijayakṛṣṇaḥ  
savyasācīdhanajayaḥ.*<sup>212</sup>

These are merely the ten epithets of Arjuna, the son of Indra through Kuntī. The terrible atmospheric disturbances are supposed to calm down and protect the reciter from any harm.

Arjuna was born to Kuntī with the blessings of the god Indra. As a disciple of Droṇa, he excelled in archery. His rival on the Kaurava side, in that martial skill, was Karṇa.

Once when Droṇa was teaching archery skills to the Kuru princes, he asked each prince in turn as to hit the target of a bird perched on a tree. They were supposed to hit the eye of the bird. Droṇa asked each prince as a series of questions in regards to the target, i.e. tree, color of the bird etc. All answered the series of questions, and Droṇa asked them to step aside. When it came to Arjuna, he answered in the negative to each of the questions asked. The only thing he answered in the affirmative was when Droṇa asked him if he saw the eye of the bird. From then on,

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<sup>212</sup> Arjuna, Phalguṇa, Pārtha, Kirīṭī, Śvetavāhana, Bibhatsu, Vijaya, Kṛṣṇa, Savyasācī, Dhananjayaḥ



Arjuna became Droṇa's favorite disciple. It is after this incident that Droṇa did not want any rivals to Arjuna, and thus asked for the thumb of Ekalavya.

On another occasion, Karṇa with his honed archery skills had become superior to Arjuna. When it came to a final contest wherein it looked like Arjuna would be beaten and embarrassed, the chief chaplain of the Kuru court, Kṛpa, saved face for Arjuna by saying that only members of the royalty can take part in this contest. Since Karṇa was brought up as a charioteer's son, he was as such not qualified. Duryodhana took advantage of this situation and appointed Karṇa, the governor of Anga.<sup>213</sup>

When Dhṛtarāṣṭra had the Pāṇḍavas sent away to Vāraṇāvata, the news of Draupadī's marriage-by-contest reached them. The five brothers went to Drupada's court disguised as brahmins. When the various kings could not fulfill the conditions of the contest, Arjuna stepped forward. He took the bow, and seeing in the pan of oil, the reflection of the rotating fish target above, accurately hit the eye of that rotating fish. Seeing that a brahmin had put them to shame, the gathered kings not only rose in unison in protest, but also moved forward together to hit Arjuna. Bhīma, single-handedly, blocked them. Arjuna and his brothers returned to their mother with Draupadī. When the brothers announced to their mother that they had brought home a prize, Kuntī, like a good mother, not knowing what it was, asked them to share the prize equally. Thus Draupadī became the common spouse of the five Pāṇḍava brothers.

After Draupadī had officially become the common wife of all the Pāṇḍava brothers, sage Nārada later arrived at their place and made the

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<sup>213</sup> It is composite area consisting of certain parts of present-day Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal states of India and the Tarai region of Nepal.

brothers agree to a rivalry free marital arrangement among them. The deal was that while Draupadī was spending time with one brother, the others could not bother them. If this were to be violated for any reason, the transgressor would have to go away on an exile for a dozen years. Once, Arjuna for some pressing and noble reason had to unintentionally transgress this agreement when he disturbed Yudhiṣṭhira while he was spending time with Draupadī. Arjuna requested Yudhiṣṭhira's forgiveness and told him that he was ready to go into exile for violating the conditions set forth by Sage Nārada. Yudhiṣṭhira not only totally forgave Arjuna, but also requested him not to go into exile as it was an unintentional transgression for a worthy cause. Arjuna nevertheless left for exile.

During the exile, Arjuna visited Dvārakā, the capital of the Yādavas. While there, Arjuna not only met his cousin Kṛṣṇa, but Subhadrā, the sister of Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna was smitten by Subhadrā's beauty and asked Kṛṣṇa for her hand in marriage. Kṛṣṇa was delighted. However, for several reasons of his own, he asked Arjuna to elope with Subhadrā. Arjuna agreed. However when Arjuna did so, the Yādavas gave him chase. Kṛṣṇa stopped them. The alliance of Arjuna and Subhadrā gave rise to the birth of a son whom the couple named as Abhimanyu.

In the thirteenth incognito year of exile, Arjuna worked as a eunuch dance instructor of Princess Uttarā, the daughter of the Virāṭa king. During this period he went by the name Bṛhannaḷā. This role incidentally was also the fruition of a curse by the celestial nymph Ūrvaśī. After the recognition of his true identity, Uttarā married Abhimanyu.

Prior to the great battle at Kurukṣetra, Arjuna went to Dvārakā to seek the help of Kṛṣṇa. To his surprise, he found Duryodhana already there sitting at the head of Kṛṣṇa's bed. Arjuna, then respectfully sat down

in a chair near Kṛṣṇa's feet.<sup>214</sup> When, Kṛṣṇa arose, he naturally saw Arjuna first and embraced him. This made Duryodhana angry because he was there first. Kṛṣṇa calmed by saying that it was only natural that he saw Arjuna first as he got up. There was no partiality of any sort here. Kṛṣṇa then told both Duryodhana and Arjuna that they have a choice between having him alone as a non-combatant for one group, and the entire but powerful army of Kṛṣṇa for the other group. Kṛṣṇa said Arjuna gets to choose first as he was the younger of the two. Duryodhana reluctantly agreed. He was filled with anxiety. However, he became utterly delighted and even smirked when Arjuna chose Kṛṣṇa alone. Truly happy with getting the great army of Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana went away.

Just before the commencement of the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Arjuna lost his nerve and told Kṛṣṇa, his non-combatant charioteer, that it was not worth killing so many kinsmen just for a parcel of land called a kingdom. It is in this setting and context that Kṛṣṇa delivers to Arjuna a great sermon which became known as the *Bhagavadgītā*. Arjuna thus became the direct disciple of Kṛṣṇa and the first recipient of this great sermon. Arjuna also beheld on this occasion the great cosmic form (*viśvarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa. Finally, he is enlightened and convinced and says:

*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādān mayā'cyuta. sthito'smi  
gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava. [Bhagavadgītā XVIII:73]*

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<sup>214</sup> Symbolically, the two (Duryodhana and Arjuna) represent arrogance and humility towards God (Kṛṣṇa).

"Destroyed is my delusion and recognition has been gained by me through Thy Grace, O Acyuta (Kṛṣṇa). I stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word."

In the battle, Arjuna kills Jayadratha, the son-in-law of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He also 'defeats' Bhīṣma. Later, when Grand Sire Bhīṣma is lying on his bed of arrows and feels thirsty, Arjuna shoots at the earth and gets the Gangā water for him. However, Arjuna's biggest victory is the killing of his arch-rival in archery, Karṇa. Despite Arjuna's hesitancy to shoot at Karṇa when the latter's chariot wheel is stuck in the mud and he's trying to pull it out, Kṛṣṇa orders Arjuna to kill Karṇa. At this time, Karṇa tries to invoke the canons of dharma. Kṛṣṇa reminds all present there, that where was Karṇa's sense of dharma when he ordered the disrobing of Draupadī at the Kuru court?

## **11.7**

### **DRAUPADĪ**

King Drupada of Pāñcāla who had been humiliated by Droṇa decided to perform a *yajña* under the direction of two eminent priests

named Yāja and Upayāja in order to obtain superior progeny to kill Droṇa one day.

As the oblation was being poured into the sacred fire, first emerged a full-grown man with all his armor. This man was named Dhṛṣṭadyumna. He would eventually kill Droṇa in the great Kurukṣetra war and in turn be killed after the war at night while asleep by Droṇa's son Aśvatthāmā.

Soon after the appearance of Dhṛṣṭadyumna, there appeared a beautiful damsel of dark hue who was named Kṛṣṇā. Since she was Drupada's daughter, she came to be called Draupadī. And since she was the princess of Pāñcāla, she came to be known as Pāñcālī as well.

When the time became appropriate, Drupada held a contest of archery skill wherein the winner to wed Draupadī. Many kings were invited to take part in the contest and on the sixteenth day of the wedding festivities, Dhṛṣṭadyumna announced the conditions of the contest as Draupadī entered the assembly hall. The contest required that the participant hit the eye of a revolving fish above with an arrow as he looked at the moving target's reflection in a pan of oil below. All the princes gathered tried one by one and failed. Karṇa came the closest but Draupadī would not marry a charioteer's son. Finally, Arjuna disguised as a brahmin stepped forward and won.

### **Draupadī and the number five**

When the Pāṇḍava brothers returned home with Draupadī and informed their mother Kuntī that they had brought back a prize, she

unwittingly asked her sons to share equally the prize amongst themselves. Thus Draupadī automatically became the wife of the five brothers. Now this arrangement had to be *dharmically* justified. There are five reasons put forth to justify this. Three arguments were advanced by Yudhiṣṭhira, and two by Sage Vyāsa.

1. The argument of the subtle nature of dharma (advanced by Yudhiṣṭhira)

Yudhiṣṭhira said to Drupada:

*sūkṣmo dharmo mahārāja nāsya vidmo vayam gatim.* [Ādi Parva 195:29]

"O great king, morality is subtle and we do not know its course."

2. The argument of Kuntī's ordinance (advanced by Yudhiṣṭhira)

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

*gurūṇām caiva sarveśām mātā paramako guruḥ. sā cāpyuktavatī vācam  
bhaikṣvad bhujyatām iti. tasmādetadaham manye param dharmam  
dviyottama.* [Ādi Parva 196:16-17]

"Of all the preceptors, the mother is the foremost. She has commanded us saying 'Enjoy all of you that which you have obtained.' O best of the twice born, it is therefore I consider this to be virtuous."

3. The arguments of the precedents of Jaṭilā and Vārākṣī (advanced by Yudhiṣṭhira)

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

*śrūyate hi purāṇe'pi jaṭilā nāma gautamī. ṛṣīnadhyāsitavatī sapta  
dharmabhṛtām varā. tathaiva munijā vākṣīm tapobhirbhāvitātmanaḥ.  
sangatābhūd daśa bhrātṛnekanāmanaḥ pracetasah. [Ādi Parva 196:14-15]*

"I have heard in the Purāṇas that a lady of the Gautama lineage named Jaṭilā, the foremost of all virtuous women, married seven sages simultaneously. So also, the daughter of an ascetic married ten brothers, all of them bearing the same name of Pracetas and all of their souls were exalted by asceticism."

4. The argument of Śiva's curse on Indra for being arrogant (advanced by Vyāsa)

Vyāsa said:

*viśvabhugbhūtadhāmā ca śivirindraḥ pratāpavān. śāntiścaturthasteṣām vai  
tejasvī pañcamaḥ smṛtaḥ. teṣām bhagavānugradhanvā prādādiṣṭam  
sanisargād yathoktam. tām cāpyeṣām yoṣitam lokakāntām śriyam bhāryām  
vyadadhānmānuṣeṣu. [Ādi Parva 197:29-30]*

"Viśvabhug, Bhūtadhāma, the greatly effulgent Śibi, Śānti and Tejasvin, these are the five Indras of old. The illustrious deity with the formidable

bow (Śiva) kindly granted to the five Indras the desire they cherished in their hearts and he appointed that exceedingly beautiful lady, who was none other than the celestial Lakṣmī herself to be their common wife in the world of men."

*evamete pāṇḍavāḥ sambhūvurye te rājan pūrvamindrā babhūvuḥ.  
lakṣmīścaīṣām pūrvamevopadiṣṭā bhāryā yaiṣā draupadī divyarūpā. [Ādi  
Parva 197:35]*

"O king, thus were born as the sons of Pāṇḍu those that were at one time Indras and the celestial Lakṣmī herself who had appointed to be their wife is the exceedingly beautiful Draupadī."

5. The argument of Draupadī's prior birth and boon from the god Śiva (advanced by Vyāsa)

Vyāsa said:

*āsīt tapovane kācidṛṣeḥ kanyā mahāmanaḥ. nādhyayagacchat patim sā tu  
kanyā rūpavatī satī. toṣayāmāsa tapasā sā kilogreṇa śankaram. [Ādi Parva  
197:44-45]*

"There was in a certain forest, a daughter of an illustrious sage, who though beautiful and chaste, did not get a husband. She, gratified by her asceticism, the deity Śankara (Śiva)."



*tām devadevaḥ prītātmā punaḥ prāha śubham vacaḥ.*

*pañcakṛtvastvayokto'ham patim dehīti vai punaḥ. tat tathā bhavitā bhadre vacastad bhadramastu te. dehamanyam gatāyāste sarvametad bhaviṣyati.*

[Ādi Parva 197:49-50]

"The god of gods, being well-pleased with her, spoke again to her thus. 'You have addressed me five times saying, "Give me husband". O amiable girl, therefore, it shall be as you have asked. Be blessed. All this will happen in one of your future births!'"

*yathaiva kṛṣṇoktavatī purastānnaikam patim me bhagavān dadātu. sa cāpyevam varamityabravīt tām devo hi vettā paramam yadatra. [Ādi Parva 198:3]*

"As Kṛṣṇā (Draupadī) had repeatedly asked (in her former life) for five times saying, 'Give me a husband', the great deity had granted her the boon accordingly. The deity himself knows the right and wrong of this."

### **The number fifteen (five times three) and Draupadī**

The circumstances which led to the attempted disrobing of Draupadī is well-known. It is the five-fold aspect of this episode that becomes interesting in terms of analysis.

1. Yudhiṣṭhira staked her as a pawn in the dice-match
2. Vidura as the paragon of virtue protested her staking
3. Bhīṣma as the grand sire protested her staking
4. Kṛpa as the royal chaplain protested her staking
5. Śakuni through his loaded dice won her
6. Pratikāmin informed her of the defeat of the Pāṇḍavas
7. Vikarṇa stood up and spoke up on her behalf
8. Karṇa ordered her disrobing
9. Duḥśāsana humiliated her by attempting to disrobe her
10. Kṛṣṇa protected her
11. Duryodhana made lewd gestures to her
12. Dhṛtarāṣṭra gave her back her freedom
13. Bhīma avenged her by killing Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana
14. Arjuna avenged her by killing Karṇa
15. Sahadeva avenged her by killing Śakuni

In the above table, situations one, five, six, eight and nine were against Draupadī, while situations two, three, four, seven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen were in her favor.

Yudhiṣṭhira having lost himself stakes Draupadī after being cajoled by Śakuni. Several questions arise here. How can someone who has lost himself stake somebody that is free? How can someone of the wisdom of Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Dharma, fall for the cajoling of Śakuni when Yudhiṣṭhira has lost each to him so many times? How could Yudhiṣṭhira

ignore the apprehension of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and advice of Vidura?  
But it happened.

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

*tayaivamvidhayā rājan pāñcālyāham sumadhyayā. glaham dīvyāmi  
cārvangyā draupadyā hanta saubala. [Sabhā Parva 65:39]*

"O king, son of Subala, making that princess of Pāñcāla, the slender-waisted Draupadī, as my stake, I shall (now) play with you."

Śakuni wins everything for his nephews through his loaded dices that seem to do his bidding. There is an oral tradition that Śakuni's dices obeyed him because he had occult powers of control over them. These dices were said to be made from the bones of his ancestors. Śakuni wanted to avenge the Gāndhāra nation and the injustice done to his beautiful sister (who had bandaged her eyes for the sake for her blind husband) from the marital machinations of Bhīṣma.

Once Draupadī had been won for him by his maternal-uncle Śakuni, Duryodhana demands that she be brought into the assembly hall and join the retinue of female servants. He wanted to get his revenge on Draupadī who had laughed at him when he unwittingly fell into a pool of water. According to oral tradition, Draupadī is said to have made a sarcastic

comment that a blind man's son can only be blind. All this deeply hurt Duryodhana and he did express the fact that it did hurt him.

Duryodhana said:

*tatra mām prāhasat kṛṣṇaḥ pārthena saha susvaram. draupadī ca saha strībhirvyathayantī mano mama. [Sabhā Parva 50:30]*

"At this, Kṛṣṇa (Arjuna) with Pārtha (Bhīma) laughed aloud, and Draupadī with other females laughed also. This greatly pains my heart."

On winning her, Duryodhana said:

*ehi kṣattsardraupadīmānasva priyām bhāryām sammatām pāṇḍavānām. sammārjatām veśma paraitu śīghram trāstu dāsībhirapuṇyaśīlā. [Sabhā Parva 66:1]*

"Come Kṣatta, bring Draupadī here, the dear and beloved wife of the Pāṇḍavas. Let her be forced to sweep the chambers, and let the unfortunate woman remain where our serving women are."

It was Karṇa's idea to disrobe Draupadī. It was his way of getting back at her for having rejected him as her suitor during the contest to win her hand.

In this context, Draupadī said:

*dṛṣṭvā tu tam draupadī vākyamuccairjagāda nāham varayāmi sūtam.  
sāmarśahāsam prasamīkṣya sūryam tatyāja karṇaḥ sphuritam dhanustat.  
[Ādi Parva 187:23]*

"Seeing him, Draupadī said in a loud voice, 'I shall not choose a charioteer for my husband.' Laughing in vexation, and casting a glance towards the sun, Karṇa threw aside the bow already drawn to a circle."

After Draupadī was brought into the assembly-hall, Karṇa vengefully said:

*eko bhartā striyā devairvihitaḥ kurunandana. iyam tvanekavaśagā bandhakīti  
viniścitā. asyāḥ sabhāmānayanam ca citramiti me matiḥ. ekāmbadha  
ratvam vāpyatha vāpi vivastratā. [Sabhā Parva 68:35-36]*

"O descendent of Kuru, it has been ordained by the gods that a woman should have only one husband. She (Draupadī) has (however) many husbands. Therefore, it is certain that she is an unchaste woman. In my opinion, there is nothing surprising if she is brought before the assembly in one cloth or if she be made naked."

*duḥśāsana subāle'yam vikarṇaḥ prājñavādikaḥ. pāṇḍavānām ca vāsāmsi draupadyāścāpyuhara.* [Sabhā Parva 68:38]

"O Duḥśāsana, this Vikarṇa speaking words of wisdom, is but a boy. Take off the robes of the Pāṇḍavas, and also that of Draupadī."

Duḥśāsana then began to disrobe Draupadī. She then started to pray to Kṛṣṇa who protected her honor by giving an unending stream of garment. When no matter how much he tried to disrobe Draupadī, the clothing never fell off completely. Finally, Duḥśāsana sat down exhausted. There is an oral tradition that Draupadī once tore-off a portion of her expensive garment spontaneously and bandaged Kṛṣṇa's finger when it was bleeding profusely. Now, at a time when Draupadī needed help, Kṛṣṇa returned the favor a hundred-fold with a limitless supply of garment.

Finally, it was principally Bhīma who avenged her. He precisely predicted how the evil quartet would be dealt with in the final battle. He pointed out that he would kill Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana; Arjuna would kill Karṇa; and Sahadeva would kill Śakuni.

Bhīma declared:

*aham duryodhanam hantā karṇam hantā dhananjayaḥ. śakunim  
cākṣakitavam sahadevo haniṣyati.* [Sabhā Parva 77:26]

"I shall be the slayer of Duryodhana, Dhanajaya (Arjuna) will be the slayer of Karṇa. Sahadeva will kill the gambler Śakuni."

*vākyasūrasya caivāsya puruṣasya durātmanaḥ. duḥśāsanasya rudhiram  
pātāsmi mṛgarāḍiva.* [Sabhā Parva 77:29]

"As regards this wicked-minded man Duḥśāsana, who is bold in speech, I will drink his blood like a lion."

The number five is important in Dravidian culture. In the idol-worshipping cult of the Dravidians the use of five vessels (*pañcapātra*) and five ingredients of ambrosia (*pañcāmṛta*) to bathe the idol is very much in vogue. Even the five fold fire knowledge (*pañcāgni vidyās*) and the five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) mentioned in the Upaniṣads are probably from Dravidian influence. The fact that Draupadī's father's kingdom is named *Pāñcāla* is also significant. Further, Draupadī is dark-skinned. So is her husband Arjuna (Kṛṣṇa). The cowherd-prince of Dvārakā is also dark-skinned. He is called Kṛṣṇa. The sage Vyāsa is dark-skinned and is known alternatively as Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana. The Aryanization and assimilation of Dravidian kings and peoples were well underway at the time of the Mahābhārata era.

There is also a asceticism-violence-eroticism triadic scheme with regard to Draupadī by the three dark-hued men who share her name in male form. Kṛṣṇā (Draupadī) is dharmically justified by the ascetic Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇadvaiṇāyana), the warrior Arjuna (Kṛṣṇa) marries her; and finally the erotic Kṛṣṇa, the lover of sixteen-thousand women (*ṣoḍaśastrīsahasrīśa*), protects her honor.

## **11.8**

### **KARNA**

When Kuntī wanted to test the mantra given to her as a boon by Sage Durvāsa, she prayed to the sun-god Sūrya. When the god appeared and asked Kuntī what she wanted, she innocently told him that she was just testing out the power of the mantra. Sūrya told her that he would have to give her something. So, he blessed her with a son. Unmarried, Kuntī became both nervous and anxious as to what to do next with her son. None would believe her if she told what happened. So, Kuntī made the decision to put the baby in a casket and let it afloat in the river. This casket was found by a charioteer couple named Adhiratha and Rādhā. Adhiratha was one of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's main charioteers. The delighted issueless couple decided to adopt the child. This child was born with a divine armor (*kavaca*) and earrings (*kuṇḍala*) which were gifts of protection and immortality given by the sun-god. This child was named Vasuṣeṇa by his



foster-parents. He also went by the names of Rādheya (son of Rādhā) and Karṇa because of his protective earrings.

Karṇa learnt the martial skills along with the Kuru princes under Droṇa's tutelage. Karṇa excelled in archery and became Arjuna's chief rival. Karṇa wanted to learn more, so he was directed to go to Sage Paraśurāma. However, Paraśurāma being an avowed hater of the warrior-class would teach only brahmins. So, Karṇa went to Paraśurāma under the guise of a brahmin disciple. The sage once fell asleep on the lap of Karṇa. A wasp came and stung and bored a hole in Karṇa's thigh and blood oozed out. Karṇa bore the pain and did not move as it would wake up the sage. The blood trickled down to the sage's face and woke him up. The instant reaction of the sage was that no brahmin could bear such pain. So, the sage concluded that Karṇa was a member of the warrior class. Paraśurāma immediately cursed Karṇa saying that he would forget the use of his weapons and skills when he needed them most at the moment of crisis. After calming down, the sage not only modified the curse but gave Karṇa his special bow and weapons.

His first major insult because of his caste came when the royal chaplain of the Kuru clan, Kṛpa, refused to admit Karṇa as a contestant in a tournament of demonstrations of weapon skills reserved only for members of the royalty. This put Arjuna automatically at the top in archery skills. This angered Duryodhana. However, seizing this opportunity, Duryodhana made Karṇa governor of Anga, and made him a part of the decision-making quartet on the Kaurava side.

Despite this elevated status, Karṇa was insulted once more by Draupadī when she refused to marry him even if he were the winner of the contest to wed her because he was a charioteer's son. This deeply hurt Karṇa and he eventually took revenge on her by ordering the disrobing of Draupadī in the Kuru court.

In an effort to bring Karṇa over to the side of the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛṣṇa decided to go and talk with him. Karṇa, citing issues of timely help, friendship and dharma refused to abandon Duryodhana.

Knowing that Karṇa would be invincible with his armor, and knowing Karṇa's incredible and legendary generosity, the god Indra came one day in the guise of a brahmin begging for alms. When Indra asked Karṇa for his protective armor and earrings, Karṇa without any hesitation surrendered it to the god. Karṇa was now a mortal and could be killed by Arjuna, the son of Indra. This was the purpose behind Indra's scheming designs.

Kuntī too dialoged with Karṇa in letting him know that he was her son, and therefore should join the Pāṇḍava side. Citing the same reasons as he had done in the dialog with Kṛṣṇa, Karṇa politely and respectfully refused his mother's request. He however promised Kuntī that he would never kill any of the Pāṇḍava brothers except Arjuna. Either he will kill Arjuna, or Arjuna would kill him. Consequently, he told her that she will always have five sons.

When the great battle at Kurukṣetra began, Bhīṣma who was the supreme marshal of the Kaurava army refused to allow Karṇa to fight as long as he was commander. Consequently, Karṇa entered the battlefield only on the thirteenth day after Bhīṣma was no longer in charge. Karṇa was responsible for the death of Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna and

Subhadrā. After the fall of Droṇa, Karṇa became commander of the Kaurava forces for two days, i.e. the sixteenth and the seventeenth days. When Karṇa let lose the special weapon, Kṛṣṇa who was Arjuna's non-combatant charioteer, sunk the chariot so that the missile missed Arjuna. Karṇa also had disagreements with Śalya, the brother of Mādri, and the maternal-uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva.

Finally, Karṇa's chariot wheel got stuck in the mud and as he was trying to pull it out, Kṛṣṇa urged Arjuna to finish off Karṇa. It is at this juncture that Karṇa brings up issues of dharma in trying to fight an unready combatant. Kṛṣṇa points out to Karṇa that where was this same sense of dharma when he immorally ordered the disrobing of Draupadī in the Kuru court.

Kṛṣṇa said:

*tamabravīda vāsudevo rathasto rādheya dṛṣṭyā smarasīha dharmam.  
prāyeṇa nīcā vyamanuṣe magnā nindati daivam kukṛtam na tu svam. yad  
draupadīmekavastrām sabhāyāmānāyayestvam ca suyodhanaśca. duḥśāsanaḥ  
śakuniḥ saubalaśca na te karṇa pratyabhāttatra dharmah. [Karṇa Parva  
91:1-2]*

"Then Kṛṣṇa, who was in the chariot said to Karṇa, 'Fortunate it is, O son of Rādhā, that you remember virtue. It is always seen that men, when they are in distress, speak ill of providence and not of their own evil deeds. You, Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana, and Subala's son Śakuni, brought

Draupadī, clad in one piece of cloth, before the court. Then, O Karṇa, this virtue of yours did not display itself."

*yadā rajasvalām kṛṣṇām duḥśāsanavaśe sthitām. sabhāyāmna prāhasaḥ  
karṇa kva te dharmastadā gataḥ.* [Karṇa Parva 91:7]

"When you laughed at Draupadī while she spare dressed and in her season (menstrual period), stood before the court at Duḥśāsana's will, where was this virtue of yours?"

## **11.9**

### **DURYODHANA**

Duryodhana was actually named "Suyodhana" meaning "good battle" in Sanskrit. The laudatory prefix "su"<sup>215</sup> (good) was changed to the derogatory prefix "dur" (bad) when his character was totally deemed *adharmic* by the Hindu religious masters of yore. In fact, all his brothers whose name began with "dur" or "dus" actually commenced with "su". Hence, his immediate next brother was named "Suśāsana". Another one Sumukha instead of Durmukha. Yet others were Susaha, Sudharṣa, Sumada and so on instead of Duḥsaha, Durdharṣa, Durmada and so on. Perhaps because of their relatively better character, some of the brothers of

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<sup>215</sup> "su" is the Sanskrit cognate of the Greek "eu" both of which mean "good".

Duryodhana retained their "su" prefixes forever. Among these were: Sulocana, Subāhu, Suvarman etc.

Duryodhana had several factors that slowly, steadily and irrevocably made him an avowed enemy of the Pāṇḍava brothers. His maternal-uncle Śakuni who had issues of his own with the royal house of Kuru became the deadly fuel to propel the wrath of Duryodhana. To begin with, the constant bullying, humiliating and pranks of Bhīma towards him turned Duryodhana into a person awaiting his chance to seek a full scale revenge against the Pāṇḍavas in general and Bhīma in particular. Next, the very fact that the Pāṇḍava brothers were the mantric sons of Kuntī rather than his uncle Pāṇḍu utterly convinced Duryodhana that they had no rights to the Kuru throne. His father Dhṛtarāṣṭra, though blind, was a good ruler who could rule as a full sovereign under the able guidance of many eminent people like Bhīṣma, Vyāsa, Kṛpa, Droṇa, Vidura, Nārada etc. not to mention his strong sons who numbered a hundred. Hence, this care-taker view that the Pāṇḍavas had of their blind uncle who was older to Pāṇḍu was thus totally unfounded, according to Duryodhana, in every sense. The unfair means by which Draupadī was won by the Pāṇḍavas (disguised as brahmins when the bride-winning tournament was clearly intended only for kings) became another issue of perceived injustice, jealousy and anger for Duryodhana. The fact that Kṛṣṇa was partial to the Pāṇḍavas made the situation worse. Balarāma, the older half-brother of Kṛṣṇa, saw this and became sympathetic to Duryodhana's perspective. Two further factors augmented this sympathy of Balarāma towards Duryodhana. The first was that Balarāma became the mace fighting instructor of Duryodhana. The second was that Balarāma's daughter, Śaśirekhā, became the wife of

Lakṣmaṇa kumāra, the son of Duryodhana. This second aspect is current only in an oral vernacular folk tradition.

Duryodhana could probably had his way had he only agreed to give the Pāṇḍavas just five villages and let them lead their lives. In fact, Kṛṣṇa had almost brokered a peace agreement based on this. But the vengeful and uncompromising nature of Duryodhana got the better of him leading to his total downfall, a fact predicted by so many elders in the Kuru court including his mother Gāndhārī.

Duryodhana said:

*ghriyamāṇe mahābāhau mayi samprati keśava. tāvadapyaparityājyam  
bhūmernaḥ pāṇḍavān prati.* [Udyoga Parva 127:25]

"So long as this is held by myself of long arms, O Keśava, I shall not leave aside which is pierced by the point of a sharp needle."

Kṛṣṇa said:

*sarvam bhavatu te rājyam pañca grāmān visarjaya. avaśyam bharaṇīyā hi  
pituste rājasattama.* [Udyoga Parva 150:17]

"Let the entire kingdom be yours but give up only five villages; for surely they ought to be supported by your father, O best of kings."

There is an oral tradition that when war became inevitable, Gāndhārī wanted to make Duryodhana invincible. Because of her ascetic vow to keep her eyes bandaged so that she no way could enjoy more than her blind husband could, Gāndhārī had accrued enormous spiritual merit. She wanted to expend some of that merit to make her son unslayable. So, she asked Duryodhana to come totally naked before her so that she could unbandage her eyes and see him which would create a spiritual armor for him. Kṛṣṇa, who was ever looking out for the well-being of the Pāṇḍavas, saw through all this and quickly approached Duryodhana asking him to cover his private parts and thighs. Duryodhana agreed. So, when Gāndhārī saw him, she did not see a completely nude Duryodhana. This would prove to be his vulnerable point. So, when the mace fight between him and Bhīma took place, Kṛṣṇa subtly pointed to Bhīma to strike Duryodhana in his groin area as that was the only part that Gāndhārī's protective vision had not seen. Duryodhana finally fell and became wise as he was dying.

Balarāma was totally angered when he saw the unfair fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana. He loved his brother Kṛṣṇa too much to say anything to him. So, Balarāma was about to strike Bhīma when Kṛṣṇa intervened and pacified him.

Sanjaya narrating the event to Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

*śirasyabhihatam dṛṣṭvā bhīmasenena te sutam. rāmaḥ praharatām  
śreṣṭhaścukrodhaḥ balavadbalī. tato madhye  
narendraṇāmūrdhvaḥbāhurhalāyudhaḥ. kurvannārtasvaram ghoram dhig  
bhīmetyuvācaḥ. [Śalya Parva 60:3-4]*

"Seeing your son struck at the thighs, the powerful Rāma, that best of smiters, became highly angry. Raising his arm up, the hero having the plough for his weapon, sorrowfully said in the midst of those kings---'O fie on Bhīma, O fie on Bhīma!'"

## **11.10**

### **DUḤŚĀSANA**

Among the one hundred sons born to Queen Gāndhārī, Duḥśāsana was the second oldest. Along with his only older brother Duryodhana, his maternal-uncle Śakuni, and Karṇa, he formed a part of the evil quartet that controlled the sinister maneuverings and diabolical machinations of the Kauravas.



Duḥśāsana is the least important of the evil quartet. He is essentially an underling to the other three, and is a shadow of his older brother Duryodhana. Duḥśāsana's only major role in the Mahābhārata epic is when on the orders of his older brother Duryodhana, he drags the scantily clad Draupadī by the hair into the Kuru assembly-hall and humiliates her by attempting to disrobe her. He makes a utter fool of himself in this regard when the garment of Draupadī seems endless. He ultimately falls down totally fatigued and exhausted. Thus Duḥśāsana's high point and low point come almost in sequence.

For this lewd and infamous act, Duḥśāsana earns the wrath of Bhīma, the most robust and macho figure among the Pāṇḍava brothers. Bhīma vows to tear open the chest of Duḥśāsana and drink his blood. Bhīma is eventually able to accomplish this. Duḥśāsana is the first of the evil quartet to die in the great battle. He remains an unlamented figure and a totally irredeemable one in every sense of the term within Hindu culture. Only his mother Gāndhārī sheds tears for him upon his death.

## **11.11**

### **KUNTĪ**

King Kuntibhoja who had been childless had been promised a child by his maternal uncle, King Śūrasena, and his wife. As soon as a beautiful female child was born to them, Śūrasena and his wife turned her over to

the delighted Kuntibhoja for adoption. The child was named Pṛthā. After Kuntibhoja adopted her, she came to be known as Kuntī as well. Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva, was Kuntī's brother.

When the sage Durvāsa came to pay a visit to Kuntibhoja, Kuntī was deputized to care for and cater to the needs of the sage in every way. Kuntī's hospitality towards the sage was so diligent and meticulous that the characteristically hard-to-please and infamously quick-tempered sage was greatly pleased by Kuntī's dedicated service to him. He blessed her with a powerful mantra from the Atharvaveda which could instantly bring before her whatever god she called upon.

After the sage had departed, Kuntī, in her typical childish curiosity, wanted to test out the power of the bestowed mantra. She called upon the Sun-god Sūrya who to her astonishment appeared before her and asked her what she wanted. When she told him that she was merely testing out the mantra, Sūrya said that he cannot leave until he has blessed her with something. So, he granted her a male child with protective armor and earrings and disappeared. Kuntī became frightened that she being unwed would have a hard-time convincing people about what happened. So, she put her baby in a casket and let it afloat in the Ganges river. This child was eventually found by a childless charioteer couple (Adhiratha and Rādḥā) who readily and happily adopted the child and raised him as their own son. He was named Vasuṣeṇa. He was also known as Rādheya and most famously as Karṇa.

When she came of age, Kuntibhoja arranged for his daughter's marriage by calling upon eligible young princes from several territories to come to the assembly where Kuntī could choose the husband she liked most. Among the princes gathered there, Kuntī chose the handsome Pāṇḍu

of the prestigious Kuru household. Eventually, Pāṇḍu would also get married to Mādrī, the princess of the Madra kingdom. Despite two spouses, he could have any children on account of a sage's curse. So, Kuntī decided to use her powerful mantra again. She first called upon the god Dharma who blessed her with a son who became known as Yudhiṣṭhira. Next, she called upon the god Vāyu who blessed her with another son who became known as Bhīma. Yet again, she called upon the god Indra who blessed her with another son who became known as Arjuna. Seeing this, Mādrī too wanted children, and so she requested Kuntī to use the mantra on her behalf and get children. Kuntī obliged her co-wife and called upon the twin Aśvin gods. They blessed her with twins who became known as Nakula and Sahadeva. When Pāṇḍu eventually died because of the curse, Mādrī, who felt responsible for the fruitioning of the curse, entered into the funeral pyre of her husband after turning over the custody of her twin sons to Kuntī for care. Kuntī raised these five boys as her own and they became known famously as the Pāṇḍavas.

Kuntī managed through all the indignities and hardships that her sons had to bear on account of the Kauravas for very many years. The main things that she is known for during these years are her unwitting maternal ordinance to her sons to share their prize which happened to be Draupadī, and her request to Karṇa to switch sides as he is her oldest son and that the kingdom and Draupadī would be his. The latter scenario has become an emotional estranged mother-son reunion classic within Hindu culture and retold with embellished emotions to this day.

Kuntī said:

*kaunteyastvam na rādheyo na tavādhirathaḥ pitā. nāsi sūtakule jātaḥ karṇa  
tad viddhi me vacaḥ. kānīnastvam mayā jātaḥ pūrvajaḥ kuṣiṇā dhṛtaḥ.  
kuntirājasya bhavane pārthastvamasi putraka. [Udyoga Parva 145:2-3]*

"You are the son of Kuntī, and not the son of Rādhā; nor is Adhiratha your father; you are not born in the family of charioteers; know this word of mine to be true. You were begotten on me when I was an unmarried girl, and you were the first held in my womb. You were born in the palace of Kuntirāja, my dear son."

*karṇārjunau vai bhavetām yathā rāmajanārdanau. āsdhyam kim tu loke  
syād yuvayoḥ samhitātmanoḥ. [Udyoga Parva 145:10]*

"Karṇa and Arjuna being united like Rāma (Balarāma) and Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa), what is there which cannot be performed by you (both) in the world?"

*karṇa śobhiṣyase nūnam pañcabhirbhrātṛbhirvṛtaḥ. devaiḥ parivṛto brahmā  
vedyāmiva mahādhvare. [Udyoga Parva 145:11]*

"O Karṇa, you will surely shine surrounded by your five brothers like Brahmā surrounded by the gods seated on the dais on the occasion of the great sacrificial ceremony.

Karṇa replied:

*yudhiṣṭhiram ca bhīmam ca yamau caivārjunāḍṛte. arjunena samam  
yuddhamapi yaudhiṣṭhire bale. arjunam hi nihatyājau samprāptam syāt  
phalam mayā. yaśasā cāpi yujyeyam nihataḥ savyasācinā. na te jātu na  
śiṣyanti putrāḥ pañcayaśasvini. nirarjunāḥ sakarṇā vā sārjunā vā hate  
mayi. [Udyoga Parva 146:21-23]*

"There are Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and the twins, in fact everyone save Arjuna who alone in the army of Yudhiṣṭhira is worthy to fight with me. Having killed Arjuna, I shall achieve a reputation for great prowess; or being myself killed by Savyasācin (Arjuna), I shall be endued with renown. O lady of renown, your five sons shall not decrease; either you will be with Karṇa and not Arjuna, or if I'm slain, you shall be with Arjuna (and without Karṇa)."

After the war, Kuntī prays that her great grandson, Parikṣit, is saved. He succeeds Yudhiṣṭhira as his father Abhimanyu died during the war. Kuntī finally departs to the forest along with Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. All three eventually die in a forest fire.

## 11.12

### KṚṢṆA

Of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, Rāma, the 7th incarnation, and Kṛṣṇa, the 8th incarnation are the most universally worshipped among the Hindus. There is always a tendency to compare these two incarnations. Rāma is considered idealistic and is referred to as *maryādā puruṣottama* (respectful lord). Kṛṣṇa is considered realistic and is referred to as *līlā puruṣottama* (sportive lord). While Rāma rarely showed that he is God-incarnate, Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, almost always showed that he is God-incarnate. While Rāma had only one spouse, Kṛṣṇa had sixteen thousand. While Rāma's story is essentially in the Rāmāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa's story is found principally in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Harivamśa and the Mahābhārata. Rāma had three major blotches on his otherwise impeccable character, i.e. the way he killed Vālī, the way he treated Sītā during her pregnancy, and the way he banished Lakṣmaṇa at the very end of epic for a trivial infraction of a royal ordinance. Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, had a series of issues that are very questionable in terms of what is expected of a divine person. The improper way the three Kaurava marshals (Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karṇa) and Duryodhana were done in with Kṛṣṇa's help, certainly stand out.

In certain schools of Vaiṣṇavite Hinduism, Kṛṣṇa is considered not an incarnation but the main form (*mūlarūpa*) of God. It is Viṣṇu that is considered an aspect of Kṛṣṇa. These schools, i.e. those of the Nimbārka,

Vallabha traditions and especially, the Caitanya tradition, base this doctrine on the scriptural phrase *kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam* [Bhāgavata Purāṇa I:3:28] meaning "Kṛṣṇa Himself is indeed the Lord." The Rāmānujite school of Vaiṣṇavite Hinduism recognizes Kṛṣṇa as the only full incarnation (*pūrṇāvatāra*) while the rest of them are aspectual incarnations (*amśāvatāras*) of Viṣṇu. The Madh vite school of Vaiṣṇavite Hinduism is the only one that will not make any distinction between the incarnations themselves as well as between the incarnational forms and the main form. Their difference is purely one of reference, and not one of essence. It is strictly based on the Upaniṣadic dictum *ekamevādvitīyam brahma* [Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI:2:1] meaning "God is one without a second".

Kṛṣṇa was the eighth child of Devakī and Vasudeva, a couple from the royal Yādava family that ruled from Mathurā. Kamsa, the brother of Devakī and the ruler, had usurped the throne by jailing his father Ugrasena. He had jailed Devakī and her husband because there was a premonition that the child of Devakī and Vasudeva would kill him. There were six children who were born to Devakī and Vasudeva, and Kamsa killed every one of them as soon as they were born. The seventh child, Balarāma, was miraculously transferred to the womb of Rohiṇī, another wife of Vasudeva and thus saved. The eighth child, Kṛṣṇa, as soon as it was born miraculously had his father unshackled and Vasudeva took the opportunity to take the child in a torrential storm across the Yamunā river to Gokula to the house of Nandagopa and his wife Yaśodā who were a cowherd couple. In exchange, the female child of this couple was brought back to jail. When Kamsa came to kill the eighth child of sister, the baby

girl miraculously flew away from Kamsa's hands and yelling out that his killer was safe and well.

While Kṛṣṇa was growing up in the house of his foster parents, Kamsa found out where Kṛṣṇa was and sent a demoness by the name of Pūtanā to poison the infant while it suckled her during breast feeding. Kṛṣṇa actually sucked the life out of Pūtanā. Kṛṣṇa and his cowherd friends indulge in a lot of childhood pranks especially stealing butter. Kṛṣṇa kills the river-snake demon Kālīya which was tormenting the people. When the cowherds do not perform the sacrifice to the god Indra and worship the Govardhana Hill, Indra gets angry on them and sends down a torrential downpour. Kṛṣṇa lifts the Govardhana Hill with one finger and protects his people. When Kamsa sends the wrestlers Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra to kill Kṛṣṇa, he vanquishes both of them. Kṛṣṇa eventually kills Kamsa. The young Kṛṣṇa is liked by many cowherd girls who like to play and dance with him. Once while they bathed, he stole their clothes and refused to give it back to them unless they came out naked. The spiritual meaning is that unless one becomes pure (nudity) one cannot attain God (Kṛṣṇa). Kṛṣṇa is particularly fond of one cowherd girl named Rādhā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu.

Later when Jarāsandha, the king of Magadha, attacks Mathurā several times, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa finally flee together with the Yādavas far to the west and establish their new capital at the port city Dvārakā (in present day coastal Gujarat). With this shift, Kṛṣṇa's cowherd days come



to an end and his career as a politician, philosopher and king begin. The Gopālakṛṣṇa of Mathurā has transitioned to the Vāsudevakṛṣṇa of Dvārakā. He marries many wives in this phase of his life. However, his three chief queens are Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and Jāmbavatī. Rukmiṇī is known for her sincerity and devotion and begets Kṛṣṇa's oldest son Pradyumna. Satyabhāmā is known for her incredible beauty but is very arrogant. Jāmbavatī is also beautiful but dutiful and she bears Kṛṣṇa his favorite son Sāmba. Each of these three principal queens of Kṛṣṇa bears him ten sons. So, he has thirty sons just from them. Pradyumna's son is Aniruddha.

The rest of Kṛṣṇa's career is spent in acting as a peace-maker between his two sets of quarreling relatives, the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, who are cousins to each other as well. Kṛṣṇa is highly sympathetic to the Pāṇḍavas who seem relatively the more decent of the two quarreling sides. Balarāma is more sympathetic towards the Kauravas.

Kṛṣṇa stops a tumult from taking place at Draupadī's wedding. He guards the honor of Draupadī in a timely manner when she was being publicly disrobed by Duḥśāsana. Kṛṣṇa again saves the day for Draupadī when Durvāsa visits the Pāṇḍavas during exile and requests Draupadī for himself and his entourage. Draupadī has a divine magical vessel called the *akṣayapātra*, which was given to Yudhiṣṭhira by Sūrya, and which will produce any amounts of variegated foods but only once a day. Once it is cleaned and put aside, it cannot repeat its magic until the next day. Draupadī had just wiped it and put it aside when Durvāsa arrived. When she called on Kṛṣṇa for help, he came and asked her if there was any food still left in the magical vessel. Draupadī found just a grain of rice

and a leaf of a vegetable. Kṛṣṇa ate just these, and Durvāsa and his group suddenly felt completely full, and left. It is said that Kṛṣṇa saved Kṛṣṇā (Draupadī) on many an embarrassing occasion.

Kṛṣṇa kills his cousin Śiśupāla after the latter insults him. Kṛṣṇa had promised his aunt (Śiśupāla's mother) that he would ignore his jealous cousin for a hundred insults. After this, all was fair play. The moment that mark was crossed Kṛṣṇa killed him. He also slew Dantavakra another rival of Kṛṣṇa. It is said that Śiśupāla and Dantavakra were the third and final incarnations of the porters of Viṣṇu's heaven, Jaya and Vijaya. Due to the curse of the quartet Sanakādi boy-sages they had to descend to earth to oppose their lord. When Jaya and Vijaya went to Viṣṇu to tell him about their plight, Viṣṇu modified the curse by giving them an option. They could either be born as his devotees for seven lifetimes or his adversaries for three. Jaya and Vijaya chose the latter as they did not wish to be separated from their lord for such a long time. Hence, they were born in the first lifetime as the demons Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu and were killed by Viṣṇu in his third and fourth incarnations as Varāha and Narasimha. In the second lifetime, they were born as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa who were killed by Viṣṇu in his seventh incarnation as Rāma. In the third and final lifetime, they were born as Śiśupāla and Dantavakra who were killed by Viṣṇu in his eighth incarnation as Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa tried several times to bring about peace between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas but failed. He asked the Kauravas to give their cousins just five villages, but they refused. Kṛṣṇa showed his Cosmic form (*viśvarūpa*) in the Kuru court to frighten the evil Kaurava quartet to make

peace. Ironically, Kṛṣṇa would show the same Cosmic form just before the battle to instigate the sentimental Arjuna to make war against the Kauravas.

When Duryodhana and Arjuna come to Dvārakā seeking his help, Kṛṣṇa rightly gives them a choice of might versus right. Arjuna, who gets the first choice, chooses right, i.e. the non-combatant Kṛṣṇa alone. Duryodhana happily chooses the might, i.e. the powerful and immense Nārāyaṇīya army of the Yādavas. It was classic case of humility and right on one side versus arrogance and might on the other.

Kṛṣṇa's great philosophical jewel before this carnage is the eighteen chaptered sermon to Arjuna called the *Bhagavadgītā*. In this, Kṛṣṇa takes the opportunity to talk of the five paths to salvation, i.e. the path of works (*karma yoga*), the path of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*), the path of meditation (*rāja yoga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*), and finally the path of total surrender to God (*prapatti yoga*). Of the three major preceptors of the three principal schools of Vedānta, the Śankara school opts for the path of knowledge as being the highest, the Rāmānuja school opts for the path of total surrender as being the highest, and the Madhva school opts for the path of devotion as being the highest. The *Bhagavadgītā* has become the one text that remains the most popular of the Hindu scriptures as it introduces philosophy in the context of mythology.

It is the combination of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa that both the mythographers of the Mahābhārata as well as the later Hindu theologians

refer to as *Nara-Nārāyaṇa*, where Arjuna is *nara* (man) and Kṛṣṇa is *nārāyaṇa* (literally, the one who moves within man, i.e. God in his indwelling immanent aspect). Therefore, since this *Nara-Nārāyaṇa* combination is able to bring about victory over the forces of *adharmā* by their sheer alliance, the Mahābhārata epic is referred to as *Jaya* (victory) by the epic itself.

*jayo nāmetihāso'yam śrotavyo vijigīṣuṇā.* [Ādi Parva 62:20]

"This history is called *Jaya* (victory); it should be heard by those desirous of victory."

Sanjaya said:

*yataḥ satyam yato dharmo yato hrīrārjavam yataḥ. tato bhavato govindo yataḥ kṛṣṇastato jayaḥ.* [Udyoga Parva 68:9]

"Where there is truth, where there is righteousness, where there is modesty, and where there is humanity, there is Govinda (Kṛṣṇa). Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is victory."

Kaṇa said:

*viditam me hṛṣīkeśa yato dharmastato jayaḥ. pāṇḍuram gajamārūḍho gāṇḍīvī sa dhananjayaḥ. tvayā sāratham hṛṣīkeśa śriyā paramayā jvalan.*

*yūyam sarve vadhiṣvam tatra me nāsti samśayaḥ. pārthivān samare kṛṣṇa duryodhanapurogamān.* [Udyoga Parva 143:36-38]

"It is known to me, O Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa), that where there is virtue, there is victory. Dhananjaya (Arjuna), mounted on an animal, wielding the Gāṇḍīva bow, together with you, O Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa), shining with effulgence, you will both slay all the rulers of the earth, lead by Duryodhana, in battle. I have no doubt about this."<sup>216</sup>

*kṛṣṇena sahitāt ko vai na vyatheta dhananjayāt.* [Udyoga Parva 146:9]

"Who is not afraid of Dhananjaya (Arjuna) united with Kṛṣṇa."

Sanjaya said:

*yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ. tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama.* [Bhagavadgītā XVIII:78]

"Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of yoga, and Pārtha (Arjuna) the archer, I think, there will surely be fortune, victory, well-being and righteousness."<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> In these verses, Karṇa classically enunciates the extra-ordinary awesome power of the *Nara-Nārāyaṇa* combination.

<sup>217</sup> This is the very last verse of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Sauti said:

*jayo nāmetihāso'yam śrotavyo mokṣamicchatā.* [Svargārohaṇika Parva 5:51]

"The history is known by the name of Jaya (Victory). It should be heard by everyone desirous of Liberation (from the cycle of births and deaths)."

The way Kṛṣṇa engineered the defeat and demise of the three Kaurava marshals is indeed questionable. The death of Duryodhana equally so. When Queen Gāndhārī is informed of the utter carnage of the war, she curses Kṛṣṇa to die at the thirty-sixth year after the war by ignoble means in the wilderness.

Exactly thirty-six years after the war, fighting breaks out among the Yādavas where Sātyakī<sup>218</sup> kills Kṛtavarman. Seeing this the others pounced on Sātyakī. Pradyumna, Kṛṣṇa's oldest son and son of Rukmiṇī, proceeded to help Sātyakī. However, the odds were overwhelming and both Sātyakī and Pradyumna were slain before the very eyes of Kṛṣṇa.

After the great Yādava internal carnage where almost all except Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were killed, Balarāma then proceeded to the forest and sat in a yogic posture. A great thousand-hooded serpent with reddened eyes emerged out of the mouth of Balarāma and entered the sea.<sup>219</sup>

Kṛṣṇa too went to the forest wearing ochre robes and sat down in a yogic posture. A hunter mistaking him for a deer, shot an arrow at his

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<sup>218</sup> Also known as Yuyudhāna. He broke Droṇa's bow 101 times in the great battle

<sup>219</sup> Balarāma is considered the incarnation of Ādiśeṣa, the Primal Serpent on which Viṣṇu rests in Vaikuṅṭha. This great serpent incarnated as Lakṣmaṇa to serve his older brother Rāma. This time, it incarnated as Kṛṣṇa's older brother.

feet. When the hunter saw what he had done he became filled with fear and touched Kṛṣṇa's feet. Kṛṣṇa, however, forgave him, and Kṛṣṇa's soul arose into the firmament in opulent splendor. Arjuna cremated the mortal remains of Kṛṣṇa and performed his last rites. With this event, the Dvāpara age ended and the Kali age began.

## PART C

### CHAPTER 12

#### PATTERNS OF TRIADISM IN THE RĀMĀYAṆA OF VĀLMĪKI

#### BĀLAKĀṆḌA

#### 12.1

#### The episode of the Krauñca birds, the fowler and Vālmiki

*tasyābhyāṣe tu mithunam carantamanapāyīnam. dadarśa bhagavānstatram  
krauñcacayoścārunissvanam. (2.9)*

“In the vicinity of the forest, that worshipful one saw a pair of Krauñca birds, singing melodious notes, and hovering around never parting from one another” [2:9]

*tasmāt tu mithunādekam pumāmsam pāpniścayḥ. jaghān vairanilayo  
niṣādastasya paśyataḥ. (2.10)*



“At this point, a sinful fowler, singling out the male-bird, without any hostile reason, slew it in the very presence of the holy man.” (2:10)

**Analysis:** The very birth of poetry is said to commence with this episode. The triadism of asceticism-violence-eroticism is complete here. Here, Vālmīki is the ascetic, the fowler is the one who commits the violent act of killing the male krauñca bird in front of the holy man while the male and female birds were engaged in an erotic act. This simple structure is further made intriguingly complicated by the fact that Vālmīki himself was once a hunter who eventually becomes an ascetic and becomes the author of an epic which is replete with asceticism, eroticism and violence. It is also interesting to note that this episode becomes the catalyst for the birth of the śloka metre with which Vālmīki writes a great epic on dharma. The śloka metre would, in all probability, have not taken birth if Vālmīki did not consider the killing of the male krauñca bird to be essentially an adharmic act<sup>220</sup> and made his famous utterance<sup>221</sup>. And yet the fowler was merely pursuing his profession, i.e. his dharma. So, there is a certain cloud of dharmādharma that hangs over the whole episode. So, another triad of dharma-dharmādharma-adharma comes into play here.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> *tataḥ karuṇaveditvādadharmo'yamiti dvijaḥ.* (Bālakāṇḍa 2:14) “The twice-born one considering it to be an unrighteous deed was moved with pity.”

<sup>221</sup> *mā niṣādha pratiṣṭhām tvamagamaḥ śāśvatīḥ samāḥ. yat krauñcamithunādekamavadhīḥ kāmamohitam* (Bālakāṇḍa 2:15) “O fowler, since you have slain one of the pair of krauñca-birds, you shall never attain prosperity.”

<sup>222</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 2:1-17) pp. 127-128

## 12.2

### The episode of Daśaratha, his childless situation and the Aśvamedha sacrifice

#### Evidence:

*tasya caivam prabhavāsya dharmajñasya mahātmanaḥ. sutārtham  
tapyamānasya nāsīd vamsākaraḥ sutaḥ. (8:1)*

“And although engaged in austerities with a view of having sons born to him, the powerful and high-souled king, had no son capable of perpetuating his race.” (8:1)

*cintayānasya tasyaivam buddhirāsīn mahātmanaḥ. sutārtham vājimedhena  
kimartham na yajāmyaham. (8:2)*

“Mentally turning the matter over, the high-souled one thought, ‘why do I not perform the horse-sacrifice with the intention of obtaining a son.’” (8:2)

**Analysis:** There are two patterns of triadism at play in this episode. The first is sovereignty, sacrifice and fertility. Here the noble sovereign of Ayodhyā, i.e. Daśaratha<sup>223</sup>, resolves to perform the ritual sacrifice of Aśvamedha in order to obtain sons (which is a lack of fertility issue). The second pattern of triadism is asceticism, violence and eroticism. Here in the asceticism factor there are several things at play. Vālmīki describes Daśaratha as a royal sage famed in the three worlds who was self-controlled like a maharṣi<sup>224</sup>. Further Daśaratha himself was engaged in

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<sup>223</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 8:1-23) pp. 139-140

<sup>224</sup> maharṣikalpo rājarṣistriṣu lokeṣu viśrutaḥ. (Bālakāṇḍa 6:2) “self-controlled like a great sage, a royal sage famed in the three worlds.”

austerities like an ascetic for the sake of obtaining children<sup>225</sup>. Also, Rājaraṣi Daśaratha consults his eight ministers who were all great ascetics themselves. Together they make nine ascetics. Nine is an eternal and is three times three. The violence factor in the second triad is the Aśvamedha sacrifice where there would be ritual slaughter of several animals. The eroticism factor is that all this is concerned with the birth of sons which is usually the outcome of sexual intercourse. It is also important to note that the king's name is Daśaratha which means "ten chariots". The important part of the chariot is the wheel. This Daśaratha sires Śrīrāma who is one of the ten the incarnation of Viṣṇu who mostly destroys his enemies with the sudarśana cakra. And the principal foe that Śrīrāma will destroy in Vālmīki's epic is the one with ten heads, i.e. Daśagrīva.

### 12.3

#### The episode of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, sacrifices and courtesans

##### Evidence:

Romapāda said:

*ṛṣyaśṛṅgo vanacarastapaḥ svādhyāyasamyutaḥ. anabhijñastu nārīṅām  
viṣayāṅām sukhasya ca. (10:3)*

“R̥ṣyaśṛṅga has been brought up in the forest and is engaged in austerities and self-study. He is ignorant of the pleasure that ensues from contact with women.” (10:3)

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<sup>225</sup> *sutārtham tapyamānasya* (Bālakāṇḍa 8:1) “engaged in austerities with the view of begetting sons”

Sanatkumāra said:

*tam ca rājā daśaratho yaśaskāmaḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ. ṛṣyaśṅgo dvijaśreṣṭham  
varayiṣyati dharmavit. (11:8)*

“And King Daśaratha, knowing duty and desirous of fame, with the intention of obtaining offspring and heaven, with folded hands, will appoint that best of priests, Ṛṣyaśṅga, to conduct the ceremony.” (11:8)

*yajñārtham prasavārtham ca svargārtham ca nareśvaraḥ. labhate ca sa tam  
kāmam dvijamukhyād viśampatiḥ. (11:9)*

“And that bringer of good will attain his object at the hands of that foremost of priests.” (11:9)

**Analysis:** The triadism of asceticism-violence-eroticism is clearly evident here. The ascetic Ṛṣyaśṅga is lured by courtesans in order to induct him into the art of erotics that he knows nothing about. Yet he is also the supreme expert in certain sacrifices whose services the royal sage Daśaratha needs in order to properly perform the Aśvamedha sacrifice which involves the killing of several animals.

## **12.4**

### **Triadism in the Aśvamedha sacrifice**

**Evidence:**

*ṭṛtīyasavanam caiva.....brāhmaṇapungavāḥ. (14:7)*

“Those foremost of priests.....officiated at the third bath.” (14:7)

*ekavimsātiyūpaste ekavimsātyaratnayah. vasobhirekavimsādbhirekaikam  
samalankṣtāḥ. (14:25)*

“These twenty-one sacrificial posts each measuring twenty-one aratnis were  
decked out in twenty-one pieces of cloth.” (14:25)

*sa cityo.....garuḍo rukmapakṣo vai triḡuṇo’ṣṭadaśātmakaḥ. (14:29)*

“That altar.....consisting of three sides of eighteen bricks, looked liked  
the golden-winged Garuḍa.” (14:29)

*paśūnām triśatam tatra yūpeṣu niyatam tadā.....(14:32)*

“And to these sacrificial posts were bound, three hundred beasts.....”  
(14:32)

*kṛpāṇaurvisasāraiṇam tribhiḥ paramayā mudā (14:33)*

“[Then Kausalyā] with three strokes slew the horse with great glee”  
(14:33)

**Analysis:** There were 21 sacrificial posts each of 21 cubits height. And the  
sacrificial altar was three-sided consisting of 18 bricks. There were 300

beasts tied to the sacrificial posts and Kausalyā slays the sacrificial horse with three strokes.<sup>226</sup>

## 12.5

### Daśaratha divides the pāyasa between his three principal queens who give birth to four sons

#### Evidence:

*so'ntaḥpuram praviśyaiva kausalyāmidamabravīt. pāyasam pratigṣhṇīṣva putrīyam tvidamātmanaḥ. (16:26)*

“Then entering the inner chamber, he spoke to Kausalyā, [saying] ‘You take this porridge as this will make you bear a son’.” (16:26)

*kausalyāyai narapatiḥ pāyasārdham dadau tadā. ardhārdham dadau cāpi sumitrāyai narādhipaḥ. (16:27)*

“The king gave Kausalyā half of the porridge. Then the king gave Sumitrā one half of one half (a quarter).” (16:27)

*kaikeyyai cāvaśiṣṭārdham dadau putrārthakāraṇāt. pradadau cāvaśiṣṭārdham pāyasasyāmśtopamam. (16:28)*

“So that Kaikeyī can have a son, he gave a portion of what remained of the divine porridge.” (16:28)

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<sup>226</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 13:15-37) pp. 150-152

*anucintya sumitrāyai punareva mahāmatih. evam tāsām dadau rājā  
bhāryāṇām pāyasam pṛthak. (16:29)*

“Upon thinking, the great-minded one gave to Sumitrā the remainder of the porridge.” (16:29)

*prodyamāne jagannātham sarvalokanamaskṛtam. kausalyājanayad rāmam  
divyalakṣaṇasamyutam. (18:10)*

“From Kausalyā was born Rāma that Lord of the Universe who was endowed with all excellent marks.”

*bharato nāma kaikeyyām jajñe satyaparākramah. sākṣād viṣṇoścaturbhāgaḥ  
sarvaiḥ sudito guṇaiḥ. (18:13)*

“From Kaikeyī was born that prowess of honesty named Bharata. He was endowed with all good characteristics and was veritably that fourth part of Viṣṇu.”

*atha lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrājanayatsutau. vīrau sarvāstrakuśalau  
viṣṇorardhasamanvitau. (18:14)*

“Then the two sons born of Sumitrā were Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. They were heroic, skilled in all weapons and endowed with the half part of Viṣṇu.” (18:14)

**Analysis:** This episode is so well-known.<sup>227</sup> The triadism in terms of the queens of Daśaratha is so apparent. The triadism at work here is as follows:

1. Kausalyā = represents the first level of sovereignty and nobility. She is the mother of the future sovereign, i.e. the noble Rāma.
2. Kaikeyī = represents the second level of heroism and sacrifice. It was she who rescued Daśaratha from the battle ground, nursed his wounds and obtained the two boons<sup>228</sup>.
3. Sumitrā = represents the third level of docility and fertility. Sumitrā is the most docile of the three queens. She's the most mature. Her fertility is quite clear as she's the mother of twin sons, i.e. Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna.

Daśaratha had a total of 350 queens as part of his royal harem. However, only these three aforementioned queens were his principal ones.

These three queens give birth to four sons. But even these four sons are really fit into a triadic pattern.

1. Rāma = represents the first level of sovereignty and nobility. He's the noble future sovereign.

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<sup>227</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 15:24-28) pp. 156-157; (Bālakāṇḍa 17:6-12) p. 159

<sup>228</sup> *smara rājan purā vṛttam tasmin devāsura raṇe. tatra tvām cyāvayacchatrustava jīvitamantarā. tatra cāpi mayā deva yat tvam samabhirakṣitaḥ. jāgratyā yatamānāyāstato me pradadau varau.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍa 11:18-19) "Remember, O king, the incidents that took place formerly in the war between the gods and the demons. Incapable of taking your life, your enemy rendered you exceedingly feeble. Because, O respected sir, I attended on you sleeplessly, nursed you to health, you did grant me two boons."



2. Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata = represent the second level of heroism and sacrifice. Lakṣmaṇa's heroism and sacrifice is active as he accompanies his brother Rāma as a "married bachelor" into the forest for 14 years and suffers all the pain and hardship with him. Bharata's heroism and sacrifice is passive as he stays behind at Ayodhyā refusing the throne, acting as regent and awaiting his brother's return in 14 years. He actually lives like an ascetic outside Ayodhyā in a village called Nandīgrāma where he has vowed to throw himself into the sacrificial fire if his brother does not return in 14 years.<sup>229</sup> Further, there is a very subtle triadism in Bharata acting as regent. The triadism is the two sandals of Rāma representing the sovereign and his queen and Bharata, the caretaker of the kingdom. Here:

a) Rāma = sovereignty (first sandal)

b) Bharata = sacrifice

c) Sītā = docility (second sandal)<sup>230</sup>

3. Śatrughna = represents the third level of docility and fertility. He is the least significant and the most docile of the four brothers.<sup>231</sup> He is hardly heard of and rarely expresses his views. As the twin of Lakṣmaṇa he is representative of fertility.

Sometimes the order of triadism reverses itself. It is eroticism-violence-asceticism. Daśaratha who is a slave-in-love of Kaikeyī (eroticism)

<sup>229</sup> *caturdaśa hi varṣāṇi jaṭācīradharo hyaham. phalamūlāsano vīra bhaveyam raghunandana. tavāgamanamākāṅkṣan vasan vai nagarād bahiḥ.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 112:23-24) "For fourteen years shall I, wearing matted locks and bark, subsisting upon fruits and roots, O scion of the Raghu clan, expecting your arrival, remain outside the city."

*caturdaśe hi sampūrṇa varṣe'hani raghūttama. na draṅsyāmi yadi tvām tu pravekṣyāmi hutāśanam.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 112:25-26) "O foremost of the Raghus, if after the completion of the fourteenth year, I do not see you, I shall enter the fire."

<sup>230</sup> *pativratā mahābhāgā chāyevānugatā sadā* (Bālakāṇḍam 73:27) "May she be a wife ever devoted to her husband, following him like a shadow."

<sup>231</sup> *śatrughno nityaśatrughno nūtaḥ prītipuraskṛtaḥ* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 1:1) "he affectionately took with him, the sinless Śatrughna."

is reminded by her that she was granted two boons earned during the war between the gods and demons (violence) which when cashed in turns Rāma into an ascetic for 14 years.

In fact she asks that Rāma be clad in deer-skin and lead the life of a mendicant.<sup>232</sup> It indirectly also turns Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata into ascetics.<sup>233</sup>

### **The Episodes involving Viśvāmitra**

There are three episodes involving Viśvāmitra in the Bālakāṇḍa in terms of the triadic scheme.

#### **12.6**

#### **Episode of Viśvāmitra taking Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to his hermitage for destroying the demons, granting of celestial weapons as a reward and leading them to Mithilā**

##### **Evidence:**

Viśvāmitra said:

*aham niyamamātiṣṭhe siddhyārtham puruṣarṣabha. tasya vighnakarau dvau tu rakṣasau kāmārūpiṇau. (19:4)*

“For undertaking a rite, I abide by some prescribed rules. And it so happens that two demons hell-bent on desecrating my rite assuming any form of their choosing.” (19:4)

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<sup>232</sup> *nava pañca ca varṣāṇi daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ. cīrājinadharo dhīro rāmo bhavatu tāpasaḥ. (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 11:26-27)* "Let the gentle Rāma, clad in deer-skin, lead the life of a mendicant in the Daṇḍaka forest for the period of nine and five years."

<sup>233</sup> *sa valkalajaṭādhārī muniveśadharāḥ prabhuḥ. Nandīgrāme'vasadhīraḥ sasainyo bharatastadā. (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 115:21)* "Henceforth, wearing bark and matted locks, and in the guise of an ascetic, the heroic Bharata dwelt in Nandīgrāma along with his forces."

*svaputram rājaśārdūlarāmam satyaparākramam. (19:8)*

“O Tiger among kings, your son Rāma of genuine prowess.” (19:8)

*kākapakṣadharam vīram jyeṣṭham me dātumarhasi. (19:9)*

“With the sidelocks, the hero, the eldest, you are duty bound to grant to me.” (19:9)

*tathā vasiṣṭhe bruvati rājā daśaratha svayam. prahaṣṭavadano  
rāmamājuhāva salakṣmaṇam. (22:1)*

“Upon Vasiṣṭha himself telling king Daśaratha thus, with a complacent face summoned Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa” (22:1)

*viśvāmitro yayāvagre tato rāmo mahāyaśāḥ. kākapakṣadharo dhanvī tam ca  
saumitriranvagāt. (22:6)*

“Viśvāmitra went first, followed by the highly famous Rāma with sidelocks holding the bow. And following him was Sumitrā’s son.” (22:6)

Viśvāmitra said:

*parituṣṭo’smi bhadram te rājaputra mahāyaśāḥ. prītyā paramayā yukto  
dadāmyastrāṇi sarvaśāḥ. (27:2)*

“I am pleased with you. Good tidings to you, O greatly famous prince. I confer upon you all the weapons with great pleasure.” (27:2)

*devāsuragaṇān vāpi sagandharvoragān bhuvi. yairamitrān prasahyājau  
vaṣṭīkṣtya jaiṣyasi. (27:3)*

“You will be crowned with victory in battle with the gods and demons supported on earth by Gandharvas and Uragas.” (27:3)

*tāni divyāni bhadram te dadāmyastrāṇi sarvaśaḥ. daṇḍacakram  
mahaddivyaṃ tava dāsyāmi rāghava. (27:4)*

“Good tidings to you. I will confer upon you, O Rāghava, all those celestial weapons such as the Daṇḍacakra.” (27:4)

*dharmacakram tato vīra kālacakram tathaiva ca. viṣṇucakram  
yathātyugramaindram cakram tathaiva ca. (27:5)*

“Dharmacakra, and Kālacakra, as well as the fierce Viṣṇucakra and Indracakra (will be given to you).” (27:5)

*vajramastram naraśreṣṭha śaivam śūlavaram tathā. astram brahmaśiraścaiva  
aiṣṭikamapi rāghava. (27:6)*

“The Vajra weapon, the Śūlavara weapon of Śiva, the weapon Brahmaśiras and Aikṣa, O Rāghava” (27:6)

*dadāmi te mahābāho brāhmāstramanuttamam. gade dve caiva kākutstha  
modakīśikharī subhe. (27:7)*

“I give you the peerless weapon of Brahmā and the two excellent maces,  
Modakī and Śikharī.” (27:7)

*pradīpte naraśārdūla prayacchāmi nspātmaja. dharmapāśamaham rāma  
kālapāśam tathaiva ca. (27:8)*

“O Rāma, I will bestow upon you the Dharmapāśa as well as the  
Kālapāśa.” (27:8)

*vāruṇam pāśamastram ca dadāmyahamanuttamam. aśanī dve prayacchāmi  
śuṣkārdre raghunandana. (27:9)*

“I grant you the excellent Varuṇapāśa and bestow upon you the two  
aśanis, Śuṣka and Ārdra” (27:9)

*dadāmi cāstram painākamastram nārāyaṇam tathā. āgneyamastram dayitam  
śikharam nāma nāmataḥ. (27:10)*

“I shall give you the Pināka weapon, the Nārāyaṇa weapon, the Āgneya  
weapon called Śikhara.” (27:10)

*vāyavyam prathamam nāma dadāmi tava cānagha. astram hayaśiro nāma  
krauñcamastram tathaiva ca. (27:11)*

“I will grant you the Vāyavya weapon, called Prathama as well as the weapon named Hayaśiras, and the Krauñca weapon.” (27:11)

*śaktidvayam ca kākutstha dadāmi tava rāghava. kankālam musalam ghoram kapālamatha kinkiṇīm. (27:12)*

“I will confer upon you two powerful ones, O sinless Rāghava. I shall give you the weapons Kankāla, the dreadful Muśala, and Kapāla, and Kinkiṇī.” (27:12)

*vadārtham rākṣaṣṭi yāni dadāmyetāni sarvaśaḥ. vaidyādhāram mahāstram ca nandanam nāma nāmataḥ. (27:13)*

"All these that are intended for slaughtering the demons. I will confer upon you the mighty weapon Vidyādhāra and the one that is named Nandana." (27:13)

*asiratnam mahābāho dadāmi nśparātmaja. gāndharvamastram dayitam mohanam nāma nāmataḥ. (27:14)*

"O mighty armed one and son of the best of men, I will confer upon you the Gandharva weapon, and the one which is named Mohana." (27:14)

*prasvāpanam praśamanam dadmi saumyam ca rāghava. varṣaṇam śoṣaṇam caiva samtāpanavilāpane. (27:15)*

"O Rāghava, I will give you Prasvāpana, Paśamana, and Saumya. Also, the weapons Varṣaṇa, Śoṣaṇa, Santāpana and Vilāpana" (27:15)

*mādanam caiva durdharśam kandarpadayitam tathā. gandharvamastram dayitam mānavam nāma nāmataḥ. (27:16)*

"Also, Mādana, hard to repress Kandarpa. And also the favorite Gandharva weapon named Mānava." (27:16)

*paiśācamastram dayitam mohanam nāma nāmataḥ. pratīccha naraśārdūla rājaputra mahāyaśaḥ. (27:17)*

"I will give you the Piśāca weapon and the one named Mohana, O famous son of a king and tiger among men." (27:17)

*tāmasam naraśārdūla saumanam ca mahābalaṃ. samvartam caiva durdharśam mausalam ca nṛpātmaja. (27:18)*

"O Tiger among men, I will give you Tāmasa and the powerful Saumana. Also, O son of a king, I will give you the irrepressible Samvarta and Mauśala." (27:18)

*satyamastram mahābāho tathā māyāmayam param. sauram tejaḥ prabham nāma paratejo'pakarṣaṇam. (27:19)*

"O mighty armed one, I will give you the Satya weapon, the supreme Māyāmaya. Also, the Tejaprabha capable of depriving the enemies of energy." (27:19)

*somāstram śísiram nāma tvāṣṭramastram sudāruṇam. dāruṇam ca bhagasyāpi śīleṣumatha mānavam. (27:20)*

"The weapon Soma, Śísira, the weapon named Tvaṣṭra and the good one Dāruṇa belonging to Bhaga, Śīleṣu, and Mānava." (27:20)

*sarvasangrahaṇam yeṣām daivatairati durlabham. tānyastrāṇi tadā vipro rāghavāya nyavedayat. (27:23)*

"All these collection of weapons that even the gods cannot obtain are then given by the brahmin to Rāghava." (27:23)

*mithilasya naraśreṣṭha janakasya bhaviṣyati. yajñah paramadharmiṣṭhastra yāsyāmahe vayam. (31:6)*

"O foremost of men, a highly meritorious sacrifice will be performed by Janaka, the king of Mithilā. There we will proceed." (31:6)

**Analysis:**

1. Viśvāmitra the ascetic, takes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to his hermitage for the purpose of protecting his sacrifice from the demons. The two princes kill the demons. They are given the some 56 types of special celestial



weapons by the ascetic as a reward<sup>234</sup>. He then leads them to Janaka's court where the princes eventually get married.

- a) Viśvāmitra = asceticism
- b) killing of the demons and the receiving of celestial weapons by the two princes = violence
- c) wedding of the four princes to the daughters of Janaka and Kuśadhvaja = eroticism

## 12.7

### The Ahalyā episode

#### Evidence:

Viśvāmitra said:

*sa cātra tapa ātāṣṭhidahalyāsahitaḥ purā. varṣapūgānyanekāni rājaputra mahāyaśaḥ. (48:16)*

"Here, O illustrious prince, in the days of yore, Gautama in the company of Ahalyā carried on austerities for a long series of years." (48:16)

*tasyāntaram veditvā ca sahasrākṣaḥ śacīpatiḥ. muniveśadharo bhūtvā ahalyāmidamabravīt. (48:17)*

"And seizing an opportunity, Śacī's thousand-eyed husband, assuming the form of an ascetic addressed Ahalyā." (48:17)

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<sup>234</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 26:2-24) pp. 175-177

*ṛtukālam pratīkṣante nārthinaḥ susamāhite. sangamam tvahamicchāmi tvayā  
saha sumadhyame. (48:18)*

"O exceedingly beautiful one, those bent upon sport, do not wait for the menstrual time. O graceful one, I desire to enjoy your company now."  
(48:18)

*muniveṣam sahasrākṣam vijñāya raghunandana. matim cakāra durmedhā  
devarājakutūhalāt. (48:19)*

"Thereupon, O son of Raghu, out of curiosity, that one of perverse understanding consented to the proposals of the thousand-eyed king of gods masquerading as an ascetic." (48:19)

*athābravīt suraśreṣṭham kṛtārthenānantarātmnā. kṛtārthasmi suraśreṣṭha  
gaccha śīghramitaḥ prabhoḥ. (48:20)*

"Then having attained her object, she spoke to the foremost of celestials saying 'O best of immortals, I have obtained my desire, do quickly go from this place, O lord'." (48:20)

*ātmānam mām ca deveśa sarvathā rakṣa gautamāt. indrastu prahasan  
vākyamahalyāmidamabravīt. (48:21)*

"Do you, O lord of celestials, from a sense of respectability safeguard yourself and me from Gautama. Indra then smilingly said to Ahalyā."  
(48:21)

*suśroṇi parituṣṭo'smi gamiṣyāmi yathāgatam. evam sangamya tu tadā  
niścakrāmoṭajāt tataḥ. (48:22)*

"O you of shapely hips, pleased am I. Now I return to my own place."  
(48:22)

*atha dṛṣṭvā sahasrākṣam muniveśadharam munīḥ. durvṛttam vṛttasampanno  
roṣād vacanamabravīt. (48:26)*

"And upon seeing the wicked thousand-eyed god in the guise of an ascetic,  
the well-behaved ascetic fired with rage." (48:26)

*mama rūpam samāsthāya kṛtavānasi durmate. akartavyam idam yasmād  
viphalastvam bhaviṣyasi. (48:27)*

"And since, O you of wicked mind, assuming my form, you have done  
this foul deed, you shall lose your scrotum." (48:27)

### **Analysis:**

2. Viśvāmitra enroute to Mithilā with the two princes asks Rāma to redeem Ahalyā from her curse. Ahalyā had been cursed by her husband Sage Gautama for having an illicit affair with the god Indra who comes disguised as an ascetic.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Bālakāṇḍa 47:14-32; 48:1-22) pp. 215-218

- a) Gautama = asceticism
- b) Indra = Vedic god of war = violence
- c) Ahalyā = eroticism

Gautama, an ascetic, curses (verbal violence) Indra to loose his scrotum (eroticism).

Also, Ahalyā is redeemed by the good offices of an ascetic like Viśvāmitra (asceticism) who brings the princes after the slaying of the demons (violence) and enroute to the wedding of the princes with the Mithilā princesses (eroticism).

## 12.8

### Rāma stringing Śiva's bow at Janaka's court and winning Sītā's hand

#### Evidence:

Viśvāmitra said:

*tvam caiva naraśārdūla sahāsmābhirgamiṣyasi. adbhutam ca dhanūratnam  
tatra tvam draṣṭumarhasi. (31:7)*

"And you, O tiger among men, must accompany us, and there behold a wonderful jewel of a bow." (31:7)

*nāsyā devā na gandharvā nāsurā na ca rākṣasāḥ. kartumāroḥaṇam śaktā  
na kathamcana mānusāḥ. (31:9)*

"And neither gods nor other celestials, neither demons nor other vile beings nor men can string it." (31:9)

*dakṣayajñavadhe pūrvam dhanurāyamyā vīryavān. vidhvasya tridaśān  
roṣātsalīlamidamabravīt. (66:9)*

"Formerly with a view of destroying Dakṣa's sacrifice, the powerful Śiva,  
drawing this bow, spoke to the gods in ire." (66:9)

*yasmād bhāgārthino bhāgam nākalpayata me surāḥ. varāṅgāni mahārhaṇi  
dhanuṣā śatayāmi vaḥ. (66:10)*

"Since you gods deny me the shares of this sacrifice, I will with my bow  
sever your heads." (66:10)

*tato vimānasaḥ sarvedevā vai munipungava. prasādayanta deveśam teṣām  
prīto'bhavad bhavaḥ. (66:11)*

"Thereupon, O powerful ascetic, the bewildered gods fell down in  
propitiation which pleased Śiva." (66:11)

*tadetad devadevasya dhanūratnam mahātmanaḥ. (66:12)*

"This is that jewel of a bow belonging to the god of gods." (66:12)

*nyāsabhūtam tadā nyāsastamasmākam pūrvaje vibhau. (66:13)*

"And which was ultimately consigned as a trust to our ancestor." (66:13)

*yadasya dhanuṣo rāmaḥ kuryādāropaṇam mune. sutāmayonijām sītām  
dadyām dāśaratheraham. (66:26)*

"O Ascetic, if Rāma succeeds in stringing this bow, I will confer upon Daśaratha's son my daughter Sītā, unsprung from the usual source." (66:26)

**Analysis:**

3. King Janaka narrates to the trio of Viśvāmitra, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa the history of the great bow of Śiva in his possession. Janaka has vowed that he'll give his adopted daughter Sītā in marriage only to the one who strings the great bow of Śiva.

- a) Śiva = the great yogī = asceticism
- b) Śiva = the jagadsamhārakartā (destroyer of the world) = violence
- c) Śiva = the great lover (engaged in amorous sports with the goddess Pārvatī) and whose symbol is the linga = eroticism

**12.9**

**Triadism of Śiva:**

There is plenty of triadism involving Śiva himself. Here is a list of them below:

- a) tripuṇḍradhārin = wearing the three lines of ashes on the forehead = mark of asceticism
- b) triśūlapāṇi = carrying a trident as his weapon = mark of violence
- c) trinetradhara = having three eyes = the third eye that burns kāma (eros)

- a) Janaka is a rājaraṣi who is the Lord of Videha (bodily detachment) = asceticism
- b) Śiva's bow is a weapon of destruction = violence
- c) Sītā is the bride to be won = eroticism

- a) Janaka is king of Videha = sovereignty
- b) Śiva's bow = remanant of Dakṣa's yajña = sacrifice
- c) Sītā is found in the earth and is later the mother of twins = fertility

**some minor incidents involving the number three:**

- a) the emissaries of Janaka take three nights to reach Ayodhyā to inform and invite Janaka of the impending wedding.<sup>236</sup>
- b) Three ṛṣis construct the wedding fire altar after informing the "apavarga" ṛṣi Janaka.<sup>237</sup>
- c) the princes lead the princesses around the fire three times during the wedding ceremony.<sup>238</sup>
- d) From Ayodhyā three people, i.e. Bharata, Śatrughna and Yudhajit depart for Kekeya.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>236</sup> *janakena samādiṣṭā dūtāste klāntavāhanāḥ. trirātramuṣitā mārge te'yodhyām prāviśānpurīm.* (Bālakāṇḍam 68:1) "Thus commissioned by Janaka, the envoys having spent three nights on the way, entered the city of Ayodhyā, with their conveyances afflicted with fatigue."

<sup>237</sup> *tathetyuktā tu janakam vasiṣṭho bhagavānṛṣiḥ. viśvāmītram puraskṛtya śatānandam ca dhārmikam.* (Bālakāṇḍam 73:19-20) "Thereupon, saying so be it to Janaka, the venerable Vasiṣṭha with Viśvāmītra and the pious Śatānanda."

<sup>238</sup> *īdṛṣe vartamāne tu tūryoddhuṣṭāninādite. triragnim te parikramya ūhurbhāryā mahaujasaḥ.* (Bālakāṇḍam 73:39) "To the blowing of the trumpets, those exceedingly puissant ones, thrice going around the fire, in company with their wives went to the encampment."

e) the episode of Triśanku as symbolic of someone who is neither here (on earth) nor there (in heaven) but in a third place somewhere in between.<sup>240</sup>

## 12.10

### The Paraśurāma episode

#### Evidence:

Paraśurāma said:

*tadaham te balam dṛṣṭvā dhanuṣo'pyasya pūraṇe. dvandvayuddham  
pradāsyāmi vāryaślāghyamaham tava. (75:4)*

"Then, having witnessed your might in stretching the bow, we shall duel."  
(75:4)

Daśaratha said:

*kṣatraroṣāt praśāntastvam brāhmaṇaśca mahātapāḥ. bālānām mama  
putrāṇāmabhayam dātumarhasi. (75:6)*

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<sup>239</sup> *yudhajit prāpya bhāratam saśatrughnam praharṣitaḥ. (Bālakāṇḍam 77:19)* "And having Bharata and Śatrughna, the heroic Yudhajit, with a delighted heart."

<sup>240</sup> *triśanko gaccha bhūyastvam nāsi svargakṛtālayaḥ. (Bālakāṇḍam 60:17)* "O Triśanku, turn back. You have not earned an abode in heaven."

*evamukto mahendreṇa triśankurapatat punaḥ. vikrośamānastrāhīti viśvāmitram tapodhanam. (Bālakāṇḍam 60:18)* "The great Indra, having spoken thus, Triśanku fell down crying to the ascetic Viśvāmitra, 'Save me, save me!'"

*tacchurtvā vacanam tasya krośamānasya kauśikaḥ. rośamāhārayat tīvram tiṣṭha tiṣṭheti cābravīt. (Bālakāṇḍam 60:19)* "Thereupon, hearing his distressful cries, Kauśika waxed mightily and exclaimed, 'stay, stay!'"

*saśarīrasya bhadram vastrīśankorasya bhūpatēḥ. ārohaṇam pratijñātam nānṛtam kartumutsahe. (Bālakāṇḍam 60:27)* "Good betide you, I have vowed to this king, Triśanku's bodily ascension unto heaven, therefore, I dare you to falsify my vow."

*svargo'stu saśarīrasya triśankorasya śāsvataḥ. (Bālakāṇḍam 60:28)* "Let Triśanku evermore dwell in heaven in person."



"You have quenched your ire against the Kṣatriyas. Moreover, you are a Brahmin boasting of austerities. It behoves you to dispel the fears of my sons who are boys." (75:6)

*bhārgavāṅṅām kule jātaḥ svādhyāyavrataśālinām. sahasrākṣe pratijñāya śāstram pratikṣiptavānasi. (75:7)*

"You were born in the family of the Bhārgavas engaging in self-study. You have vowed to renounce arms in the presence of the thousand-eyed one." (75:7)

Paraśurāma said:

*yojayasva dhanuḥ śreṣṭhe śaram purapurānjayam. yadi śakto'si kākutstha dvandvam dāsyāmi te tataḥ. (75:28)*

"And you set upon the best of bows an arrow capable of conquering hostile cities. And if you succeed, I shall combat with you." (75:28)

*na ceyam tava kākutstha vrīḍā bhavitumarhati. tvayā trailokyanāthena yadaham vimukhikṛtaḥ. (76:19)*

"And, O Kākutstha, I ought not to be ashamed. I have been baffled by the Lord of the three worlds himself. (76:19)

*tataḥ sītām mahābhāgāmūrmilām ca yaśasvinīm. (77:11)*

"And the exalted Sītā and famous Urmilā." (77:11)

*kuśadhvajāsute cobhe jagṛhurnṛpayoṣitaḥ. (77:12)*

"Both the daughters of Kuśadhvaja graced with silken apparel." (77:12)

*abhivādyābhivādyāmsca sarvā rājasutāstadā (77:13)*

"Having paid reverence the daughters of the kings." (77:13)

*remire muditāḥ sarvā bhartṛbhir muditā rahaḥ. (77:14)*

"Well pleased, in private, took joy with all the brothers." (77:14)

**Analysis:**

Paraśurāma, the ascetic, comes threatening violence immediately after the wedding occasion. Finally, he realizes that Rāma is the Lord of the three worlds. Then the 4 brothers after having paid homage to the gods unite with their 4 wives. Here:

Paraśurāma = asceticism

threatening violence against the warrior caste = violence

in the context of a quadrable Wedding = eroticism

**12.11**

**Four brides are a triad**

**Evidence:**

Janaka said:

*sītām rāmāya bhadram te ūrmilām lakṣmaṇāya vai. vīryaśulkām mama  
sutām sītām surasutopamām. (71:21)*

"Sītā for Rāma, good betide you, Urmilā for Lakṣmaṇa. O potent ascetic,  
as your daughters-in-law Urmilā and Sītā resembling the daughter of a  
god." (71:21)

*dvitīyamūrmilām caiva trivardāmi na samśayaḥ. dadāmi paramaprīto  
vadhvau te munipungava. (71:22)*

"O foremost of ascetics, and I take oath thrice without doubt that I will  
confer to you with a glad heart the two beloved brides." (71:22)

*maghā hyadyā mahābāho tṛtīyadivase prabho. phalguṇyāmuttare  
rājamstasmin vaivāhikam kuru. (71:24)*

"Today the Maghā star is on the ascendent. On the third day, my lord,  
when the Phalgunā will be on the north, O king, please perform the  
wedding ceremony." (71:24)

*bhrātā yavīyān dharmajña eṣa rājā kuśadhvajah. (72:4)*

"This youthful brother of yours, king Kuśadhvajā, well-versed in morality."  
(72:4)

*sutādvayam naraśreṣṭha patnyārtham varayāmahe. (72:5)*

"O foremost of men, the two daughters can become wives." (72:5)

*bharatasya kumārasya śatrughnasya ca dhīmataḥ.* (72:6)

"Of young Bharata and intelligent Śatrughna." (72:6)

**Analysis:**

Sītā, the wife of Rāma, is Janaka's adopted daughter. She is the future sovereign queen and is a lady of noble qualities. Ūrmilā, the wife of Lakṣmaṇa, is Janaka's own child. She sacrifices her married life for 14 years when her husband accompanies Rāma in exile. Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti, the wives of Bharata and Śatrughna, are daughters of Janaka's younger brother Kuśadhvaṇa. They represent docility. Janaka takes oath three times and performs the wedding on the third day.

**sovereignty-sacrifice-docility**

1. Sītā (Janaka's adopted daughter) = sovereignty
2. Ūrmilā (Janaka's own daughter) = sacrifice
3. Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti (Kuśadhvaṇa's daughters) = docility

12.12  
AYODHYĀKĀṆḌA

The trio depart for the forest

Evidence:

Kaikeyī said:

*nava pañcaca varṣāṇi daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ.* (11:26)

"live in the Daṇḍaka forest for a period of nine and five years." (11:26)

*cīrājinadharo dhīro rāmo bhavatu tāpasah. bharato bhajatāmadya  
yauvarājyamakaṇṭakam.* (11:27)

"Let Rāma clad in deer-skin lead the life of a mendicant. And let Bharata gain the heir-apparentship rid of thorns." (11:27)

Rāma said:

*aham cāpi pratijñām tām guroḥ samanupālayan. vanamadyaiva yāsyāmi  
sthiribhava manasvini.* (26:28)

"Today I shall depart for the forest for redeeming my father's vows. O high minded one, live here in undisturbed mind." (26:28)

Sītā said:

*yadi tvam prasthito durgam vanamadyaiva rāghava. agrataste gamiṣyāmi  
mṛdgantī kuśakaṇṭakān.* (27:7)

"If you depart to the impregnable forest today, I shall go before you, O Rāghava, treading upon the thorns and prickly grass." (27:7)

*anuśiṣṭāsmi mātṛā ca pitṛā ca vividhāśrayam. nāsmi samprati vaktavyā  
vartitavyam yathā mayā. (27:10)*

"I have been taught by my father and mother to follow my husband in all conditions of life: and I shall carry out now what I have been taught. I shall need to no other advise." (27:10)

*sāham tvayā gamiṣyāmi vanamadya na samśayaḥ. nāham śakyā mahābhāga  
nivartayitumudyatā. (27:15)*

"Surely I shall go today with you to the forest. In this there is no doubt. O great hero, you shall not dissuade me from doing so." (27:15)

Lakṣmaṇa said:

*yadi gatum kṛtā buddhirvanam mṛgagajāyutam. aham tvānugamiṣyāmi  
vanamagre dhanurdharaḥ. (31:3)*

"If you are resolved to go to the forest filled with deer and elephants, I shall accompany you, always going before you with bow in my hands."  
(31:3)

Kaikeyī's demand was that Rāma should go to the forest for 14 years. Yet when the actual time of departure comes, it is three people that

depart for the forest. They are Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. In this situation at least three forms of triadism are apparent.

### **Analysis:**

#### **1. sovereignty/nobility-heroism/sacrifice-fertility/docility**

- a) Rāma is exiled because he is the sovereign-to-be. He is a noble individual.
- b) Lakṣmaṇa sacrifices his marital life for the sake of his brother. In this sense he is heroic.
- c) Sītā is the symbol of fertility as she is born of the Earth and the future mother of twins to be named Lava and Kuśa. She is a docile being serving her Lord and waiting in Aśokavana to be rescued by her Lord.

#### **2. asceticism-violence-eroticism**

- a) Rāma departs like an ascetic to the forest wearing bark garments.
- b) Lakṣmaṇa is always wrathful and violent throughout the 14-year exile.  
--wrathful against Bharata advancing toward Citrakūṭa<sup>241</sup>  
--violence against Surpanakhā at Pañcavaṭī<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> *sampatram rājyamicchamstu vyaktam prāpyābhiśecanam. āvām hantum samabhyeti kaikeyā bharata sutaḥ.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 96:17) "Having got himself installed, Kaikeyī's son Bharata, anxious to render his royalty perfectly safe, is coming hither for the purpose of slaying us both."

*samprāpto'yamarīrvīra bharato vadhya eva hi. bharatasya vadhe doṣam nāham paśyāmi rāghava.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 96:23) "Surely, Bharata should be slain by me, O Rāghava, I do not find any fault in slaying Bharata."

*pūrvāpakāriṇam hatvā na hydharmeṇa yujyate. pūrvāpakārī bharatastyāge dharmasca rāghava.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 96:24) "Slaying a former wrong-doer one does not accrue sin. There is merit to be earned by slaying Bharata who has formerly done us wrong."

--wrath against Sugrīva for his irresponsible attitude<sup>243</sup>

c) Sītā is abducted by Rāvaṇa who desires her.<sup>244</sup>

### **Kausalyā's words to Daśaratha**

1. *te dvijastrividham vṛddhā jñānena vayasaujasā* (45:13)

"There are three kinds of people, i.e. those aged by virtue, naturally and by wisdom." (45:13)

2. *gatirekā patirnāryā* (61:24)

"One of the refuges of a woman is her husband." (61:24)

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<sup>242</sup> *ityukto lakṣmaṇastathā kruddho rāmasya paśyataḥ. uddhṛtya khaḍgam ciccheda karṇanāse mahābalaḥ.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 18:21) "Thus desired the exceedingly strong Lakṣmaṇa, fired with wrath, taking out his sword, in the sight of Rāma, cut off her nose."

<sup>243</sup> *anāryastvam kṛtaghnaśca mithyāvādī ca vānara. pūrvam kṛtārtho rāmasya na tatpratīkaroṣi yat.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 34:13) "You are ignoble and ungrateful and lying, O monkey, since, having been formerly benefitted by Rāma, you did not requite his services."

*nanu nāma kṛtārthena tvayā rāmasya vānara. sītāyā mārgeṇa yatnaḥ kartavyaḥ kṛtamicchātā.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 34:14) "Having been benefitted by Rāma, you anxious to repay his kindness, should exert yourself in search of Sītā."

*sa tvam grāmyeṣu bhogeṣu saktō mithyāpratiśravaḥ. na tvām rāmo vijānūte sarpam maṇḍūkarāviṇam.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 34:15) "But of false promises, you had been indulging in gross enjoyments, nor does Rāma know you for a serpent, croaking like a frog."

*mahābhāgeṇa rāmeṇa pāpaḥ karuṇavedinā harīṇām prāpito rājyam tvam durātmā mahātmanā.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 34:16) "A sinful wretch of a wicked soul, you had obtained the kingdom of the monkeys through the agency of the eminently virtuous, kind and high-souled Rāma."

<sup>244</sup> *rakṣa rākṣasabhartāram kāmaya svayamāgatam. na manyathaśarāviṣṭam pratyākhyātum tvamarhasi.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 48:17) "I am the lord of the whole world of demons; being pierced by the shafts of Eros, I have come to you. It does not behove you, therefore, to refuse me."



3. *triṇī dvandvāni bhūteṣu pravṛttānya viśeṣataḥ* (77:23)

"Three couples [hunger & thirst, ignorance & grief, sickness & death] pertain in special to all creatures." (77:23)

### 12.13

#### Andhamuni's tale

##### Evidence:

The young ascetic said:

*ṛṣerhi nyastadaṇḍasya vane vanyena jīvataḥ.* (63:27)

"How can slaying me living like an ascetic off the forest and in the forest." (63:27)

*jaṭābhāradharasyaiva valkalājīnavāsasaḥ* (63:28)

"Bearing matted locks and wearing bark and deer-skin." (63:28)

*mātāram pītarān cobhāvanuśocāmi madvadhe. tadetanmithunam vṛddham  
cirakālabhṛtam mayā.* (63:31)

"I lament my death on account of my father and mother. How will the old couple betake themselves who have maintained thus far by me." (63:31)

*dvāndhau nihitau vṛddho mātā janayitā ca me. tau nūnam durbalāvandhau  
matpratīkṣau pipāsitau. (63:40)*

"You have slain both my aged and blind parents who afflicted by thirst  
are remaining in expectation of me." (63:40)

**Analysis:**

Daśaratha remembers that his being separated from Rāma is the  
effectuation of the curse of the blind man who lost his son to Daśaratha's  
arrow long ago. Here too there's a triadism:

1. blind man = head of his family (sovereignty)
2. son = sacrificed his life to take care of his blind parents (sacrifice)
3. blind woman = representing meekness (docility)

This situation becomes a catalyst for Rāma becoming an ascetic,  
Sītā being abducted by Rāvaṇa for erotic reasons and for the epic to  
culminate in a gigantic battle.

**12.14**

**"Three" boons of Kaikeyī**

**Evidence:**

Kaikeyī said:

*nava pañcaca varṣāṇi daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ. (11:26)*

"Nine and five years he will have the Daṇḍaka forest as his home."  
(11:26)

*cīrājinadharo dhīro rāmo bhavatu tāpasaḥ. bharato bhajatāmadya  
yauvarājyamakaṅṭakam (11:27)*

"Let Rāma clad in deer-skin lead the life of a mendicant. And let Bharata gain the heir-apparentship rid of thorns." (11:27)

Rāma said:

*purā bhrātāḥ pitā naḥ sa mātaram te samudvahan. mātāmahe samāścauśīd  
rājyaśulkamanuttamam. (107:3)*

"O brother, formerly when our father espoused the hand of your mother, he promised her the kingdom as her bride-price." (107:3)

Analysis:

The fact that Daśaratha had promised boons to Kaikeyī when she nursed him in the battle between the gods and demons is well-known. But the "third" reason why Rāma must go to the forest is revealed by him to Bharata for the very first time at Citrakūṭa. It seems that Daśaratha had promised Kaikeyī the kingdom as a bride-price.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Ayodhyākāṇḍa 99:3) p. 297

## 12.15

### Three worthies

#### Evidence:

*puruṣasyeha jātasya bhavanti guruvaḥ sadā. ācāryaścaiva kākutstha pitā  
mātā ca raghava. (111:2)*

"To a man born, there are three superiors, i.e. the teacher, the father and the mother, O Rāghava." (111:2)

This above matches up with:

*mātr̥ devo bhava pit̥r̥ devo bhava ācārya devo bhava. (Taittirīyopaniṣad  
I:11:2)*

"The mother is a god, the father a god and the teacher a god."  
(Taittirīyopaniṣad I:11:2)

#### Analysis:

Rāma points that there are three people who are worthy of honor to every person. These are the mother, the father and the teacher. This is consistent with the Upaniṣadic teaching cited above which says the same thing.

## ARANYAKĀṆḌA

The Araṇyakāṇḍa is the third book of the Rāmāyaṇa. It is important to note the following here:

1. Araṇyaka (3rd section of the Vedas)
2. Vānaprasthā (3rd stage of life)
3. Araṇyakāṇḍa (3rd book of the Rāmāyaṇa)
4. Vanaparva (3rd book of the Mahābhārata)

All four have to do with the forest.

Also, the trio meet a series of ascetics after their departure from Ayodhyā. These ascetics are:

1. Sage Bharadvāja<sup>246</sup>
2. Sage Atri<sup>247</sup>
3. Sage Śarabhaṅga<sup>248</sup>
4. Sage Sutīkṣaṇa<sup>249</sup>
5. Sage Dharmabhṛta<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> *gatvā muhūrtamadhvānam bharadvājamupāgamat* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 54:9) "Proceeding awhile, he came to Bharadvāja's hermitage."

<sup>247</sup> *so'trerāśramamāsādyā tam vavande mahāyaśāḥ. tam cāpi bhagavānatriḥ putravat pratyapadyata.* (Ayodhyākāṇḍam 117:5) "Having arrived at Atri's hermitage, that renowned one paid respects to the sage, and the reverend Atri received Rāma as a son."

<sup>248</sup> *abhiḡacchāmahe śīghram śarabhaṅgam tapodhanam. āśramam śarabhaṅgasya dadarśa mahadadbhutam.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 5:3) "Therefore, we will quickly go to the Sage Śarabhaṅga. Thereupon, Rāma set out for the hermitage of Śarabhaṅga."

<sup>249</sup> *rāmastu sahito bhrātrā sītayā ca parantapaḥ. sutīkṣaṇasyāśramapadam jagāma saha tairdvijaiḥ.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 7:1) "And Rāma accompanied by his brother as well as Sītā went to the asylum of Sutīkṣaṇa in company of the brahmins."

<sup>250</sup> *munim dharmabhṛtam nāma praṣṭum samupacakrame.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 11:8) "Hearing this mighty wonder, we have been worked-up with intense curiosity. Do tell us as to what this is."

6. Sage Agastya<sup>251</sup> (who presents Rāma with Viṣṇu's bow which is a weapon symbolizing violence)<sup>252</sup>

7. Sage Śabari<sup>253</sup>

This is interspersed with different demons seeking erotic relationships with either Sītā, Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa or having a violent bloodthirsty attitude toward them. These demons are:

1. Virādha<sup>254</sup> (expressing desire for Sītā)
2. Surpanakhā<sup>255</sup> (expressing desire for Rāma)
3. Khara<sup>256</sup> (bloodthirsty attitude toward Rāma)
4. Dūṣaṇa
5. Ayomukhī<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> *iti rāmo muneḥ śrutvā saha bhrātrā'bhivādyā ca. pratasthe'gastyamuddiśya sānugaḥ sītayā.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 11:44) "Hearing these words of the ascetic, Rāma, saluting him, along with his brother, set-off for Agastya's place with his younger brother and Sītā."

<sup>252</sup> *anena dhanuṣā rāma hatvā sankhyaye mahāsuraṇ. ājahāra śriyam dīptām purā viṣṇurdivaukasām.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 12:35) "Having, O Rāma, slain the mighty demons with this bow, Viṣṇu in days of yore in battle secured the effulgent Fortune of the celestials."

*taddhanustau ca tūṇī ca śaram khadgam ca mānada. jayāya pratigṛhṇīśva vajram vajradharo yathā.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 12:36) "O bestower of honor, do you for securing victory, take this bow, these quivers, this arrow, and this scimitar, like the holder of the thunderbolt, taking the same."

<sup>253</sup> *tau tamāsramamāsādyā drumaiabahubhirāvṛtam. suramyamabhivikṣantau śabarīmabhyupeyatuh.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 74:5) "Getting at that charming hermitage covered on all sides with trees and casting their looks around, they beheld the female mendicant Śabari."

<sup>254</sup> *aham vanamidam durgam virādho nāma rākṣasaḥ.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 2:12) "I'm a demon named Virādha, and this forest is my fortress."

*iyam nārī varārohā mama bhāryā bhaviṣyati* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 2:13) "This transcendently beautiful one shall be my wife."

<sup>255</sup> *samupetāsmi bhāvena bhartāram puruṣottamam.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 17:24) "I approach you, you best of men, as my husband, with feelings of love."

*cirāya bhava bhartā me sītayā kim kariṣyasi.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 17:25) "Become my husband forever. What will you do with Sītā?"

<sup>256</sup> *iyam prahrṣṭā muditā rudhiram yudhi pāsyati.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 19:25) "This one exceedingly rejoiced, will drink their blood."

<sup>257</sup> *uvāca cainam vacanam saumitrimupaguhya ca. aham tvayomukhī nāma lābhaste tvamasi priyaḥ.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 69:15) "And embracing him she spoke to Lakṣmaṇa the

## 6. Kabandha<sup>258</sup>

All these demons are dealt with through violent means either by Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa.

### **Evidence:**

1. Slaying of Virādha: *evamuktvā tu kākutstham virādhaḥ śarapīḍitaḥ.*

(Araṇyakāṇḍam 4:23) "Having said this to Rāma, Virādha afflicted with arrows." (4:23)

*babhūva svargasamprāpto nyastadeho mahābalaḥ. (Araṇyakāṇḍam 4:24)*

"Having deposited his body, attained heaven." (4:24)

2. Mutilation of Surpanakhā: *ityukto lakṣmaṇastasyā kruddho rāmasya paśyataḥ. uddhṛtya khaḍgam ciccheda karṇanāse mahābalaḥ*

(Araṇyakāṇḍam 18:21) "Thus desired the exceedingly strong Lakṣmaṇa, fired with wrath, taking out his sword, in the sight of Rāma, cut off her nose and ears." (18:21)

3. Slaying of Dūṣaṇa: *karābhyām ca vikarṇābhyām papāta bhuvi dūṣaṇaḥ. viṣāṇābhyām viśīrṇābhyām manasvīva mahāgajaḥ. (Araṇyakāṇḍam 26:15)*

"And like a mighty elephant whose husks have fallen off, Dūṣaṇa, on his arms having been severed, fell down to the earth." (26:15)

4. Slaying of Khara: *sa vṛtra iva vajreṇa phenena namuciryathā. bala*

*vendrāśanihato nipapāta hataḥ kharāḥ. (Araṇyakāṇḍam 30:28)* "And Khara slain, fell down like Vṛtra slain by the thunderbolt, or Namūcī by foam, or Bala by Indra's Aśani." (30:28)

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following words: 'my name is Ayomukhī. It is a great gain to you that you have become my beloved one, my lord.'

<sup>258</sup> *sa mahābāhuratyartham prasārya vipulau bhujau. jagrāha sahitāveva rāghavo pīḍayan balāt. (Araṇyakāṇḍam 69:35)* "Thereupon that one, of huge arms, stretching them forth, got hold of those two descendents of Raghu, crushing them with its strength."

5. Mutilation of Ayomukhī: *evamuktastu kupitaḥ khadgamudhṛtya lakṣmaṇaḥ. karṇanāsatanam tasyā nicakartārisūdanaḥ.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 69:17) "Thereat, exercised with ire, Lakṣmaṇa, the subduer of foes, uplifting his dagger, chopped off her nose, ears and breast." (69:17)

6. Slaying of Kabandha: *sa tu māmabravīdindro yadā rāmaḥ salakṣmaṇaḥ. chetsyate samare bāhū tadā svargam gamiṣyati.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 71:15) "Indra said to me, "You shall attain to heaven when Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, shall cut-off your arms in a battle." (71:15)

Kabandha<sup>259</sup> eventually tells the brothers the way to Sage Śabarī's hermitage.<sup>260</sup>

## **12.16**

### **The Surpanakhā episode**

#### **Evidence:**

#### **Surpanakhā said:**

*sumupetāsmi bhāvena bhartāram puruṣottamam.* (17:24)

"I approach you, you best of men, as my husband, with love." (17:24)

#### **Rāma said:**

*anujastveṣa me bhrātā śīlavān priyadarśanaḥ. śrīmānakṛtadāraśca lakṣmaṇo nāma vīryavān.* (18:3)

"This young brother of mine is a person of character and good-looking. He is graceful and heroic, and his name is Lakṣmaṇa." (18:3)

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<sup>259</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Araṇyakāṇḍa 69:19-36) pp. 238-240

<sup>260</sup> *śramaṇī śabarī nāma kākutstha cirajīvinī.* (Araṇyakāṇḍam 73:26) "O Rāma, an immortal female mendicant named Śabarī."



*apūrvī bharyayā cārthi taruṇaḥ priyadarśanaḥ. anurūpaśca te bhartā  
rūpasyāsyā bhaviṣyati. (18:4)*

"He is youthful, good-looking, eligible and has not tasted the company of a woman. Considering your beauty, he'll become a fit husband for you."  
(18:4)

Surpanakhā said:

*asya rūpasya te yuktā (18:7)*

"With this form, I fit to be your mate." (18:7)

*ityukto lakṣmaṇastasyā kruddho rāmasya paśyataḥ. uddhṛtya khaḍgam  
ciccheda karṇanāse mahābalaḥ (18:21)*

"Thus desired the exceedingly strong Lakṣmaṇa, fired with wrath, taking out his sword, in the sight of Rāma, cut off her nose and ears." (18:21)

Surpanakhā said:

*sā sukeśī sunāsorūḥ surūpā ca yaśasvinī. devateva vanasyāsyā rājate  
śrīrivāparā. (34:16)*

"And that fair-haired, fair-nosed, fair-thighed illustrious one possessed of beauty, graced the forest like a goddess, as if a goddess of wealth herself."  
(34:16)

*taptakāñcanavarṇābhā raktatunganakhī śubhā. sītā nāma varārohā vaidehī  
tanumadhyamā. (34:17)*

"Of the lustre of burnished gold, with fingernails reddish and sharp, the surpassingly lovely lass is named Sītā who is the daughter of the king of Videha." (34:17)

*naiva devī na gandharvī na yaksī na ca kinnarī. tathārūpā mayā nārī  
dṛṣṭapūrvā mahītale. (34:18)*

"There is not a goddess, nor a celestial female being of any sort like this woman I have ever seen on the face of this earth." (34:18)

*yasya sītā bhaved bhāryā yam ca dṛṣṭvā pariṣvajet. abhijīvet sa sarveṣu  
lokeṣvapi purandarāt. (34:19)*

"He that shall have Sītā for his spouse, and who shall be warmly embraced by her, shall live longer in the world than the lord of celestials himself." (34:19)

*sā susīlā vapuḥ ślāghyā rūpeṇāpratimā bhuvī. tavānurūpā bhāryā sā tvam  
ca tasyāḥ patirvaraḥ. (34:20)*

"That good-natured girl, unparalleled on earth in loveliness, who can well pride herself on her person, is a worthy wife for you; and you too are a fit husband for her." (34:20)

*tam tu vistīrṇajaghanām pīnottungapayodharām. bhāryārthe tu  
tavānetumudyatāham varānanām. (34:21)*

"It is to bring over for you that one of spacious hips, and a high and well-developed bust, that I had put forth my efforts." (34:21)

*virūpitāsmi krūreṇa lakṣmaṇena mahābhujā. tam tu dṛṣṭvādya vaidehīm  
pūrṇacandrānibhānanām. (34:22)*

"But, O mighty armed one, I have been disfigured by the wicked Lakṣmaṇa. As soon as you have seen Sītā having a face of a full-moon." (34:22)

*manmathasya śaraṇām ca tvam vidheyo bhaviṣyasi (34:23)*

"You shall afflicted by the shafts of Cupid." (34:23)

**Analysis:**

Surpanakhā desires Rāma who sends her to Lakṣmaṇa the "ascetic-bachelor" who deals with her violently. She goes to Rāvaṇa's court and besides complaining about the brothers describes Sītā's beauty to Rāvaṇa so much that it creates a lust in him. Rāvaṇa approaches Sītā dressed as an ascetic. Thus Surpanakhā becomes the catalyst for Rāvaṇa to lustfully abduct Sītā which leads to the violence of battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa.

Rāma was a good sovereign, a noble soul who donned the garb of an ascetic to uphold dharma. He was lusted for by Surpanakhā. By contrast, Rāvaṇa was an evil sovereign who also donned the garb of an ascetic for adharmic purposes. He lusted for Sītā.

### 12.17

#### Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sītā and the sacrifices of Mārīca and Jaṭāyu

##### Evidence:

Rāvaṇa said:

*etacchauṭīryayuktam te macchandavaśavartinaḥ.* (42:6)

"This is worthy of your heroism that you have addressed yourself to act after my desire." (42:6)

*sa rāvaṇavacaḥ śrutvā mārīco rākṣastadā. mṛgo bhūtvā"śramadvāri rāmasya vicacāra ha.* (42:14-15)

"Having heard the words of Rāvaṇa, the demon Mārīca, assuming the wonderful shape of a deer began to range at large before Rāma's hermitage." (42:14-15)

Sītā said:

*āryaputrābhirāmo'sau mṛgo harati me manaḥ. ānayainam mahābāho krīḍārtham no bhaviṣyati.* (43:10)

"O son of the noble one, this deer has attracted my mind. O mighty armed one, please get it for me. It will be a sportive object for us."  
(43:10)

*jīvanna yadi te'bhyeti grahaṇam mṛgasattamaḥ. ajinam naraśārdūla ruciram  
tu bhaviṣyati.* (43:19)

"O best of men, if you cannot get hold of it alive, its skin will also look very beautiful." (43:19)

*upasthe ca vaidehim bhikṣurūpeṇa rāvaṇaḥ.* (46:9)

"Rāvaṇa appeared before Sītā disguised as a mendicant." (46:9)

*dṛṣṭvā kāmaśarāviddho brahmaghoṣamudīrayan.* (46:14)

"Seeing her, he was pierced with the shafts of passion, uttering the name of Brahman, he spoke to her." (46:14)

*śarīram mṛgarūpasya vinirbhidya śarottama. mārīcasyaiva hṛdayam  
bibhedāśanisannibhaḥ.* (44:15-16)

"And that best of arrows, like a thunderbolt, deeply pierced the breast of Mārīca, disguised as a deer." (44:15-16)

Rāma said:

*tat tathā hyabhavaccādyā mārīco'yam mayā hataḥ. (44:23)*

"His words have been verified now. Truly have I killed Mārīca." (44:23)

*sa cchinnapakṣaḥ sahasā rākṣasā raudrakarmaṇā. nipapāta mahāgṛdhro  
dharanyāmalpajīvitaḥ. (51:43)*

"The ranger of the night of cruel deeds having sundered his wings, the king of vultures approaching well-nigh the verge of death, fell down on the earth." (51:43)

### **Analysis:**

Rāvaṇa comes to the cottage to abduct Sītā dressed as a mendicant. He thus comes as an ascetic for erotic reasons. Sītā, the target of Rāvaṇa's erotic love, falls for a deer which is actually a demon in disguise. The abduction ends in an act of violence. Rāma kills Mārīca the "deer". Rāma the sovereign to-be chases a deer which is a symbol of docility. Mārīca sacrifices his life for the sake of his sovereign, i.e. Rāvaṇa. In turn, Jaṭāyu, the king of birds, sacrifices his life in attempting to rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa. There is much intertwined triadism in these episodes. The following tables try to clarify this.

### **Asceticism-Violence-Eroticism-Violence**

1. Rāvaṇa = powerful sovereign dressed as a pseudo-ascetic (asceticism)
2. Mārīca = pseudo-deer (target of violence)
3. Sītā = beautiful lady (target of eroticism)

4. Jaṭāyu = bird (target of violence)

#### **dharma-dharmādharma-adharma-dharma**

1. Sītā = dharma (dutiful toward the "mendicant" and faithful to her husband)
2. Mārīca = dharmādharma [Mārīca advises Rāvaṇa not abduct Sītā (dharma), yet he finally succumbs to Rāvaṇa's wishes and becomes an accomplice (adharma)]
3. Rāvaṇa = adharma
4. Jaṭāyu = dharma

#### **Sattva-rajas-tamas-sattva**

1. Sītā = sattva (pure in thought and deed)
2. Mārīca = rajas (sprints like "deer")
3. Rāvaṇa = tamas (filled with darkness of ignorance)
4. Jaṭāyu = sattva (pure in thought and deed)

#### **sovereignty/nobility-heroism/sacrifice-docility/fertility-sovereignty/nobility**

1. Rāvaṇa = sovereign of Lankā
2. Mārīca = sacrifices his life for his master
3. Sītā = docile individual seeking the docile object, i.e. the "deer"
4. Jaṭāyu = "King of birds" (sovereignty)

#### **Asceticism-Violence-Eroticism-Violence**

1. Rāma = powerless sovereign-in-exile dressed as a true ascetic

2. Mārīca = adharmic target of Rāma's dharmic violence
3. Sītā = loved by Rāma but lusted for by Rāvaṇa
4. Jaṭāyu = dharmic target of Rāvaṇa's adharmic violence

**dharmā-dharmādharmā-adharmā-dharmā**

1. Rāma = dharmā
2. Mārīca = dharmādharmā
3. Rāvaṇa = adharmā
4. Jaṭāyu = dharmā



**12.18**

**KIṢKINDHĀKĀṆḌA**

**The Vālī and Sugrīva affair**

**Evidence:**

*sa hi rājyācca vibhraṣṭaḥ kṛtvairāśca vālinā. hṛtadāro vane trasto bhrātrā  
vinikrito bhṛṣam. (4:27)*

"He also has been driven out of his kingdom, and has incurred the hostility of Vālī. And his wife being torn away from him, he lives in this forest in fear being exceedingly harrassed by his brother." (4:27)

*bhikṣurūpam parityajya vānaram rūpamāsthitaḥ. (4:34)*

"Renouncing the guise of a beggar, and assuming the form of a monkey."  
(4:34)

*tato hanumān samtyajya bhikṣurūpamarindamaḥ. (5:13)*

"Then that subduer of foes, Hanumān, throwing off the guise of a mendicant." (5:13)

*kāṣṭhayoḥ svena rūpeṇa janayāmāsa pāvakam. dīpyamānam vahnim  
puṣpairabhyarcya satkṛtam. (5:14)*

"In his original form produced a fire out of two pieces of wood. Then worshipping the flaming fire with flowers" (5:14)

*tayormadhye tu suprīto nidadhau susamāhitaḥ. tato'gnim dīpyamānam tau cakratuśca pradakṣiṇam. (5:15)*

"He, well pleased, carefully placed it between them. Then they two went around the fire." (5:15)

*sītākapiṇdrakṣaṇādācarāṇām rājīvahemajvalanopamāni. sugrīvarāmapraṇayaprasauḡe vāmāni netrāni samam sphuranti. (5:31)*

"The left eyes of Sītā, the king of apes, and night rangers respectively like lotus, gold and flaming fire, throbbed when the friendship between Rāma and Sugrīva was contracted." (5:31)

*aham sarveṣu kāleṣu praṇataḥ preṣyavat sthitaḥ. (9:3)*

"I, at all times, remained like a servant." (9:3)

*māyāvī nāma tejasvī pūrvajo dundhubheḥ sutaḥ. tena tasya mahadvairam vālinaḥ strīkṛtam purā. (9:4)*

"There was one endued with energy called Māyāvī. He was the eldest son of Dundubhī. Formerly, there arose a mighty hostility between himself and Vālī." (9:4)

*sa tu niḥsṛtaḥ krodhāttam hantumasurottamam. vāryamāṇastataḥ strībhirmayā ca praṇatātmanā. (9:7)*

"And he rushed out in wrath, for the purpose of slaying that foremost of demons. He was opposed by his wives as well as myself, who humbled himself before him." (9:7)

*tato'hamapi sauhārdānniḥ sṛto vālinā saha. (9:8)*

"Thereupon, out of affection, I also went out with Vālī." (9:8)

*aham tvavagato buddhyā cinhaistairbhrātaram hatam. pighāya ca biladvāram śilayā girimātrayā. (9:19)*

"And from these signs, concluding my brother to be slain, I, closing the entrance of the cavern with a crag which was huge as a hill." (9:19)

*śokārtaścodakam kṛtvā kiṣkindhāmāgataḥ sakhe. gūhamānasya me tat tvam yatnato mantribhiḥ śrutam. (9:20)*

"Afflicted with grief, after performing his funerary rites, returned to Kiṣkindhā, O my friend." And although I concealed the matter, the ministers heard it all." (9:20)

*tato'ham taiḥ samāgamyā sametairabhiśecitaḥ. rājyam praśāsatastasya nyāyato mama rāghava. (9:21)*

"There they, assembled together, installed me as the king. And, my Rāma, as I was ruling the kingdom justly." (9:21)

*ājagāma ripum hatvā dānavam sa tu vānaraḥ. abhiṣiktam tu mām dṛṣṭvā  
krodhāt samraktalocanaḥ. (9:22)*

"It came to pass that after having slain his foe, the demon, that ape came.  
Then, seeing me installed as king, he, with his eyes reddened with wrath."  
(9:22)

*madīyān mantriṇo baddhvā puruṣam vākyamabravīt. nigrahe ca samarthasya  
tam pāpam prati rāghava. (9:23)*

"On imprisoning my ministers, he spoke with harsh words to me. And  
although I was capable of chastising him, I did not incline towards that  
sin." (9:23)

*na prāvartata me buddhirbhrātṛgauravayantritā. hatvā śatrum sa me bhrātā  
praviveśa puram tadā. (9:24)*

"Yet my mind influenced by a sense of my brother's dignity. Having slain  
his foe, he entered the city." (9:24)

*mānāyamstam mahātmānam yathāvaccābhivādayam. uktāśca nāśiṣastena  
prahṣṭenāntarātmanā. (9:25)*

"I, honoring that high-souled one, duly saluted him. He withal did not with  
a glad heart utter his benediction." (9:25)

*natvā pādāvaham tasya mukuṭenāsprṣam prabho. api vālī mama krodhānna prasādam cakāra saḥ. (9:26)*

"And, O lord, I, bowing to his feet with my crown; yet, on account of anger, Vālī did not extend to me his grace." (9:26)

*viṣādātviham mām dṛṣṭvā paurairmantribhireva ca. (10:6)*

"Seeing me enter in a dejected mood, the citizens and advisors." (10:6)

*abhiṣikto na kāmēna tanme kṣantum tvamarhasi. tvameva rājā mānārhaḥ sadā cāham yathā purā. (10:7)*

"Installed me, but it was not done with my will. Therefore, it behoves you to forgive me. You are the king, O worthy of honor, and I am, as before, your eternal servant." (10:7)

*tataḥ śāpabhayād bhīto ṛṣyamūkam mahāgirim. (11:64)*

"O lord of men, afraid of the curse that monkey chief went away to the great Ṛṣyamūka mountain." (11:64)

*tasyāpraveśam jñātvāhamidam rāma mahāvanam. vicarāmi sahātmātyo viṣādena vivarjitaḥ. (11:65)*

"O Rāma, knowing for certain that he shall not enter this forest, I have been living here with my ministers, devoid of fear and grief." (11:65)

### **Analysis:**

The person who abducted Sītā, i.e. Rāvaṇa, came disguised as a mendicant, and the genesis of her liberation begins with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meeting another mendicant in disguise, i.e. Hanumān. Both Rāvaṇa and Hanumān were highly learned men<sup>261</sup> endowed with tremendous powers. However, they had one major difference, i.e. Hanumān was benign and good, while Rāvaṇa was malicious and evil.

Sugrīva was a righteous person who had been unfairly judged by his brother Vālin. After all, Sugrīva dissuaded Vālin from going after Māyāvī. And when Vālin went anyway, Sugrīva dutifully followed his brother in battle and waited for an entire year at the mouth of the cave where Vālin and Māyāvī were fighting. Sugrīva never usurped the throne but was appointed to it by Vālin's ministers. And when Vālin returned after slaying Māyāvī, Sugrīva greeted him and laid the crown at his brother's feet after apologizing to him. And added to this, it was Vālin who abducted Sugrīva's wife. Vālin was clearly adharmic.

Rāma and Sugrīva were both in a similar though not identical situation. They had both lost their kingdoms and their wives to men of arrogance, ill-will and malignant power. Rāma needed the help of Sugrīva and his army to defeat Daśagrīva, but he first needed to settle Sugrīva as the sole unchallenged king of the vānaras.

Further, Rāma was living like a partial ascetic until his spouse was abducted by a pseudo-ascetic, i.e. Rāvaṇa, for erotic ends. This turned

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<sup>261</sup> *vedāntagaḥ karmasu cāgnyāśūraḥ* (Yuddhakāṇḍam 109:23) "He was conversant with the Vedas, and the great performer of sacrifices."  
*nāṅgvedavinītasya nayajurvedadhāriṇaḥ. nasāmavedaviduṣaḥ śakyamevam vibhāṣitum.*  
(Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 3:28) "None can speak thus who has not mastered the Ṛgveda, borne well the Yajurveda, and acquainted himself thoroughly with the Sāmaveda."

Rāma into a complete ascetic, who accompanied by his spouseless-in-exile ascetic brother, Lakṣmaṇa, meets an ascetic in disguise, i.e. Hanumān (and who is also a true brahmacārin) who actually is the emissary of a vānara king, i.e. Sugrīva, who has become an ascetic because his wife, Rumā, has been abducted by his brother, Vālin. Being afraid of Vālin, Sugrīva is living on a certain mountain called Ṛṣyamūka, which is protected by an ascetic named Mātanga and where Vālin cannot enter on account of Mātanga's curse on him. Both Rāma and Sugrīva need each other to get back their spouses and the only way this is obtainable is through violence. So the triadism of asceticism, violence and eroticism is complete in this instance also.

Rāma had to help Sugrīva not only because the latter was dharmic but because he was the incarnation of Sūrya from whom the Ikṣvāku kings were descended. In short, they were Sūryavamśins. Also, Sugrīva was assured of victory as he was fortunate to have both Viṣṇu in his incarnation as Rāma and Vāyu in his incarnation as Hanumān on his side. To have the grace of Brahman (Viṣṇu) and the visible Brahman (Vāyu) is important. This is reinforced by the Taittirīyopaniṣad.<sup>262</sup> Also, the power of Vāyu is further reinforced in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad.<sup>263</sup> When Vāyu switches sides in the Mahābhārata, one sees readily the consequences. Karṇa, who is the incarnation of Sūrya, does not have Viṣṇu and Vāyu on his side this time. It is Indra who has incarnated as Arjuna who has their

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<sup>262</sup> *namaste vāyo tvameva praṭyakṣam brahmāsi* (Taittirīyopaniṣad I:1:1) "Salutations, O Vāyu, thou art the perceptible God."

<sup>263</sup> *sa yathaiṣām prāṇānām madhyamaḥ prāṇaḥ evam etāsām devatānām vāyuḥ. nimlocanti hyanyā devatāḥ na vāyuḥ. saiṣānastamitā devatā yad vāyuḥ.* (Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad I:5:22) "As breath holds the central position among vital breaths, so does air among the other gods. For the other gods have their decline, but not air. Air is the divinity that never sets."

grace. Hence victory is assured to him. Vāyu is doubly present this time on Indra's (i.e. Arjuna's) side, once actively as his brother Bhīma (the incarnation of Vāyu) and another time as Hanumān on the standard of his chariot.

### **sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. Sattva = Hanumān (pure and intelligent)
2. Rajas = Vālin (wrathful, passionate, violent)
3. Tamas = Sugrīva (passive and having inertia)

Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa about the learned nature of Hanumān when he says "*nānṛgvedavinītasya nāyajurvedadhāriṇaḥ. nāsāmavedaviduṣaḥ śakyamevam vibhāṣitum.*" "None can speak thus who has not mastered the Ṛgveda, borne well the Yajurveda, and acquainted himself thoroughly with the Sāmaveda." (3:28) "*nūnam vyākaraṇam kṛtsnāmanena bahudhā śrutam. bahu vyāharatānena na kimcidapaśabditam.*" Forsooth he has studied well all the grammars, for he has not used a single inelegant word though he has addressed me much." (3:29) That Vālin is wrathful is clear from the following descriptions by Sugrīva "*sa tu vai niḥsṛtaḥ krodhāttam hantumsurottamam.*" "And he rushed out in wrath, for the purpose of slaying that foremost of demons" (9:7) "*abhiṣiktam tu mām dṛṣṭvā krodhāt samraktalocanaḥ.*" "Then, seeing me installed as king, he, with his eyes reddened with wrath." (9:22) "*api vālī mama krodhānna prasādam cākara saḥ.*" "Yet, on account of anger, Vālī did not extend to me his grace." (9:26). Sugrīva is a passive and docile figure as is clear from descriptions of himself in the following passages: "*aham sarveṣu kāleṣu praṇataḥ*



*preṣyavat sthitaḥ.*" "I, at all times, remained like a servant." (9:3)  
*"mānāyamstam mahātmānam yathāvaccābhivādayam."* "I, honoring that high-souled one, duly saluted him." (9:25) *"natvā pādavaham tasya mukuṭenāsprṣam prabho."* "And, O lord, I, bowing to his feet with my crown." (9:26) *"anāthasya hi me nāthastvameko'nāthanandana"* "O you that rejoicest the forlorn, I, who am helpless, you are my only protector." (10:2). Rāma is annoyed by the lethargic Sugrīva and says to Lakṣmaṇa: *"sa kiṣkindhām praviśya tvam brūhi vānarapungavam. mūrkhām grāmyasukhe saktam sugrīvam vacanānmama."* "Go, therefore to Kiṣkindhā, and speak of me to that stupid lord of monkeys, Sugrīva, addicted to rural enjoyments." (30:70) In turn Lakṣmaṇa goes and complains to Tārā, the widow of Vālin, about Sugrīva's lethargy and says: *"sa māsamścaturaḥ kṛtvā pramāṇam plavageśvaraḥ. vyatītāmstān madodagro viharan nāvabudhyate."* "That lord of apes has spent well-nigh the entire period, being influenced by liquor and addicted to enjoyments with you." (33:45)

### **dharmā-dharmādharmā-adharma**

1. dharmā = Hanumān
2. dharmādharmā = Sugrīva
3. adharma = Vālin

Hānumān's dharmic nature and Vālin's adharmic nature are quite clear, but Sugrīva's dharmādharmic nature needs to be explained. Sugrīva is dharmic in the sense that he serves his brother, the vānara king Vālin, faithfully and in all earnestness. He advises his brother not to chase after Māyāvī, waits for a year near the mouth of the cave when the Vālī-Māyāvī

battle rages, does not usurp the throne but is appointed to it and is ready to handback the kingdom when Vālin returns. However, his adharmic nature comes in when he agrees to Rāma killing Vālin<sup>264</sup> and further concedes to wearing a garland in order to be easily identified by Rāma to avoid accidentally killing him during the battle between the siblings.<sup>265</sup> Finally, Sugrīva is adharmic because he fails to fulfil his contractual obligation to Rāma until he is confronted by Lakṣmaṇa.<sup>266</sup>

### **sovereignty-heroism-docility**

1. sovereignty = Vālin (king of the Vānaras)
2. heroism = Hanumān (flies to Laṅkā and faces Rāvaṇa)
3. docility = Sugrīva (passive and docile before his brother)

### **sovereignty-heroism-fertility/docility**

When the friendship between Rāma and Sugrīva was contracted, it is said that the left eyes of Vālin, the rākṣasas and Sītā began to throb. Here there is a double triadism. The following tables will clarify:

1. Vālin = sovereignty (Vānara king)
2. Rākṣasas = heroism (fell for Rāvaṇa in the Rāma-Rāvaṇa battle)

<sup>264</sup> *tamadyaiva priyārtham me vairiṇam bhrāṭṛrūpiṇam. vālinam jahi kākutstha mayā baddho'mañjaliḥ.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 12:11) "O Rāma, you, even today, destroy, for my well-being, my brother Vālī. This, I do pray to you with folded hands."

<sup>265</sup> *abhijñānam kuruṣva tvamātmano vānareśvara. yena tvāmabhijānīyām dvandvayuddhamupāgatam.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 12:38) "Make some mark on your person, O lord of apes, by which I shall be able to recognize you when engaged in a duel." *gajapuṣpīmimām phullāmutpāṭya śubhalakṣaṇām. kuru lakṣmaṇa kaṇṭhe'sya sugrīvasya mahātmanaḥ.* (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam 12:39) "O Lakṣmaṇa, plucking this auspicious Gaja flower, put it around the neck of the high-souled Sugrīva."

<sup>266</sup> Goldman, 'The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki' (Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa 33:1-19) pp. 128-129

3. Sitā = fertility (as the feminine figure)

1. Rāma = sovereignty
2. Hanumān = heroism
3. Sugrīva = docility

## 12.19

### YUDDHAKĀṆḌA

#### The three brothers at Lankā

##### sattva-rajas-tamas

1. sattva = Vibhīṣaṇa (pious and virtuous)
2. rajas = Rāvaṇa (lustful, wrathful and deviant)
3. tamas = Kumbhakarṇa (slothful as he sleeps for six months)<sup>267</sup>

Śurpanakhā represents the oddity (apavarga) in this group being a female.

##### dharmādharmādharmā

1. dharmā = Vibhīṣaṇa
2. dharmādharmā = Kumbhakarṇa
3. adharma = Rāvaṇa

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<sup>267</sup> *ayam hi sūptaḥ śaṅmāsānkumbhakarṇo mahābalaḥ.* (Yuddhakāṅḍam 12:11) "After having slept for six months, that one, Kumbhakarṇa, of prodigious strength."

Vibhīṣaṇa's dharmic nature is quite clear throughout the ninth sarga of the Yuddhakāṇḍa. He culminates his advice to Rāvaṇa is: "*tyajāśu kopam sukhadharmanāśanam bhajasva dharmam ratikīrtivardhanam. prasīda jīvema saputrabāndhavāḥ pradīyatām daśarathāya maithilī.*" (9:22)

The dharmādharmic nature of Kumbhakarṇa is clear from the following passages: "*sarvametanmahārāja kṛtamapratimam tava. vidhīyeta sahāsmābhirādāvevāsya karmaṇaḥ.*" (12:29) "*tasmātvayā samārabdham karma hyapratimam paraiḥ. aham samīkariṣyāmi hatvā śatrūmstavānagha.*" (12:35) Kumbhakarṇa is aware of dharma but finally opts, unlike his pious brother Vibhīṣaṇa, to fight on the side of adharma.

## 12.20

### Three Kingdoms

#### sattva-rajas-tamas

1. sattva = Ayodhyā (righteous and noble)
2. rajas = Kiṣkindhā (fickle-minded lustful monkeys)
3. tamas = Lankā (dark and demonic)

Videha represents the oddity (apavarga) in this group as it is aloof from the triad as the name itself suggests, yet it supplies the woman, i.e. Sītā, without whom the other three kingdoms would perhaps never have interacted.

#### dharma-dharmādharma-adharma

1. dharma = Ayodhyā
2. dharmādharma = Kiṣkindhā

3. adharma = Lankā

In all three kingdoms, the older brother loses the kingdom to the younger brother, but it is only in Ayodhyā that the older brother gets back his kingdom as it is totally dharmic. Because adharma touches the other two kingdoms, the older brothers die and lose their kingdom forever to their younger siblings.

### **Three Orders of Men in Society**

#### **Evidence:**

*vividhā puruṣā loke uttamāmadhyamamadhyamāḥ.* (6:6)

"There are three orders of men on this earth, the superior, the mediocre, and the inferior." (6:6)

*mantraśtribhirhi samyuktaḥ samarthairmantranirṇaye.* (6:7)

"He is said to belong to the superior order, whose counsel contains the three signs." (6:7)

There are three orders of men in society, i.e. the superior, the mediocre and the inferior. And the superior men have three marks.

## 12.21

### Three divisions of the Vānara army

#### Evidence:

*sā vānarāṇām dhvajinī sugrīveṇābhipālītā. tridhā niviṣṭā mahatī  
rāmasyārthaparābhavat. (4:107)*

"That huge army of apes commanded by Sugrīva, and set up in three divisions, were deeply concerned with the accomplishment of Rāma's work." (4:107)

## 12.22

### UTTARAKĀṆḌA

#### The three sons of Sukeśa

#### Evidence:

*mālyavantam sumālim ca mālim ca balinām varam.  
trīmstrinetrasamānputrānrākṣasānrākṣasādhipaḥ. (5:6)*

"The lord of the demons begot (on her) three sons resembling the three eyes of the demons. They were Mālyavān, Sumāli and Māli the strong." (5:6)

*trayo loko ivāvyagrāḥ sthitāstrayaḥ ivāgnayaḥ. trayo mantrā ivātyugrāstrayo  
ghorā ivāmayāḥ. (5:7)*

"All resembling the three worlds possessing themselves of calmness; like to the three fires established; fierce like the three mantras, dreadful like the three diseases." (5:7)

*trayaḥ sukeśasya sutāstretāgnisamatejasāḥ. vivṛddhimagamamstatra  
vyādhayopekṣitā iva. (5:8)*

"The three sons of Sukeśa, having the energy of the three fires, grew up like a disease which has been disregarded." (5:8)

*dakṣiṇasyaoddhestīre trikūṭo nāma parvataḥ. (5:22)*

"On the shore of the southern sea is a mountain named Trikūṭa (three peaks)." (5:22)

*tairvadhyamānā devāśca ṛṣayaśca tapodhanaḥ. bhayārtāḥ śaraṇam  
jagmurdevadevam maheśvaram. (6:1)*

"Thus afflicted, the gods, the sages and the ascetics wrought up with fear, sought the protection of that God of gods, the Great Lord." (6:1)

*te sametya tu kāmārim tripurārim trilocanam. (6:3)*

"And coming to that enemy of Cupid, the foe of Tripura (three cities), the three-eyed deity." (6:3)

**Analysis:**

In the above passages the three sons of Sukeśa are compared with the three worlds, the three Vedic fires and the three pathological humors of kapha, vāta and pitta from which all human diseases are said to spring from. Also, Viśvakarma offers to build them a palace on a mountain called "three peaks". Afraid of the three demons, the triadic holy set of gods, sages and ascetics seek refuge in the "three-eyed" Lord of the gods.

**12.23**

**Rāvaṇa offers nine heads**

**Evidence:**

*evam varṣa sahasrāṇi nava tasyāticakrumuḥ. śirāmsi nava cāpyasya  
praviṣṭāni hutāśanam. (10:11)*

"In this way, he passed away nine thousand years; and nine of his heads entered the fire." (10:11)

**Analysis:**

Rāvaṇa after 9000 years of austerities offers 9 of his heads into the sacrificial fire. The number nine is a symbol of immutable eternity. It is also 3 times 3 and hence relevant and significant to the topic at hand.



## 12.24

### Rāvaṇa-Vedavatī episode

#### Evidence:

*sa dr̥ṣṭvā rūpasampannām kanyām tām sumāhāvratām. kāmamohaparītātmā papraccha prahasanniva. (17:3)*

"Seeing the girl observing high vows, endowed with beauty, he, with his soul overwhelmed with lust asked her laughing." (17:3)

*rūpam te'nupamam bhīru kāmonmādakaram nṛṇām. na yuktam tapasi sthātum nirgato hyeṣa nirṇayaḥ. (17:5)*

"Your loveliness, O timid one, is peerless, capable of maddening folk with desire. It does not behove you to lead an ascetic mode of life. This would not suit an old person." (17:5)

*so'bravīdravaṇo bhūyastām kanyām sumahāvratām. avaruhya vimānāgrātkandarpaśarapīḍitaḥ. (17:19)*

"Thereat descending from the front of his car, Rāvaṇa, affected by the shafts of Cupid, again addressed the girl, observant of a mighty vow." (17:19)

*evamuktasyā tatra vedavatyā niśācaraḥ. mūrdhajeṣu tadā kanyām karāgreṇa parāmṛśat. (17:26)*

"Thus addressed there by Vedavatī, the night ranger seized the girl by the hair." (17:26)

*dharṣitāyāstavayānārya na me jīvitamiṣyate. rakṣastasmāpravekṣyāmi paśyataste hutāśanam.* (17:29)

"Having been outraged by you, I do not wish to live. Therefore, O demon, I will enter into the fire in your very presence." (17:29)

*yasmāttu dharṣitā cāham tvayā pāpātmanā vane. tasmāttava vadhārtham hi samutpattyasatyaham punaḥ.* (17:30)

"As I have in this world been dishonored by you, you are nefarious. I shall again be born to compass your destruction." (17:30)

*nāhi śakyaḥ striyā hantum puruṣaḥ pāpaniścayaḥ. śāpe tvayi mayotsṛṣṭe tapasaśca vyayo bhavet.* (17:31)

"It lies not in a female to slay a male intent on sin. And if I utter a curse, it shall cost me my asceticism." (17:31)

**Analysis:**

The lady Vedavatī is a beautiful damsel engaged in austerities and Rāvaṇa is smitten with love. He touches her and she rather than curse him or kill him and thereby lose all her ascetic powers instead chooses to enter a funeral pyre and vows to reincarnate to destroy Rāvaṇa. This is a

clear case of asceticism-violence-eroticism. The following table will clarify this:

1. asceticism = Vedavatī
2. eroticism = Rāvaṇa
3. violence = Rāvaṇa violates Vedavatī and Vedavatī vows to destroy Rāvaṇa through rebirth.

## 12.25

### The Rāvaṇa-Rambhā-Nalakūbara episode

#### Evidence

*tām samutthāya gacchantīm kāmabāṇavaśam gataḥ. kare gṛhītvā lajjantīm smayamāno'bhyabhāṣata. (26:20)*

"Having got up and influenced by lust, he took her, shameful as she was, by the hand and smilingly said." (26:20)

*tadevam prāñjaliḥ prahvo yācate tvām daśānanaḥ. bharturbhartā vidhātā ca trailokyasya bhajasva mām. (26:27)*

"And Daśānana, the lord of lords of the three worlds, thus begs you, with folded palms. Seek me please." (26:27)

*putra priyatarāḥ prāṇaurbhāturvaiśravaṇasya te. (26:32)*

"Vaiśravaṇa's son, dearer than his life." (26:32)

*vikhyātastrīṣu lokeṣu nalakūbara ityayam. dharmato yo bhavedvipraḥ  
kṣatriyo vīryato bhavet. (26:33)*

"He is celebrated in the three worlds under the name Nalakūbara. In virtue, he is like a brahmin, and in prowess, he equals a kṣatriya." (26:33)

*krodhādyaśca bhavedagniḥ kṣāntyā ca vasudhāsamaḥ. (26:34)*

"In anger, he is like fire, and in patience, he is like the earth." (26:34)

*etatchrutvā tu samkruddhastadā vaiśravaṇātmajaḥ. (26:51)*

"Hearing of this, Vaiśravaṇa's son was greatly enraged." (26:51)

*dharṣaṇām tām parām śrutvā dhyānam sampraviveśa ha. tasya tatkarma  
vijñāya tadā vaiśravaṇātmajaḥ. (26:52)*

"Hearing about this great ravishment, he entered into meditation. Vaiśravaṇa's son having ascertained the truth." (26:52)

*muhūrtātkrodhatāmrākṣastoyam jagrāha pāṇinā. gṛhītvā salilam  
sarvamupasṛśya yathāvidhiḥ. (26:53)*

"In a moment, with eyes reddened with ire, he took water in his palms."  
(26:53)

*utsasarja tadā śāpam rākṣasendrāya dāruṇam. (26:54)*

"He imprecated a dreadful curse on the lord of the demons." (26:54)

*yadā hyakāmām kāmārto dharṣaiṣyati yoṣitam. (26:55)*

"Whenever he shall, stricken with lust, ravish a reluctant damsel." (26:55)

*mūrdhā tu saptadhā tasya śakalibhavitā tadā. (26:56)*

"Then, his head shall be instantly sundered into seven pieces." (26:56)

### **Analysis:**

Rāvaṇa lusts for Rambhā who is his nephew's wife. Hence there is a clear case for eroticism. Rambhā's husband Nalakūbara comes to know of this through his meditative powers and taking water into his palm pronounces a curse on Rāvaṇa. Nalakūbara's actions clearly depict his ascetic powers and mannerism. Further, Rambhā talks of her husband in a three-fold manner:

1. being like a brahmin in virtue (sovereignty and nobility)
2. being like a kṣatriya in prowess (heroism)
3. being as patient as the earth (docility and fertility)

Lastly, Nalakūbara's curse of Rāvaṇa is full of violence, i.e. of Rāvaṇa's head shattering into seven pieces.

**12.26**

**The Sītā-Vālmiki-Lava-Kuśa episode**

**Evidence:**

*apatyalābho vaidehi tvayyayam samupasthitāḥ. (43:31)*

"O Sītā, signs of pregnancy are manifest in you." (43:31)

*śvastvam prabhāte saumitre sumantrādhiṣṭhitam ratham. (45:16)*

"O Lakṣmaṇa, next morning, ascending the car, driven by Sumantra."  
(45:16)

*āruhya sītāmāropya viṣayānte samutsṛja. (45:17)*

"Take away Sītā, to another land." (45:17)

*apāpam vedmi sīte te tapolabdhenā cakṣuṣā. visrabdhā bhava vaidehi  
sāmpratam mayi vartse. (49:10)*

"By the eyes of asceticism, I perceive, O daughter of Janaka, that you are  
innocent. You have come under my shelter, O Sītā, to be consoled."  
(49:10)

*āśramasyā vidūre me tāpasyastapasi sthitāḥ. tāstvām vatse yathā vatsam  
pālayiṣyanti nityaśaḥ. (49:11)*

"O child, the pious ascetics live around my hermitage. They shall daily take care of you as their daughter." (49:11)

*idamarghyam pratīccha tvam visrabdhā vigatajvarā. yathā svagr̥hamabhyetya viśādam caiva mā kṛthāḥ. (49:12)*

"Accept the arghya now, and confiding me, remove your grief. Do not be sorry for anything. Consider that you have come home." (49:12)

*yāmeva rātrim śatrughnaḥ parṇasālām samāviśat. tāmeva rātrim sītāpi prasūtā dārakadvayam. (66:1)*

"On the same night that Śatrughna housed himself in a thatched cottage, Sītā gave birth to two sons." (66:1)

*evam kuśalavau nāmnā tāvubhau yamajātakau. matkṛtābhyām ca nāmābhyām khyātiyuktau bhaviṣyataḥ. (66:9)*

"According to this, I shall name the first son Kuśa, and the second Lava. And by those names, they will be celebrated on earth." (66:9)

*hate tu lavaṇe devāḥ sendrāḥ sāgnipurogamāḥ. ucuḥ sumadhurām vāṇīm śatrughnam śatrutāpanam. (70:1)*

"Lavaṇa being slain, the celestials headed by Agni and Indra said in sweet tones to Śatrughna, the represser of enemies." (70:1)

**Analysis:**

Rāma banishes Sītā from his kingdom and it is Lakṣmaṇa who takes the pregnant Sītā to the forest. There she is offered protection by Sage Vālmīki at his hermitage. There Sītā gives birth to twin boys, Lava and Kuśa. Śatrughna is present when the twins are born.

Here it is quite clear that the first twin-son of Sumitrā, Lakṣmaṇa, takes the twin-bearing Sītā to the forest where an ascetic offers her protection. This ascetic is the author of this epic, the Rāmāyaṇa, which is full of asceticism, violence and eroticism. The second twin-son of Sumitrā, Śatrughna, is present at Vālmīki's hermitage when the twins are born. After this Śatrughna engages in a heroic act of slaying the demon Lavaṇa.

**12.27**

**Sītā swears thrice affirming her purity before entering the earth**

**Evidence:**

*tathā me mādhavī devī vivaram dātumarhati* (97:14, 15 and 16)

"May the goddess Mādhavī, give me room in her womb." (97:14, 15 and 16)

This line is repeated three times as the second half of each of the above three verses.



## Chapter 13

### PATTERNS OF TRIADISM IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

#### ĀDIPARVA

##### 13.1

##### Śantanu-Gangā-Devavrata

###### Evidence:

*sa rājā śantanurdhimān devarājasamadyutiḥ. babhūva mṛgayāśīlaḥ  
śantanurvanagocaraḥ. (97:25)*

"That greatly intelligent king Śantanu, as effulgent as the king of the gods,  
became a lover of hunting and passed much of his time in the woods."  
(97:25)

*sa kadācinmahārāja dadarśa paramām striyam. jājvalyamānām vapuṣā  
sākṣācchriyamivaparām. (97:27)*

"Once, the great king met an elegant damsel of blazing beauty like Śrī  
herself. (97:27)

*tām dr̥ṣṭvā hṛṣṭaromābhūd vismito rūpasampadā. pibanniva ca netrābhyām  
nātr̥pyata narādhipa. (97:29)*

"The king was awestruck to see that damsel of great beauty, and his hair, all over his body, stood up in rapture. His steadfast gaze drank her charms, but it failed to satiate him." (97:29)

*sā ca dr̥ṣṭvaiva rājānam vicarantam mahādyutim. snehādāgatasauhārdā nātr̥pyata vilāsinī.* (97:30)

"The maiden also, seeing that this king with great effluence move about in great agitation, was moved and felt for him an affection and friendship. She gazed at him, and longed to gaze at him more." (97:30)

*jātam jātam ca sā putram kṣipatyambasi bhārata. prīṇāmyaham tvāmityuktṵ gangāstrotasyamajjayat.* (98:13)

"O descendent of Bharata, as soon as they were born, they were, one after the other, thrown into the river by Gangā, who said, when she threw them into stream, 'this is done for your good'." (98:13)

*athaināmaṣṭame putre jāte prahasatimiva. uvāca rājā duḥkhārtaḥ parīpsan putramātmanaḥ.* (98:15)

"When the eighth son was born, and when Gangā was smiling, the king, desiring to protect his son, said in sorrow." (98:15)

*putrakāma na te hanmi putram putrvatām vara. jīrṇastu mama vāso'yam yathā sa samayaḥ kṛtaḥ.* (98:17)

"As you desire for a son, I shall not kill this child. You have become the foremost of fathers. But there must be an end to my stay with you according to our agreement." (98:17)

*ime'sṭau vasavo devā mahābhāgā mahaujasaḥ. vasiṣṭhaśāpadoṣeṇa mānuṣatvamupāgatāḥ.* (98:19)

"These sons were the eight gods, the illustrious and greatly effulgent Vasus. They had to assume human form in consequence of the curse of Vasiṣṭha." (98:19)

### **Analysis:**

Śantanu is out hunting (violence). In that circumstance, he beholds Gangā and is aroused by her beauty. She too returns his longing glances (eroticism). She agrees to marry him as long as he does not ask her what she's doing. He agrees and she marries him and gives birth to 7 children whom she promptly kills (violence). When the 8th child is born, Śantanu forbids her to kill it. She saves the child but promptly divorces him as it has violated the agreement. She tells Śantanu these 8 children were the celestial Vasus born as humans on account of Sage Vasiṣṭha's curse (asceticism). The 8th child, Devavrata, eventually takes the vow of celibacy (asceticism).<sup>268</sup>

It is possible to construct the following two matrices from this episode:

### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

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<sup>268</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 218-220

1. asceticism = Vasiṣṭha and Devavrata
2. violence = Śantanu and Gangā
3. eroticism = Śantanu and Gangā

**sovereignty-sacrifice-fertility**

1. sovereignty = Śantanu
2. sacrifice = Devavrata [who eventually sacrifices his life in selfless service of his "father's" (actually his stepmother's) lineage]
3. fertility = Gangā (mother of the 8 Vasus)

**13.2**

**Śantanu-Satyavati-Devavrata**

**Evidence:**

*sa kadācit vanam yāto yamunāmbhitonadīm.* (100:45)

"Once, he went to a forest of the banks of the river named Yamunā."  
(100:45)

*mahīpatiranirdeśyamājighrad gandhamuttamam. tasya prabhavamanvicchan  
vicacāra samantataḥ.* (100:46)

"When the king was roaming there, he perceived a sweet fragrance coming  
from an unknown direction." (100:46)

*rūpamāduryagandhaistām samyuktām devarūpiṇīm. samīkṣya rājā dāśeyīm  
kāmayāmāsa śantanuḥ (100:49-50)*

"Having seen her endowed with celestial beauty, amiableness and fragrance,  
the king Śantanu desired to possess her." (100:49-50)

*asyām jāyeta yaḥ putraḥ sa rājā pṛthivīpate. tvadūrdhvamabhiṣektavyo  
nānyaḥ kaścana pāṛthiva. (100:56)*

"O king, the son that will be born of this girl shall be installed on your  
throne, and shall not make anyone else your successor." (100:56)

*tatastatkāraṇam rājño jñātvā sarvamśeṣataḥ. devavrato mahābuddhiḥ  
prajñayā cānvacintayat. (100:72)*

"Having heard the cause (of his grief) from the king, the greatly intelligent  
and wise Devavrata thought for a while." (100:72)

*abhyagacchat tadaivāśu vṛddhāmātyam piturhitam. tamapṛcchat tadābhetya  
pitustacchokakāraṇam. (100:73)*

"He then went to the old minister, devoted to his father's well-being, He  
asked him the cause of his father's sorrow." (100:73)

*tasmai sa kurumukhyāya yathāvat paripṛcchate. varam śāsamsa kanyām  
tāmuddiśya bhatarṣabha. (100:74)*

"O best of the Bharata clan, that foremost of the Kurus asked him all about it, and then he heard from him about the pledge regarding the maiden." (100:74)

*rājyam tāvat pūrvameva mayā tyaktam narādhipāḥ. apatyahetorapi ca kariṣe'dya viniścayam.* (100:95)

"O chiefs, I relinquished my right to the throne a few moments before. I shall now settle the doubt that has arisen in respect to my sons." (100:95)

*adyaprabhṛti me dāśa brahmacaryam bhaviṣyati. aputrasyāpi me lokā bhaviṣyantyakṣayā divi.* (100:96)

"O fisherman, from this day, I adopt the vow of celibacy. If I die sonless, still I shall ascend to the rejoins of the everlasting bliss." (100:96)

### **Analysis:**

King Śāntanu (sovereignty) falls in love with a fisher-maiden named Satyavatī who will eventually be the grand matriarch of the Kuru clan (fertility). She hardly has any say in the whole affair. King Śāntanu desires her, her father bargains on her behalf and Devavrata seals the deal for her attainment of the Kuru queenship. So she represents docility as well. Devavrata sacrifices both his rights to the throne as well as wedlock. Hence he represents heroism and sacrifice. The following tables are possible from this episode.

### **sovereignty-heroism-fertility**

1. sovereignty = Śantanu
2. heroism = Devavrata (emerges as "Bhīṣma")
3. fertility = Satyavatī

### **sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = Devavrata (purity of character)
2. rajas = Śantanu (smitten by passion)
3. tamas = Satyavatī (dark-eyed fisher-maiden)

### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Devavrata
2. violence = Satyavatī (whose great grand-sons will eventually engage in battle at Kurukṣetra)
3. eroticism = Śantanu (smitten by erotic lust)

## **13.3**

### **Bhīṣma-Citrāngada-Vicitravīrya**

#### **Evidence:**

*tataḥ śantanavo dhīmān satyavatyāmajāyata. vīraścitrāngado nāma vīryavān puruṣeśvaraḥ. (101:2)*

"Thereupon the wise Śantanu begot through his wife Satyavatī, a very powerful hero named Citrāngada, the best of men." (101:2)

*athāparam maheśvāsam satyavatīyāṃ sutam prabhuḥ. vicitravīryam rājānam  
janayāmāsa vīryavān. (101:3)*

"The powerful king begot through Satyavatī, another son named Vicitravīrya who became a mighty bowman, and he became king after his father." (101:3)

*aprāptavati tasminastu yauvanam puruṣarṣabhe. sa rājā śantanurdhīmān  
kāladharmamupeyivān. (101:4)*

"Before that best of men, Vicitravīrya, had attained the age of majority, his father succumbed to the inevitable influence of Time." (101:4)

*svargate śantanau bhīṣmaścitrāṅgadarindamam. sthāpayāmāsa vai rājye  
satyavatīyāṃ mate sthitaḥ. (101:5)*

"When Śantanu went to heaven, Bhīṣma, who was always obedient to Satyavatī, installed that chastiser of foes, Citrāṅgada, on the throne." (101:5)

*sa citrāṅgadaḥ śauryāt sarvānścakṣepa pāṛthivān. manuṣyam na hi mene sa  
kacit sadṛśamātmanaḥ. (101:6)*

"Citrāṅgada also defeated all the kings of the world by his prowess. He could not find an equal to him among men." (101:6)



*tam kṣipantam surāścaiva manuṣyāmasurāmtathā. gandharvarājo  
balavāṃstulyanāmābhyayāt tadā. (101:7)*

"Seeing him defeat men, demons and even the gods, the powerful king of the Gandharvas, who bore the same name with him, came to him for a fight." (101:7)

*tenāsyā sumahadyuddham kurukṣetre babhūva ha. nadyāstīre sarasvatyāḥ  
samāstistro'bhavad raṇaḥ. (101:8)*

"Between the foremost of the Kurus and the powerful Gandharva chief, a fearful combat took place on the field of Kurukṣetra. The combat lasted for three long years on the banks of the Sarasvatī river." (101:8)

*tasminvimarde tumule śastravarṣasamākule māyādhiko'vadhīd vīram  
gandharvaḥ kurusattamam. (101:9)*

"In that fierce encounter, which was covered with showers of weapons, the best of the Kurus was killed by the Gandharva king through his great prowess of illusion." (101:9)

*vicitravīryam ca tadā bālamaprāptayauvanam. kururājye  
mahābāhurabhyaśiñcandanantaram. (101:12)*

"Thereupon he installed the mighty armed boy, Vicitravīrya, who was still a minor, on the throne of the Kuru kingdom." (101:12)

### **Analysis:**

It is ironic that all three of Śantanu's sons died issueless. Two (Bhīṣma and Citrāngada) die unmarried and are killed in war at Kurukṣetra at different times and the third (Vicitravīrya) though espoused to two wives dies issueless after succumbing to the disease of consumption. It is interesting to note that Citrāngada fights a battle for "three" years with the Gandharva king. Also, the death of Citrāngada at Kurukṣetra is ominously foreboding of the great bloody event to come.<sup>269</sup>

The following tables are possible:

#### **sovereignty-heroism-fertility**

1. sovereignty = Citrāngada (King of the Kuru clan after Śantanu)
2. heroism = Bhīṣma (the quiet hero who guides his brothers)
3. fertility = Vicitravīrya (it is his spouses that become the matriarchs of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas)

#### **sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = Bhīṣma
2. rajas = Citrāngada (fights a long bloody battle for three years)
3. tamas = Vicitravīrya (dies from consumption, a disease often associated with lack of sunlight)

#### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Bhīṣma
2. violence = Citrāngada

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<sup>269</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., *'The Mahābhārata'* (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 227-237

3. eroticism = Vicitravīrya (lustful<sup>270</sup> husband of two wives)

### 13.4

#### Bhīṣma and Ambā-Ambikā-Ambālikā

##### Evidence:

*atha kāśīpaterbhīṣmaḥ kanyāstisro'psaropamāḥ. śuśrāva sahitā rājan  
vr̥ṇvānā vai svayamvaram. (102:3)*

"O king, he heard that the three daughters of the king of Kāśī, all equal to the Apsaras in beauty, would be married at a svayamvara ceremony."  
(102:3)

*tāḥ sarvaguṇasampannā bhrātā bhrātre yavīyase. bhīṣmo vicitravīryāya  
pradadau vikramāhṛtāḥ. (102:54)*

"That mighty armed hero wishing his brother's well-being brought those greatly accomplished maidens and then offered them to his brother."  
(102:54)

*vivāham karayiṣyantam bhīṣmam kāśīpateḥ sutā. jyeṣṭhā tāsāmidam  
vākyamabravīddha satī tadā. (102:56)*

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<sup>270</sup> *tayoḥ pāṇī gṛhītvā tu rūpayauvanadarpiṭaḥ. vicitravīryo dharmātmā kāmātmā  
samapadyata. (Ādīparva 102:62)* "After having married them both, Vicitravīrya, though he was virtuous minded, became lustful from his prime of youth."

"The wedding of the daughters of the king of Kāśī was settled by Bhīṣma. But the eldest one softly smiling spoke thus" (102:56)

*mayā saubhapatīḥ pūrvam manasā hi vṛtaḥ patiḥ. tena cāsmi vṛtā  
pūrvameṣa kāmaśca me pituḥ. (102:57)*

"I have chosen in my heart the king of Saubha as my husband. He too has in his heart accepted me as his wife. This is also agreeable to my father." (102:57)

*mayā varayitavyo'bhūcchālvastasmin svayamvare. etad vijñāya dharmajña  
dharmatattvam samācara. (102:58)*

"I would have also chosen Śālva in the svayamvara as my husband. You are learned in the precepts of virtue. Knowing all this, do what you think is proper." (102:58)

*vinīcitya sa dharmajño brahmaṇairvadaparāgaiḥ. anujajñe tadā  
jyeṣṭhāmambām kāśipateḥ sutām. (102:60)*

"The greatly virtuous man, after consulting with the priests who were learned in the Vedas, allowed the eldest daughter of the king of Kāśī, Ambā, to do what she liked." (102:60)

*ambikāmbālike bhārye pradād bhrātre yavīyase. bhīṣmeḥ vicitravīryāya  
vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā. (102:61)*

"Bhīṣma, then bestowed Ambikā and Ambālikā on his younger brother Vicitravīrya according to the ordained rites." (102:61)

### **Analysis:**

Bhīṣma and the three daughters of the King of Kāśī fit into two triadic schemes.

### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Ambā
2. violence = Bhīṣma
3. eroticism = Ambikā and Ambālikā

After being released by Bhīṣma, Ambā returns to her fiance King Śālva who rejects her.<sup>271</sup> She then goes and seeks refuge in a hermitage.<sup>272</sup> The chief ascetic of the hermitage asks her to see Paraśurāma<sup>273</sup> who would fight against Bhīṣma for her. Paraśurāma is unable to defeat Bhīṣma in battle and thus asks Ambā to seek refuge in Bhīṣma.<sup>274</sup> Totally

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<sup>271</sup> *yathā śālvapate nānyam varam dhyāmi kathamcana. tvāmṛte puruṣavyāghra tathā mūrdhānamalabhate.* (Udyogaparva 175:16) "O lord of the Śālvas, I do not desire any husband save yourself. O foremost among men, I swear by your heart."  
*tāmevam bhāṣamāṇām tu śālvaḥ kāśīpateḥ sutām. atyajad bhārataśreṣṭha jīrṇā tvacamivoragaḥ.* (Udyogaparva 175:19) "Śālva, however, abandoned that daughter of the ruler of Kāśī, who spoke thus. 'O chief among the Bharatas, like a serpent casting-off its slough'."

<sup>272</sup> *āśramam puṇyaśālinām tāpasānām mahātmanām. tatastāmavasād rātrim tāpasaiḥ parivāritā.* (Udyogaparva 175:36) "To the hermitage of a great souled ascetic of virtuous ways of life, and she stayed there for the night surrounded by ascetics."

<sup>273</sup> *gaccha madvacanād rāmam jāmadagnyam tapasvinam. rāmaste sumahad duḥkham śokam caivāpaneṣyati.* (Udyogaparva 175:25) "Being thus spoken to by that Śālva of short foresight, she issued out of that city sorrowing and weeping like a female osprey."  
*haniṣyati raṇe bhīṣmam na kariṣyati ced vacaḥ. tam gaccha bhārgavaśreṣṭham kālāgnisamatejasam.* (Udyogaparva 176:26) "He will slay Bhīṣma in battle if he does not act up to his words. Go to him that foremost of the Bhṛgu clan, who, in energy, is equal to the fire that rages at the time of the universal destruction."

<sup>274</sup> *bhīṣmameva prapadyasva na te'nyā vidyate gatiḥ. nirjito hyasmi bhīṣmeṇa mahāstrāṇi pramuñcatā.* (Udyogaparva 188:4) "Take refuge with Bhīṣma himself. There exists none other for you. I'm vanquished by Bhīṣma on account of his using such mighty weapons."

humiliated she performs a severe penance.<sup>275</sup> The god Śiva appears before her and grants her a boon.<sup>276</sup> After this she immolates herself in order to be reborn for destroying Bhīṣma.<sup>277</sup>

Ambā is reborn as Śikhaṇḍin, the child of King Drupada.<sup>278</sup> Śikhaṇḍin becomes a eunuch<sup>279</sup> who in the great battle at Kurukṣetra stands in front

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<sup>275</sup> *gamiṣyāmi tu tatrāham yatra bhīṣmam tapodhanaḥ. samare pātayiṣyāmi svayameva bhṛgūdvaḥ.* (Udyogaparva 188:9) "I shall go to where Bhīṣma whose wealth is asceticism resides. I shall myself bring down Bhīṣma in battle, O perpetuator of the Bhṛgu clan." *evamuktva yayau kanyā roṣavyākulalocanā. tāpasye dhṛtasamkalpā sā me cintayati vadham.* (Udyogaparva 188:10) "Having spoken thus, that maid went away with eyes agitated in wrath, and intending to bring about my death, she firmly resolved to practice asceticism."

<sup>276</sup> *tām devo darśayāmāsa śūlapāṇirumāpatiḥ. madhye teṣām maharṣīṇām svena rūpeṇa tāpasīm.* (Udyogaparva 189:7) "To that ascetic lady, the god who holds trident in his hand, and who is the husband of Umā, showed himself in his own form in the midst of those great sages."

*haniṣyasi raṇe bhīṣmam puruṣatvam ca lapsyase. smariṣyasi ca tat sarvam dehamanyam gatā satī.* (Udyogaparva 189:13) "You will slay Bhīṣma in battle for you will attain the state of a man. And you will recollect this, when you go to another body."

<sup>277</sup> *tataḥ sā paśyatām teṣām maharṣīṇāmaninditā. samāhṛtya vanāt tasmāt kāṣṭhāni varavarṇinī.* (Udyogaparva 189:17) "Having gathered fuel from that forest, thereupon the faultless damsel of fairest complexion, in the very sight of those great sages" *citām kṛtvā sumahatīm pradāya ca hutāśanam. pradīpte'gnau mahārāja roṣadīptena cetasā.* (Udyogaparva 189:18) "And making a large funeral pyre and having set fire to it, O king, with a mind burning in wrath, even in that flaming fire"

*uktva bhīṣmavadhāyeti praviveṣa hutāśanam. jyeṣṭhā kāśisutā rājan yamunāmbhito nadīm.* (Udyogaparva 189:19) "O king, that eldest daughter of the king of Kāśī entered the fire on the banks of the river Yamunā, announcing 'for the destruction of Bhīṣma'."

<sup>278</sup> *bhāryā tu tasya rājendra drupadasya mahīpateḥ. mahiṣī dayitā hyāsīdapatrā ca viśāmpate.* (Udyogaparva 190:2) "The chosen and the beloved queen of king Drupada, O great king, was childless at first, O monarch."

*etasminneva kāle tu drupado vai mahīpatiḥ. upatyārthe mahārāja toṣayāmāsa śankaram.* (Udyogaparva 190:3) "And during this time, the highly intelligent king Drupada, pleased by worship, O mighty king, the god Śiva for the sake of offspring"

*ityukto devadevena strīpumāmste bhaviṣyati.* (Udyogaparva 190:5) "The god of gods said thus, 'your son shall be both male and female'."

*śraddhadhāno hi tadvākyam devasyācyutatejasaḥ. chādayāmāsa tām kanyām pumāniti ca so'bravīt.* (Udyogaparva 190:18) "Reverencing the words of that god of immeasurable glory, he kept to himself that she was a daughter, and said that 'this is a male child.'" *jātakarmāṇi sarvāṇi kārayāmāsa pārthivaḥ. pumvadvidhānayuktāni śikhaṇḍīti ca tām viduḥ.* (Udyogaparva 190:19) "And that king caused all the rites prescribed for a son during infancy to be performed according to all due ordinances, and named him Śikhaṇḍin."

of Arjuna<sup>280</sup> (who acted as a eunuch dance instructor called Bṛhannalā<sup>281</sup> to Princess Uttarā, the daughter of King Virāṭa). Bhīṣma refuses to fight a eunuch and falls to Arjuna's arrows.<sup>282</sup>

Another type of triadism is clear here.

### **Triadism of "eunuchs"**

1. Bhīṣma = celibate (a sort of a eunuch)<sup>283</sup>
2. Arjuna = one who temporarily acted as a eunuch called Bṛhannadā
3. Śikhaṇḍin = one who became a eunuch to avenge Bhīṣma

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<sup>279</sup> *pratidāsyāmi bhagavan pullingam tava suvrata. kiñcidkālāntaram strītvam dhārayasva niśācara.* (Udyogaparva 194:6) "O daughter of a king, I will take on myself your maidenhood. Pledge yourself to me as to the condition, and I will do what is dear to you."

*ityuktvā samayam tatra cakrāte tāvubhau nṛpa. anyo'nyasyābhisamdehe tau samkrāmayatām tataḥ.* (Udyogaparva 194:8) "Having spoken thus, they both made an agreement, O king, and they transferred to each other their respective sexes."

<sup>280</sup> *tataḥ kirīṭi samrabdho bhīṣmamevābhyadhāvata.* (Bhīṣmaparva 120:13) "Thereupon the diadem-decked Arjuna waxing rushed at Bhīṣma."

*śikhaṇḍinam puraskṛtya dhanuścāsyā samācchinnat.* (Bhīṣmaparva 120:14) "And placing Śikhaṇḍin before him, he cut-off the bow of the latter."

<sup>281</sup> *pratiññām śaṇḍhako'smiti kariṣyāmi mahīpate. jyādhātau hi mahāntau me samvartum nṛpa duṣkarau.* (Virāṭaparva 2:25) "O ruler of the earth, I shall declare myself to be one of neuter sex, but O king, it is very difficult to conceal the big strokes of the bow-string on my arms."

*valayaiśchādayiṣyāmi bāhū kiṇakṛtāvimau. karṇayoḥ pratimucyāham kuṇḍale jvalanaprabhe.* (Virāṭaparva 2:26) "However, I shall conceal with the bangles the marks of my arm caused by the bow-string."

*pinaddhakambuḥ pāṇibhyām tṛtīyām prakṛtim gataḥ. veṇīkṛtaśirā rājan nāmnā caiva bṛhannalā.* (Virāṭaparva 2:27) "Having worn rings shining as fire on my ears and conch bangles on my wrist, and dressing my hair in a braid on my head and taking the name of Bṛhannalā."

<sup>282</sup> *kāraṇadvayamāsthāya nāham yotsyāmi pāṇḍavān.* (Bhīṣmaparva 120:33) "I shall not fight with the Pāṇḍavas for two reasons."

*avadhyatvāśca pāṇḍūnām sribhāvaśca śikhaṇḍinaḥ.* (Bhīṣmaparva 120:34) "namely, for the unslayableness of the Pāṇḍavas, and for the femininity of Śikhaṇḍin."

<sup>283</sup> Compare Gospel of Matthew XIX:12

Bhīṣma was engaged in violence whenever any of the three princess were involved. First he abducted the three princess through violence by defeating King Śālva in battle. Then he fought and defeated Paraśurāma who tried to fight for Ambā.

**sovereignty-heroism-fertility**

1. sovereignty = Ambā (as the eldest daughter of the King of Kāśi)
2. heroism = Ambālikā (as the grandmother of the Pāṇḍava heroes)
3. fertility = Ambikā (as the grandmother of the 101 Kauravas)

**13.5**

**Parāśara-Satvavatī-Vyāsa**

**Evidence:**

*sā kadācidaham tatra gatā prathamayauvanam. atha dharmavidām śreṣṭhaḥ  
paramarṣiḥ parāśaraḥ. (105:7)*

"In the prime of my youth, I went one day to ply my boat. It so happened that the great and wise ṛṣi Parāśara, the foremost of virtuous men." (105:7)

*ājagāma tarīm dhīmāmstarīṣyan yamunām nadīm. sa taryamāṇo yamunām  
māmupetyābravīt tadā. (105:8)*



"Came to my boat for crossing the Yamunā river. As I was taking him across the river, he then spoke to me." (105:8)

*sāntvapūrvam muniśreṣṭhaḥ kāmārto madhuram vacaḥ. uktam janma kulam mahyamasmī dāśasutetyaham. (105:9)*

"That best of ṛṣis became full of desire and began to address me in soft words. I said that 'I am a daughter of a śūdra by birth'." (105:9)

*abhibhūya sa mām bālām tejasā vaśamānayat. (105:11)*

"He over-powered me by his great effulgence." (105:11)

*pārāśaryo mahāyogī sa babhūva mahānṛṣiḥ. kanyāputro mama purā dvaipāyana iti śrutaḥ. (105:14)*

"The son of Parāśara, thus born of me in my maiden-hood, has become a great sage named Dvaipāyana." (105:14)

*yo vyasya vedāṁscaturastapasā bhagavānṛṣiḥ. loke vyāsatvamāpede kārṣanyāt kṛṣṇatvameva ca. (105:15)*

"That illustrious sage, having divided by his ascetic power the Vedas into four parts, has become known on earth as Vyāsa, and for his dark-skin color as Kṛṣṇa." (105:15)

**Analysis:**

**asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Parāśara
2. violence = Vyāsa (the author of the violent Mahābhārata epic)
3. eroticism = Satyavatī

**sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = Parāśara
2. rajas = Satyavatī (able to excite passion in Parāśara)
3. tamas = Vyāsa (dark-hued)

**Ambikā-Ambālikā-maid-servant**

**Evidence:**

*tato'mbikāyām prathamam niyuktaḥ satyavāgr̥ṣiḥ. dīpyamāneṣu dīpeṣu śaraṇam praviveśa ha. (106:4)*

"Then the truthful sage who had given his promise as regards Ambikā first, came to her bed-room while the lamp was burning." (106:4)

*ambālikāmathābhyāgādṛṣim dṛṣṭvā ca sāpi tam. vivarṇā pāṇḍusankāśā sampadyat bhārata. (106:15)*

"O descendent of Bharata, upon seeing the sage enter, Ambālikā, turned pale and discolored." (106:15)

*tataḥ svairbhūṣaṇairdāsīm bhūṣayitvāpsaropamām. preṣayāmāsa kṛṣṇāya  
tataḥ kāśipateḥ sutā. (106:24)*

"Having decked a maid-servant like an Apsara with her ornaments, the daughter of the king of Kāśī, sent her to Kṛṣṇa (Vyāsa)." (106:24)

**Analysis:**

**sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = maid-servant (mother of virtuous Vidura)
2. rajas = Ambālikā (grand-mother of the Pāṇḍava heroes)
3. tamas = Ambikā (mother of the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra)

**sovereignty-heroism-docility**

1. sovereignty = Ambikā (mother of the future blind king)
2. heroism = Ambālikā (grand-mother of the Pāṇḍava heroes)
3. docility = maid-servant (mother of the docile Vidura)

## 13.6

### Dhṛtarāṣṭra-Pāṇḍu-Vidura

#### Evidence:

*teṣu triṣu kumāreṣu jāteṣu kurujāngalam. kuravo'tha kurukṣetram  
trayametadavardhata. (109:1)*

"On the birth of the three sons (Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura),  
Kurujāngala, Kurukṣetra and Kurus grew in prosperity. (109:1)

*dhṛtarāṣṭraśca pāṇḍuśca viduraśca mahāmatih. janmaprabhṛti bhīṣmeṇa  
putravat paripālitaḥ. (109:17)*

" Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura were brought up by Bhīṣma, as if they  
were his own sons." (109:17)

#### Analysis:

##### sattva-rajas-tamas

1. sattva = Vidura<sup>284</sup>
2. rajas = Pāṇḍu (excelled in archery)
3. tamas = Dhṛtarāṣṭra (blind)

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<sup>284</sup> *triṣu lokeṣu na tvāsīt kaścid vidurasammitaḥ. dharmanityastathā rājan dharme ca  
param gataḥ. (Ādiparva 109:22)* "O king, there is none in the three worlds who excelled  
Vidura in his devotion toward religion and virtue and in his knowledge of the science of  
morality."

### 13.7

#### Durvāsas-Kuntī-Karna

##### Evidence:

*ugram paryacarat tatra brāhmaṇam samśitavratam. (111:4)*

"By careful attentions to the terrible brahmin of rigid vows." (111:4)

*niḡūḍhāniścayam dharme yam tam durvāsasam viduḥ. tamugram  
samśitātmānam sarvayatnairatoṣayat. (111:5)*

"Known as Durvāsa, he was very dharmic yet wrathful. She attended on him with great care." (111:5)

*tasyai sa pradadau mantramāparddhamānvavekṣayā.  
abhicārābhisamyuktamabravīcaiva tām muniḥ. (111:6)*

"Anticipating the future difficulty of her getting sons, he taught her a mantra for invoking any of the gods. The sage then said to her." (111:6)

*yam yam devam tvametena mantreṇāvāhayiṣyasi. tasya tasya prasādena  
putrastva bhaviṣyati. (111:7)*

"Through effulgence of those gods whom you will invoke with this mantra, offspring will be certainly begotten through you." (111:7)

*yathoktā sā tu kuntī kautuhalānvitā. kanyā satī devamarkamājuhāva  
yaśasvinī. (111:8)*

"Having been thus told by the brahmin, the illustrious Kuntī, being curious, invoked in her maidenhood the Sun-god." (111:8)

*sā dadarśa tamāyāntam bhāskaram lokabhāvanam. vismitā cānavadyāngī  
dṛṣṭvā tanmahadadbhutam.* (111:9)

"She immediately saw before her that effulgent deity, the Sun-god, that beholder of everything in the world. Seeing the wonderful sight, that maiden of fruitless feature was very much surprised." (111:9)

*prakāśakartā tapanahī sambabhūva tayā saha. tatra vīrahī samabhavat  
sarvaśastrabhṛtām varahī. āmuktakavacaḥ śrīmān devagarbhaḥ śriyānvitaḥ.*  
(111:18)

*sahajam kavacam bibhratkuṇḍaloddyotitānanaḥ. ajāyata sutaḥ karṇaḥ  
sarvalokeṣu viśrutaḥ.* (111:19)

"That burning illuminator of the universe, the Sun-god, received her embraces. Thereupon was born a hero, known all over the world by the name Karṇa."

### **Analysis:**

#### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Durvāsas
2. violence = Karṇa (born with an armor-plate and later becomes a Kaurava Marshall in the Kurukṣetra War)

3. eroticism = Kuntī<sup>285</sup>

### **13.8**

#### **Vyāsa-Gāndhārī-Kauravas**

##### **Evidence:**

*kṣucchramābhipariglānam dvaipāyanamupasthitam. (115:7)*

"She gratified Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa who became fatigued and hungry." (115:7)

*toṣayāmāsa gāndhārī vyāsastasyai varam dadau. sā vavre sadṛśam bhartuḥ  
putrāṇām śatamātmanaḥ. (115:8)*

"Vyāsa granted Gāndhārī a boon that she should have one hundred sons."  
(115:8)

*tataḥ kālena sā garbham dhṛtarāṣṭrādathāgrahīt. samvatsaradvayam tam tu  
gāndhārī garbhamāhitam. (115:9)*

"Sometime after, she became pregnant through Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Gāndhārī bore  
the burden in her womb for two years." (115:9)

*aprajā dhārayāmāsa tatastām duḥkhamāviśat. śrutvā kuntīsutam jātam  
bālārkasamatejasam. (115:10)*

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<sup>285</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 240-241

"Bearing without delivering, she was afflicted with a lot of grief. She heard that a son was born to Kuntī, as effulgent as the morning sun."  
(115:10)

*udarasyātmanaḥ sthairyamupalabhyānvacintayat. ajñātam  
dhṛtarāṣṭrasyayatnena mahatā tataḥ. (115:11)*

"Being sorry that in her case the time for bearing the child in the womb was too long and being deprived, without the knowledge of Dhṛtarāṣṭra."  
(115:11)

*sodaram ghātayāmāsa gāndhārī duḥkhamūrchitā. tato jajñe māmsapeśī  
lohāṣṭileva samhatā. (115:12)*

"By reason of grief, Gāndhārī struck her womb with violence. Thereupon was brought forth a hard-mass of flesh like an iron-ball"

*divivarṣasambhṛtā kuṣṣau tāmutraṣṭum pracakrame. atha dvaipāyano jñātvā  
tvaritaḥ samupāgamat. (115:13)*

"that she bore in her womb for two years. Upon seeing the hard-mass of flesh, she decided to throw it. Upon knowing this, Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa came to her."

*jyeṣṭham kuntīsutam jātam śrutvā ravisamaprabham. (115:15)*

"Having heard that Kuntī had first given birth to a son as effulgent as the Sun." (115:15)



*duḥkhena parameṇedamudraram ghātita mayā. śatam ca kila putrāṇām  
vitīrṇam me tvayā purā. (115:16)*

"I struck at my womb in grief. You granted me the boon that I should get one hundred sons." (115:16)

*iyam ca me māmsapaśī jātā putraśatāya vai. evametad sauvaleyi  
naitajjātvanyathā bhavet. (115:17)*

"But a ball of flesh has come out in place of one hundred sons. O daughter of Subala, it is even so. My words can never be futile." (115:17)

*vitatham noktapūrvam me svaireṣyapi kuto'nyathā. ghṛtapūrṇam kuṇḍaśatam  
kṣiprameva vidhīyatām. (115:18)*

"I have not spoken an untruth even in jest. Why then will my words be futile? Let one hundred jars, filled with melted butter, be brought in right away." (115:18)

*ekādhikaśatam pūrṇam yathāyogam viśāmpate. māmsapeśyāstadā rājan  
kramaśaḥ kālaparyayāt. (115:21)*

"O king, that ball of flesh in time became gradually one hundred and one separate parts." (115:21)

*tataḥ putraśatam pūrṇam dhṛtarāṣṭrasya pārthiva. (115:43)*

"O king, there were born one hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra" (115:43)

*māsamātreṇa samjajñe kanyā caikā śatādhikā.* (115:44)

"and within a month, a daughter over and above the hundred (sons)."  
(115:44)

**Analysis:**

**asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Vyāsa
2. violence = hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī. They were responsible for the Kurukṣetra battle.
3. eroticism = Gāndhārī

**sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = Vyāsa
2. rajas = hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī. They were quarrelsome and ultimately responsible for the bloody Kurukṣetra battle.
3. tamas = Gāndhārī who lived a blindfolded life of darkness

**sovereignty-sacrifice-docility**

1. sovereignty = Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Ādiparva 116:2-14

2. sacrifice = 98 sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī. Though some like Vikarṇa disagreed<sup>287</sup> with the two sovereign brothers, they nevertheless sacrificed their lives for the cause of their older two leader brothers. Yuyutsu defected<sup>288</sup> just before the commencement of the Kurukṣetra battle.
3. docility = Duḥśalā (the only female sibling)

### 13.9

#### Kindama-Pāṇḍu-Mādrī

##### Evidence:

*rājā pāṇḍurmahārāṇye mṛgavyālaniṣevite. caran maithunadharmastham  
dadarśa mṛgayūthapam. (118:5)*

"O king, once Pāṇḍu, while roaming in the great forest abounding in deer and other fierce animals, saw a large deer, the leader of its herd, copulating with its mate." (118:5)

*tatastām ca mṛgīm tam ca rukmapunkhaiḥ supatribhiḥ. nirvibheda  
śaraistīkṣṇaiḥ pāṇḍuḥ pañcabhirāśugaiḥ. (118:6)*

"Seeing them, Pāṇḍu pierced both with five of his sharp swift arrows that were winged with golden feathers." (118:6)

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<sup>287</sup> Sabhāparva 68:12-24

<sup>288</sup> Bhīṣmaparva 43:96

*sa ca rājan mahātejā ṛṣiputrastapodhanaḥ. bhāryayā saha tejasvī  
mṛgarūpeṇa sangataḥ. (118:7)*

"O king, it was a greatly radiant ascetic, the son of a sage (in the form of a stag) this man was with his wife who was a doe." (118:7)

*samsaktaśca tayā mṛgyā mānusīmīrayan giram. kṣaṇena patito bhūmau  
vilalāpākulendriyaḥ. (118:8)*

"Wounded by Pāṇḍu, while with the mate, he fell down on the ground in a moment and uttered cries that were human. He began to weep bitterly." (118:8)

*dvayornṛśamsakartāramavaśam kāmamohitam. jīvitāntakaro bhāva  
evamevāgamiṣyati. (118:27)*

"Cruel as you have been to a couple, death shall certainly overtake you as soon as you will feel the influence of sexual desire." (118:27)

*aham hi kindamo nāma tapasā bhāvito muniḥ. vyapatrapanmanuṣyāṇām  
mṛgyām maithunamācaram. (118:28)*

"I'm an ascetic named Kindama. I was engaged in intercourse with my wife in the form of a doe due to human modesty." (118:28)

*vartamānaḥ sukhe duḥkham yathāham prāpitastvayā. yathā tvām ca sukham  
prāptam duḥkhamabhyāgamiṣyati. (118:33)*

"As I have been plunged into grief when I was happy, so you will also be afflicted with grief when in happiness." (118:33)

*tam mādrynujagāmaikā vasanam vibhratī śubham.* (125:5)

"He roamed there happily with Mādrī." (125:5)

*samīkṣamāṇā sa tu tām vayaḥsthām tanuvāsasam. tasya kāmaḥ pravavṛdhe gahane'gnirivodgataḥ.* (125:6)

"Seeing her clothed in a semi-transparent robe, his sexual desire emerged like fire." (125:6)

*rahasyekām tu tām dṛṣṭvā rājā rājīvalocanām. na śasāka niyantum tam kāmam kāmavaśīkṛtaḥ.* (125:7)

"The king could not suppress his sexual desire on seeing his lotus-eyed wife, and he was overcome by it in that solitude of the forest." (125:7)

*sa tu kāmaparītātmā tam śāpam nānvabudhyata. mādrīm maithunadharmeṇa so'nvagacchad balādiva.* (125:9)

"He was then overcome by desire. He did not remember the curse of the sage, and embraced Mādrī with force." (125:9)

*sa tayā saha samgamyā bhāryayā kurunandanaḥ. pāṇḍuḥ paramadharmātmā yuyuje kāladharmāṇā.* (125:12)

"The descendent of Kuru, the virtuous-minded Pāṇḍu, succumbed to the inevitable influence of Time while united with his wife." (125:12)

### **Analysis:**

#### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Kindama
2. violence = Pāṇḍu
3. eroticism = Mādri

Here, the ascetic Kindama is killed by Pāṇḍu's arrows while engaging in an erotic act. Kindama curses Pāṇḍu who dies while making love to Mādri.<sup>289</sup>

#### **sovereignty-sacrifice-docility**

1. sovereignty = King Pāṇḍu
2. sacrifice = Mādri<sup>290</sup>
3. docility = Kindama in the form of a deer (the symbol of docility)

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<sup>289</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., *The Mahābhārata* (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 247-249; 259-260

<sup>290</sup> *mām cābhigamya kṣīṇo'yam kāmād bharatasattamaḥ. tamucchindyāmasya kāmam katham nu yamasādane.* (Ādiparva 125:26) "This best of the Bharata clan, came to me with the desire of having an intercourse. His desire was not satiated. Should I go to the region of Yama to satiate him." (125:26)

*ityuktvā tam citāgnistham dharmapatnī nararṣabham. madrarājasutā tūrṇamanvārohad yaśasvinī.* (Ādiparva 125:31) "Having said this, the daughter of the king of Madra, the lawfully wedded wife of the best of men, Pāṇḍu, ascended the funeral pyre of her lord." (125:31)

## Pāṇḍu-Kuntī-Mādrī

### Analysis:

#### sovereignty-heroism-fertility

1. sovereignty = King Pāṇḍu
2. heroism = Kuntī. All four sons of Kuntī, i.e. Karṇa, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna were great heroes of the epic.
3. fertility = Mādrī. She is the mother of the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva<sup>291</sup>

#### asceticism-violence-eroticism

1. asceticism = King Pāṇḍu (who turned to asceticism<sup>292</sup> after killing the ascetic in the form of a deer)
2. violence = Kuntī (whose sons were involved in the violent Kurukṣetra battle as its principal marshalls)
3. eroticism = Mādrī

## 13.10

### The Five Pāṇḍavas

#### Analysis:

As Pāṇḍu could not beget any children through union with his wives on account of Sage Kindama's curse, Kuntī through her mantric

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<sup>291</sup> *tato mādrī vicāryaivam jagāma manasāśvinau. tāvāgamyā sutau tasyām janayāmāsaturyamau.* (Ādiparva 124:16) "Thereupon Mādrī, reflecting for some time, thought of the twin Aśvins. They came to her without delay and begot twin offspring through her."

*nakulam sahadavam ca rūpeṇāpratimau bhuvī.* (Ādiparva 124:17) "They were Nakula and Sahadeva, matchless in beauty on this earth."

<sup>292</sup> Ādiparva 119:6-19

Ādiparva 119:32-37

powers begat Yudhiṣṭhira from invoking the god Dharma, Bhīma from invoking Vāyu and Arjuna from invoking Indra. She then taught Mādrī the mantra. Mādrī invoked the twin Aśvini kumāras and to her were born Nakula and Sahadeva.<sup>293</sup>

### **sovereignty/nobility-heroism-fertility/docility**

1. sovereignty and nobility = Yudhiṣṭhira (who was very truthful<sup>294</sup> throughout his life and inherited the kingdom after the Kurukṣetra battle)
2. heroism = Bhīma (who avenged Draupadī by killing Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana in the Kurukṣetra battle) and Arjuna (who won Draupadī's hand and killed Bhīṣma and Karṇa in the Kurukṣetra battle)
3. fertility and docility = Nakula and Sahadeva (twins who were obedient shadows of their older brothers)

## **13.11**

### **Śikhaṇḍin-Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna-Draupadī**

#### **Analysis:**

#### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Śikhaṇḍin (a eunuch who could not marry)
2. violence = Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna (who killed Droṇa in a violent manner)

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<sup>293</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 255-256; 258-259

<sup>294</sup> *sthirābuddhirhi droṇasya na pārtho vakṣyate'nṛtam. trayāṇāmapi lokānāmaiśvārthe kathaṅcana.* (Droṇaparva 191:43) "Droṇa knew it for certain that Yudhiṣṭhira would never tell a lie, not even for the sake of getting the wealth of the three worlds."

*tasya pūrvam rathaḥ pṛthavyāścaturaṅgulamucchrtaḥ. babhūvaivam ca tenokte tasya vāhāḥ spṛśānmahīm.* (Droṇaparva 191:56) "Until now the chariot of Yudhiṣṭhira had remained at a height of four fingers breadth from the earth's surface. After he had uttered that lie, his steeds touched the earth."



3. eroticism = Draupadī (who was lusted for by Karṇa, Jayadratha and Kīcaka; who was married to five men simultaneously; and who was attempted to be disrobed by Duḥśāsana)<sup>295</sup>

### 13.12

#### Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa-Subhadrā

##### Analysis:

The trio are enshrined at the Temple of Jagannātha in Puri, Orissa.

##### asceticism-violence-eroticism

1. asceticism = Balarāma (who remained aloof<sup>296</sup> in the Kaurava-Pāṇḍava skirmish and went off on a pilgrimage<sup>297</sup> like a holyman)
2. violence = Kṛṣṇa (who killed many demons such as Kamsa, Śiśupāla etc. and who incited the reluctant Arjuna in the name of duty<sup>298</sup> to engage in battle at Kurukṣetra)
3. eroticism = Subhadrā (one of the wives of Arjuna whom he married by abduction<sup>299</sup>)

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<sup>295</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Beginning), pp.316-318

<sup>296</sup> *pāṇḍavā hi yathāsmākam tathā duryodhano nṛpaḥ. tasyāpi kriyatām sāhyam sa paryeti punaḥ punaḥ.* (Udyogaparva 157:29) "As the sons of Pāṇḍu are to us, so is that ruler of men Duryodhana. Therefore, you help him also for he applied for it again and again."

<sup>297</sup> *tasmād yāsyāmi tīrthāni sarasvatī nīṣevitum. na hi śakṣyāmi kauravyān naśyamānānupekṣitum.* (Udyogaparva 157:34) "Therefore I shall now go on pilgrimage to holy places on the banks of the Sarasvatī, for I shall not be able to look on with indifference at this massacre of the Kurus."

<sup>298</sup> *svadharmam api cā'vekṣya na vikampitum arhasi. dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyāt kṣatriyasya na vidyate.* (Bhagavadgītā II:31) "Further, having regard for your own duty, you should not falter. There exists no greater good for a warrior than a battle enjoined by duty."

*tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ.* (Bhagavadgītā II:37) "Either slain, you shall go to heaven, or victorious you shall enjoy the earth. Therefore, arise, O son of Kuntī, resolved for battle."

## The Wedding of Draupadī

### Evidence:

*yadā nivṛttā rājāno dhanuṣaḥ sajakarmaṇaḥ. athodathiṣṭhad viprāṇām  
madhyājjiṣṇurudāradhī. (188:1)*

"When all the kings desisted from the attempt to string the bow, the high-souled Arjuna, rose from among the brahmins." (188:1)

*tadarjuno vīryavatām sadarṣastadaindrarinindrāvarajaprabhāvaḥ. sajyam ca  
cakre nimiṣāntareṇa śarāmśca jagrāha daśārdhasamkhyān (188:20)*

"By Arjuna, the son of Indra, that foremost of all-powerful men, that hero as powerful as the younger brother Indra. He took up five arrows."  
(188:20)

*vivyādha lakṣyam nipapāta tacca chidreṇa bhūmau sahasātividdham.  
tato'ntarikṣe ca babhūva nādaḥ samājamadhye ca mahān ninādaḥ. (188:21)*

"Shot the mark and caused it to come down on the ground through the orifice of the machinery above over which it had been placed. Thereupon rose a great uproar in the sky and also a great clamor in the arena."  
(188:21)

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<sup>299</sup> *tāmabhidrutya kaunteyaḥ prasahyāropayad ratham. subhadrām cārusarvāṅgī  
kāmaḥaprapīḍitaḥ. (Ādiparva 220:7)* "The son of Kuntī, struck by the arrows of the god of love, suddenly rushed towards the faultless featured Subhadrā, and forcibly took her into his chariot."

*viddham tu lakṣyam prasamīkṣya kṛṣṇā pārtham ca śakrapratimam nirīkṣya.  
ādāya śuklam varamālyadāma jagāma kuntīsutamutsmayantī. (188:27)*

"Seeing the mark shot and seeing also Arjuna, who shot the mark like Indra himself, Draupadī was filled with joy. And she came to the son of Kuntī with a white robe and a garland of flowers." (188:27)

*tān gṛhītaśarāvāpān kruddhānāpatato bahūn. drupado vīkṣya santrāsād  
brāhmaṇāñcharaṇam gataḥ. (189:13)*

"Seeing those kings all rushing upon him in anger with bows and arrows, Drupada sought the protection of the priests from fear." (189:13)

*jighāmsamānāḥ kururājaputrāvamarṣayanto'rjunabhīmasenau. (189:15)*

"They rushed in anger against the Kuru princes, Bhīma and Arjuna."  
(189:15)

### **Analysis:**

#### **asceticism-violence-eroticism**

1. asceticism = Arjuna (disguised as a brahmin rises from the assembly of brahmins and shoots down the target)
2. violence = the assembled but unsuccessful princes rise in violence against Drupada, Arjuna and Bhīma after feeling insulted by a "brahmin's" success.
3. eroticism = Draupadī (likes Arjuna's success and garlands him)<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Beginning), pp. 348-364

### **13.13**

#### **Three Kṛṣṇas and Draupadī (alias Kṛṣṇā)**

##### **Evidence:**

*nivārayāmāsa mahīpatīmstān dharmeṇa labdhetyanunīya sarvān.* (190:38)

"Gently addressing the assembled monarchs by saying 'this maiden has been rightfully won'." (190:38)

*ekasya bahavyo vihitā mahiṣyaḥ kurunandana. naikasyā bahavaḥ pumsaḥ śrūyante patayaḥ kacit.* (195:27)

"O descendent of Kuru, it is ordained that a husband can have many wives, but we have never heard that a wife can have many husbands." (195:27)

*na me vāganṛtam prāha nādharme dhīyate matiḥ. evam caiva vadatyambā mama caitanmanogatam.* (195:30)

"My tongue never utters an untruth. My mind never turns to that which is sinful. It has been commanded by our mother, and my mind also approves of it." (195:30)

*yathāyam vihito dharmo yataścāyam sanātanaḥ. yathā ca prāha kaunteyastathā dharmo na samśayaḥ.* (196:20)

"(I shall tell you as to) how this practice has been established and why it is to be regarded as old and eternal. There is no doubt that what the son of Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira, has said is quite conformable to virtue." (196:20)

### **Analysis:**

Arjuna<sup>301</sup> (Kṛṣṇa) wins the hand of Draupadī (Kṛṣṇā), Śrī Kṛṣṇa convinces the assembly of angry princes that Draupadī has been fairly won by the "brahmin". Sage Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa dvaipāyana) concurs with the opinion of Yudhiṣṭhira that Draupadī's marriage to five men at the same time is dharmic.

1. Arjuna wins Draupadī
2. Śrī Kṛṣṇa deflects a debacle at the wedding of Draupadī
3. Sage Vyāsa approves of Draupadī having five husbands.

### **asceticism-violence-eroticism intertwined**

1. asceticism = Sage Vyāsa (an ascetic who was himself a product of eroticism and who engaged in eroticism with Ambikā and Ambālikā to beget the fathers of violent sons. He also authored the most violent epic)

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<sup>301</sup> *arjuna phalguṇa pārthaḥ kirīṭi śvetavāhana bhībatso vijaya kṛṣṇa savyasācī dhananjayaḥ.* (10 names of Arjuna)

2. violence = Arjuna (a hero who won Draupadī in the guise of an ascetic brahmin by skillfully using the bow, a weapon of violence, and who abducted Subhadrā, and who for a time acted like a eunuch while incognito)
3. eroticism = Śrīkr̥ṣṇa (ṣoḍaśastrīsahasrīśa, i.e. the Lord of 16000 women who preached the Bhagavadgītā, the gospel of ascetic non-attachment and who induced Arjuna into battle)

### 13.14

#### SABHĀ PARVA

#### Triadism and counter-triadism in the insult and avengement of

#### Draupadī

#### Evidence:

*asti te vai priyā rājan glaha eko'parājitaḥ. paṇasva kṛṣṇām pāñcālīm tayā"tmānam punarjaya. (65:32)*

"O king, there is still one stake dear to you which is not yet won. Bet Draupadī, the princess of Pāñcāla. By her, win yourself back." (65:32)

*duḥśāsanaīṣa mama sūtaputro vṛkodarādudvijate'lpacetāḥ. svayam pragrahyānaya yājñasenīm kim te kariṣyantyavaśāḥ sapatnāḥ. (67:25)*

"Having heard the command of his brother, that prince rose with blood red eyes. Entering the house of those great warriors, he thus spoke to the princess Draupadī." (67:25)

*duḥśāsana subālo'yam vikarṇaḥ prājñavādikaḥ. pāṇḍavānām ca vāsāmsi draupadyāścāpyupāharaḥ. (68:38)*

"O Duḥśāsana, this Vikarṇa, speaking words of wisdom, is but a boy. Take off the robes of the Pāṇḍavas, and also that of Draupadī." (68:38)

*tato duḥśāsano rājan draupadyā vasanam balāt. sabhāmadhye samākṣipyā vyapākraṣṭum pracakrame. (68:40)*

"O king, thereupon Duḥśāsana, in the presence of all in the assembly, began to drag forcibly the cloth of Draupadī." (68:40)

*abhyutsmayitvā rādheyam bhīmamāgharṣayanniva. draupadyāḥ prekṣamāṇāyāḥ savyamūrumdarśayat. (71:12)*

"Having encouraged Karṇa, and insulting Bhīma, he uncovered his right thigh, he showed it to Draupadī in her very sight." (71:12)

*aham duryodhanam hantā karṇam hantā dhananjayaḥ. śakunim cākṣakitavam sahadevo haniṣyati. (77:26)*

"I shall be the slayer of Duryodhana. Arjuna will be the slayer of Karṇa. Sahadeva will kill the gambler Śakuni." (77:26)

*vākyasūrasya caivāsya puruṣasya durātmanaḥ. duḥśāsanasya rudhiram pātāsmi mṛgarāḍiva. (77:29)*

"As regards this wicked-minded man, Duḥśāsana, who is bold in speech, I will drink his blood like a lion." (77:29)

**Analysis:**

1. Śakuni asked for the staking of Draupadī in the dice-game.
2. Duryodhana orders that Draupadī to be brought into the assembly hall and bares his left thigh to Draupadī in front of all.
3. Karṇa orders the disrobement of Draupadī
4. Duḥśāsana actually attempts to disrobe Draupadī

The triadism is as follows in terms of seniority:

1. Śakuni
2. Karṇa
3. Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana

The counter-triadism that will avenge Draupadī is predicted by Bhīma as follows:

1. Sahadeva would kill Śakuni (the youngest of the Pāṇḍavas would kill the oldest of the vicious Kauravas that were involved in the insulting of Draupadī)
2. Arjuna would kill Karṇa (middle to middle)
3. Bhīma would kill both Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana (the oldest of the Pāṇḍavas would kill the youngest of the vicious Kauravas that were involved in the insulting of Draupadī)<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., *'The Mahābhārata'* (The Book of the Assembly Hall), p. 161



## 13.15

### The Three lights in every person

#### Evidence:

*triṇī jyotīmsī puruṣa iti vai devalo'bravīt. apatyam karma vidyā ca yataḥ  
sṛṣṭāḥ prajāstataḥ. (72:5)*

"Devala has said that offspring, deeds and learning, these are the three lights that is in every person, for from these (three) has sprung creation."  
(72:5)

*amedhye vai gataprāṇo śūnye jñātibhirujjhīte. dehe tritayamevaitat  
puruṣasyopayujyate. (72:6)*

"When life becomes extinct and the body becomes impure, and is cast-off by the relatives, these three (offspring, deeds and learning) become of service to every person." (72:6)

#### Analysis:

##### asceticism-violence-eroticism

1. asceticism = knowledge (vidyā)
2. violence = action (karma)
3. eroticism = offspring (apatya)

##### sattva-rajas-tamas

1. sattva = knowledge (vidyā)
2. rajas = action (karma)

3. tamas = offspring (apatya)

**nobility-sacrifice-fertility**

1. nobility = knowledge (vidyā)

2. sacrifice = action (karma)

3. fertility = offspring (apatya)

Knowledge is sattvic and imparted chiefly by ascetics. The Vedas (which according to Hindu tradition are the source-books of all types of knowledge) are first "heard" (śruti) by the seers (ṛṣis) who are ascetics and then passed on to the rest of humankind. Also, the acquisition of knowledge is done in the brahmacharya stage which is a form of asceticism. Thus knowledge is by definition closely allied to asceticism in Indian culture. Knowledge is light and intelligence hence sattvic. Knowledge is pure and noble<sup>303</sup> points out Śrīkrṣṇa.

Action is rajasic and is the central aspect of ritual sacrifice (yajña) as well as battle which is often referred to as raṇayajña. In this case, the insult of Draupadī did indeed lead to violent consequences.

Offspring is associated with fertility and it is only through the erotic act of sex that normally speaking children are born. Since offspring come from the body which is associated with the earth (pṛthivi) which in turn is identified with tamas, offspring in that sense are associated with tamas.

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<sup>303</sup> *nahi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate* (Bhagavadgītā IV:38) "There is nothing in this world that is equal in purity to wisdom."

**13.16**

**UDYOGA PARVA**

**demonic-divine-devout**

**Evidence:**

*tau yātvā puruṣavyāghrau dvārakām kurunandanau. suptam dadṛśatuḥ  
kṛṣṇam śayānam cābhijagmatuḥ. (7:7)*

"The two sons of Kuru, foremost among men, having reached Dvārakā, saw Kṛṣṇa asleep and went near him as he lay." (7:7)

*tataḥ śayāne govinde praviveśa suyodhanaḥ. ucchīrṣataśca kṛṣṇasya  
niśasāda varāsane. (7:8)*

"And as Kṛṣṇa lay, Suyodhana (Duryodhana) entered and sat himself down on the floor, which he used as a seat, near the head of Kṛṣṇa." (7:8)

*tataḥ kirīṭī tasyānupraviveśa mahāmanāḥ. paścāccaiva sa kṛṣṇasya  
prahvo'tiṣṭhat kṛtāñjalīḥ. (7:9)*

"Then entered the large-minded one, wearing a crown and stood with the hands clasped, near the feet of Kṛṣṇa." (7:9)

*pratibuddhaḥ sa vārṣṇeyo dadarśāgre kirīṭinam. sa tayoḥ svāgatam kṛtvā  
yathāvat pratipūjya tau. (7:10)*

"The son of Vṛṣṇi (Kṛṣṇa), having awakened, first saw the one wearing a crown and welcomed them and did them due honors." (7:10)

*tadāgamanajam hetum papraccha madhusūdanaḥ. tato duryodhanaḥ  
kṛṣṇamuvāca prahasinnava. (7:11)*

"The son of Madhu (Kṛṣṇa) asked the cause of their coming, and Duryodhana said, as if in jest" (7:11)

*tathā sambandhaka tulyasmākam tvayi mādharma. aham cābhigataḥ pūrvam  
tvāmadya madhusūdana. (7:13)*

"And, O slayer of Madhu, our relations with you are the same, and this day, I have come first to you." (7:13)

*pūrvam cābhigatam santo bhajante pūrvasāriṇaḥ. (7:14)*

"From the time of our ancestors, good men have befriended him who has been the first to come." (7:14)

*bhavānabhigataḥ pūrvamatra me nāsti samśayaḥ. dṛṣṭastu prathamam rājan  
mayā pārtho dhanamjayaḥ. (7:15)*

"I have not the slightest doubt that you came here first, but it is Arjuna, the son of Kuntī, O king, who was first seen by me." (7:15)

*tava pūrvābhigamanāt pūrvam cāpyasya darśanāt. sāhāyyamubhayoreva  
kariṣyāmi suyodhana. (7:16)*

"O Suyodhana (Duryodhana), yourself having come first, and he having been seen by me first, I shall help both of you." (7:16)

*pravāraṇam tu bālānām pūrvam kāryamiti śrutīḥ. tasmāt pravāraṇam pūrvamarhaḥ pārtho dhanamjayaḥ. (7:17)*

"But the Vedas lay down that the younger persons should be aided first. Therefore, I should first assist Arjuna, the son of Kuntī." (7:17)

*te vā yudhi durādharṣā bhavantvekasya sainikāḥ. ayudhyamānaḥ samgrāme nyastaśastro'hamekataḥ. (7:19)*

"Let them, who are hard to defeat in battle, be the army of one party of you, and let myself who shall not fight, having put off my weapons, take the side of the other." (7:19)

*ābhyāmanyataram pārtha yat te hṛdyantaram matam. tad vṛṇītām bhavānagne pravāryastvam hi dharmataḥ. (7:20)*

"Of these two, O son of Kuntī, choose anyone after your liking, for you have the right of first choice." (7:20)

*evamuktastu kṛṣṇena kuntīputro dhanamjayaḥ. ayudhyamānam samgrāme varayāmāsa keśavam. (7:21)*

"Arjuna, the son of Kuntī, being thus spoken to by Kṛṣṇa, chose him (Kṛṣṇa), who was not to fight in the battle." (7:21)

*duryodhanastu tat sainyam sarvamāvarayat tadā. sahasrāṅām sahasram tu yodhānām prāpya bhārata. (7:23)*

"And Duryodhana then chose the whole of that army. And, O descendent of Bharata, having gotten thousands upon thousands of warriors." (7:23)

*kṛṣṇam cāpahṛtam jñātvā samprāpa paramām mudam. duryodhanastu tat sainyam sarvamādāya pārthiva. (7:24)*

"And knowing that Kṛṣṇa was lost to him, he became mightily pleased. And, O king, Duryodhana having taken the whole army" (7:24)

**Analysis:**

Both Duryodhana and Arjuna arrive at Dvārakā at about the same time. However, Duryodhana arrives first into Kṛṣṇa's chambers where he finds Kṛṣṇa asleep and filled with demonic attributes as he is, arrogantly places himself at Kṛṣṇa's head. Arjuna arrives shortly thereafter at Kṛṣṇa's chamber and being devout as he is, humbly sits at Kṛṣṇa's feet. Kṛṣṇa wakes up and sees Arjuna first. Duryodhana demands that Kṛṣṇa meet with him first as he was first to arrive. Kṛṣṇa however calms Duryodhana by telling him that he'll help both sides. Nevertheless Kṛṣṇa points out that Arjuna gets the first choice as tradition establishes that the youngest gets the first choice. Kṛṣṇa gives the choice of either himself alone on one side as a non-combatant, or his entire powerful army to the other. Arjuna

chooses Kṛṣṇa to the joy of Duryodhana who gets the whole of the mighty Yādava army.<sup>304</sup>

Arjuna chose right while Duryodhana chose might. The divine gave the choice to the demon and the devotee. The devotee chose the divine while the demon rejected it.

### 13.17

#### BHĪṢMA PARVA

#### God-Preceptor-Disciple

#### Evidence:

*tamāsthitaḥ keśavasamgr̥hītam kapidhvajo gāṇḍīvabāṇapāṇinaḥ.* (22:10)

"On this grand chariot which was driven by Kṛṣṇa, stood this ape-bannered hero with the Gāṇḍīva-bow and arrows in hand." (22:10)

#### Analysis:

Kṛṣṇa, Parabrahman, is about to deliver the message of the Gītā to Arjuna. But God will speak to His devotee only through the preceptor who is Vāyu, the perceptible Brahman,<sup>305</sup> mounted as the ape (Hanumān) on Arjuna's chariot.

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<sup>304</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., 'The Mahābhārata' (The Book of the Effort), p.197

<sup>305</sup> *namo brahmaṇe namaste vāyo tvameva pratyakṣam brahmāsi* (Taittirīyopaniṣad 1:1:1) "Salutations to the Lord, salutations to the god Vāyu, you are the visible Lord."

### 13.18

#### The Four Kaurava Marshalls and triadism

##### Analysis:

##### nobility-heroism-fertility

1. nobility = Bhīṣma (the noble one who never broke his vow of celibacy. The kṣatriya who behaved like a brahmin)
2. heroism = Droṇa (the brahmin who behaved like a kṣatriya) and Karṇa (who fought heroically and loyally for the Kauravas)
3. fertility = Śalya (the maternal uncle of the twins Nakula and Sahadeva)

During the eighteen days of battle, Bhīṣma was the marshall of the Kaurava army for ten days; Droṇa for five days; Karṇa for two days, and finally, Śalya for one day.

### 13.19

#### SAUPTIKA PARVA, STRĪ PARVA AND MAUŚĀLA PARVA

#### Why did Gāndhārī curse Kṛṣṇa to live for 36 years after the

#### Kuruksetra battle?

##### Evidence:

*trīṇi varṣasaharāṇi cariṣyasi mahīmimām.* (Sauptika Parva 16:10)

"For three thousand years you shall have to wander over this earth."  
(Sauptikaparva 16:10)



*pāṇḍavā dhārtarāṣṭrāśca dagdhāḥ kṛṣṇa parasparam. upekṣitā  
vinaśyantastvayā kasmājjanārdana. (Strīparva 25:39)*

"The Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, O Kṛṣṇa, have both been consumed. Whilst they were thus being routed out, O Kṛṣṇa, why were you indifferent to them?" (Strīparva 25:39)

*śaktena bahubhṛtyena vipule tiṣṭhatā bale. ubhayatra samarthena  
śrutavākyena caiva ha. (ibid 25:40)*

"You could have prevented the slaughter, for you had a large following and a vast army. You had eloquence, and you had the power of making peace." (ibid 25:40)

*icchatopekṣito nāśaḥ kurūṇām madhusūdana. yasmāt tvayā mahābāho  
phalam tasmādavāpnuhi. (ibid 25:41)*

"Since deliberately, O Kṛṣṇa, you were indifferent to this universal destruction. Therefore, O mighty-armed one, you should feel the consequences of this act." (ibid 25:41)

*patiśuśrūṣayā yanme tapaḥ kimcidupārjitam. tena tvām duravāpena śapsye  
cakragadādhara. (ibid 25:42)*

"By the little merit I have acquired by serving dutifully my husband, by that merit which is so difficult to obtain, I shall curse you, O Kṛṣṇa."  
(ibid 25:42)

*yasmāt parasparam ghnanto jñātayaḥ kurupāṇḍavāḥ. upekṣitāste govinda tasmājjñātīn vadhiṣyasi.* (ibid 25:43)

"Since you were indifferent to the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas whilst they killed each other, therefore, O Kṛṣṇa, you will become the destroyer of your own kinsmen." (ibid 25:43)

*tvamapyupasthite varṣe śaṭtrimśo madhusūdana. hatajñātirhatāmātyo hataputro vanecaraḥ.* (ibid 25:44)

"Thirty-six years from today, O Kṛṣṇa, you will, after bringing about the death of your kinsmen and friends and sons, wander in the forest." (ibid 25:44)

*kutsitenābhyupāyena nidhanam samavāpyasyasi.* (ibid 25:45)

"You shall die by ignoble means." (ibid 25:45)

*viśvāmitram ca kaṇvam ca nāradam ca tapodhanam. sāraṇapramukhā vīrā dadṛśurdvārakām gatām.* (Mauśāla Parva 1:15)

"One day, the Vṛṣṇi heroes including Sāraṇa amongst them, saw the sages Viśvāmitra, Kaṇva and Nārada arrive at Dvārakā." (Mauśāla Parva 1:15)

*vṛṣṇyandhakavināśāya musalam ghoramāyasam. vāsudevasya dāyadaḥ  
sāmba'yam janayiṣyati. (ibid 1:19)*

"For the destruction of the Vṛṣṇis and the Andhakas, a dreadful iron bolt will be produced by an heir of Vāsudeva named Sāmba." (ibid 1:19)

*yena yūyam sudurvṛttā nṛśamsā jātamanyavaḥ. ucchettāraḥ kulam  
kṛtsnamṛte rāmajanārdanau. (ibid 1:20)*

"O wicked and cruel ones, intoxicated with pride, through that iron bolt you will become the exterminators of your family with the exception of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa." (ibid 1:20)

*tataḥ pariṣado madhye yuyudhāno madotkaṭaḥ. abravīt  
kṛtavarmāṅamavahāsyavamanya ca. (ibid 3:17)*

"Then Yuyudhāna, inebriated with wine, derisively laughing at and insulting Kṛtavarman, in the midst of that assembly, said" (ibid 3:17)

*tataḥ paramasamkruddhaḥ kṛtavarmā tamabravīt. nirdiśanniva sāvajñam  
tadā savyena pāṇinā. (ibid 3:20)*

"Greatly enraged at this, Kṛtavarman, emphasizing his disregard for Sātyaki by pointing to him with his left hand, said this to him" (ibid 3:20)

*evamuktvā khaḍgena keśavasya samīpataḥ. abhidrutya śiraḥ  
kruddhaściccheda kṛtavarmaṇaḥ. (ibid 3:28)*

"Having said these words, Sātyaki rushed at Kṛtavarman, and cut-off his head with a sword in the very sight of Kṛṣṇa." (ibid 3:28)

*ekībhūtaṣṭataḥ sarve kālaparyāyacoditāḥ. bhojāndhakā mahārāja śaineyam  
paryavāryan. (ibid 3:30)*

"At that time, however, O king, the Bhojas and the Andhakas, moved by the perverseness of the hour that had come upon them, all became as one man and surrounded the son of Śini." (ibid 3:30)

*hanyamāne tu śaineya kruddho rukmiṇīnandanaḥ.  
tadanantaramāgacchanmokṣaiṣyan śineḥ sutam. (ibid 3:33)*

"When the son of Śini was being thus assaulted, Rukmiṇi's son became greatly enraged. He rushed forward for rescuing Sātyaki who was engaged in fighting the Bhojas and the Andhakas." (ibid 3:33)

*bahutvānnihatau tatra ubhau kṛṣṇasya paśyataḥ. hatam dṛṣṭvā ca śaineyam  
putram ca yadunandanaḥ. (ibid 3:35)*

"But the odds were overwhelming, both of them were killed before the very eyes of Kṛṣṇa. Seeing his own son, and the son of Śini too killed" (ibid 3:35)

*jarātha tam deśamupājagāma lubdhastadānīm mṛgalipsurugraḥ. sa keśavam  
yogayuktam śayānam mṛgāsakto lubdhakaḥ sāyakena. (ibid 4:22)*

"A fierce hunter by the name of Jarā, then came there, for finding a deer. The hunter mistaking Kṛṣṇa, who was stretched on the earth in a yogic posture, for a deer" (ibid 4:22)

*jarāvidhyat pādatale tvarāvamstam cābhitastajjighṛkṣurjagāma. athāpaśyat  
puruṣam yogayuktam pītāmbaram lubdhako'nekaśūm. (ibid 4:23)*

"pierced at him at the heel with an arrow and quickly came to that spot for capturing his prey. Coming up, Jarā saw a man dressed in yellow robes, rapt in the practice of yoga and having many arms." (ibid 4:23)

*matvā"tmānam tvapadrāddham sa tasya pādau jarā jagṛhe śamkitātmā.  
āśvāsāyamstam mahātmā tadānīm gacchanūrdhvam rodasī vyāpya lakṣmyā.  
(ibid 4:24)*

"Considering himself an offender, and filled with fear, he touched the feet of Kṛṣṇa. The high-souled one comforted him and then ascended upwards, filling the entire sky with splendor." (ibid 4:24)

### **Analysis:**

Gāndhārī curses Kṛṣṇa for not making enough of an effort to avoid the battle that took place between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. The

question is why does she allow him to live for 36 years in the pronouncement of her curse.<sup>306</sup> The reason is as follows:

She gives 10 years for each of the 3 living Kauravas (which is her party). These 3 Kauravas survivors of the Kurukṣetra battle are Kṛpa, Aśvatthāman and Kṛtavarman. She allows 6 years for each surviving Pāṇḍava. These 6 survivors are the 5 Pāṇḍava brothers and Sātyaki. Thus Kṛṣṇa is allowed to live for 36 years. Also,  $3+6 = 9$  which is a śāśvata samkhyā (eternal number) as any number multiplied by 9, the sum of the digits of the product can always be ultimately reduced to nine. This signifies that Kṛṣṇa is eternal and can never die.

Further, this viewpoint is reinforced by the fact that the brawl among the Yādavas at Dvārakā starts with Sātyaki (the pro-Pāṇḍava surviving Yādava) making accusations against Kṛtavarman (the pro-Kaurava surviving Yādava). Sātyaki kills Kṛtavarman and the Yādavas in turn kill Sātyaki. And hence the two Yādava survivors die.

It is further interesting to note that Aśvatthāman is cursed to wander the earth friendless for 3000 years for having killed the upa-Pāṇḍavas and Dhṛṣṭadyumna in their sleep. Also, it is three ṛṣis, i.e. Viśvāmitra, Kaṇva and Nārada, who curse the Yādavas.

Kṛṣṇa too is killed by a hunter. This is the karmic balancing for Daśaratha killing Śravaṇakumāra and Rāma killing Vālin from behind a tree. It is for this reason that Kṛṣṇa easily forgives the hunter.

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<sup>306</sup> van Buitenen, J.A.B., *'The Mahābhārata'* (The Book of the Women), pp. 70-71

**13.20**

**ĀŚRAMAVĀSIKA PARVA**

**The royal trio in the forest**

**Evidence:**

*kuntī gāndhārīm baddhanetrām vrajantīm skandhāsaktam  
hastamathodvahantī. rājā gāndhāryāḥ skandhadeśe'vasajja pāṇim yayau  
dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ pratītaḥ. (15:9)*

"Kuntī walked first, carrying on her shoulders the hand of Gāndhārī who walked with bandaged eyes. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra walked confidently behind Gāndhārī, placing his hand on her shoulder." (15:9)

*gaccha sañjaya yatrāgnirna tvām dahati kahircit. (37:23)*

"Go, O Sañjaya, to a place where the fire may not burn you." (37:23)

*vayamatrāgninā yuktā gamiṣyāma parām gatim. (37:24)*

"As regards ourselves, we shall allow our bodies to be destroyed by this fire, and attain to the greatest end." (37:24)

*sannirudhyendriyagrāmamāsīt kāṣṭhopamastadā. gāndhārī ca mahābhāgā  
jananī ca pṛthā tava. (37:31)*

"Governing all the senses, he remained like a post of wood. The highly blessed Gāndhārī and your mother Kuntī remained similarly." (37:31)

*dāvāgninā samāyukte sa ca rājā pitā tava. sañjayastu mahāmātrastasmād  
dāvādamucyata. (37:32)*

"Then your royal sire was overtaken by the wild-fire. Sañjaya, his minister, succeeded in escaping from that fire." (37:32)

**Analysis:**

It is the old royal trio that depart for the forest. The order is reversed. Kuntī who is the youngest of the three goes first. Gāndhārī is in the middle. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the oldest of the three goes last. All three are killed in a forest fire.

**sovereignty-heroism-fertility**

1. sovereignty = Dhṛtarāṣṭra
2. heroism = Kuntī (mother of the Pāṇḍavas)
3. fertility = Gāndhārī (mother of 101 children)

**sattva-rajas-tamas**

1. sattva = Gāndhārī
2. rajas = Kuntī
3. tamas = Dhṛtarāṣṭra

**dharma-dharmādharmā-adharma**

1. dharma = Gāndhārī
2. dharmādharmā = Kuntī
3. adharma = Dhṛtarāṣṭra



**13.21**

**TRIADISM IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ**

*tribhirguṇamayair bhāvairebhiḥ sarvam idam jagat. mohitam nā'bhijānāti  
mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam. (7:13)*

The whole world is deluded by the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas.

*trividham narakasye'dam dvāram nāśanam ātmanaḥ. kāmāḥ krodhas tathā  
lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet. (16:21)*

The ruin of the soul takes place through three means, i.e. lust, anger and greed.

*trividhā bhavati śraddhā (17:2)*

Faith of the bound souls is of three types, i.e. sāt̥tvic, rājasic and tāmasic.

*āhāras tvapī sarvasya trividhā bhavati (17:7)*

Food too is of three types, i.e. sāt̥tvic, rājasic and tāmasic.

*tapas tat trividham (17:17)*

Austerities is of three types also, i.e. sāt̥tvic, rājasic and tāmasic.

*aum tat saditi nirdeśo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ. (17:23)*

"Aum tat sat" is the trifold symbol of Brahman.

*tyāgo hi.....trividhaḥ (18:4)*

Relinquishment too is of three types.

*aniṣṭam iṣṭam miśram ca trividham karmaṇaḥ phalam. (18:12)*

The fruit of action is trifold, i.e. pleasant, unpleasant and mixed.

*jñānam jñeyam parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā. karmaṇam karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasamgrahaḥ. (18:18)*

Knowledge, known and knower are the triad that incite one to action. The instrument of action, action and agent is the other triad.

*sukham tvidānīm trividham. (18:36)*

Happiness too is trifold, i.e. sāttvic, rājasic and tāmasic.

Chapters 3, 4 and 12 teach the three ways (mārgas) to salvation. These are karma, jñāna and bhakti respectively.

In both of the Hindu epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the triadic patterns that have been deciphered are not the only ones. There certainly are more. I am, here, just presenting the most obvious and important ones. The Rāmāyaṇa which is the first of two epics, being closer in time to the Indo-European era of Indian religio-cultural history, had a lot more Dumezilian type of triadic patterns not to mention other types of triadisms. The second epic, i.e. the Mahābhārata, given its vast size, i.e. four times the size of the Rāmāyaṇa, has relatively fewer Dumezilian type of triadic patterns as the epic is historically at the tail-end of the Indo-European era, and to a great extent well integrated with the Dravidian elements of Indian culture. The number five which plays a

prominent part in Dravidian culture can be readily seen in matters dealing with Draupadī, one of the chief female figures of the epic. This is just one, though important, example of the integration and assimilation of Indo-European with non-Indo-European elements in Indian culture.

## **Chapter 14**

### **The two epics connected in dharma-dharmādharma-adharma context in three curious episodes**

The killing of Vālī by Rāma from behind a tree in order to help Sugrīva become king, has become one of the biggest blotches on Rāma's otherwise impeccable character. Except for the devoutly faithful and the fanatically dedicated, any explanation either within the episode such as Rāma's tedious justification or external commentaries based in piety trying to explain things away rather than explaining them seem very dissatisfying to the objective reader of the epic.

Similarly, the killing of Karṇa by Arjuna who was egged on by a supposedly non-combatant Kṛṣṇa when Karṇa was trying to retrieve his mired chariot wheel also seems unchivalrous and ethically improper to any objective reader of the epic especially on account of the fact that the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna duo are looked upon as Deity incarnate and enlightened devotee *par excellence*. Again, any explanation, given within or found without, seems unsatisfying.

However, the two episodes may be resolved somewhat if not solved outright by seeing the interconnectedness between them both dharmically and karmically.

#### **Vālī-Sugrīva-Rāma episode**

Vālī is Indra incarnate

Sugrīva is Sūrya incarnate

Rāma is Viṣṇu incarnate

Hanumān is Vāyu incarnate

### **Karṇa-Arjuna-Kṛṣṇa episode**

Karṇa is Sūrya incarnate

Arjuna is Indra incarnate

Kṛṣṇa is Viṣṇu incarnate

Bhīma is Vāyu incarnate

The gods Sūrya and Indra are celestial and atmospheric deities respectively who have been in opposition for supremacy throughout the history of Hindu mythology since Vedic times. Viṣṇu, as a solar deity, is a celestial god who seems to have been sympathetic to Indra. In this sense, Viṣṇu is often referred to as *Upendra* (deputy Indra). So, in the two episodes of the two epics, the old Vedic drama is played out. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, being a solar deity, first fulfills his obligation to Sūrya by supporting Sugrīva and killing Vālī. Also, Rāma's Ikṣvāku dynasty is a solar dynasty. This injustice to Indra is karmically reversed and dharmically rectified when Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa not only egged on Indra as Arjuna to kill

Sūrya as Karṇa in a helpless situation, but also earlier gave Indra (as Arjuna) the gift of the Bhagavadgītā and the Cosmic Form (*viśvarūpa*). The Sūrya-Indra opposition is further clarified when Indra, at an earlier occasion, came in the guise of a brahmin and taking advantage of Karṇa's legendary generosity, got hold of Karṇa's armor of invincibility. The rivalry of the two gods is again clear when Karṇa told Kuntī that she'll always have five sons; either he dies and Arjuna lives or Arjuna dies and he lives. Earlier still, Karṇa and Arjuna were the only ones who could win Draupadī. Viṣṇu is put in the delicate role of balancing himself between the two. Vāyu is always on the side of Viṣṇu. In the Rāmāyaṇa, as Hanumān he serves Sugrīva, while in the Mahābhārata epic, he as Bhīma protects Indra as Arjuna. The Taittirīyopaniṣad makes it very clear that Vāyu is Brahman (God) the visible.

*namo brahmaṇe namaste vāyo tvameva pratyakṣam brahmāsi.* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad I:1:1]

"Salutations to Brahman (God), salutations to thee, O Vāyu, thou art indeed the perceptible Brahman (God)."

That Brahman (God) is Viṣṇu is referenced obliquely in the Kaṭhōpaniṣad.

*so'dhvanah param āpnoti tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam.* [Kaṭha Upaniṣad I:3:9]

"He (devotee) reaches the end of the journey, that supreme abode of Viṣṇu (Ubiquitous Lord)."

In the Mahābhārata epic, at the commencement of the great battle at Kurukṣetra, the chariot of Arjuna, driven by Kṛṣṇa, has an ape-banner (*kapidhvaja*):

*tamāsthitaḥ keśavasamgrhītam kapidhvajo gāṇḍīvabāṇapāṇinaḥ. dhanurdharo yasya samaḥ pṛthivyām na vidyate no bhavitā kadācit.* [Bhīṣma Parva 22:10]

"On this (grand) car, which was driven by Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) stood the ape-bannered hero (Arjuna) with Gāṇḍīva (bow) and arrows in his hand, a great bow man whose equal there is none on earth or none will be."

That ape is none other than Hanumān, the incarnation of the god Vāyu. And Hanumān is not there merely as an image on the banner but himself in living form.

Hanumān said to Bhīma:

*tadāham bṛhayiṣyāmi svaraveṇa ravam tava. vijayasyadhvajasthaśca nādān mokṣyāmi dāruṇān.* [Vana Parva 151:17]

"I shall then with my own (shouts) add to your shouts. Remaining on Vijaya's (Arjuna's) flagstaff, I shall send forth fearful shouts."

According to the Madhvite school of Vaiṣṇavite Hinduism, this powerful triad of Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa), Indra (Arjuna) and Vāyu (Hanumān) represents God, soul and mediator respectively. According to this school, the real recipient of the 'Song of the Blessed One' (*Bhagavadgītā*) was not Arjuna, but Hanumān who alone as mediator between man and God can convey the message of the Lord to mankind. This is their interpretation of the words:

*nimittamātram bhava savyasācin.* [Bhagavadgītā XI:33]

"You, O Savyasācin (Arjuna), be merely a means."

This triadic connection between Viṣṇu, Indra and Vāyu goes back to the Ṛgveda.

*viṣṇurmṛṅtantu vāyuh.* [Ṛgveda VI:50:12]

"Viṣṇu and Vāyu, make us happy"

*ā vāmaśvāso abhimātiṣāha indrāvīṣṇū sadhamādo vahantu.* [Ṛgveda VI:69:4]

"May your equally spirited steeds, O Indra and Viṣṇu, the triumphant over enemies, bear you hither."



*ubhā jigyathurna parā jayethe na parā jigye katarascanainoh. indrasca  
visno yadapasrdhetam tredha sahasram vi tadairayetham. [Rgveda VI:69:8]*

"You have both ever been victorious; never have been conquered; neither of you two has been vanquished: with whomsoever you have contended, you have thrice conquered thousands."

Once the war is over, Gāndhārī is most displeased with Kṛṣṇa. She curses him to die after thirty-six years aftermath of the war. The reason she does that she allows Kṛṣṇa to live for every surviving war-participant. She gives ten years for each Kaurava, and one year for each Pāṇḍava.

### **Kaurava survivors**

Kṛpa  
Aśvatthāmā  
Kṛtavarmā

### **Pāṇḍava survivors**

Yudhiṣṭhira  
Bhīma  
Arjuna  
Nakula

Sahadeva

Sātyakī

Kṛṣṇa was a non-combatant and as such does not count. Yuyutsu, the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra by a maid, though a war-participant and survivor, also cannot be counted because he not only changed sides in the last minute, but also remained insignificant in the whole affair. Even the kingdom was not handed over to him when Dhṛtarāṣṭra left for the forest.

Further, it is significant that Sātyakī slays Kṛtavarmā when Gāndhārī's curse takes effect at the thirty-sixth year after the war. After this, the great carnage at Dvārakā begins. Kṛṣṇa watches his eldest son Pradyumna slain when the latter goes to defend Sātyakī.

It is also significant that three sages, Kaṇva, Viśvāmitra and Nārada play a very significant role in the suicidal carnage of Kṛṣṇa's people. Kaṇva is this bachelor sage, Viśvāmitra a former warrior-class sage, and Nārada this happy-go-lucky sage fit the Dumézilian triadic pattern.

The number thirty-six is significant as the integers in it add up to the sum of the number nine. The number nine in the Hindu tradition is referred to as a stable number (*sthira sankhyā*). It symbolizes eternity (*nityatva*). Thus Kṛṣṇa is eternal, he cannot be killed.

Kṛṣṇa ultimately 'dies' or completes his incarnational role when the hunter accidentally shoots him in the leg thinking him to be a quarry. This is significant as it is a karmic-dharmic payback for three events:

1. the killing of Śravaṇa kumāra by Daśaratha under the same "mistaken quarry" circumstances

2. the killing of Vālī from behind a tree with an arrow by Rāma
3. the killing of Karṇa by improper means by Arjuna while being urged on by Kṛṣṇa

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **Concluding Remarks**

This thesis has now concluded what it set out to do. Starting from the top in Part A, thesis has provided the aim, the introduction which included the plan, purpose, prior attempts, the historical and theoretical backgrounds outlining the structures of the four triadisms, and finally the expected outcome of the thesis. The thesis did a literature review of the subject by other scholars. After this, the thesis covered the tripartite scheme of Georges Dumézil as applied to the Indo-European myths from the Celtic in the western extreme to the Vedic in the eastern extreme. It also made a review of the scholarly criticisms leveled against Dumézil's theory. Next, the thesis moved on to give on to present an exposition of the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadic scheme extrapolated from Wendy Doniger's asceticism-eroticism dualism. From there, the thesis provided the background and analysis of the well-known Vedic triadism of sattva-rajas-tamas which received doctrinal edification in the Hindu philosophical systems of Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Vedānta. Then, the thesis provided an introduction and analysis of this very multivalent concept of dharma in its religious and social contexts.

In the second part, the thesis gave a synoptic overview of the storylines of the two Hindu epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Next, the thesis provided a synoptic analysis of sixteen important characters of the Rāmāyaṇa, and twelve important characters from the Mahābhārata.

In the final part, some twenty-seven episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa, and twenty episodes from the Mahābhārata were analyzed applying some or

all of the tripartite schemes. Lastly, some three special episodes were analyzed to show the interconnectedness of the two Hindu epics especially as associated with the notions of dharma and adharma.

The thrust of this thesis has been to put forth the view that the Hindu Epics have three principal triadic schemes reflected in them. The thesis has based this on the dual ethnographic heritage of Indian religious culture, i.e. the Elamo-Dravidian and the Indo-European.

Now to compare the two Hindu epics in the context of the four triadic schemes, I found that as far as the Dumézilian triadism went, the Mahābhārata, at least as far as the main characters are concerned, ironically was more faithful in sticking with the triadism like a mold than did the Rāmāyaṇa. The oldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, Yudhiṣṭhira was religious, noble, lawful and by virtue of his position a sovereign-to-be like Rāma both symbolizing the first level. But after this, the Mahābhārata clearly follows the Dumézilian model better. The next two brothers, Bhīma and Arjuna, are symbolic of the second level with both being vengeful brave warriors in mace and archery combat skills. By contrast in the Rāmāyaṇa, the brothers of the second level are split in their ways, one is aggressive (Lakṣmaṇa) and the other is passive (Bharata). The first goes into exile with Rāma, and the other stays back. However, both are very obedient to the sovereign. In the third level, the twins in the Mahābhārata remain intact going everywhere as a docile, insignificant duo. By contrast, the third level in the Rāmāyaṇa has only one of the twins as the utterly insignificant and docile character.

In the dharma-dharmādharma-adharma triadic scheme, the Rāmāyaṇa is much clearer in reflecting this, than the Mahābhārata. Though Rāma merely "knows dharma" (dharmajñā), Yudhiṣṭhira, by contrast, is dharm-

incarnate. Yet Rāma comes out the clear winner as at least the monogamist, wife-protector and as being free from vices such as gambling. As far as dharmādharma is concerned, the kingdoms and the characters involved one will find good clear-cut examples, as does one for adharma. By contrast, the Mahābhārata taken as a whole, seems to reflect the dharmādharma mold. The individual characters and episodes, as I have shown, indeed have good examples of each member of this triadism, but I am talking of the epic as a whole.

In the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism, the Rāmāyaṇa clearly wins out over the Mahābhārata here as well. The three kingdoms of the Rāmāyaṇa very clearly reflect this triadism as do the three brothers particularly in the Lankā kingdom for example. In the Mahābhārata, by contrast, one has to look at individual episodes rather than the overall picture.

In the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadic scheme, one finds that both the epics reflect this amply and equally in all their major episodes from beginning to end. One finds this triadism so well embedded into almost all episodes of both epics that it makes one wonder how much of the Elamo-Dravidian tradition that this triadism reflects has been absorbed into both epics. Their Indo-European aspect seems to have been overwhelmed if not totally blotted out. Are the epics the Aryanized versions of essentially Dravidian tales that existed in the subcontinent and got morphed on account of assimilation with an immigrating civilization? This is something someone in the future can look into.

In any case, for now, the outermost triadic scheme is the widest in scope and something that India shares with the rest of the Indo-European world. This is the tripartite scheme of Georges Dumézil. The middle ring of the triadic scheme is specifically the Indianized version of the Indo-Iranian group within the Indo-European world. The Avestan-Iranic scheme

was a strict ethical dualism of good and evil. In the Indian world it becomes dharma and adharma. What is in between these two extremes is, dharmādharma. Many episodes and characters in both epics reflect this intermediate category. The innermost triadism is purely Indian with a very strong Dravidian element. The triadic scheme of asceticism-violence-eroticism is an Aryanized Dravidian institution. Asceticism, especially, is purely Indian. No other part of the Indo-European world including the early Vedic era reflect this type of lifestyle. It is essentially a late Vedic era institution when the Indo-Aryans were considerably influenced by the Elamo-Dravidian Indus Valley culture which probably practiced asceticism. The Sāṅkhya-Yoga school of thought reflects this attitude as well as its triadism of sattva-rajas-tamas which fits in neatly with the triadism of asceticism-violence-eroticism. The two Hindu epics have retained all three stages of triadisms to their fullest. They are the best and the largest models of this triple triadic scheme.

In this three-ring theory of Indo-European penetration into the Indian sub-continent, I believe there are the seeds of other investigations that future scholars could make. Some of these are: the processes of the Indo-Europeanization of Europe with spin-off studies into why Greek and even more so Albanian, despite both being Indo-European, are so different than the other Indo-European tongues of Europe. How much of the languages of the pre-Indo-European peoples of Greece and Albania influence these tongues to be so different? In my opinion, it is as interesting as the Indian Indo-European languages being influenced by the very much still extant Elamo-Dravidian languages of the sub-continent. Other matters such as the investigation into the details of the feud and eventual parting of the ways between of the Avestan Iranians and the Vedic Indians took place. Was there a real serious quarrel over the supremacy of Varuṇa (later Ahura





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## APPENDIX 1

### A Letter to the Honorable Members of the Faculty of the Department of Religious Studies at UNISA

Honorable Members of the Faculty of the Department of Religious Studies:

Most kindly allow me to introduce myself.

I am (Mr.) B.N. Hebbar who has applied to your department to be considered as a possible doctoral candidate in the area of Hinduism. I propose to work under the guidance of your able colleague Prof. Dr. Michel Clasquin.

To this end, and as part of the requirement for my being considered by you all as a worthwhile candidate to admit, I am herewith submitting a proposal of my thesis topic in the following pages. I thank you in advance for your willingness to read the same.

The title of my proposed thesis is *Deciphering Patterns of Triadism in the Hindu Epics.*

This thesis purports to open fresh avenues on many fronts. Firstly, it deals quite extensively and substantially, for the very first time, with a topic on which the material written thus far has been generally very thin, marginal and largely peripheral, if not altogether non-existent. Secondly, it breaks

new ground in applying certain theories extrapolated by me, through my own pondering and cogitation over the years on the matter, from other views written on the subject. Thirdly, it hopes to rectify certain prejudices and misapprehensions about the Indo-European phenomenon held in many quarters both among the Indians as well as some Westerners, in very differing ways, on the said issue.

The following pages, which is the actual thesis proposal, which gives all the details, will hopefully make all this quite clear to you all.

If you find my proposal worthy, and if I am admitted as a doctoral candidate, I would consider it an honor, and I assure you all that I will do my best to live up to your expectations and eventually earn that degree.

I thank you once again for allowing me to write you this proposal and for your agreeing to read it.

I remain,  
yours sincerely and respectfully  
B.N.Hebba

## APPENDIX 2

### PROPOSAL-UNISA

**Proposed thesis title:** *Deciphering Patterns of Triadism in the Hindu Epics*

#### PART-1

##### **Why am I doing it?**

When I was a ten year-old kid, my father went to evening school to learn French. One day, in trying to memorize and master his French vocabulary, I came into the room just as he was uttering the words "deux-cents deux" [202]. It sounded a lot like the Hindi words for 202 [which is "do-so do"]. The only difference that I noticed was that the French pronunciation was far more nasalized than its Hindi counterpart. Over the years, I began to notice that a lot of Hindi words sounded very similar to their English equivalents as well. Words such as "naam = name", "shakkar = sugar", bhraataa = brother", "aath = eight" etc. And yet our Tamil neighbor's language was utterly unintelligible to me. And yet, according to some of my people, we were supposed to be all Indians, one people, without differences. But then the enigma remained that the English and French words seemed closer to the Hindi words than the Tamil ones. It was confusing indeed.

I then went to my father, who was an electronics engineer by profession, and asked him to resolve my linguistic empuzzlement. Though he was a science man, he had been good at history and geography during his school years. Further, he was a veteran of World War-II having served in the Royal Air-force. However, he had no training or exposure to linguistics. In trying to resolve my curiosity, he blurted out what he had heard oft repeated by many "educated" Indians, "Oh, German is a lot like Sanskrit you know". By saying this, instead of solving my puzzle, he had created one more. I was now totally confused. Afterwards, dad said something not too flattering about Lord Macaulay and praised Max Müller to the skies. It did not solve a thing for me. I wanted to know, who in heaven's name was this Max Müller! Added to all this, an older cousin of mine who was learning Russian in those days, came and said "Russian is a lot like Sanskrit, you know". But dad had told me that it was German. I got my cousin and father together in the same room to 'duke it out' [Americanism for 'fight it out']. Finally, like a good Indian father, dad pontifically said "All this is not important, go do your math homework. That's what's going to help you get a good paying job." And I hated math. Now you really know the reason why I'm doing this doctorate in religious studies [just kidding!]

Then in college, I came across the word "Indo-European" and with a confident self-assuring smile on my face, I read the immortal words of Sir William Jones [1746-1794] which remain to this day the core words of the chief and oft repeated 'mantra' of Indo-European linguistics the world over:



"The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all without believing them to have sprung from some common source which perhaps no longer exists. There is similar reason, though not quite forcible for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family."

[address to the Asiatic Society, 1786]

My cousin's Russian was still missing for Sir William's list. Then a good look at a linguistic map of the Indo-European tongues, soon fixed that lingering puzzle. But who was Max Müller? I was now ready for my next level of Indo-European nirvāṇa.

When I looked at the works and words of Max Müller [1823-1900], he took me to a whole new level. It was no more a mere linguistic deal. It was religious and cultural as well. He brought what my grandfather had often very reverentially talked about, i.e. the Vedas, and the word "Aryan" [Indo-European] connected together on the same page and in the same paragraph.

"The Veda has a two-fold interest: it belongs to the history of the world and to the history of India. In the history of the world, the Veda fills a gap which no literary work in any other language could fill. It carries us back to times of which we have no records anywhere, and gives us the very words of a generation

of men, of whom otherwise we could form but the vaguest estimate by means of conjectures and inferences. As long as man continues to take an interest in the history of his race and as long as we collect in libraries and museums the relics of former ages, the first place in that long row of books which contains the records of the Aryan branch of mankind will belong forever to the *R̥gveda*."

[*Ancient History of Sanskrit Literature*, (1859) p.63]

When I later read Max Müller's *Comparative Mythology* the Indo-European connection got sealed for me. In fact, with the Indo-European model, I now became interested in other ethno-linguistic families, i.e. Hamito-Semitic, Ural-Altaiic, Sino-Tibetan, Malayo-Polynesian, Elamo-Dravidian [to which belonged Tamil], Niger-Congo etc. In short, my view of the world became both expanded and scholarly. I slowly came to realize that even here, the big three, i.e. the Indo-European, the Hamito-Semitic and the Sino-Tibetan held the cards in terms of being the most influential ones in world religious culture.

The next leap in this Indo-European journey was to the writings of Georges Dumézil [1898-1986] who initiated me into a numerological pattern which he considered to be the hallmark of the Indo-European peoples. This ideological hallmark was the tripartite scheme. From the Celtic tradition in the West to the Vedic tradition in the East, he consistently pointed this triadism occurring as a leitmotif in the religious, cultural and social institutions of all the Indo-European peoples right across the Eurasian landmass. It immediately struck me as something truly remarkable and original in terms of scholarship. After this, I came to

regard William Jones, Max Müller, and Georges Dumézil as the three super-scholars who developed three important stages of the Indo-European phenomenon. William Jones was a linguist who was responsible for the discovery of the Indo-European family. Max Müller, a scholar in religion, took it to the next stage by diligently making the connections in terms of comparative Indo-European mythology and religion. Georges Dumézil, also a scholar in comparative Indo-European religion, sealed the issue by deciphering the tripartite pattern in the institutions of the Indo-European peoples. To me personally, the words of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III:9:2 came to mind when for the first time the Dumezilian triadism sunk into me:

*"trayas trimśat tveva devā iti. katame te trayas trimśad iti. aṣṭau vasavaḥ ekādaśa rudrāḥ dvādaśādityāḥ te ekatrimśat indraścaiva prajāpatiśca trayatrimśāviti"*

["there are only thirty-three gods. Which are these thirty three? The eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, these are thirty-one; Indra and Prajāpati make up thirty-three"]

It was quite clear that the Vedic gods were divided into three types, i.e. the celestial [Ādityas], the atmospheric [Rudras], and the terrestrial [Vasus]. Actually I find here a triadism within a triadism. Not only are the three types of gods a triadism, but they together would form the third level of the Dumezilian triadism with the thunderbolt-wielding Indra, the Vedic Thor, occupying the 2nd level, and Prajāpati, the Vedic Zeus, father of all creatures, occupying the 1st level.

Having become convinced with this triadism, I started to look for other triadisms. The sattva-rajas-tamas trio readily came to mind. This triadism has its origins in the Upaniṣads, but its doctrinal institutionalization came about in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedāntic systems of Hindu thought. To me this was no big discovery. It was merely a logical flow out the Dumezilian triadic pattern.

However, the one I'm truly proud of is the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadic pattern. The polarized dualistic theme of asceticism and eroticism was discovered by Wendy Doniger, the famous Indologist at the University of Chicago. Her book *Asceticism and Eroticism in the mythology of Śiva* [Oxford University Press, 1973] amply solidified this theme. I took this one step further and extrapolated a triadism out of it. The new element I added was "violence". In fact, I saw that was possible to turn this into a triadism in the context of the god Śiva himself. The asceticism and the eroticism of Śiva were already established by Doniger, I saw that as the Hindu god of destruction, namely, the "violence" element, quite readily fit in. Convinced of this triadic pattern, I was now prepared to apply it further.

**Why is it important that this be done? If it is so important, why hasn't it been done before?**

A few years ago, I was leafing through the *Journal of Indo-European Studies*. I glanced through the page listing the editorial board. There was not a single Indian or Iranian on it. The board of scholars were from some of the finest academic institutions of higher learning in the

world, but they were all European or American. Where is the "Indo" in the Indo-European, I thought to myself? Then I discerned the answer. The mistake is not that of the editorial board. These fine scholars would let in any qualified Indian or Iranian to be part of their editorial board. So, the mistake most definitely lay on the Indo-Iranian side. I first totally removed Iran from the equation. When the Iranians are not interested in their own native Zoroastrianism, why would they be interested in this "meaningless" Indo-European stuff. The present mindset of the Iranian nation, at least of the ruling clerics, is that there is nothing outside of the world of Shia Islam that is even remotely worth looking into. This then left the Indians and the Europeans and the Americans. Even here, the mistake was ninety percent Indian and only ten percent that of the Europeans and the Americans.

### **The problems at the Indian end**

So, why does ninety percent of the blame lie with the Indians? It is the Indian cultural mindset to begin with. To the Indians, if one is not a medical doctor or an engineer, one is slightly less than a human being. Recently, business professionals and lawyers have been deemed worthy by that cultural mindset. The study and pursuit of anything else is totally useless. The whole cultural mindset is to study to get trained in a high-paying vocation, make plenty of money, get married to a pretty or handsome spouse, raise children and live a life of utter fun and ease outside of one's career.

Any person pursuing anything in the humanities is looked upon in a two-fold manner by these people. The first, is that this person did not have the brains to pursue the sciences. Therefore, un-masculine if not outright sub-human. The second is that this person does not know how to make money and enjoy life. Therefore, this person is to be treated like a social outcast.

With this sort of a cultural mind-set, the universities in India were essentially geared in favour of the sciences. In fact, even the social sciences such as Economics, Political Science and Sociology were looked down upon. It was only the hard sciences that were socially acceptable. Among the social sciences, Economics was perhaps the "most respected". And even here, you were a nobody until you were a graduate of some prestigious foreign institution such as the London School of Economics. Because of this attitude, there were hardly any political think-tanks in India worth their name and much less having any international fame. Only recently in the 21st century, things are slowly changing. In fact, Stephen Cohen, professor of Political Science at New York University, was initially surprised that the Indian community in the United States with all its wealth was not into any sort of political lobbying through think-tank outfits. Many a time he approached the members of the well-endowed Indian immigrant community for fiscal resources, and they were just not interested. Cohen said, "they think that all this is not that important." Again, it is a reflection of the attitudes that they brought with them when they left India.

The universities in India in terms of the humanities are essentially confined to having the following departments, i.e. History, English and Philosophy. Rarely will one find an Anthropology department. However, the most important thing to note is that there are no Religion or Religious Studies departments in any of the Indian universities. Historically, there

never have been one. In a land that is so religious, it is utterly mind-boggling. It just does not make any sense. But it is a stark truth and reality that many scholars outside of India are sadly unaware of. When this is brought to their attention, they are totally surprised if not stunned. Some two decades ago, Christian, Muslim and Buddhist groups in India finally lobbied some state governments and managed to get a Christian Studies Department or Islamic Studies Program or Buddhist Studies Centre into the local universities. Hinduism is ignored. If someone wants to do an academic study of Hindu temple-worship or of Vedic yajñas, one would either do it through the Sanskrit department or the Anthropology department if there happens to be one at all in the first place. The Philosophy departments in Indian universities have traditionally and essentially spent all their time and efforts in making tenuous and artificial comparisons between Indian and Western philosophies. What are typically entertained are topics such as the comparisons between the atomistic metaphysics of Jainism with the atomistic views of the ancient Greek philosophers such as Leucippus and Democritus; or the arguments for the existence of God put forth by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher Udayana with those of Descartes; or the views of the Buddhist philosophers with those of the British Empiricists; or the ethics of Gītā with that of Kant; or between the metaphysics of Śankara and Spinoza, Bradley or Whitehead. In fact, the educated Hindus have always regarded philosophy as the true and high essence of their faith. So, this snobbish tradition of making artificial and superficial comparisons have remained since the days of the British Raj. The real and true historical connection that exists between Europe and India in the Indo-European tradition is utterly, most unfortunately, ignored.

Another reason for ignoring the religious side of Hinduism in the higher educational system of India can be traced to the battle royale

between the pro-Indian views of Max Muller and the anti-Indian views of Lord Macaulay [1800-1858] both of whom tried to influence the Indian educational system during the days of the British Raj. Let us first look at these two opposing views through the words of their chief proponents themselves.

"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant---I should point to India."

[*What can India teach us?* p. 6]

"India is not, as you may imagine, a distant, strange, or, at the very utmost, a curious country. India for the future belongs to Europe, it has its place in the Indo-European world, it has its place in our own history, and in what is the very life of history, the history of the human mind."

[*What can India teach us?* p. 13]

Max Müller delivered these lectures in 1882 to the British candidates of the Indian Civil Service.

However, his opponent, Lord Macaulay said as follows:

"No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as matter of policy; but many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And



this will be effected without any efforts to proselytise; without the smallest interference with religious liberty; merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the prospect."

[Lord Macaulay's letter to his father, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (Vol. 1)* p. 399 (1909), George O. Trevelyan]

"The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages, by which, by universal confession, there are not books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronise sound Philosophy and true History, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier, Astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, History, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long, and Geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter."

[*Lord Macaulay-his life-his writings* p.113, (1880), Charles H. Jones]

Thus we can see for ourselves clearly the two polarized European attitudes in dealing with the Indians and their culture. In the end, the Macaulay forces won out. However, the views of Müller were not totally discounted. This perhaps explains why there are Philosophy departments and not Religious Studies departments in Indian universities. Further, it also explains why the orientation of Philosophy departments towards the comparative approach method with Western philosophers which Max Müller had emphasized.

Another reason, as to why this topic has not been touched by the Indian side, lies in the emergence, in recent years, of the forces of Hindu fascism, known among many in our times, as the Hindutva movement. Its origins go back to the early part of the last century when the Hindu Mahasabha [HMS] was founded in 1915, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] was founded in 1925. Both these organizations were radically pro-Hindu. In their view, all of the Indian peoples were one, who were artificially separated into Aryan and Dravidian by the British in their divide and rule approach. No doubt the British may have had this approach in the governing of their Indian Empire. But that is where the truth ends. The British did not create the Aryan and the Dravidian. These ethno-linguistic groups are historical realities which this Hindutva bunch refuses to acknowledge as they are inconvenient truths which go against their pre-conceived jingoism. So, if the Indian peoples are one, from the Kashmiri to the Keralite, then it logically follows that the Aryan Migration into the sub-continent is false. Therefore, the entire Indo-European affair is just nonsense.

In 1951, the like-minded organizations of the HMS and the RSS got together to form a political party to gain parliamentary respectability. This political party came to be called the Bharatiya Janasangh [BJS]. For two decades they remained a toothless opposition. In 1977, they reinvented themselves under a new name and emblem. They called themselves the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. Finally in 1998 they came to power. Immediately they, together with their ideological allies all of whom came under the unifying nomenclature known as the Sangh Parivar, started to put their Hindutva ideology into practice. They tried to change the school and college textbooks in India to chuck-out the Aryan Migration aspect in Indian history. Their arguments for rejecting the Aryan Migration

phenomenon essentially came to be based on certain views. Among these were: that there is no mention in the Vedas of any migration from anywhere; it was impossible for immigrants to come on chariots through the western Himalayas; the horse was known to the Indus Valley peoples etc. The arguments they gave were not totally without merit. Criticism, skepticism in the context of scholarship is healthy. However, when this skepticism turns into self-delusional rigid dogmatism, then it loses its right to oppose. The Hindutva scholarship is a "swiss-cheese" scholarship. Whenever it suited their views, they argued quite diligently, and whenever it did not, they left gaping holes in their scholarship. Thankfully, every Indian did not fall for these arguments. R.S. Sharma in his book *Advent of the Aryans* [Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, India, 1999] has cogently argued in favor of the Aryan Migration viewpoint. However, the Hindutva crowd managed to ignite nationalism among the Indians. In a nation that essentially chooses to ignore the study of the humanities, this stirring up of nationalistic passions by the Hindutva bunch can be quite dangerous. In fact, the long arm of the Hindutva movement has reached the Indian immigrant community in far-off places such as the USA, Canada, UK, Australia etc. In the USA, the Hindutva crowd managed to stir-up the passions of the Indian-American community to petition the US courts to have any references to the Aryan Migration phenomenon deleted from the school textbooks. Thankfully again, the scholarly community led by Harvard University Sanskrit professor Michael Witzel got it blocked and the Hindutva fascists were soundly defeated. Despite this, seeing the wealth of the Indian-American community, some western "Indologists" have pragmatically gone over to the Hindutva side. Their thinking seems to be: "why fight for grants and funds when a very wealthy Hindu entrepreneur or medical doctor can write one a generous cheque" in exchange for some

snake-oil salesman pro-Hindutva "scholarship"? Later on, there'll be a grand reception thrown in honor of such a "scholar", and one even receives the grand title "ācārya" [venerable teacher]. This Hindutva bunch is very peculiar in their anti-western attitudes. On the one hand, they'll deny the Aryan Migration view, and yet they'll be the same hypocrites who, perhaps in the name of political expediency or some artificial amity, will go out of their way to say that Christ and Kṛṣṇa are one because both were born at midnight and because Herod and Kamsa were, respectively, headed to kill them.

So, when the Aryan Migration view is rejected by one bunch and ignored by the other half who are in favor science, technology and business education, then the Dumezilian Indo-European tripartite scheme or its spin-off theories does not have much of a chance. In short, it gets hit from both sides, i.e. the jingoistic fascists and the progressive pragmatists. And the few folks that are still left in the university crowd, are either too busy arguing about the grammatical niceties in the aphorisms of the renowned Sanskritist Pāṇini [520-460 BCE] or too involved in trying to figure out how similar are the philosophies of Śaṅkara [788-820] and Spinoza [1632-1677]. So, the story on the Indian side as to why my topic has not been done is now quite clear.

### **The problems at the Western end**

So, why hasn't European and American scholarship attempted to tackle my topic? Let's now take a look at the situation at this end of the Indo-European bargain.

Once when I was teaching a class and delivered a lecture on the Indo-European phenomenon in the context of a preamble lecture to Vedic Hinduism, a student after listening to me yelled out, "What's this 'indo' thing?" He understood all the comparative stuff I put across to the class in terms of the Celtic, Germanic, Balto-Slavic, Greco-Roman, but he just could not figure out this "indo" thing. After the class, I wondered to myself as to why this was so puzzling and hard to digest to this young man who happened to be a first-year undergraduate student. I quickly went over to the public library and asked the librarian to point me to any standard history textbooks being used in high-school classes on Western Civilization. I found my answer. Leafing through the table of contents, I saw a chapter on Mesopotamian civilization, then Egyptian civilization, then the Greek and Roman civilizations. I immediately went to the index and looked at the word "Indo-European". Oh yes, it was there alright, but merely as a footnote word mentioned just once in the context of the Greco-Roman chapters. No wonder, I thought to myself, that this kid's high-school teacher would not know the term, let alone the kid himself. So, when Western Civilization is presented as essentially as a product of Hebraism and Hellenism with their respective backgrounds, then there isn't too much room for this "indo" thing. It's too outlandish for a basic book on the history of Western Civilization.

On another occasion, I went to a lecture by a scholar in western philosophy at a leading university and his doctorate was from a distinguished one. I do not quite remember the context now, but after his lecture, I went and talked with him and soon the "Indo-European" thing came-up in the course of the conversation. When I explained to him about the Indo-European phenomenon, the expression on his face was as if he

had just received news that they discovered blue-cheese on the moon. He was all too much into Heidegger and Sartre to know what the hell I was talking about.

Alright, who then knows about the Indo-European thing among western university scholars? They can be divided into three groups. The first group is made up of western Indologists. The second group is made up of linguistic anthropologists. The third group is made up of scholars specializing in pre-Christian comparative European mythology.

To the first group made up of western Indologists, this Indo-European thing is too much of a peripheral, if not disputed, topic. The scholars in this group really want to sink themselves into Indian culture. They would much rather do their research and write a book on Gaṇeśa or Śiva or Durgā or temple rituals, pilgrimage to Jagannātha Puri, or the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads, or Karma-yoga in the Bhagavadgītā or the Sāṅkhya-Yoga tradition etc. Who in heaven's name wants to go back to Europe when there are so many juicy details about the goddess Kālī and tantric rites to be explored and write about etc.

To the second group made up of Indo-European linguists, they are purely the modern manifestations of Sir William Jones and Franz Bopp [1791-1867]. They are into comparative philology and nothing more. In fact, I once went to a lecture given by a senior lady professor of Spanish. In trying to explain the origins of the Spanish language, she put up her chart of the Indo-European languages. She was great as she started off from Celtic and progressed to the Germanic to the Italic to the Hellenic to the Balto-Slavic and to the Armenian. After that, she lost steam. One could clearly see that she was feeling quite uncomfortable and awkward to talk about the Indo-Iranian tongues even though they were there clearly on the chart. It was too out of the way for her. Iran was strange, and India

stranger. It was time for her to return to home base and concentrate on the Italic tongues, then transition into Spanish and zero in on Cervantes in particular.

The third group, made up of comparative European mythologists, know about the Indian end of their scholarship. However, they do not cross that psychological threshold or territorial marker set by their masters Müller and Dumézil. In other words, they do not get into the Indian stuff beyond Vedic Hinduism. They are quite content, for example, with identifying the Dumezilian first level of the tripartite scheme by saying that the Celtic Lugus equals the Germanic Odin equals the Slavic Svarog equals the Greek Zeus equals the Roman Jupiter equals the Avestan (Iranic) Ahura Mazda equals the Vedic (Indic) Varuṇa. Anything beyond this Vedic era, these scholars feel very uncomfortable. It is outside the jurisdiction of their scholarship. Good examples of these are scholars like Jaan Puhvel, J.P. Mallory both of whom are otherwise extra-ordinary scholars. By the way, Prof. Mallory's *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* [Thames and Hudson, U.K. 1991], is a superb introduction to the subject for anyone interested in acquainting oneself with this important but much ignored and misunderstood (and even maligned) topic. In fact, even in Vedic Hinduism, they do not venture to go beyond Vedic mythology. They are only very marginally interested in Vedic rituals, texts etc.

I find this attitude towards India by the scholars of groups two and three rather surprising because Maurice Winternitz clearly emphasized the importance of India to all humanities scholars studying pre-Christian European culture:

"If we wish to understand the beginnings of our own culture, if we wish to understand the oldest Indo-European culture, we must go to India, where the oldest literature of an Indo-European people is preserved."

[*A History of Indian Literature* (Vol. 1) 1927, p.6]

Another bunch in the West who not only would not care for people like Jones, Müller, Dumézil, Gimbutas, Mallory etc. but will put down in a condescending manner any Indo-European scholar, would be the extreme Biblicalists. To them, nothing other than their Biblical tradition is worth focusing on. And anything challenging that view, ought to be booted out. They are the counterparts of the Hindutva bunch on the Biblical side of the equation. A good example of this is when I went to a conference and there was a young British scholar who specialized in Zoroastrianism. In his talk, he made the remark that many concepts such as Heaven, Hell, Final Judgment, Archangels, Angels all came into Judaism from Zoroastrianism in the 2nd Temple Era [516 BCE to 70 CE]. He also mentioned the Dumezilian tripartite scheme. A whole bunch of Biblical extremists got up and shouted "Aryanist, Aryanist". One of them said, "we can show you that the triadic pattern exists even in the Hebrew Bible. Abraham saw three holy men at Mamre [Genesis 18:2], Yahweh is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob [Exodus 3:15], God is referred to as being 'holy' three times [Isaiah 6:3] etc." The British scholar retorted by saying that the contact of the Hebrew peoples and Indo-Europeans may have introduced this triadism into the Jewish tradition. I believe Dumézil himself pointed this out in one of his works. Anyway, my point here is that there is nothing wrong with raising legitimate objections, as long as it



is done in the context of decent civilized and scholarly discourse. There is no need to shout and yell at anyone.

The last group who dismiss Jones, Müller and Dumézil would be the Chomskian linguists. I do not know too much about this bunch. From what little I know and have gathered about them is that they have a very anatomical and neurological approach to linguistics and as such they are very dismissive of all this cultural and ethnographic stuff.

So, now we know as to what problems and issues lie in the European and American world of scholars to the undertaking of something like what I'm about to do.

Therefore, it is very important that a person of Indian background like me stand up to the Hindutva crowd and prove to the best of my ability, the triadic pattern of the Indo-European tradition enunciated by Dumézil as applied to the Hindu Epics which are immediately after the Vedic era.

The Hindus live not by the Vedas, which they merely owe lip-service to. They live their religion through their two epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. They are at the heart of Hindu culture, and if ever the Indo-European tradition has to be proved, it is there that one needs to do it. For the reasons mentioned above, nobody has done this before either from the Indian side or from the Western side in such a detailed manner.

Let me now sum up the reasons as to why my topic has not been touched thus far by anyone:

1. Because of the self-limiting unadventurous attitude of the European comparative mythologists to go anything beyond the pre-circumscribed Vedic material
2. Because of the jingoistic fascistic tendencies of the saffronized Hindutva crowd who regard all this Indo-European stuff as divisive in mentality, colonial in origin and alien to the cultural unity and body-politic of India. This is an attitude which stems from a general lack of critical thinking in the field of religion encouraged by the Indian cultural mindset at large.
3. Because of the obstructionist and dismissive tendencies of the extremist Biblicists about all this Indo-European business as being "Aryanist"
4. Because of the condescending attitude of the Chomsky linguists who snobbishly regard all this cultural stuff as secondary and that human physiology and neurology is primarily responsible for the basic structure of human language
5. Because of the progressive pragmatists in India who scoff at anything in the humanities as utterly useless and stupid and glorify an education based in science, technology and business as "real" education

What is stake here is true objective academic humanities scholarship based on critical thinking. I'm not addressing my thesis to Groups two and three as I see them as mirror images of each other in terms of entrenched uncritical religio-cultural dogmatism. I have no interest in convincing the folks in Groups four and five either. They can get together and start a "university" based on science, technology, medicine and business. With their attitude, they can petition the UN to abolish humanities education altogether from the face of the earth. The Indians can advise them on how to abolish religious studies departments completely. They seem to have unprecedented expertise in that area. I apologize for the sarcasm.

So, all I am concerned with then, is the people in Group one. Thankfully they are still what one may call as scholars. Though they are a shrinking and dying species, they, nevertheless, need to be convinced that it is worth their scholarly while to come outside of their cocoons and self-imposed thresholds and look at Vedic culture as a whole and the immediately post-Vedic era of the Hindu epics. They need to heed the advice of Prof. Winternitz (see p.9) on this matter. There, they will find not only plenty of episodes and instances of Dumézilian triadisms but also other triadisms as well. One will find the triadisms more in the Rāmāyaṇa than in the Mahābhārata as the former is closer to the Vedic era than the latter. The Indo-European "vapor trail" tends to thin out by the second epic. It is still there, but certainly smaller in proportion when comparing the sizes of the two epics. The Rāmāyaṇa is one-fourth the size of the Mahābhārata.

The other aim is to make reasonable people anywhere, who are not experts in this field, but are otherwise well-educated and interested in this area of knowledge, think deeply about these matters so that it will at least somewhat stem the tide or put a dent in the half-baked jingoistic agendas of certain people who in the name of cultural preservation and patriotism are craftily undermining and destroying objective academic scholarship so carefully constructed through pains-taking research by scholars in the field all over the world for well over three centuries.

In Part-2, I will describe how am I planning to do this? What is the theoretical background to my study? What I expect to find? and Why?

## PART-2

### How am I planning to do this? What is the theoretical background to my study? What do I expect to find? Why?

The fundamental aims of my thesis are as follows:

1. To point out amply that the Dumézilian tripartite scheme continues to exist in the immediately post-Vedic era of the Hindu epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. This is *something new* and nobody thus far has done any research on it to the extent I'm doing for the various reasons stated at the end of Part-1. Again, Dumézil's tripartite theory is not new; nor for that matter are the two Hindu epics. But the application of Dumézil's tripartite theory to the two Hindu epics, this widely, is something that is, indeed, new.
2. To point out that there are other triadic patterns other than the Dumézilian one. One of these is the asceticism-violence-eroticism triadism which came out as the *result of my own pondering and cogitation* from the dualistic scheme of asceticism and eroticism of the famous University of Chicago religion professor Wendy Doniger.
3. To further point out that there are two other triadic schemes, i.e. the dharma-dharmādharmā-adharma triadism and the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism. The first of this is again the result of *my own insights* based on the concepts of dharma and adharma prevalent in Indian cultural tradition. The

latter triadism already existed in Indian culture from ancient times. I have merely recognized it and applied it in the analysis of the various episodes of the Hindu epics.

Thus in each of the above aims, I have contributed something substantially brand new to this type of scholarship.

### **THE PLAN and METHODOLOGY of the THESIS**

The methodology on how I plan to go about presenting my thesis is as follows:

I am planning to write my thesis in three parts and fifteen sections. Part-A is the theory, Part-B is the context, and Part-C is the application of the theory to the context.

**PART-A** will be essentially dealing with such matters as the aim, the introduction, the literature review and most importantly the theoretical and structural backgrounds of the four types of triadic concepts that I would be applying in the analysis of the Hindu Epics. This part will contain seven sections.

**Section 1** will merely state the aims of the thesis.

**Section 2** will be dedicated to the introduction. It will be divided into five segments. They will look into the purpose, the prior attempts on the subject matter, if any, and the inadequate manner in which this has been dealt with, the plan and the theoretical background of the thesis topic outlining the structures of these triadisms, and finally the expected outcome of the thesis.

**Section 3** will be divided into two segments which will look at the literature review on the subject both in terms of books as well as articles.

**Section 4** will be dedicated to Georges Dumézil and the understanding of his tripartite scheme. It will be divided into four segments. They will look into the circumstances of the discovery of the tripartite scheme, the tripartite schemes in the Indo-European cultures of pre-Christian Europe such as the Celtic, Germanic, Balto-Slavic and Greco-Roman, the Indo-European tripartite schemes in Avestan (Iranian) and Vedic (Indian) cultures and will conclude with a review of the criticism of Dumézilian triadic scheme.

**Section 5** will look into the triadism extrapolated from the Asceticism and Eroticism dualism of Wendy Doniger. This section will be divided into four segments. The first segment will look at the institution of asceticism in the Indian cultural context. The next two segments will look at eroticism and violence also in the Indian cultural context. This section will conclude by looking at initial dualistic scheme of Doniger in the light of the triadism extrapolated from it.

**Section 6** will introduce the Indologically well-known triadic concepts of sattva-rajas-tamas. This section will be divided into three segments. The first segment will begin by tracing the origins of the sattva-rajas-tamas triadism to some late Upaniṣads. The second segment will then proceed to show how this triadic concept received doctrinal edification and formulation in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system of Hindu thought. The final segment will show its spill-over into, and adaptation by, the three most important schools of Vedānta, i.e. the schools of Śaṅkara [788-820], Rāmānuja [1017-1137] and Madhva [1238-1317].

**Section 7** will introduce the very Indian cultural concepts of dharma and adharma. This section will be divided into two segments. The first segment will look into the religious context of this highly charged multivalent term called "dharma" and its counter co-relate term "adharma". The second segment will show the social context of these two terms in Indian culture.

**PART-B** will mostly deal with introducing the two Hindu Epics, i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, in terms of providing synopses of these epics and introduction and analysis of some of the important personalities in these two epics. The idea behind this is that the reader becomes thoroughly familiar with both the story lines as well as the nature of each of the important protagonists who will show up in the analysis of the various episodes of the two epics. This part will be divided into four sections.

**Section 8** will provide a synopsis of the Rāmāyaṇa which contains seven books.

**Section 9** will provide a synopsis of the Mahābhārata which contains eighteen books of which the first three books contain the bulk of the epic story.

**Section 10** will analyze sixteen important personalities from the Rāmāyaṇa story line. These persons include people from all the three kingdoms involved in the epic. From the Ayodhyā Kingdom, we have the king and his three queens and the four sons where two of whom are twins. There are two sages, both rājaṛṣis [royal savants], associated with the Ayodhyā Kingdom. One of them has an adopted daughter who is the heroine of the epic. From the Kiṣkindhā Kingdom, are the two rival brothers and their intelligent minister. From the evil Laṅkā Kingdom are the three brothers, one of whom is the chief villain of the epic.

**Section 11** will analyze twelve important personalities from the Mahābhārata story line. These persons include the Grand Sire of the epic, the martial arts brahmin teacher, the three of the five brothers who are the heroes of the epic, their mother, their common wife, an alienated brother who has joined the two villains who are brothers in turn, and finally this divinity-incarnate, who staying on the sidelines, dominates both the ethics and the metaphysics of the epic.



**PART-C** will be the application part. It will be divided into two main sections which are essentially the application of the four triadic concepts discussed in Part-A to the two Hindu Epics that are analyzed in Part-B. Altogether some 27 episodes are analyzed from the Rāmāyaṇa epic applying some or all of the tripartite schemes. Similarly, some 20 episodes are analyzed from the Mahābhārata epic applying some or all of the tripartite schemes. The analyses of the various episodes from both the epics will be done in a template and tabulation style manner so as to give the reader a ready "photographic" effect in terms of viewing and absorbing the analyses made. All the details would have already been dealt with in Part-B quite extensively. So, there is absolutely no need for repetition here.

**Section 12** will analyze some 27 select episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa epic.

**Section 13** will analyze some 20 select episodes from the Mahābhārata epic.

**Section 14** will show how the two epics are connected in three curious episodes from both epics associated with the notions of dharma and adharma

**Section 15** will provide the bibliography divided into two segments, i.e. books and articles in scholarly journals on the various topics dealt with in this thesis.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As I had suspected for very many years that the institution of Indo-European triadism as initially expounded by Georges Dumézil and its akin theories are to be found immediately aftermath of the Vedic Era in the history of Hinduism. This era is the period of the Hindu Epics where these triadic patterns are quite evident.

As someone who comes from an Indian ethnic background it is most important that I point this out to those who would care to listen to such matters with an open mind which is free from any bias or pre-conceived notions. In recent years, it has become ignorantly fashionable among many Indians both in the sub-continent as well as in the diasporic communities to declare that the Indo-European phenomenon as the lingering vestige of European colonialism. This is simply not true. If anything, it was against the interests of European colonialists to make any ethnic or linguistic connections between the rulers and the ruled. It would have been inconvenient to them.

The heart and soul of the Hindus lie in these two epics which are venerated, read, enacted, emulated, assimilated, adapted, transmitted and perpetuated by them in all modes and manners of their lives. Thus, it is by pointing out that the two epics still maintain the Indo-European phenomenon, will perhaps change the minds of many Hindus and free them from their unnecessary anti-European prejudices. To reject colonialism is one thing, but to reject anything and everything in its name is wholly another matter. In other words, there is no need "to throw the baby out with the bathwater." It is nothing short of sheer prejudice, or perhaps reverse racism. And this is wrong.

In fact, when I delivered a lecture at a Hindu Temple on this topic, many Hindus eagerly listened to my analyses and were quite convinced. Two of them even agreed to publish my findings. I very strongly feel that the central purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one. Hence, if I can bring goodwill among peoples and mend misunderstandings and eliminate prejudices, I would have achieved much. I can only hope that would indeed be the case.

Thank you for having taken the time and made the efforts to read through my proposal. I look forward to your decision.