

SECONDARY TALES OF THE TWO GREAT EPICS

L. D. SERIES 88
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NAGIN J. SHAH

By
RAJENDRA I. NANAVATI
M. T. B. College
SURAT



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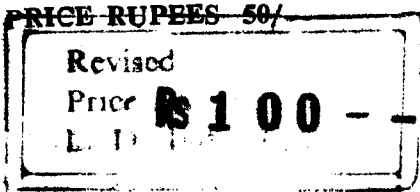
L.D. INSTITUTE OF INDOLOGY AHMEDABAD-9

Printed by

**Shri Ramanand Printing Press
Kankria Road,
Ahmedabad-22,
and Published by
Nagin J. Shah
L. D. Institute of Indology
Ahmedabad-9**

FIRST EDITION

October 1982



FOREWORD

The L.D. Institute of Indology has great pleasure in publishing Dr. Rajendra Nanavati's thesis entitled "*Secondary Tales of the Two Great Epics: A Study of their Form, Content and Function.*" The first chapter discusses folk literature, folk-tale-collections and the meaning of the term 'secondary'. The next two chapters are devoted to the study of the tales from the two Epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. His searching analysis of each story is revealing. His efforts to trace a story to its source are fruitful. He has tried to seek the help from various allied branches of learning viz. Sanskrit Poetics, Nāṭyaśāstra, Cultural Anthropology, Linguistics and History to make the study comprehensive.

I am most thankful to Dr. Nanavati for agreeing to the publication of his thesis, the present work, which earned him the Ph. D. Degree of the South Gujarat University. I hope the work will be welcomed by students of Literature and Mythology.

L.D. Institute of Indology
Ahmedabad-380009
15th October 1982.

Nagin J. Shah
Director

PREFACE

The two Great Epics of India – the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*—have been studied from various points of view but never from that of their secondary tales. S.A. Dange in his 'Legends in the Mahābhārata' has studied some tales from that epic either by showing their points of contact with the Brāhmaṇa legends and folk-lore or simply as folk-tales, but independently of the epic. It is a study of tales as they are found in the epic but not in the context of the epic which is provided by their functional aspect. This point of view i.e. of the secondary tales vis-a-vis their occurrence in the epics has, to the best knowledge of this writer, never been explored before. The present study is an humble attempt in that direction.

The two great epics are pre-eminently the examples of works evolved in the tradition of folk-literature. The secondary tales in them are also drawn for the most part from the inexhaustible store of floating mass of folk-tales. Therefore, only a folk-literary approach would be appropriate in a study of these tales. The implications of such an approach should be clearly understood. The foremost characteristic of a folk-tale is its traditionality. There is no definite verbal structure of a folk-tale. The only structure it has is that of its content-units called motifs. This content-structure is, on the one hand its subtle and flexible form, on the other hand it determines the function of the tale in the epic-context. This has been illustrated in a number of ways and emphasised again and again in the course of this study.

In 1966, this writer had submitted an essay "The Form and Role of Short-story in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*" to the University of Bombay for the V.N. Mandlik Gold Medal. The essay was fortunate in being adjudged worthy of the Medal. This inspired him to make a closer study of the subject for the degree of Ph. D. of the South Gujarat University, Surat. The title was altered so as to include the 'content' portion of the tales, and the term 'short-story' was changed to 'secondary tales' so as to include all the tales that did not form part of the 'original' (?) story,

It was soon realized that as a subject for a deeper study, the mass of tales from the two epics presented an unwieldy amount of material for study. Some sort of judicious restriction in the selection of material was absolutely necessary. The option of restricting the material by selecting any one of the epics seemed unwise and impractical. The tales in *Rāmāyaṇa* alone would not be sufficient in number and variety to form a subject of investigation of this nature. On the other hand, the tales in *Mahābhārata* would be far too many for the purpose. But, there was no point in leaving *Rāmāyaṇa* alone. Since both the epics are similar in many ways and even the tales of the two epics have many points of contact between them, their comparison would have been incumbent upon any student of them. The wise course was to take them together and then select material therefrom.

It was, therefore, decided to select some representative portions of the two epics. From *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bāla-Kāṇḍa* and *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* were chosen. They are accepted by all the scholars to be later additions, because they are almost wholly and indisputably secondary. Again, *Bāla-Kāṇḍa* and *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* are known to cover between themselves almost all the secondary tales of *Rāmāyaṇa*, the central Kāṇḍas being nearly free from them. The study of *Rāmāyaṇa*, could thus be nearly exhaustive.

In the case of *Mahābhārata* this was not possible. Here, therefore, *Ādiparvan* and *Sabhā-parvan* were selected. *Ādiparvan* is almost entirely made up of the secondary material of a very wide variety. *Sabhāparvan*, on the other hand, contains much genuine portion of the original epic-saga and a study of the occurrence of secondary tales in such portions would be very interesting. In the case of the *Mahābhārata*-tales, the aim has been to be comprehensive rather than exhaustive and this purpose has been achieved by studying the tales from these Parvans in functional groups and by taking in the stride, where it was possible, tales from other Parvans also. These two Parvans of the epic have been observed to cover within their compass nearly all important patterns of forms and functions of the secondary tales of our Great epics.

Originally, it was intended to study the tales only within the frames of the epic and to avoid the comparative aspect. But some exceptions had to be made. Thus the discussions of the tale of *Rīśyaśṛṅga*, that of *Ahalyā*, the cycle of *Viśvāmitra*-tales, and the tales of *Janamejaya*'s snake-sacrifice will show some small excursions beyond the limits of the investigation, always with some important results.

It may be mentioned here that generally the texts of the two Great Epics followed here are those of the critical editions – of the *Bhandarkar Oriental Reserach Institute*, Poona, in the case of *Mahābhārata*, and of the *Oriental Institute*, Baroda, in the case of *Rāmāyaṇa*. All the references in the book are traced to these editions, unless stated otherwise.

This writer is very thankful to his respected guide Dr. A.D. Shastri, Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, M.T.B. Arts College, Surat for his kind guidance in the preparation of this work as a thesis for Ph. D. He also thanks the authorities of the South Gujarat University, Surat, for granting permission to publish the thesis.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to Prin. K.C. Mehta, Principal, M.T.B. Arts college, Surat, for his constant and personal interest in the progress of the work which was a steady source of inspiration to this writer.

There are many friends of the staff of M. T. B. Arts College, Surat with whom this writer read a number of portions of the study and incorporated their suggestions – Prof. Ramesh Oza, Dr. Natvarsinh Parmar, Prof. M. V. Meghani, Prof. G.P. Śanadhya, Prof. Pravinsinh Chavda. He remembers them all gratefully.

VII

He also wishes to thank Prof. G. K. Bhat, Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri and Prof. S.A. Dange, who had read the thesis and encouraged him for its publication.

The writer is also grateful to the respected Dr. H.C. Bhayani, who took personal interest in directing the study to its publication and Dr. Nagin J. Shah, Director, L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad and other friends and authorities of the Institute who continuously extended their kind co-operation during the process of its publication.

And then, there are the names of Lata Desai as well as of Nina and Harsha and the entire Bhavnagari family. To forget them would be an offence, but to thank them would be a greater offence.

Surat-1.
15-3-1982

Rajendra Nanavati

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The Epics and Folk Literature

The important place legends hold in national life has been shown excellently by Dr. H. L. Hariyappa. Says he : “Now and then.... the hunger of the soul asserted itself, the monotony of existence, the transitoriness of life, birth and death, above all, the futility of appeal to an invisible God – these ideas began to sway over the mind of community.... For the average man with his preoccupations — and his class formed the teeming millions — a set of prepared ideas about the Supreme Power is necessary The average man, again, would feel gratified to find some concrete story on which his faith can lay anchor.... The medium of legend to communicate religious and even philosophical ideas has been found fruitful through ages. Nothing can exert greater credence on human mind than when it is described as having happened....

“At such a time, the service rendered by the Epics and the Purāṇas for enlivening the souls of the people can hardly be exaggerated. Here did Lomahaṛṣaṇa earn the gratitude of all by presenting the ancient legends to the people in a manner that pleased their mind.”¹

In view of this, the important place the two great epics occupy in the cultural history of India hardly needs to be stressed. “If a nation is to be united it is by the tradition it inherits and cherishes. And India’s unshakeable belief in and regard for tradition has been writ large in the Great epics and in the purāṇas and has been upheld by the sky-scraping towers of temple.”² How completely the various tales of the two great epics have pervaded all the walks of our national life has been shown by Dr. R. N. Dandekar in these words about MBh which can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, even to the other epic. “Men and women in India, from one end of the country to the other, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, simple and sophisticated, still derive entertainment, inspiration and guidance from the Mahābhārata. The first tales which an Indian grandmother tells every evening are taken from the MBh. The moral lessons which are taught to boys and girls in Indian schools are more often than not illustrated by stories from the great epic. The heroes of the MBh are still held by the youth of this country as their ideals. In times of stress and trial, the MBh has brought a message of hope as much to an illiterate villager as to an experienced statesman. Indian writers, ancient and modern,

1 *Rgvedic Legends Through the Ages*, H. L. Hariyappa, Poona, 1953. pp. 134-135.

2 *ibid*

have found in the stories of the great epic excellent vehicles for the expression of their creative genius. The popular folk-songs, the ballads sung by itinerant bards, the well-known literary works in several Indian languages, even talking pictures of the modern cinema, often draw their inspiration and material from the MBh. There is, indeed, no department of Indian life, private or public, which is not deeply influenced by the great epic.”³

This shows that the two great epics are closely connected with the popular traditional culture of India. In fact, the epics are often termed as *itihāsa*, and are bracketted together with the Purāṇas to form a class of literature. These works are often claimed to be the fifth Veda — the Loka-Veda. The five characteristics — the pañca lakṣaṇas⁴— of the Purāṇas can be shown to be present to an extent even in the epics, at least in the MBh. But there is an important difference between them. The functions the tales are supposed to perform in these two sub-types are quite different. The tales — mythological or so-called historical — form one of the five essential characteristics of Purāṇas, but they are not at all supposed to be essential to the two great epics. Each of the epics primarily professes to narrate only one single connected tale. In spite of this basic difference in the attitude to the inclusion of various tales, the fact remains that so many tales other than the principal ones are included in these two epics that their unnatural presence in the body of the epics, particularly in that of the MBh, becomes glaring. While Rāmāyaṇa, comparatively speaking, contains a limited number of such extraneous tales and even these are mostly lumped together either at the beginning (in BK) or towards the end (in UK), leaving the main body of the narrative almost uninterrupted, such tales in the MBh are almost innumerable, are spread throughout the epic, almost continuously disturb the flow of the principal narrative, and show, by contrast with Rāmāyaṇa, how much they contribute to the deformation of its epic form. A study of such secondary tales, therefore, should prove interesting as well as instructive.

There is ample justification for studying the numerous tales of the two great epics. Mankind’s interest in a tale is as old as the mankind itself. It is a natural corollary to its social instinct. Due to this social instinct and its resultant interest in story-telling, all nations and races possess a traditional lore of tales which is popularly handed down from antiquity to posterity, and to which lore we apply terms like ‘mythology’ or ‘legend’ or ‘folk-lore’ with a more-or-less similar connotation. “In Bhāratavarsha (India), such a tradition has endured in the shape of itihāsa and purāṇa, which once upon a time lived in the mouths of paurāṇikas (story-tellers) and which in later times, found embodiment in the two great epics and the

3 Under the entry “Epics—Indian Literature” in *Encyclopaedia of Literature* — Ed. Joseph T. Shipley.

4 *Matsyapurāṇa* : 53.64

Sargaś ca pratisargaś ca vaiśo manvantarāṇi ca /
Vaiśānucaritam ca’iva purāṇam pañcalakṣaṇam //

eighteen Purāṇas.”⁵ In fact, the epics have resulted from our traditional folk-literature, have been preserved traditionally as popular property, have come to contain and preserve a lot of popular material in the form of tales of various types and have, as we have seen, continuously influenced the folk-life and folk-culture. They have continuously and heavily drawn upon the traditional mass of tales. As Winternitz puts it : “It is certain.... that as early as the time of Buddha there was in existence an inexhaustible store of prose and verse narratives — Ākhyānas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Gāthās —, forming as it were *literary public property* which was drawn upon by the Buddhists and the Jains, as well as by the epic poets.”⁶

The folk-literary characteristic of the two great epics can be established by other means also. It is said in Chāndogya Upaniṣad⁷ that the magic songs of the Atharvaveda stand in the same relationship to the Itihāsapurāṇa as the hymns to the Ṛgveda, the prose prayer formulae to the Yajurveda, and the melodies to the Sāmaveda. Now Atharvaveda is traditionally called the Veda of the Bhṛguṣ and the Aṅgirasas, and as Dr. Sukthankar has shown in the case of the MBh, “in the formative period of the epic a powerful Bhārgava influence — direct or indirect — has been at work....”⁸ The Bhṛguṣ, therefore, are the common link connecting this class of literature with the Atharvaveda.

Again, it is generally accepted that the Ṛgveda reflects more of an aristocratic-priestly interest in its compilation, whereas the Atharvaveda is more popular in character. In contrast to the generally exalted tone of the Ṛgvedic prayers, the magic incantations of the Atharvaveda reflect the beliefs, customs, traditions of a more popular common mass. As Macdonell puts it : “In its main contents the *Atharvaveda* is more superstitious than the *Ṛgveda*. For it does not represent the more advanced religious beliefs of the priestly class, but is a collection of the most popular spells current among the masses, who always preserve more primitive notions with regard to demoniac powers.”⁹ In that sense Atharvaveda can be said to be nearer to the common folk than the Ṛgveda. In connecting Itihāsapurāṇas with the Atharvaveda, therefore, the tradition, perhaps, tried to emphasise its folk-literary character.

It is rather difficult to decide the type of this connection. The relation of the Purāṇas with the Vedas is rather wellknown. The knowledge of the Itihāsapurāṇas is considered essential for a proper understanding of the Vedas.¹⁰ The Purāṇas are not in

5 *Ṛgvedic Legends Through the Ages*, H.L. Hariyappa, Poona, 1953. p. xx.

6 *History of Indian Literature*, M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta. Vol. I, p. 314.

7 III. 34.

8 vide : ‘The Bhṛguṣ and the Bhārata’, *Sukthankar Memorial Edition*, Vol. I, Ed. P. K. Gode, p.333.

9 *A History of Sanskrit Literature* : 1962, p. 156.

10 vide ĀdiP. i. 204.

itihāsapurāṇābhyām vedam samupabṛmhayet /
bibhety alpaśrutāt vedo mām ayam prahariṣyati //

any way less important than the Vedas, simply because they are complementary.¹¹ In commentaries on the Vedas, the contextual episode for any mantra is often introduced with the words : “Here they narrate an Itihāsa”.¹² This means that the Itihāsa-lore originally consisted of narratives of such episodes as providing the context for the composition of the Vedic mantras. Naturally, this episodic material was handed down in the oral tradition. The care that was bestowed upon the Vedic mantras to preserve them without altering even a word or even an accent, was not considered necessary for this literature since it was not useful sacerdotally. And the looseness of words in the oral tradition in the case of this literature often resulted in the change of intent also.

Thus, the Itihāsa-Purāṇa literature has been preserved in tradition, chiefly oral. And the most important characteristic of folk-literature is its traditionality. As Stith Thompson shows : “The quality that determines whether a particular story is a folk-tale or not would seem to be the fact that it is handed down traditionally, whether by word of mouth or on the written or printed page.”¹³ Look at the word ‘Itihāsa’ itself. It means ‘iti ha āsa’ — ‘thus, indeed, it was’. Mark the force of the expletive ‘ha’. The very beginning of any tale with these words is enough to indicate that the tale has been handed down in oral tradition. Again it also seems to emphasise that the incident narrated is an actual historical happening. Automatically, the story woven in the narrative, or any claim described in it (such as ‘such and such feat was achieved by this mantra’) appears convincingly authoritative. As Dr. Hariyappa puts it, “Thus, indeed, it was” (*iti ha āsa*) combines with narration, a stamp of authority. And when, now and then, an appeal is made to former authorities by means of statements like *atrāpyudāharantīmam itihāsam purātanam*, etc., the belief is firmly rooted.¹⁴ Thus the overtones of the meaning of the word ‘itihāsa’ reveal the claim that the incident narrated in it is historical, therefore convincing and brought down in oral tradition. Of course, we cannot believe the claim to be always true. The so-called itihāsas may even be purely fictitious. Or the oral tradition might change the description of some original historical event to such an extent that it would be impossible to obtain even a semblance of the original from the oral narrative. We must keep this in mind when we call the two great epics the itihāsas. The application of the same term ‘itihāsa’ for the isolated contextual episodes as well as for the full-fledged epics indicates that there is some sort of relation between them. In fact, the single episodes seem to have been called ‘itihāsa’ through all the stages of their development, thus even the ballad-cycles and the epics also being called itihāsas.

Even the epic-character of these two great epics, MBh and RM, indicates their origin in folk-literature. The terms denoting the store of ancient traditional tales are

11 pūraṇāt purāṇam/ na hi traṇaṇā suvarṇa-pūraṇam kriyate/

12 atr ‘etihāsam ācakṣate/

13 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Ed. J. T. Shipley, 1970, p. 124.

14 *Rgvedic Legends Through the Ages*, H.L. Hariyappa, Poona, 1953, . 135.

Itihāsa, Ākhyāna, Purāṇa, Gāthā. Each describes one characteristic and all put together give us almost a definition of that type of literature. 'Itihāsa' indicates its historical aspect. 'Ākhyāna' denotes its narrative character. 'Purāṇa' claims its ancientness. 'Gāthā' points to its characteristic of being sung. All put together, these tales must originally have been in the form of narratives of ancient historical events to be sung. The sūtas and paurāṇikas and kuśilavas were our traditional bards, our custodians of this ancient lore, who used to sing the ballads of the heroic deeds of our ancient — historical or legendary — heroes in the royal courts as well as in the public. These ballads were originally single ballads but in a natural process of development they eventually grew into epics — 'epics of growth' as such epics are called. This process of evolution has been described thus by W. H. Hudson : This sort of an epic "is not in its entirety the work of a single author, but to some extent the result of a process of evolution and consolidation, and that a large amount of pre-existing material, in the shape of floating legends and earlier folk-poems and sagas, is gathered up in its composition. An epic of this kind may, therefore, be regarded as the final product of a long series of accretions and syntheses; scattered ballads gradually clustering together about a common character into ballad-cycles (like the English Robin Hood cycle), and these at length being reduced to approximate unity by the intervention of conscious art".¹⁵ This is very clearly exemplified in the case of the Finnish national epic 'Kalevala' which "owes its epic form to the labours of a modern scholar, Dr. Lonnrot, who, like Scott in his 'Border Raids', collected from the peasantry an immense number of ancient ballads and sagas, and then wove these together with great skill, into a consecutive narrative, without, as he asserted, adding a line of his own. His work, therefore, provides an interesting object-lesson, for it shows the way in which, in early times, an epic may have been made out of masses of scattered legendary material."¹⁶ The Anglo-Saxon epic "Beowulf" or the old Germanic epic "Nibelungenlied" also are examples of this type of epics. In our literature, the tales collected around the character of Viśvāmitra in RM¹⁷ come quite near to this form. The famous "Suparṇākhyāna" outside the epic, or the tales clustered around Garuḍa in MBh¹⁸ are further instances of such story-cycles which may as well be called epics in an embryonic stage. "To the same general class we may also assign the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*"¹⁹ or our RM and the original form of MBh (whether it be a 'Bhāratākhyāna' or a 'Jaya-kāvya'²⁰), "though we must do this with some diffidence, since... whatever may have been their genesis and early history, the controlling power of a single supreme genius is clearly evident in the poems as they stand."¹⁹ RM, as it stands today, clearly reveals the controlling power of a single supreme genius —

15 *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, p. 138.

16 *ibid.*, p. 139.

17 BK. Chs. 50-64.

18 ĀdiP. Chs. 16-30.

19 *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* : Hudson; p. 139.

20 About this 'Jaya-kāvya' we shall have to say more later on.

Vālmīki. And many portions of MBh which undoubtedly must have belonged to the original composition also reveal the hand of a literary genius. But it is obvious from this, that the epics of growth reveal the controlling power of the genius only in their final form. All the stages of their development prior to this final one belong to the folk-tradition only. This means that the development of our two great epics through all the stages but the last one has belonged to the folk-tradition. It is only in the final stage that the genius of Vālmīki and Vyāsa(?) shape them into epics.

At this stage, we must correct, or rather modify, the observation of Western critics that the tales resulting into an epic through the intervention of a genius-poet cluster around a character. So far as RM is concerned, this is well corroborated since the tales in RM must have clustered together about its hero Rāma. But in the case of MBh, there is no such single, central figure, around which the tales can be shown gathering. Instead, we must point out that the ballads must have gathered here around the central episode of the fratricidal war. Therefore, the common element around which the folk-ballads cluster may either be a central character or a central event.

We can show this aspect of the process of evolution of the epics in this way. When the popular ballads cluster around one character or one central event, and are welded together by some genius into the shape of an epic, their epic form comes to stay and is not generally observed to admit any further popular material. But the case of our two indigenous epics seems to be different. Even after they were shaped into epics by Vālmīki and Vyāsa Pārāśarya(?), further popular material kept coming in. In the case of RM, such fresh matter was added either in the beginning or in the end, thus keeping the original epic in the centre and almost intact. In the case of MBh, even this scruple was not cared about. Fresh matter kept on being added in the beginning, in the middle, in the end, in fact in every place where some pretext or the other could be found. Sometimes, when no such occasion to include a fresh tale was found, it was even introduced into the main story. Thus our epics, besides, being epics, became collection of tales. How this happened is shown very well by Romesh Chunder Dutt. Says he : "The epic became so popular that it went on growing with the growth of centuries. Every generation of poets had something to add; every distant nation in Northern India was anxious to interpolate some account of its deeds in the old record of the international war; every preacher of a new creed desired to have in the old Epic some sanction for the new truths he inculcated. . . All the floating mass of tales, traditions, legends and myths. . . found a shelter under the expanding wings of this wonderful Epic; and as Krishna worship became the prevailing religion of India after the decay of Buddhism, the old Epic caught the complexion of the times. . . it is thus that the work went on growing for a thousand years after it was first compiled and put together in the form of an Epic; until the crystal rill of the epic itself was all but lost in an unending morass of religious and didactic episodes, legends,

tales and traditions".²¹ Thus, the MBh in its early stages of evolution belonged to the folk-literary tradition, out of which some literary genius shaped an epic and tried to give it a final form, but the folk-literary tradition kept influencing the epic to such an extent that slowly the work lost its epic form, and became a large collection of popular tales. In other words, in all the stages before and after the one in which it was given an epic form, the MBh has belonged to the folk-tradition. In its present shape, "the Mahābhārata is not *one* poetic production at all, but rather a whole literature".²²

While MBh has almost irretrievably lost its epic form in this process, RM is fortunate in retaining its original epic form almost intact in spite of accepting the extraneous popular material, which for the most part is placed outside the kernel of the epic. It, therefore, clearly reveals the genius of Vālmīki side by side with the popular influence.

We can as well point out the difference in the result. Since MBh went on assimilating incidents, thoughts, ideals of the different peoples of India through centuries, it came to reflect the whole of the progressive Indian culture in all its diversity and intensity. RM, on the other hand, remained a story of noble characters inspiring the Indian people to emulate their high ideals. MBh took on a dynamic form, while RM always remained the same idealistic poem. Both achieved equal popularity but in their own different ways.

The Epics as Folk-Literature

At this point, it will be rewarding to examine how far do the epics as they are today reveal the characteristics of folk-literature. We shall quote below the characteristics of 'Folk-tale'²³ as described by Stith Thompson who is "one of the greatest authorities on the subject"²⁴ and try to see how far they are reflected in our epics.

We have already seen above, on the authority of Stith Thompson himself, that the most important quality of a folk-tale is its traditionality and that the term 'Itihāsa', which is used for such tales as well as the epics, itself suggests authoritative, historical, ancient oral tradition. Thompson adds: "they have established themselves as a part of a traditional store of tales of some group of people, whether literate or illiterate."²⁵ We have seen, in the words of Dr. Dandekar, what place these epic-tales have occupied in the cultural life of India.

21 Quoted in *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*; V. S. Sukthankar, pp. 2-3.

22 *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta, p. 316.

23 Under the entry 'Folk-tale' in *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Edited by Joseph T. Shipley, 1970. p. 124 ff.

24 *Cassell's Encyclopaedia of Literature*, part I. p. 224.

25 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Edited by Joseph T. Shipley, 1970, p. 124.

Again, "the study of the folk-tale is concerned with both the literary and oral tradition. No sharp line of demarcation can be drawn between the two, for the material flows freely from one channel into the other."²⁶ Not only that the epics have their origin in the traditional bardic lays which were recited, or sung, before the people, but the oral tradition also continuously influenced the epics even after they were put in the written form as is evidenced by the numberless archaic and ungrammatical forms and the wavy lines almost continuously appearing in the constituted critical text, the variants noted in the critical apparatus, and the passages relegated to the appendices of the epics in their critical editions. Naturally, this also applies equally well to the secondary tales of the epics.

"For the student of comparative literature the folk-tale is of extraordinary interest. He is able to examine the same narrative process, the same aesthetic interests, often the same motifs, and plots, among peoples of every type of cultural development. While he will undoubtedly be amazed at the universality of story-telling and even of some of its detailed manifestations, he will also be able to recognize and perhaps explain significant differences as he moves from the primitive to the 'civilized' or from the illiterate to the literate."²⁷

As we have pointed out above, we shall try to eschew the comparative aspect of these tales for the same fear of the unwieldiness of matter. But we shall have occasions to examine similar narrative processes which fall into certain well-recognized types of folk-tales. We shall also observe the same motifs and plots, with some significant differences, let us point out in anticipation, as, for example in the story of Cirakārin. The movement from the primitive to the 'civilized' also, we shall have occasions to observe in certain tales invented to explain certain obsolete customs.

"For most of the narrative materials of antiquity and the older civilizations of the orient, the folk-tales have been handed down in literary documents. These sometimes form a part of recognized tale-collections, which often have elaborate frameworks and an extremely complicated literary history."²⁸ The literary documents, in our case, are the two epics themselves. The RM, of course, has retained its epic form except in the first and the last books which, together with "this Golden Treasury of the Myths and Legends of India",²⁹ deserve to be treated as tale-collections. The extremely complicated histories of certain individual tales are well-nigh brought out by studies like "Rgvedic Legends through the Ages" by H. L. Hariyappa³⁰ or "Legends in the Mahābhārata" by S. A. Dange.³¹ The complications of the frameworks also have a history of their own which are decoded but only partly.

26 *ibid.*

27 *ibid.*

28 *ibid.* p. 125.

29 *Sukthankar Memorial Edition*, I p. 407.

30 *vide Bibliography.*

31 *vide Bibliography.*

“... a more and more conscientious attempt was made to record tales exactly as they are current orally among the people, especially in countries (Ireland) where conditions of tale-telling are favourable.”³²

Penzer says : “India is indeed the home of story-telling. It was from here that the Persians learned the art, and passed it on to the Arabians. From the Middle East the tales found their way to Constantinople and Venice, and finally in the pages of Boccaccio, Chaucer and La Fontaine In warm latitudes the temperature has naturally produced a general laxity in the habits of the people, and in Eastern countries the often exaggerated code of hospitality, coupled with the exclusion of women and consequential gatherings of men in the cool of the evenings, has given great impetus to story-telling. So much so, indeed, that it has produced the *Rāwī*, or professional story-teller, an important member of the community unknown in cooler latitudes, where the story-telling is almost confined to the family circle.”³³ The dialogue-form of the MBh, the innumerable ungrammatical or archaic forms, various idiomatic expressions and metre-filling devices so facilitated by the peculiarity of Sanskrit language which abounds in synonyms — all this goes to prove that the epics, and their secondary tales alongwith them, have been recorded for us as they were once current orally.

“Students of folk-tale are primarily concerned with problems of two kinds : (1) the origin and dissemination of tales and (2) the folktale as an art.”³⁴ (The first kind of problem naturally leads to the comparative aspect of the tales which, generally, we are not going to touch.) “The latter problem concerns the conditions of folk-tale telling (the kinds of people that tell tales, the circumstances of the telling, the reception by the audience, the way they are handed down), as well as the stylistic effects characteristic of this oral art.”³⁵ Later on, we shall have occasions to consider these conditions in some details in the context of our epics. Here we may point out only briefly, that the tellers of these tales were mostly either Bardic singers, or the Brāhmin custodians of the Purāṇas — the Paurāṇikas—; the circumstances were sacrificial; the audience was characterised by religiosity; and the whole literature was, for the most part, handed down in oral tradition which is exemplified in the manner in which the larger epic is narrated first by Sañjaya, then by Vaiṣampāyana and finally by Sauti Ugraśravas.

“Oral narrative art of this kind abounds in repetitions, formulas, and other well-known conventions. Often long passages recur most often in threes and

32 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Ed. J.T. Shipley, 1970, p. 125.

33 *The Ocean of Story*, Vol. I, Tr. Tawney, Ed. Penzer. Introduction, pp. xxxiv-xxxv & xxxvi.

34 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Ed. J.T. Shipley, 1970, p. 125.

35 *ibid.*

lead to a climax with the success of the youngest son or daughter. In some tales are "runs", conventional passages, largely nonsense which ornament the tale at appropriate places cumulative series further interest teller and hearer these devices . . . come to be thought indispensable part of folk-tale structure".³⁶ Even a casual reader of the epics, particularly MBh, cannot fail to notice the various refrains, conventional lists of sages and kings as well as conventional passages of descriptions of palaces, sacrificial wealth, forests, fights and combats, constant use of certain conventional similes, and cumulative series in the form of story-cycles in them.

The Grimm brothers saw that "the same folktale types are scattered over most of Europe and Asia and often far beyond . . . they thought of the tales as an inheritance from the Indo-European past and were convinced that, in their present form, they were broken down representatives of ancient myth. A later school, founded by Theodor Benfey in 1859, saw the original home of all these tales in India. Later, anthropologists tried to discredit these theories by showing the universality of most of the ideas and by insisting upon the independent origin, at least of the details of the stories. Attempts at a single explanation of folk-tale origins still engage certain scholars, who find all tales coming from dreams, or from rituals, or else think of them as telling the adventures of the moon or the stars. Later folk-tale scholarship . . . has recognised that every tale has its own history . . .".³⁷

This means, no single clue for all the tales in any respect can be found, and one or more of the above explanations, which, one after another, claimed to be the origins of all the tales, will possibly hold good in case of various tales. We can roughly point out that some of the myths might claim to have an Indo-European origin, while most of the fables very likely have their original home in India and have travelled from here westward. As Winternitz has said it : "Not only have single Indian tales been spread to other peoples by travellers, merchants, and itinerant monks, but even whole Indian *books* of stories and fables have become the common property of many peoples".³⁸ In case of the similarity of certain motifs it is difficult to say with any definiteness whether they have independent origins in similar customs, or in some rituals of the local tribes. Various tales, therefore, would have to be considered on their own merits, independently of each other and we should not much expect to arrive at many universal conclusions.

The foregoing quotations about the nature and characteristics of folk-tale and their exemplification shown in the two epics will, we hope, be considered enough to show that there is ample justification in considering these two epics as collections of folk-tales.

36 *ibid*, pp. 125-6.

37 *ibid*, p. 126.

38 *Some Problems of Indian Literature*, M. Winternitz, Calcutta University, 1925, pp. 68-69.

The Epics and Other Folk-Tale-Collections

As store-houses of popular tales, the epics take their material from the popular floating mass of the folk-literature and as such are comparable to other such collections which also draw their material from the same source. Jātaka collection of tales also, for example, draws its material from the same source. But no attempt is made there to connect these tales in any way. On the contrary, the distinctness of every one of the stories is maintained by providing a different occasion for each one of them, the only flimsy link of connection being that all the stories are supposed to be the incidents of the former births of Lord Buddha himself. Many folk-tales of various types are set into a single grand design wherein they are shown to help the Master in gradually evolving his personality to perfection by slowly achieving the six pāramitās one after another through innumerable births. But the monotonous uniformity of the framing incidents makes the narrations rather dull. Even the Jain collections of tales (such as the Bṛhat-kathā-kośa of Hariṣeṇa³⁹) mostly give us unconnected tales, there being some such nominal link like that all of them are illustrative of the maxims preached by Lord Mahāvīra or something like that.

More clearly comparable with the epics, formwise, are the indigenous collections like the Kathā-sarit-sāgara (KSS) or Simhāsana-dvātrīṃśikā (SD) or even Pañcatantra (PT) or Hitopadeśa or occidental collections like the Arabian Nights (AN) or Boccaccio's Decameron or Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. All these collections which also draw upon the floating mass of popular tales for their material, have a well-developed frame-story to embox the stray tales. The difference, obviously, is that in all these collections the frame-stories are meant to function as frame-stories, and are designed as such right from the beginning. To put it differently, these frame-stories mostly consist of single episodes in which there is an occasion deliberately created to include the secondary tales. On the other hand the connected epic-tale has many episodes and, therefore, many more occasions to insert the secondary tales. But it should be noted that such occasions in the epics are, at the most, only potential, and not deliberate. The story is not narrated originally with a view to include secondary tales, rather it is intended to be an interesting narrative complete in itself. And when the potential occasions are taken advantage of to insert secondary tales, the formal unity of the original epic narrative is bound to be adversely affected. Whereas the folk-tale-collections are not in any such danger of the deformation of their formal unity, since narration of independent tales is their principal motive, and the frame-story which is the main story is narrated primarily to provide an occasion for their narration. The epics, as we saw above, profess to narrate only one single connected narrative and therefore, when fresh stories are sought to be included in them, the epic-stories become only pegs upon which to hang the intruding stories

³⁹ The work is edited by Dr. A. N. Upadhye, and published (1943) by Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan, Bombay.

which, more often than not, hang rather too heavily, and at least in the case of the MBh come quite close to reminding us of the parable of the Arab and the Camel. The lack of a definite and uniform design in the inclusion of the secondary material in the epics is too obvious to need any elaboration. Similarly the reason also is obvious. While in the other collections, a single author is chalking out the pattern of the collection, the hands working upon the pattern, or rather patterns, of each of the epics are numerous. Where the epics are concerned, therefore, the uniformity of pattern is out of question. Even of the two epics, this is more obvious in the case of MBh where the framing principal narrative itself is again framed by the story of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice, and this story of snake-sacrifice is provided in its turn a frame of the episode of Śaunaka's twelve-year-sacrifice.

We may remark here in passing that the author of the UK also has tried to provide a similar frame by utilising the event of Rāma's Aśvamedha sacrifice to frame the entire Rāma-story by a sort of flashback technique. But the author's hand is shaky. His summary treatment of the episode in just one Adhyāya (BK. 4) has failed in creating the desired effect.

There is another important distinction of the epics from the other collections mentioned above. The formal and material nature of the tales included in the other collections is more or less homogeneous. Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa collect mainly fables. KSS and SDv collect tales which are more or less romantic, rather like fairy-tales. AN comes close to this class. Boccaccio and Chaucer are convincingly realistic in their style and the satiric undertones of their tales are normally clear enough. The tales contained in the epics, on the other hand, are extremely heterogeneous in their form, content, function and style, and no uniform characteristic from any point of view can be found in the entire bulk of these secondary tales.

This is true even of the intentions of the authors in collecting the tales or of the functions these tales are expected to perform. The tales of the Pañcatantra-Hitopadeśa edify, those of KSS merely entertain, those of SDv and AN mainly entertain and those of Boccaccio and Chaucer satirize. It cannot be said that such a uniformity of purpose exists behind all the secondary tales of the epics. At least, in the immediate purposes of the tales collected in the epics, no such uniformity can be found. Even when we concede that all the tales do at least entertain, we are not sure that even this function will hold good in the case of all the tales of the epics without exception.

There is some uniqueness even of the audience to which these tales are narrated. The fable-collections are for children — either in age or in intellect. The collections like KSS, SDv, AN are meant for an audience grown-up in age but with a lower level of taste. The audience of the epics would be heterogenous with regard to its age and intellect, but it is always supposed to be characterised by and to be inspired

with and deepened in the feelings of devotion and religiosity. And this is perhaps the only uniformity that can rightly be pointed out as universal among all the secondary tales of the two great epics.

Form, Content and Function : Their Inter-relation

After establishing the characteristic of the two epics as collections of folk-tales and seeing their distinctions from other collections, we should now try to clarify the connotations of the terms in the second part of the title : "A Study of their Form, Content and Function."

The term 'Function' hardly needs an explanation. The purpose with which a tale is told or with which a secondary tale is brought into the principal story is its function. It is the role a tale plays either in the epic or independently.

The term 'Content' also is comparatively clear. The ingredients from which a tale is made are its 'content'. The characters of a tale, or their actions, or the results of their actions are the ingredients that go to make up a tale. Technically, we call them the 'motifs' of a tale. "The motif is the smallest recognizable element that goes to make up a complete story".⁴⁰ It is "a word or pattern of thought that recurs in a similar situation, or to evoke a similar mood, within a work, or in various works of a genre."⁴¹ With the help of this motif-analysis, it has been possible to recognise 'motifs' and 'types' as the complementary concepts in the study of folk-tales. The importance of motifs "for comparative study is to show what material of a particular type is common to other types. The importance of the type is to show the way in which narrative motifs form into conventional clusters."⁴² Thus the arrangement of certain motifs in a certain way or the recurrence of certain motif-clusters in numerous tales would give us one type of tales.

But this 'type' is different from the 'form' of a folk-tale. By 'form' we understand one of the forms of folk-tale like myth, legend, fairy-tale, fable etc. The two terms 'type' and 'form' can be shown to be overlapping to an extent because the basis of both the analyses of tales into types and into forms is the consideration of the content of a tale, but without complicating the matter we can simply point out that the recurrence of certain motif-patterns gives us the type of a tale while its form is decided by the nature of its content as well as the mode of treatment of the content.

The term 'Form' is defined as "the character of an object as experienced or the structure into which the elements of an experience or a thing are organised."⁴³

40 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Ed. J. T. Shipley, 1970, p. 126.

41 *ibid.* p. 204.

42 *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, Ed. J. T. Shipley, 1970, p. 126.

43 *ibid.* p. 127.

As Aristotle analyses, "the form is one of the four causes which account in full for the mode of being of anything. Two of the causes (the efficient c. or the producer; the final c., the purpose or end) are extrinsic to the thing. The other two, the formal and the material, are intrinsic; the matter is that of which a thing is made, the form is that which makes it what it is...therefore form is not simply shape but that which shapes, not structure or character simply but the principle of structure, which gives character. So, for an Aristotelian, form in a work of art is not structure (in a narrow sense) alone, but all that determines specific character; meaning or expressiveness, as well as structure, is a formal element. (But meaning, besides possessing structure and conferring it, since it involves relation is a kind of structure.) Actually, the Aristotelian will find in a work of art not one form but many, a complexity of formal elements or *formalities* (structure and meanings), the totality of which is a form (*the structure, the meaning, the character*) of the work as a whole."⁴⁴

It is not difficult to see that the terms 'Form', 'Content' and 'Function' in our title are identifiable respectively with the terms 'mode', 'matter' and 'purpose' in this analysis. Their inter-relation is also sufficiently brought out from this only. Content is the matter of a tale of which the tale is made. Its form is the mode of presenting that material — "that which makes it what it is." The form informs the content. The content is informed into the form of a tale. The purpose that the producer wanted to achieve by the narration of the tale would have affected the choice of its content or the form of its presentation (including alteration, addition, subtraction etc.) or both. The natural order of the terms, therefore, would be : purpose, matter and mode of its presentation; or Function, Content and Form. The order adopted by us in the title indicates an approach of the investigator who first observes the form which is the outer element, then examines the content which is the inner aspect, and then investigates the functions these two were intended to serve and have succeeded in achieving.

It will be instructive to draw one more distinction here between the folk-literature and the sophisticated literature. From the above-quoted analysis of form by Aristotle, it is obvious that the formal consideration of any work of art would involve everything ; the producer, the matter, the medium of expression, the mode of expression, and the purpose. If a tale is meant to be communicated its formal consideration will include the communicator (i.e. the narrator), the thing to be communicated (i.e. the words, their meanings, patterns of words and those of meanings, the total pattern) as well as the impact on the receiver (i.e. the hearer, the end). Since the producer and the end are extrinsic, and therefore only to be guessed about from the object itself, the formal consideration of a work of art would mean an investigation of the degree of integrity achieved between the words and sense, the outer form and the inner form, the harmony achieved between the material and the expressive elements. As critics

44 *ibid.* pp. 127-128.

have shown, perfect poetic form is achieved only when the outer form and the inner form, the verbal aspect and the semantic aspect are completely co-extensive and perfectly integrated. This implies that in a work of sophisticated art, form and content will be identical because the mode in which the matter is informed will be its form. The two can be discussed separately only in an abstractive way, but not *as* separate,⁴⁵ since the degree of achieving harmony of the two is actually the criterion of the success of a work of art as a work of art. On the other hand, folk-literature is mainly an oral tradition, and therefore there will not be any fixed verbal structure for a tale. It is bound to change from narrator to narrator, from time to time. The semantic structure, i.e. the motif-structure or the content part will be comparatively steadier and can be subjected to objective investigation. It is possible, nay, it is sensible, therefore, to discuss the form and content of a folk-tale separately and *as* separate, since no such criterion of the integrity of form and content is either intended or expected. The content thus is more important than the form in a folk-tale, rather the kind of content decides the form of a folk-tale.

It was perhaps this distinction between folk-literature and creative literature that Bhāmaha was pointing out when he defined poetry as *śabdārthau sahitaū kāvyam*, trying to emphasise the integrative togetherness of word and sense in the creative literature by contrasting poetry on the one hand with the Vedic literature with its emphasis on Word only and on the other with the Purāṇic-epic (not scientific, as some suppose) literature which, as we have seen now, was the traditional folk-literature with its emphasis only on the sense.⁴⁶

Implications of "Secondary"

Let us also clarify the implications of the term 'secondary.' Above, we gave a tentative definition of a secondary tale as any narrative that does not form part of the original story. Since that definition is negative and exclusive, it still remains for us to decide what is the 'original' story.

i. Before the 'beginning'

We can say that all the incidents that lead to the central event of the story only should constitute the original story. This automatically means a unity of design and of purpose. It is the most fundamental requirement of any tale worth the name. Any good narrator would instinctively comply with this requisite and avoid diversions which ultimately tend to weaken the artistic unity of the tale. When the form of the

45 Cp. *Vakroktijivitam*, I. 6.

alaṅkṛtir alaṅkāryam apoddhṛtya vivecyate /
tad upāyatayā, tattvam sālaṅkāryasya kāvyatā //

46 Cf. *Kāvya prakāśa* of Mammaṭa, vṛtti on I.2 : prabhu-sammita-śabda-pradhāna-vedādi-śāstrebyaḥ, suhṛt-sammitārtha-tātparya-vat purāṇādītiḥasebyaś ca ... vilakṣaṇam yat kāvyam — etc.

tale is small, it is easy to maintain this unity and to discern it. But where the forms are massive like the novel or the epic, a greater genius is required to maintain the unity of design through the grander movement of the narrative which, taking its start — its push from a knotty or conflicting situation, and then gathering momentum as it proceeds, reaches the climax — the pinnacle of conflict, then resting or resolving in the denouement.

That epics, always and everywhere, take their starting push from such critical situation, is not difficult to show. Homer's Iliad, for example, takes its momentum from the episode in which Achilles withdraws from the contest as a result of which the tide of the Trojan war takes a turn showing how indispensable Achilles is to the Greek forces.

Even in the MBh itself we have a very good example in the Nalopākhyānam⁴⁷ of what a real original epic of those days could have been like. This and such other upākhyānas are rightly called by Winternitz "epic within the epic".⁴⁸ It is a connected tale, complete in itself and, in a way, possessing all the dimensions and characteristics of a real artistic epic-narrative. That it is a real original epic-poem and not an abridgement of some other epic will be clear even from a cursory comparison of it with Rāmopākhyānam,⁴⁹ which is obviously an abridgement of the present RM. The narrative of Nala, after some barely necessary prefatory remarks (such as Nala was the king of Niṣadha, was a great king etc.), takes its starting push from the critical situation of Kali's failure to obtain Damayantī, resulting in his jealousy and consequently the game of dice between the two brothers and then moves on in a straightforward and dignified manner. The course of narrative is entirely free from the impression of an undue haste so inevitable in an abridgement on the one hand and from any kind of unnecessary paddings in the form of secondary tales and discourses on the other. Nalopākhyānam is an epic in its own right.

Taking a closer look at Nalopākhyānam, therefore, leaves no doubt that the original forms of RM and MBh also must have shown characteristics similar to those of Nalopākhyānam itself, though somewhat on a larger scale. RM actually seems to corroborate our supposition. In it, the events of AyK show the real artistic beginning of original epic of Vālmīki, and the material of BK as well as UK is clearly marked out as secondary or interpolated by being appended into separate Kāṇḍas in the beginning and at the end. The evidences of the text, style and internal contradictions further support our supposition.

The case of MBh is not as obvious as that of RM, but when we apply the same criteria to the MBh, it is not very difficult to see the artistic beginning of the original nucleus in the events of the SabP. Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya sacrifice, with its

47 VanP. Adhyāyas 50-78.

48 *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta. p. 381.

49 VanP. Adhyāyas. 258-276.

glory of wealth and power, sows the seed of jealousy in the mind of Duryodhana. This jealousy subsequently flowers into the events of Dyūta and Anu-dyūta subparvans and ultimately results in the all-destructive fratricidal war. Thus, Rājasūya can be said to be the real beginning of the original epic, as it is connected with the central event of the family-war.

Neither is it difficult to corroborate our supposition by showing that the events prior to the sacrifice are not essentially connected with the central event. The sacrificial episode actually starts with Yudhiṣṭhira's deliberations about it with Kṛṣṇa in the second sub-parvan of the SabP (called Mantra-parvan). The first sub-parvan is called Sabhā- or Sabhā-Varṇana-parvan. In it, Maya Dānava, out of gratitude for Arjuna who allowed him to escape alive from the all-consuming Khāṇḍava-burning, builds a glorious palace for Pāṇḍavas. Nārada visits the palace, describes divine palaces of Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera, Brahmā and incidentally mentions Hariścandra, the only king who could sit in the Indra-sabhā on account of the merits of performing a Rājasūya. Also Pāṇḍu, sitting in Yama-sabhā, is said to have sent a message through Nārada to his son Yudhiṣṭhira that he also should perform a Rājasūya. This serves to put the germ in the mind of Yudhiṣṭhira, who thereafter takes up the deliberation first with his ministers and finally with Kṛṣṇa.

Once we realize that it is only very natural for Yudhiṣṭhira or for any other eminent king, to perform a Rājasūya sacrifice even without any external incentives, the inessential character of these events becomes eminently clear. Pāṇḍu sending a message from the Yama-sabhā is a supernatural element. Descriptions of the five divine palaces are only after the repetitive decorative style so characteristic of the folk-literature, and the incidental mention of Hariścandra is brought in only to provide an incentive for Rājasūya, which, as we have seen, is not essential. Nārada himself is inessential.

Even the palace is not inevitable. It is certainly not the cause to induce Yudhiṣṭhira to perform the sacrifice, neither is it necessary to inspire jealousy in Duryodhana which can very well be explained as arising on account of the dazzling glory of the wealth and power of the Pāṇḍavas revealed at the Rājasūya. Nor is the palace intended to symbolize the wealth of the Pāṇḍavas. Rājasūya itself is enough to symbolize the glory of the Pāṇḍavas. If the palace were really intended to be symbolic of their glory, the author would have made Yudhiṣṭhira put the palace as a pawn in the famous scene of dice. But that never happens. Even the jealous utterances of Duryodhana do not reveal any such importance of the palace. If at all, palace is only a minor part of the Pāṇḍavas' glory and can be done away with. Duryodhana's jealousy is roused only when he comes and sees for himself the glory of the Pāṇḍavas and the cause of his arrival at Khāṇḍavaprastha is Yudhiṣṭhira's

ST. 3

invitation, not to visit the palace, but to attend the sacrifice. Therefore, Rājasūya is essential to the story, the palace is not.

Why then is the incident introduced in the story ? Actually, Maya's building the palace for the Pāṇḍavas comes as return, in some way, of Arjuna's obligation in letting him alive at Khāṇḍava-burning. This Khāṇḍava-dāha episode occurs at the end of ĀdiP. The obligation and its return occur chronologically, one immediately after the other, and the two, as forming a unit, would naturally be expected to occur at one place. But the redactor is clever. He puts the obligation at the end of the ĀdiP, its return in the beginning of the SabP and thus achieves a feeling of continuity between the incidents of ĀdiP as well as SabP. This serves to connect up the entire ĀdiP, in a seemingly inevitable manner, with the rest of the epic; the chain of events being as follows : (a) Khāṇḍava-dāha — Arjuna's obligation — Maya's escape — his gratitude — building the palace — (b) Nārada's visit — describing divine palaces — incidental mention of Hariścandra — also Pāṇḍu's instruction — (c) Yudhiṣṭhira's thinking of Rājasūya. It will be seen that there is no essential link between (a) and (c) since the incidents in (b) are all, as we have seen above, dispensable.

Thus, it seems extremely probable that almost entire SabP (from Mantra sub-parvan onwards) is essential to the central event and forms part of the original epic, while the entire ĀdiP, together with the incident of Maya's palace-building for the Pāṇḍavas, is a subsequent addition. This has an exact parallel in the RM where the entire BK, like ĀdiP, is of an interpolatory nature and rather clearly marked out by being put into an entirely separate Book. On the other hand, the motifs of jealousy (both of Kali and of Puṣkara) and dice between the brothers — bhrātrdyūta — giving a starting push to the Nala-story provide an exact parallel to the same motifs of jealousy and dice between cousins⁵⁰ starting the MBh-story. That such a parallel is intended is also confirmed from the fact that, when Nala has lost everything in dice to Puṣkara, the latter refers to Damayantī who can still be pawned. Nala merely swallows the insult but does not pawn her. This clearly hints at the famous incident of Draupadī being pawned and lost by Yudhiṣṭhira and dragged and insulted by the Kauravas into the open court.

It should be noted here that the SabP is almost entirely free from the Bhṛguizing elements which are so profusely strewn throughout the epic.⁵¹ Even that famous line referring to the imaginative feat of the Bhārgava Rama — triḥ saptakṛvāḥ pṛthivī kṛtā niḥkṣatriyā purā — repeated in the epic in season and out of season does not occur in the SabP even once. The only minor reference to Bhṛgu is in SabP, 13.1 where all the contemporary so-called royalties are said to be only of a lower origin since Rāma Jāmadagnya had annihilated the entire Kṣātra-class. This freedom from

50 here called 'Suhṛd-dyūta', vide MBh-SabP 51.1, 52.8 etc.

51 vide 'The Bhṛgu and the Bhārata', V. S. Sukthankar, *Sukthankar Memorial Edition*, Vol. I, pp. 278-337.

the Bhārgava element also leads one to infer the relative antiquity of the SabP among the various parts of the MBh.

One more evidence for our supposition seems to come from an entirely unexpected corner. We all know the functions and usefulness of the two indexes prefixed to the MBh. Even in the RM, we have two indexes in the beginning of the BK, having their own importance. But, in the MBh, we have a third index, not in the beginning of the ĀdiP, but way behind, in chapter 55. After the frame-story of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice has been fully set with its phalaśruti in chapter 53, the Sūta Paurāṇika, at the instance of Sage Śaunaka, sets out to narrate the epic-story. In Adhyāya 54, Vyāsa is said to visit Janamejaya's Snake-sacrifice with his disciples. Janamejaya asks Vyāsa :

katham samabhavat *bhedas* teṣāṃ a-kliṣṭa-karmaṇām/
tac ca *yuddham* katham vṛttam bhūtānta-karaṇam mahat //19//

Vyāsa orders his disciple Vaiśampāyana to narrate—

kurūṇām paṇḍavānām ca yathā *bhedo* 'bhavat purā //22//

So Vaiśampāyana sets out to narrate

bhedam rājya-vināśam ca..... //24//,

begins in Adhyāya 55 with the words —

śruṇu rājan yathā *bhedaḥ* kuru-paṇḍavayor abhūt /
rājyārthe dyūta-sambhūto *vana-vāsas* tathaiva ca //4//

yathā ca *yuddham* abhavat.... etc., then summarises the events in ślokas 6-42 and finally says :

evam etat purā vṛttam teṣāṃ a-kliṣṭa-karmaṇām /
bhedo rājya-vināśas ca *jayaś* ca jayatām vara //43//.

The summary of the events almost seems to be like an index prefixed to the actual epic which appears to begin in Adhyāya 56 devoted solely to its greatness, almost a sort of phalaśruti of the epic. The events summarised in Adhyāya 55 are referred to variously by various characters — e.g.

by Janamejaya	as	<i>bheda</i> and <i>yuddha</i> ,
by Vyāsa	as	<i>bheda</i> only,
by Sūta	as	<i>bheda</i> and <i>rājya-vināśa</i> ,
by Vaiśampāyana		
first	as	<i>bheda</i> , <i>dyūta-sambhūto vana-vāsa</i> and <i>yuddha</i>
and finally	as	<i>bheda</i> , <i>rājya-vināśa</i> and <i>jaya</i> .

It will be noted that 'yuddha' is mentioned twice, and is also termed once as 'jaya'. 'Rājya-vināśa' is mentioned twice, and once also referred to as 'vana-vāsa'.

But the term rigidly uniform in all the five references is 'bheda'. This uniformity of the term of reference which lays too much emphasis on the aspect of 'bheda' seems rather uneasy, and creates suspicion in our mind for the summary itself. When we actually examine the contents of the said summary, we find that out of the 37 ślokas of summary, only the last three or four refer to incidents of Duryodhana's jealousy, the game of dice (or the loss of kingdom), the vana-vāsa, the great war and the victory. All the remaining 33 refer to the incidents of 'bheda' — the rift among the cousins ! — or, more precisely, to the incidents mostly from the ĀdiP !! Clearly, the usefulness of this summary as one more index to the entire epic is very doubtful. Prof. K. K. Shastri has attempted to treat this Adhyāya as a summary of the original "Jaya" kāvya of Vyāsa Pārāśarya — the first phase of the epic — extending upto 8800 ślokas, and to actually retrace the original epic of that length on the basis of this summary.⁵² Obviously, the attempt is too bold to be feasible and the hypothesis itself rests on too many assumptions which are themselves questionable. On the contrary, it would be more natural to look at it as a summary of the ĀdiP which also shows the importance of the episodes of ĀdiP by connecting them up with the rest of the chain of events and by indicating their place in the scheme of the entire epic. But why was such an indication needed ? Why a separate index ? No other Parvan or Kāṇḍa is seen to begin with such a separate index or link-indication. The very fact that it was felt necessary to provide such an index for the ĀdiP seems to support our supposition that the events of the ĀdiP were added subsequently.

Looking at the summary more closely, we are able to see that it also does not refer to all the stories or incidents of the ĀdiP. It mentions only the following : arrival of the five heroes in Hastināpura after Pāṇḍu's death, Duryodhana's jealousy for the brilliant orphans, his unsuccessful attempts to get rid of Bhīma, Vidura's taking care of them, the incident of the lac-house and Pāṇḍavas' escape, Bhīma slaying Hiḍimba and Baka, their obtaining Draupadī, returning to Hastināpura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra sending them away to Khāṇḍava-prastha, the four younger brothers achieving victories in the four directions,⁵³ Yudhiṣṭhira sending Arjuna to forest under some pretext, the latter marrying Subhadrā, and then, with the help of Kṛṣṇa burning the Khāṇḍava-forest for Agni. It will be seen that the summary leaves out many other incidents of the ĀdiP as follows : the birth of Vyāsa, the story of the divine descent, the Śakuntalā-story, the Yayāti-story, Bhīṣma's birth from Gaṅgā, Satyawatī's marriage to Śantanu, her two sons, their marriages and deaths, their sons born of levirate, Pāṇḍu's marriages, the deer-sage's curse on him, his retiring to forest and his sad death, his five sons born of levirate, Draupadī's previous birth, story of Sunda-Upasunda, Arjuna's marriages with Ulūpi and Citrāṅgadā, releasing the five nymphs from their curse.

52 Vide : *The Jay-Samhitā i.e. The UR-Mahābhārata* Vols. I-II. Compiled by Prof. K.K. Shastri, Gujarat Research Society, Ahmedabad-7, 1978

53 This is not in the chronological order of events. This victory comes, in the actual course of the epic, in the SabP, after the Jarāsanha-vādhā-incident, vide SabP. Adhyāyas, 23-29.

Now, when we examine the two sets of incidents — those included in the summary and those excluded from it — the homogeneous character of both the sets becomes too persistently obvious to be neglected. The incidents included in the summary are all, though not connected with the actual epic story, at least directly connected with the epic-heroes. They are the incidents occurring in the lives of the heroes prior to the point from which the actual epic-story starts. The incidents excluded from the summary are, with a few unimportant exceptions, all related to the ancestors of the epic-heroes, and therefore only remotely connected with the heroes.

Considering the nature of the incidents included in the summary, we feel that they are very characteristic of the folk-curiosity which is so child-like, which expects to hear everything about the hero, from the beginning to the end, and which completely ignores considerations of artistic or formal unity of a tale. It is only natural and common-sense to think that these incidents must be the first and the oldest interpolations to the original epic. From a unified connected narration of an original tale, the most natural next step towards its expansion is the inclusion of events connected with the tale in some way or the other, if not with the central theme, at least with the central heroes. And the events included in the summary testify to this common-sense conclusion. For one, the events form a homogeneous group, and they are all clustered at one place in the latter half of the *ĀdiP*, or are rather prefaced to the original epic. Then, as we have already seen above, the summary is accompanied by its author's attempt to justify the inclusion of these events by making them appear as inevitable in the scheme of the entire epic, but the very necessity of such a justification creates suspicion. The author tries to conceal their secondary nature by trying to provide links in the events of Maya's palacebuilding and Nārada's visit. But the separated placement of the former event and the innecessity of the latter render the links rather weak. The index, therefore, must be taken to represent the very first redaction of the original epic. It is rather difficult to see how else can we explain or justify the position, the nature and the purpose of such an index-summary.

The confirming parallel can also perhaps be found in the two indexes of *RM*, where the first index (BK. 1) mentions the incidents of the central original *Kāṇḍas* while the second (BK. 3) includes the incidents of BK and UK also. The second index thus represents the second stage in the development of the epic. Similarly, the third index of the *ĀdiP*, in a slightly different manner must represent a later stage when the events, external to the central epic, yet connected with the lives of the heroes, were introduced into the original epic of Vyāsa.

Perhaps, the very name *ĀdiP* gives out a lie to its being interpolated. It is important to note here that BK, which is accepted by all to be a later addition to *RM*, is also called in some manuscripts *Ādi Kāṇḍa*. The fact can be confirmed from the critical apparatus of the colophon of any *Adhyāya* of BK as well as the colophon to passage 1 relegated to the Appendix I of BK, which reads : *ity ārṣe rāmāyaṇe*

ādi-kāṇḍe anukramaṇikā samāpatā/ Thus, both ĀdiP and BK agree in being named 'Ādi' -- the former exclusively, the latter occasionally. They also agree in the nature of their contents which are narration of events in the life of the hero or heroes, prior to the events beginning the epic proper. They reveal the layman's complete indifference to, or rather ignorance of, the artistic usefulness of such incidents and his characteristic curiosity to know everything about the hero, right from the beginning. (Hence the name 'Ādi'.) And, if Ādi-Kāṇḍa is accepted by all to be a later addition, it is very probable, that Ādi-parvan also must have been so.

The cumulative force of the foregoing considerations now seems to make the conclusion irresistible that everything of the ĀdiP, even the incidents connected with the lives of the heroes, must have been subsequent additions to the epic and is thus secondary.

ii. The End of the 'Original'

We mentioned above that the folk-curiosity is very characteristically child-like and is fond of hearing everything about the hero, right from the beginning to the end. We have also seen that the entire ĀdiP is a later addition, that the events in the lives of the heroes, prior to the point of Rājasūya-deliberations, are the oldest addition prefaced to the nucleus epic. Can we say any such thing about some addition appended? In other words, can we guess about the end of the nucleus epic, like we did about its beginning? Can we point out something added posterior to the nucleus in the earliest redaction? Is there some sort of an Uttara-parvan?

It is difficult to give a definite answer to this question. There are, however, some evidences which, when properly interpreted, would point to certain probabilities.

In the epic itself, MBh has been called an Itihāsa named 'Jaya'.⁵⁴ Even the benedictory stanza, recited in the beginning of every parvan, mentions the word, but rather ambiguously.⁵⁵ Many scholars had believed that this 'Jaya' was the name of the original epic written by Vyāsa Pārāśarya, and had postulated three stages in the development of the epic to its present size viz. the 'Jaya' written by Vyāsa, the 'Bhārata' revised by Vaiśampāyana, and the 'Mahā-bhārata' by Sauti. But in the notes to the critical edition of ĀdiP, Dr. Sukthankar has shown that "The introductory stanza nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya etc. is missing in S; it is therefore surely not original."⁵⁶ About the other hemistich jayo nāmeti etc., he notes that it "Rekurs at B. 5.136.18, there applied to the episode Vidulāputrānūsāsana, which shows that 'Jaya' is a generic name applicable to different works, and not a specific name of the MBh at all, as

54 cf. jayo nām' etihāso 'yam śrotavyo vijigīṣuṇā/ / ĀdiP.56.19.ab.
(v.i. śrotavyo bhūtimicchatā//SvP. 5.39.ab.)

55 cf. nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya naram ca'iva narottamam/
devīm sarasvatīm ca'iva tato jayamudīrayet // Ādi.1.0.

56 ĀdiP p 983.

believed by some writers".⁵⁷ This shows that 'Jaya' was a name applicable not to MBh alone, but to a certain class of works to which MBh itself must have originally belonged.

It still remains to be clarified, what was the nature of this class of works. Perhaps, the best pointer is the name 'Jaya' itself. It must have been a class of works which described victories — obviously in wars. The subject of wars was perhaps the most fascinating to the ancient people of all nations. The famous dictum 'yuddhasya kathā ramyā' needs only to be reminded in this context. The valorous deeds of the heroes in war always fascinated the people, attained national significance and formed the chief subject of the ancient heroic poetry — lays and ballads and ākhyānas — from which all the great national epics like Iliad, Odyssey, Kalewala, Nibelungenlied, Beowulf, Chanson de Roland, Aeneid, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata — all, principally, the tales of wars and victories — have developed. MBh is often referred to in the body of the epic itself as Bhārata Ākhyāna, and that must have been its original name and its original form. It must have been an ākhyāna describing the war between the two families of Bhārata clan, ending in the victory of one of the sides, the Pāṇḍavas.

Considering it from the point of view of its artistic form, therefore, war must have been the central event, the climax of events, and the events of StrP and Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation must have formed its denouement. That should be the logical end of a 'Jaya' type of Itihāsa. This can also be confirmed from the RM where the original epic is believed by all to be ending in the events of YK with Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa and his coronation. Even in the Nala-story, Nala finally wins over Kali, over Puṣkara (of course, in the game of dice) and is reinstalled upon his throne. We would not be far from right, therefore, in postulating that Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation after his victory in the war must have been the termination-point of the original epic, and the events thereafter, from ŚānP onwards upto the end must have been added subsequently.

Here also we can distinguish between the secondary and the tertiary stages of interpolations. The events from ĀśvP upto the end are mostly connected with the heroes, though not with the central theme, and therefore, must belong to the second stage; while the didactic purpose of the material of ŚānP and AnuP containing Bhīṣma's sermons to Yudhiṣṭhira on royal and moral duties of a king as well as the framing purpose of the first half of ĀdiP containing Janamejaya-story are too obvious to leave us in any doubt about their inclusion in the latermost stages of the epic-redaction.

But we must point out again that there is no direct textual evidence to support our statements in the preceding two paragraphs; whatever is stated here must be

57 *ibid.*, p. 989. B.5.136. 18 in the quotation is BhiP. 136.18

taken as conjectures based on the logical implications of the term 'Jaya' as applied to the epic, and to be corroborated by further evidences.

It should be noted in this context that, within the MBh itself, the only other episode to be called by the name of 'Jaya' is that of Vidulā-putrānuśāsana which is only an advice of Vidulā to her son to act bravely on the battlefield. No other secondary tale is called 'Jaya', though the term Itihāsa is applied to many other secondary tales and incidents.⁵⁸ Also none of the secondary tales narrates the war of human heroes as its central theme. Some incidents or tales would seem to contradict this dictum at first sight but that the contradiction is only apparent and not real can be shown very easily. 'Vidulā's Advice' is only a sermon, without the actual war in which her son must have fought. Rāmopākhyāna is obviously an abridgement of the RM⁵⁹ and not an independent tale. Devāsura wars are to be classed as wars of non-humans, and even then, they are never actually described but only referred to. Fights between individuals like the one between Sunda and Upasunda do occasionally occur in some tales but the distinction between a combat and a war is too obvious to be reiterated.

These considerations lead to some obvious conclusions: The central theme of a 'Jaya' Itihāsa must have been a war, most probably a war of human beings. The RM and the MBh were originally tales of wars of human beings. Even in the form in which we have the epics today, war-tales of human beings are, indeed, the core of these epics. Though RM has nowhere been called a 'Jaya' Kāvya by name, it can obviously be placed in that group with absolute propriety, and the only reason why it has never been called by that name seems to be that long back, RM had ceased to be recognized as an Itihāsa and was accepted as Ādi-kāvya. But the very fact that it had been chosen for an *epic*-treatment points to the great probability of its being a human-war-story, a 'Jaya' type of Itihāsa.

On the other hand, Vidulā's sermon is actually called a 'Jaya' Kāvya, but whatever portion of Vidulā's story remains is anything but a war-tale. Yet, even in its mutilated form it also leaves no doubt that in its original fuller form, it must have been a tale of human war. Therefore, there must have been more, perhaps many more, such 'Jaya' ballads, since wars, small and large, were not only too common in those days but they also possessed an uncommon influence upon and attraction for the common man.

However, it must be noted that, barring the two great epic stories themselves, no other example of such bardic poems has come down to us, even among those preserved in the epics. Whatever Ākhyānas are preserved in the epics, particularly in the MBh,

58 See, for instance, atṛ āpy'udāharantīmam itihāsam purātanam/SabP. 61.58.

59 Cf. *The Rāmāyaṇa*; H. Jacobi, Tr. S. N. Ghosal, pp.58-59; *History of Indian Literature*. M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta, Vol.I. pp. 516-7; *Sukthankar Memorial Edition*, I, V. S. Sukthankar, Ed. P. K. Gode, pp. 413-4, etc.

have anything but war as their central theme. Since war is the central theme of the epics, the only wars narrated throughout the epics are those fought by the heroes themselves. And all the wars turn in their favour only. (The only encounter – can it be called a *war*?—where Arjuna finds himself powerless against the Ābhīra-robbers in MauP,⁶⁰ marks the beginning of the end, the denouement of the story in its second stage. Though, as we have seen, this would not be the original story.) The right of the protagonists to shine as the victor heroes of the epics is, in no case, allowed to be obviated, and we can say that there is indeed some sort of justification in it. Therefore, when it is said that MBh is “a repertory of the whole of the old bard poetry”⁶¹ we shall have to qualify the statement that only those examples of the old bardic poetry have been preserved in the MBh which have themes other than those of wars, while those having human wars as the theme have been studiously eschewed.

iii. Further implications of the “Original” and the “Secondary”

The considerations of the implications of the terms ‘Original’ and ‘Secondary’ can be carried on still further into the course of the principal tale itself. Already many apparent contradictions,⁶² many repetitions,⁶³ even some entirely new episodes⁶⁴ are introduced into the principal tale in order to bring in secondary matter — a tale or a discourse. It has also been shown that many of the motifs constituting the VirP are merely repeated from the other parts of the principal tale,⁶⁵ to the effect that the VirP’s claim of being a part of the original is thrown in serious doubt. We have shown above that the SabP contains the beginning of the original epic. On examining some of the motifs of the principal narrative in SabP, we can observe one more dimension of the implications of the term ‘Secondary’.

We have seen that the jealousy of Duryodhana is the pivotal motif around which

60 Cf. prekṣatas tv’eva pārthasya vṛṣṇy-andhaka-vara-striyaḥ/
jagmur ādāya te mlecchāḥ samantāt janamejaya/ / MauP.8.61.

61 *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta, p. 318. Also pp. 375-387.

62 Vide *Mahābhārata* — A Criticism by C. V. Vaidya. In Ch. IV he gives some very good examples of internal contradictions — the one, for example, to introduce the Yakṣa-praśna-episode.

63 For example, the tale of Śibi protecting a pigeon from the hawk at the cost of his own life is repeated twice. Vide VanP. 130-131, (also ĀraP. appendix, passage no. 21, pp. 1074-75) and AnuP, Appendix, passage no. 8. The king in the AnuP is called Vṛṣadarbha.

64 For example, that of Jayadratha abducting Draupadī in VanP. 248-256, which occasions Rāmopākhyāna.

65 Vide ‘Virāṭaparvan – A Study’ — Dr. A. D. Shastri, *Bulletin of the Chunilal Gandhi Vidyabhavan*, Surat, No. 4, pp. 38-39. Cf. “Of one thing we can be sure that the Virāṭaparvan as we have it today is definitely later than the Mahābhārata as a whole... A conjecture may therefore be hazarded that the Virāṭaparvan as we have it today contains the original nucleus out of which the story of the Mahābhārata itself is developed. In other words, though the Virāṭaparvan as we have it is a later addition to the Mahābhārata, the epic-story has developed from the original form of the story in the Virāṭaparvan.” (p.39)

the story revolves. A similar importance of the motif of jealousy can also be observed in the RM and in the Nala-story. The following analysis of the opening events of these three tales will make this clear :

- RM. (a) Daśaratha's old-age.....(b) Rāma's coronation.....
 Nal. (a) Nala's love for Damayanti.....(b) Nala's marriage with Damayanti.....
 MBh. (a) Yudhiṣṭhira's victories-glories.(b) Performance of Rājasūya.....
- (c) Jealousy of Kaikeyī.....
 (c) Jealousy of Kali – inspiring jealousy in Puṣkara-motif reinforced.
 (c) Jealousy of Duryodhana
- (d) the two boons..... (e) Rāma's exile into forest.
 (d) the game of dice..... (e) Nala's exile into forest.....
 (d) the game of dice..... (e) Yudhiṣṭhira's exile into forest.....

The basic similarity of the pattern of motifs will not be missed even by a casual observer. Jealousy of the antagonist is the pivotal emotion in all the three tales. This jealousy makes him active into using some trick against the protagonist who is consequently turned into exile. The jealousy is caused by an incident which, set together with its circumstances, marks the beginning of the epics in the first two cases. The pattern can thus be described in general terms. (a) There is a situation which leads to (b) the causal incident. This gives rise to (c) the jealousy of the antagonist who, (d) becoming active in order to snatch away the good fortune of the protagonist, resorts to some trick (e) as a result of which the protagonist is driven into exile.

If we accept the pattern to be a convincing evidence we shall have to re-state certain observations made above about the opening of the original epic. The acceptance of the pattern will leave out two more sub-parvans of SabP — the Mantra-parvan and the Jarāsandha-vadha-parvan — as secondary, and the original epic will now be supposed to start from the Digvijaya-(sub)parvan only. We can try to corroborate this with some further observations. A difference can clearly be seen between the style of Jarāsandha-vadha-parvan which is puranic in nature and that of Arghā-bhiharaṇa- and Śiṣupāla-vadha-parvans which have powerful dialogues containing an epic grandeur. Again, the pattern seems to give us a more natural order of events in a simple primitive epic which would obviously be: first, a dig-vijaya or at least some significant victories, and only then, an ambition of performing Rājasūya. In SabP, on the other hand, the seed of ambition is laid first in the mind of Yudhiṣṭhira who then starts discussing the possibilities of the sacrifice. This makes it quite probable that the entire episode of Jarāsandha-vadha is added later on, and is not a part of the original epic. It is too hyperbolic, too loosely-connected, to form an essential part of the original.

But we must readily accept that all the evidences adduced above to prove the secondary nature of the Jarāsandha–vadha–episode are more or less subjective. The arguments about the style and the natural order of events are clearly more like personal opinions than objective facts, and the evidence of the similarity of pattern is certainly not conclusive in itself. On such grounds we can neither properly build up any hypothesis, nor do we intend to. But it helps us at least to see the implications of the term ‘Secondary’ in their proper dimensions. Many incidents of the principal tale (as we have it) can be shown in a similar manner to possess a debatable claim to originality, but such discussions are bound to remain more opinionated than objective, and any insistence on such points would be more dogmatic than scholarly. We shall, therefore, merely point out the inherent probabilities of the term ‘Secondary’ and rest content with it.

iv. The Definition of ‘Secondary’

It will be seen from above that various interpretations of the term ‘Secondary’ are possible. (1) That tale which is not original is secondary. (2) That tale which does not narrate the events in the life of the heroes is secondary. (3) That tale which is not essentially connected with the central event of the epic is secondary. (4) That episode which occurs in the course of the central theme, but does not in any way further the central theme, which shows stylistic differences, which creates internal contradictions, or unnecessary repetitions, in the sequence of events of the principal tale, is secondary. This shows that no single definition of the term ‘Secondary’ is possible, because, in the context of our two great epics, the term original itself is undefinable.

In these circumstances, we must come to some compromise as to the connotation of the term ‘Secondary tale’. We propose that we shall treat that tale as secondary which is complete in itself, independent of the principal tale. So far as some judicious restriction in the material of study is concerned, we shall confine ourselves mostly to the ĀdiP, SabP, BK and UK, since these have been observed to represent nearly all significant varieties of tales.

CHAPTER II

THE TALES IN RĀMĀYAṆA

A. BĀLA - KĀṆḌA

The implications of the various terms in the title thus made clear, we can now proceed on to the investigation of the tales themselves. For that purpose, first, we propose to make a complete survey of the tales of BK and UK of RM.

Most of the scholars agree that BK is a later addition to RM.¹ One of the reasons adduced for this supposition is the difference between the style of BK and that of the other Kāṇḍas (except UK). While the other Kāṇḍas reveal a dignified, soberly-paced, epic-like style of the narrative, almost entirely free from any sort of narrative or didactic digressions, justifying the title 'Ādi-Kāvya' (the First Poem) given to the epic, the BK (as also UK) reveals a purāṇic style abounding in digressive narratives which seriously disturb the flow of whatever little portion of the principal narrative has remained here. Even this little portion of the principal narrative gives us such details as are contradicted in the main body of the epic. Lakṣmaṇa, for example, is shown to marry Ūrmilā in BK,² but she is never mentioned again in the epic hereafter. Not only that, even Lakṣmaṇa is called a-kṛta-dāra in ArK.³ Since the marriages of all the brothers take place towards the end of BK, we shall not be wrong in taking the entire BK as secondary, providing material for our study.

The secondary material of the BK can roughly be divided into five groups: (1) The first four Sargas — Introductory part; (2) The Ṛṣyaśṛṅga episode; (3) The Entourage tales; (4) The Viśvāmitra story-cycle; (5) The Paraśurāma episode.

(1) The First Four Sargas

The BK opens with Vālmiki asking Nārada about the best of human beings. Nārada, in reply, briefly counts the principal events of Rāma's life. In Sarga 2, Vālmiki goes to the river Tamasā, sees one of the pairs of amorous cranes beings pierced by a Niṣāda, and, overwhelmed with pity, curses him. The curse, accidentally, is expressed in a new metre which is suitable to poetise the Rāma-story. Brahmā bids him to poetise it. Vālmiki accepts the advice and the events he poetises in the epic are again listed in Sarga 3. In Sarga 4, he finds the two royal princes as the suitable bards for

1 Cf. *History of Indian Literature*, M. Winternitz, Vol. I, ii, pp. 495-6; *The Riddle of the RM*, C. V. Vaidya, Ch. II; *Rāma-kathā*, Camille Bulcke, pp. 122-3; *The Rāmāyaṇa*, H. Jacobi. Tr. S. N. Ghosal, Baroda, pp. 21, 47 ff.

2 *Rāma-kathā*, C. Bulcke, p. 123. Cf. BK. 72.18.

3 ArK. 17.3.

reciting the epic publicly. Once having heard them in the streets of Ayodhyā, Rāma brings them to the royal palace and asks them to sing the poem before the royal assembly. The poem which they are said to have sung before the assembly — and which is thus actually claimed to be the creation of Vālmīki — starts from Sarga 5 of BK. The thread of this incident of narrating the epic is again taken up in the later part of UK where not only the listener of the poem is confirmed to be the same as the hero of the poem itself, but even the narrators are revealed to be the twin-sons of the hero himself, as well as the assembly turns out to be the sacrificial assembly gathered at the Aśvamedha sacrifice of the hero. The first four Sargas of BK, therefore, are intended to provide a sort of frame to the epic-story. This device of framing the epic is comparable on the one hand to the similar attempts made in the MBh to frame that epic with the story-cycle of Janamejaya's sacrifice; on the other hand, it strongly reminds us of a similar device adopted in the Kādambarī where the listener King Śūdraka and the narrator parrot Vaiśampāyana turn out in the end to be the hero of the narrative and his closest friend.

It also affords us a view of the progressively artistic use of the framing technique in the structure of the narrative. In a popular collection of tales like 'Canterbury Tales' or Decameron or AN or VP or PT, the framing story is only intended to provide a motive for collecting the various tales in one place. It need not have any inherent connection with the framed stories. In MBh also, the outermost frame-episode of Śaunaka's twelve-year Satra provides the motive of the most natural human curiosity of the sages to hear the various stories⁴ which occasions the narration of the epic, but has no inherent connection with it. More closely related to the epic, however, is the second frame of the story-cycle of the Snake-sacrifice the hero of which, Janamejaya, has a direct patrilineal connection with the heroes of the epic. Even the narrator Vaiśampāyana is a direct disciple of sage Vyāsa Pāraśarya, the traditional composer of the epic. In the RM, as we saw above, the hero and his sons themselves are the listener and the narrators respectively. The author of this episode tries to utilize a fine opportunity afforded by the event of Rāma's Aśvamedha sacrifice by framing with it the entire story of Rāma's past life. The framing technique here comes close to the powerful modern device of narration called 'flashback'. Not only that, but the framing episode itself—wherein Sītā ultimately returns to mother Earth thus ending the narrative with the tragic note of eternal separation — becomes here the culminating point of the entire epic-story. It could give us a powerful tragedy with an excellent unity of form. The only fly — but a big fly at that — in the ointment is that the author's execution does not stand equal to his conception. His narrative skill lags far behind his conception. A grand conception, therefore, fails to achieve an artistic form on account of its author's lack of command over his means of expression. The superb narrative skill revealed in the central portions of the epic stands strongly contrasted with the inferior, purāṇic style of these parts, and whereas the conception of these events could have

4 vide ĀdiP. 1.3. Citrāḥ śrotum kathās tatra... .etc.

been integrated into the central parts of the narrative, the difference in the style of these two portions becomes the cause of failure to achieve this artistic formal unity of the epic. However, even the grandness of the conception itself has been well rewarded by the great popularity attained even by these portions of the narrative. This flashback framing technique is taken to an extreme in Kādambarī where the listener-narrator are shown to be the central characters of the narrative — in their third births ! Artistically, however, it is not superior to that in the RM.

A further consideration of the contents of these sargas reveals that they are also meant to be an introductory group of episodes. Thus, they give us (1) a noble life worth poetising, (2) a proper metre for and a sensitive composer of such a poem, (3) a list of events included in the poem, and (4) the proper singers or reciters for such a poem. It is, therefore, not incorrect to postulate that “The first four Sargas of the Bālakāṇḍa which serve the purpose of an Introduction to the Rāmāyaṇa are probably from a different hand that prefixed them to the Epic at a later stage.”⁵

In making mention of Vālmīki as the first poet and a contemporary of Rāma, these four Sargas have a point of affinity with the UK. As Dr. G. H. Bhat points out, “The Rāmāyaṇa gives a detailed account of the sage Vālmīki in the first four Sargas of the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa, both of which are evidently a later addition It is only the late Kāṇḍas (I and VII) that make Vālmīki a contemporary of Rāma.”⁶ But it should be noted that even in BK, Vālmīki is not even mentioned anywhere except in these four Sargas.

This fact leads to a number of possibilities. In the first place, it makes the unity of authorship of these parts (i. e. Sargas 1-4 of BK, and the final portion of UK) almost certain. Equally certain is the unity of the age of their interpolation into the epic. It also reveals the purpose of this interpolation which is to establish the contemporaneity of the author of the poem with its hero, most probably to show that its sage-poet also belonged to the same reverentially hoary past as did its hero. Since these portions of the BK and UK are later than Rāmopākhyāna in the MBh,⁷ we can very well imagine that the author of these parts knew the MBh and was prompted to emulate the example of MBh where sage Vyāsa also is not only the author of the epic but is intimately related to the heroes and often plays an important part in furthering the story. He, therefore, tried to show the sage Vālmīki playing an important role in the drama of his hero’s life, even if only in the end.

The first and the third Sargas give two catalogues of events. The first catalogue does not mention the events of BK and UK, the second does. Again, the MBh often refers to RM, and more than once gives epitomes of it. But nowhere does it reveal

5 BK, p. 424.

6 *ibid.* p. 425,

7 See *Rāma-Kathā*, Bulcke, pp. 47 ff.

any familiarity with the episodes of these two Kāṇḍas.⁸ Therefore, MBh must have been finalised before the late Kāṇḍas were given their present shape and RM attained its present form. This is confirmed by the silence and mention of these events in the two catalogues respectively. It is also significant that the extra episodes of the second list are clearly demarcated as belonging to the two Kāṇḍas either in the beginning or in the end. This means, these two Kāṇḍas are later than the other Kāṇḍas.

It is shown that even among these two Kāṇḍas, UK is later than BK.⁹ We can further point out that even in BK, Vālmiki is mentioned nowhere except in these four Sargas. In this, the affinity of the Sargas to those parts of UK wherein Vālmiki figures is greater than to the rest of the BK. Therefore, if we agree that BK belongs to the second stage in the development of RM, and UK to the third, then these four Sargas will have to be placed in the third stage alongwith the UK.

Sarga 2 gives us that beautiful prefatory episode wherein sage Vālmiki goes to the river Tamasā to take his daily bath, sees the male of a pair of cranes in union being pierced by the arrow of a niṣāda hunter, hears the piteous wails of the female and is so deeply moved that his feelings find a spontaneous and immortal expression in the rhythm of the classical anuṣṭubh couplet. The tale is, as if, made to illustrate Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry -- 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.' Almost all the commentators of RM take the pair of cranes as symbolic of the hero and the heroine, the arrow being the dart of separation which, thereafter, became almost eternal. Incidentally, the tale also shows the potentials of the classical anuṣṭubh which, in contrast to the Vedic anuṣṭubh, is more restrained and more rhythmic, thus better suited to the poetic requirements of the sombre and dignified pace of the epic. The sage also is revealed to possess a very sensitive, sympathetic, imaginative heart, and therefore, the most appropriate person to handle the tender, pathetic, beautiful Rāma-story. The tale, as it shows the origin of poetry, is beautiful in itself and in the context of the epic, it is brought to serve many useful purposes.

The beauty and usefulness of the tale is realised more clearly when contrasted with the episode prefaced to the MBh, wherein Lord Gaṇeśa agrees to work as a scribe for sage Vyāsa. The sage dictates to him the entire MBh continuously for three years. The tale is clearly a foolish imitation of the RM-tale referred to above, and serves no better purpose than to provide to the author of the MBh a status higher than that of Lord Gaṇeśa himself. It is a foolish answer to the wondering question whether it is possible for a human being to write out such a huge corpus of heterogenous matter and it can satisfy only the lowest layer of intelligence. Rightly has it been relegated to the appendix.¹⁰ Compared to this, the author of the Vālmiki-episode in RM reveals a much more refined artistic sense.

8 *ibid.* Ch. III.

9 *ibid.* p. 143.

10 *vide* Footnote to Appendix passage 1, ĀdiP. pp. 384-85 Even the passage 1 wherein Brahmā praised MBh is merely a stale imitation of the RM-tale wherein Lord Brahmā informs sage Vālmiki about the best of human beings. (BK. Sarga 1.)

It should be noted that the nature of the assembly before which the two singers recite the epic of Vālmiki is not specified here. It is only in the UK that the assembly is revealed to be a sacrificial one and the singers to be the royal princes of the hero himself. Thus, the epic has been set in the frame of the event of Rāma's Aśvamedha Sacrifice. The sacrificial frame may, again, very likely be in imitation of the MBh.

These observations about the first four Sargas make it clear that they belong to the third stage of RM, have greater affinity with UK and their author was a person of considerable artistic talent. He succeeded in making Vālmiki a contemporary of the hero, in making him play a significant role in the hero's life, in framing the tale in a sacrificial set-up, in giving the tale an unexpected but plausible turn, in entirely changing the tone and emphasis of the epic from a happy end to a tragic one, and in making the tale an excellent example of tragic but sublime royal ethics. That he knows the value of suspense in the narrative is testified by his specifying the kind of assembly and the identity of the singers only in the UK. His creative genius is exemplified in the episode of Vālmiki's spontaneous discovery of a better metre. The author of these parts deserves the popularity that he has achieved. Only if his narrative skill had been matching !...

There is, however, one glaring contradiction in the situation of Rāma's performing Aśvamedha which, one wonders why, none has noted so far. One of the primary requirements of an Aśvamedha sacrifice is that its yajmāna king must have four wives who are known in sacerdotal terminology as mahiṣī, parivr̥ktā, vāvātā and pālāgalī.¹¹ The RM opens with Daśaratha performing Aśvamedha and, at least, three of his queens are actually named.¹² (Yet, he obtains four sons!) This fact of the sacrificial necessity of having more than one wife for Aśvamedha stands in sharp contradiction to Rāma, the ideal of monogamy, performing Aśvamedha. Even if we concede that only Sītā could be the chief queen — mahiṣī — of Rāma, the very

11 Cf. "Aśvamedha, The King of Sacrifices", B. H. Kapadia, *Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol. XXX (New Series) Part 2, September, 1961, p. 13; "The Aśvamedha : Its Original Signification", R. D. Karmarkar, *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. XXX, Parts III-IV, 1949, p. 342 (On p. 333 Karmarkar mentions three queens, but this is a mistake, inadvertently corrected by himself only on p. 342. The name of the fourth one is given by him as 'Kumārī' instead of pālāgalī); "A Folk-Custom in the Aśvamedha", S. A. Dange, *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, June, 1967, p. 328; Also *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣadas*, A. B. Keith, HOS, Vol. 32, p. 343; and *History of Dharma-śāstra*, P. V. Kane, Vol. II, part II, pp. 1230, 1234-35.

12 Cf. BK, 13.28.

hotā'dhvaryus tath'odgātā hayena samayojayan /
mahīṣyā parivr̥tṭyātha vāvātām aparām tathā | /
Can 'aparā' be taken to mean the fourth queen ?

Also, "The Adhvaryu obtains a daughter in marriage and also the fourth wife as dakṣiṇā". (Cf. B. H. Kapadia's article, p. 21) Is that the reason of omitting the name of the fourth queen ? G. S. Ghurye (in *Caste and Class in India*, p. 63) says: "Sumitrā, one of the four wives of King Daśaratha, was a Śūdrā." But he has not indicated his source,

necessity of making allowance for other queens even if only for sacrificial purposes renders the insistence for Sītā — to the extent of putting her golden image — pointless. The contradiction is, as if, built in. The author wants to show Rāma's greatest love for Sītā — the ideal of monogamy, of conjugal love —, and makes him put a golden image of Sītā even for the sacrificial purposes, but the very sacrifice that he is shown to perform primarily requires at least four wives.

Or, was Rāma originally not intended to provide an ideal of monogamy? Perhaps, even the author of these late portions did not intend Rāma to be that ideal of conjugal constancy which he later on came to be regarded as! At one place, at least, in the original portions of RM, mention has been made of "Rāma's noble women!"¹³

The second alternative is also equally unpalatable, but we should set it for whatever worth it has. As Karmarkar shows, the custom of Pāriplava is unique to the Aśvamedha sacrifice.¹⁴ According to the custom, ten different types of lores are narrated on ten consecutive days, cyclically throught the year during which the sacrificial horse is moving about. Among these lores, those of the itihāsa and the purāṇa are narrated on the eighth and the ninth days of the cycles, and it is only natural for us to suppose that, for this purpose, experts in the lores — i.e. the sūtas and the paurāṇikas — must have been employed. This means, the narration, preservation and propagation of the itihāsa-purāṇa lores took place under the custom of pāriplava within the set-up of the Aśvamedha sacrifice. In this situation, when some genius poet put some of the itihāsa-tales into an epic-form, and when, thereafter, it, again, fell to the lot of these traditional bards themselves to preserve the epic-itihāsa-poems, nothing would be more natural than their tendency to set up the epic in the same environment, to frame the poem with the same episode, of the Aśvamedha sacrifice within which they were actually narrating the tale. They were narrating the Rāma-story in the pāriplava setting of Aśvamedha, so they provided the tale with the same frame of Aśvamedha, and to make it more effective, they made Rāma, the hero of the tale itself, perform the sacrifice and showed his own tale being narrated at his own Aśvamedha sacrifice. This is very plausible.

What is implausible is the implied assumption that either the author of this episode was not aware of the implications of the situation of Rāma's performing Aśvamedha, or he was deliberately ignoring them; unless, of course, we contend that

13 vide Mantharā's words in AyK. 8.5 :

hr̥stāḥ khalu bhaviṣyanti rāmasya paramāḥ striyaḥ /
aprahṛstā bhaviṣyanti snuṣās te bhārata-kṣaye //

The parallel construction of the two halves of the śloka makes it inevitable that 'striyaḥ' be taken to mean, in the light of 'snuṣāḥ' (daughters-in-laws), the 'wives' of Rāma.

14 vide "The Pāriplava (Revolving Cycle of Legends) at the Aśvamedha." R. D. Karmarkar, *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. XXXIII, 1952, pp. 26-40; *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. II, ii, Kane, pp. 1231-1233.

the hero of the epic was not intended to be an ideal of monogamy and, therefore, in presenting him as performing Aśvamedha and consequently necessarily having more than one wife, there was no question of damaging the image of a monogamous Rāma since it did not exist. There is no sense in arguing that the author was primarily a paurāṇika, an expert in the lores of itihāsa and purāṇas, and hence was not well conversant with the intricate details of the sacrifice; we even need not contradict Mm. Kane when he says that "It is probable that in the epic only the popular elements and a few of the religious rites were emphasized;"¹⁵ the necessity of having four wives for the yajmāna king of Aśvamedha is not such a small or intricate or even insignificant detail as can be missed even by a passing observer of the sacrifice. The argument that the sacrifice was extinct and the author was describing it only from a traditional memory also does not stand, since numerous performances of Aśvamedha have been recorded in the Indian history even of the Middle ages.¹⁶ The ancient sacrifice of Aśvamedha was not extinct, and the author of the UK cannot plead ignorance of the eye-catching requirement of the four wives of the yajamāna king; still if he chose to show Rāma performing Aśvamedha, the conclusion is inevitable that either he was deliberately ignoring the basic contradiction or he was ignoring the ideal of monogamous Rāma if it did exist.

(2) The Ṛṣyaśṛṅga Episode

From Sarga 5, the actual epic narrative, claimed to be the work of Vālmīki, begins. Sargas 5, 6 and 7 give us the descriptions of Ayodhya, of its King Daśaratha, and of his ministers. These sargas can legitimately be considered as part of the principal story.

In Sarga 8, the mention of the childlessness of Daśaratha brings in an occasion for introducing the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga episode. Daśaratha deliberates with his ministers that he should perform a Vājimedha sacrifice for obtaining a son.¹⁷ When he orders his chief minister Sumantra to call the priests, Sumantra (called Sūta here) privately tells him that, in connection with his (Daśaratha's) obtaining sons, he (Sumantra) has heard from the priests the episode of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga as narrated in their presence by Sanatkumāra. The episode runs thus: "Kaśyapa's son Vibhāṇḍaka will have a son Ṛṣyaśṛṅga who will have seen no other human being but his father. At that time, there will be a severe drought in Aṅgadeśa. Its king Romapāda, upon the advice of Brāhmaṇas, will request them to bring Ṛṣyaśṛṅga into his kingdom. The Purohita etc., fearing the curse of the sage Vibhāṇḍaka, will fetch Ṛṣyaśṛṅga with the help of courtesans whereupon it will rain in his kingdom and the king will give him in marriage his daughter Śāntā. The sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga will then perform for you to obtain sons."¹⁸

15 *History of Dharmasāstra*, Kane, II. ii, p. 1237.

16 *ibid.* pp. 1238-39.

17 BK. 8. 2-3.

18 BK. 8. 5-22.

Upon the king's question as to how the courtesans managed to bring the sage, Sumantra further narrates the means by which they achieved their assignment. That part of the story is famous. Sumantra narrates it in Sarga 9 in simple past. In Sarga 10, he again says that it is already foreseen by Sanatkumāra that Daśaratha will approach Romapāda and request him to persuade his son-in-law Ṛṣyaśṛṅga to perform for Daśaratha. Accordingly, Daśaratha, having convinced Vasiṣṭha (naturally)¹⁹ personally approaches Romapāda and brings Ṛṣyaśṛṅga and his wife to his capital. Then, when the spring season comes, he starts preparations for the sacrifice by releasing the sacrificial horse,²⁰ and upon the advent of the next spring season, the sacrifice proper begins.²¹ The thirteenth Sarga describes the details of the Aśvamedha sacrifice. After Aśvamedha is duly performed, king Daśaratha requests Ṛṣyaśṛṅga who then properly performs the 'putriyā iṣṭi' with the mantras as given in the Atharvaśiras,²² as a result of which four sons are born to the three queens of Daśaratha.²³

There is one glaring contradiction in the narrative even as given in the constituted text. At more than one place, Daśaratha says that he wants to perform Aśvamedha sacrifice to obtain sons.²⁴ Even the priests promise him that by performing Aśvamedha, he will obtain four sons.²⁵ Daśaratha's desire and the priests' promise are fully justified in view of the fact that Aśvamedha is originally a fertility sacrifice. As Willibald Kirfel has proved,²⁶ it must have been a Puruṣamedha in its origin. As Kapadia puts it: "Whatever may be the original conception and purpose of the Aśvamedha, it is without doubt that fertility had an important role to play in it."²⁷ The rite of the chief queen lying down with the sacrificial horse and the so-called obscene dialogues of the other queens and the priest accompanying it both point to the same

19 see BK. 10. 13a. anumānya vasiṣṭham ca.

20 BK. 11.8, 11, 14, 19.

21 BK. 12 & 13.

22 BK. 14. 2-3.

23 BK. 15. 8ff.

24 Cf. BK. 8. 2 :-

Sutrātham vājimedhena kim artham na yajāmy aham /
BK. 11. 2-3 :-

... tam vipram ...

yajñāya varayāmāsa santānārtham kulasya ca //
tath'eti ca sa rājānam uvāca ca susatkṛtaḥ /
sambhārāḥ sambhriyantām te turagaś ca vimucyatām //
BK. 11. 8 :-

mama lālapyamānasya putrārtham nāsti vai sukham /
tad artham hayamedhena yakṣyām'iti matir mama //

25 Cf. BK. 11. 11-12

sambhārāḥ sambhriyantām te turagaś ca vimucyatām /
sarvathā prāpsyase putraṅś caturō'mitavikramān //

26 See the digest of his German article by B. H. Kapadia : "Aśvamedha, the King of Sacrifices," *JUB*, Vol. XXX, part 2, pp. 11-12.

27 *ibid.* p. 20.

conclusion²⁸. The fertility aspect of the rite is easily explainable. In a society where levirate was religiously sanctioned, the sacerdotalization of ritual procreation also can be readily justified and religiously sanctioned.²⁹ There is, therefore, nothing objectionable in Daśaratha performing Aśvamedha for obtaining sons.

The contradiction comes in when Daśaratha is shown to obtain sons, not through Aśvamedha but by the putriyā iṣṭi performed according to the mantras of Atharvaśiras. The question naturally arises : when Aśvamedha is enough for obtaining sons, why is a second rite — putriyā iṣṭi — needed ? The commentators also have felt the contradiction in the situation and have tried to offer some plausible explanation. Govindarāja, for example, says that Aśvamedha was performed to purge Daśaratha of all the sins after which the latter could properly perform the putreṣṭi. Govindarāja quotes a Vedic text to the effect that one who performs Aśvamedha purges oneself even of the sin of Brāhmicide.³⁰ Tilaka carries the position still further and states that the Aśvamedha is intended to expiate Daśaratha's sin of brahmicide which he had incurred in the prime of his youth in killing by mistake the young sage Śrāvaṇa.³¹ Tilaka puts up the situation thus: If Daśaratha wanted sons for which putreṣṭi was enough, why should he perform Aśvamedha at all ? He had incurred the sin of Brāhmicide in killing the ascetic child Śrāvaṇa. He, therefore, should expiate the sin before he could perform putreṣṭi. For this purpose, Aśvamedha was necessary.

Tilaka's attempt to provide motivation for Aśvamedha by referring to Śrāvaṇa-episode is activated by a desire not only to explain away the duplication of sacrifices, but also to glorify the institution of sacrifice. But there is adequate motivation for the so-called Śrāvaṇa-episode in the place in which it occurs. In AyK, just before his death, Daśaratha remembers³² that in his youth, he had killed a young sage mistaking him for some animal, and his bereaved parents had cursed Daśaratha that he, too, would meet a similar death in separation of his children. Thus, Daśaratha's agonising death in separation of his sons is adequately motivated by this episode for which no

28 For a very plausible explanation of the exact implication of this rite and its accompanying dialogues, see : "A Folk-custom in the Aśvamedha", S. A. Dange, *JOIB*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, June 1967, pp. 323-335.

29 See Kapadia's article in *JUB*, Vol. XXX, part 2, p. 18.

30 See his commentary on the beginning of BK. 12 :

evam daśarathaḥ sarva-kāma-samṛddho'pi putrālābha-santaptas tanmūlāni pāpāni svādhikārānūrūpen'āśvamedhena vinā na vinaśyant'iti manvānaḥ, sarva-pāpmānam tarati tarati brahma-hatyām yo'śvamedhena yajate iti śrutya rāja-sārva-bhaumo'śvamedhena yajeta iti smṛtya ca vihitam aśvamedham yaṣṭum saṅkalpa...etc. Again, towards the end of that Sarga : evam putrotpatti-pratibandha-sakala-durita-nivāraṇa-kṣame..āśvamedhe nirvṛte...putra-prāpti-karaṇam kratum sumantroktam manasi nidhāya etc.

31 Read : yady'api putra-kāmeṣṭyā'iva putrāvāptiḥ sambhavati, tathāpi tapo-ratasya vaiśyasya śrāvaṇasya vadhe tad-viyogātura-taporata-tanmātā-piṭṛmaraṇena ca brahmavadha-sama-pāpotpattya tat-prayaścittvenā'śvamedhānuṣṭhānam bodhyam.—Tilaka's commentary on BK. 14. 60. Ed. K. P. Parab, Nirṇayasāgar Press, Bombay.

32 AyK. 57-58.

further justification, as sought by Tilaka, is necessary. On the contrary, if we accept Tilaka's explanation, some further contradictions creep in.

(1) In the critical text, the hunted young sage remains anonymous in the sense that his name is not mentioned anywhere in the episode itself. How Tilaka must have got his name is a mystery.³³

(2) Again, when the young sage himself says to the king Daśaratha that the king should not fear of having killed a brāhmin since he is a vaiśya's son born of a śūdrā,³⁴ Tilaka's enthusiasm to compare it with Brāhmicide is unwarranted, and is very probably guided by Govindarāja's general remarks regarding the efficacy of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice even to expiate the great sin of brāhmicide referred to above.³⁵

(3) Further, as the narration goes, when he hunted the sage, Daśaratha was only a young prince and had not even married Kauśalyā.³⁶ Now, if he was cursed to die in separation of his children, he must at least have the children to be separated from (if at all the curse was to come true); in that case, the curse will be a boon in disguise serving as a sure antidote against the childlessness of Daśaratha who then should not have any necessity of resorting either to Aśvamedha or to Putreṣṭi for having sons.

(4) Aesthetically also, Tilaka's attempt to explain away the duplication of sacrifices in this way anticipates the so-called Śrāvaṇa-episode long before it actually occurs in the course of the epic. The episode, thus, loses its charm arising out of its surprise occurrence combined with the poetic effect of its flashback technique. But the author of the original RM knew the value of the element of surprise which is also evidenced in his introducing the episode of the crow as a sure indication of Sītā's identity. The episode, though reminiscent in character, occurs for the first time in the SK, when Hanūmān wants some unmistakable token of her identity.³⁷ The charm of the incident lies in no small degree in its surprise appearance. Can we not expect a similar artistic insight in the introduction of the so-called Śrāvaṇa-episode also? Aesthetically, therefore, the Śrāvaṇa-episode is well-placed in the structure of the plot, and its anticipation in any way would detract from its artistic effect. From this point of view, the inevitability of even the Aśvamedha seems uncertain.

(5) Finally, it is better to take Daśaratha's obtainment of the four sons as the result of Aśvamedha rather than of Putreṣṭi, since all the three queens who are said

33 Of course, Brahma-purāṇam (Adhyāya 123) mentions his name as Śrāvaṇakumāra, but that is just one of the many names given to him in various works. See *Rāma-Kathā*, Bulcke, p. 314,

34 vide AyK: 57. 37.

na dvijātir aham rājan mā'bhūt te manaso vyathā /
śūdrāyām asmi vaiśyena jāto janapadādhipa //

35 See above footnote 30

36 AyK. 57. 10 :-

devy'anuṣṭhā tvam abhavo yuvarājo bhavāmy'aham /

37 SK. 36. 12-32.

to obtain sons are mentioned by their personal as well as sacerdotal names only in connection with Aśvamedha.³⁸ The Putreṣṭi is just barely mentioned without any details. This means, that Aśvamedha, and not Putreṣṭi, is properly emphasised as the cause of the hero's birth.

The cumulative effect of the above considerations is that, if at all, the Aśvamedha which itself is originally a fertility rite should be considered responsible for Daśaratha's obtaining the sons. Putreṣṭi is purely duplicative and useless, and therefore, very likely an interpolation in the tale later even than the Aśvamedha. Consequently, the character of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga also which is specially brought in for performing that rite falls useless and appears grafted upon the narrative. This should naturally mean that the entire episode of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is a late addition even in BK.

Some further considerations can be brought forth in corroboration. Vasiṣṭha is the famous Vedic sage, is the traditional family priest of the solar race, and is fully capable of performing the Aśvamedha sacrifice. This Aśvamedha, as shown above,³⁹ was actually intended to achieve Daśaratha's desire of having progeny, and it was a fertility rite originally. Putreṣṭi, therefore, is not at all necessary. Ṛṣyaśṛṅga who is specially brought in to perform Putreṣṭi is also not necessary. Any tale or episode included in his name is, therefore, spurious.

The person who must have added the episode was aware of the contradiction. This is reflected in the apologetic attitude of Daśaratha towards Vasiṣṭha when the former goes to king Romapāda to fetch Ṛṣyaśṛṅga with the consent of Vasiṣṭha.⁴⁰ Again the sages who approve of Daśaratha's desire of performing Aśvamedha are mentioned, as it were, in two groups : those headed by Vasiṣṭha and those headed by Ṛṣyaśṛṅga⁴¹. The author of the interpolation, as it were, is at a loss about the relative importance of the two sages. The queer thing is, if these are to be taken as two groups of sages, it is the latter group that confirms in clear words that the king will obtain four sons from Aśvamedha !⁴² Actually, whenever Vasiṣṭha is mentioned, the name of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga also occurs almost without fail.⁴³ The author, as it were, takes special care to see that Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is never lost sight of in the glory of the name of Vasiṣṭha. Such an insistence for mentioning Ṛṣyaśṛṅga even to the point of ridiculousness, raises, by its over-doing, our suspicion about its genuineness. Again, the redactor's attempt to present Ṛṣyaśṛṅga as inevitable for Daśaratha's obtaining sons by showing him pre-destined for the purpose is also too obvious to be convincing. The very fact that such an attempt has to be made shows that the tale has been grafted upon the narrative at a later date. The form of the tale — the device of narrating the present as viewed

38 See above footnote 12.

39 See above footnotes 24 and 25.

40 See above footnote 19.

41 Cf. BK. 11. 10c (Vasiṣṭhapramukhāḥ sarve) and 11. 11a (ṛṣyaśṛṅgapurogāś ca).

42 vide BK. 11. 11cd & 12.

43 Cf. BK. 11. 10-11, 12,33, 12.34, 13.2, 13.42

from a point of time in distant past as an event of future — is too strained to be artistic, and is created to serve the purpose of showing R̥ṣyaśṛṅga as pre-destined and inevitable; otherwise, the purpose for which R̥ṣyaśṛṅga is brought into the tale could be, or rather had been, accomplished even without him. The device reminds one of Robert Browning's famous poem "By the Fireside" where the young poet tries to visualize how the present moment will probably be viewed at some moment of future in their old age, and by contrast effectively brings out its weak points. In this tale, therefore, the content of the tale is not very different from that in its other versions, but the peculiarity of its form indicates that the underlying purpose of introducing the tale is much deeper than the expressed one of obtaining sons for Daśaratha.

Many versions of this tale are found in our literature, as well as in that of European countries. In native literature, there are two versions in the Buddhist Jātakas. In Alambusā Jātaka (No. 523) the sage is seduced by a nymph Alambusā at the instance of Indra who is afraid of the sage's austere penance. In Naḷiṇikā Jātaka (No. 526) the sage is seduced by the princess Naḷiṇikā. The MBh contains a version of the tale at VP.110-113 where the sage is seduced by a courtesan. The MBh version, which is believed by many scholars to be the oldest version of the tale⁴⁴ explains the name of the sage thus: "Since the sage had a horn of a deer in his head, he was famous by the name of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga".⁴⁵ The singular "a horn" must be noted. The name of the sage and its explanation in the oldest version of the tale are intriguing indeed. "The more correct spelling of the name is R̥ṣya-śṛṅga".⁴⁶ The name means "the horn of a deer". The characteristic of possessing a single horn on the head is significant. It is also found in the European versions of the tale where, however, the sage becomes an animal called 'Unicorn.' The word is explained thus: "1. a mythical creature resembling a horse and having a single horn in the centre of its forehead: often symbolic of chastity or purity, capable of being tamed by a virgin, and usually successful in evading capture. 2. a heraldic representation of this animal, in the form

44 Cf. "Dr. Sukthankar (Notes, MBh. III. 110)... has shown the chronological order of the development of the Episode as follows:

- (a) Original version of the MBh.
- (b) Version of the Padma Purāṇa, probably with partial use of the former.
- (c) The version of the MBh (Vulgate) now current, containing the original nucleus which was worked over and assimilated with the Purāṇa version.
- (d) The Rāmāyaṇa version is later than those of the Padma Purāṇa" BK. pp. 438-39. Dr. G. H. Bhatt, the editor of BK also mentions that, according to Lüders, the Gāthās of Jātaka, deriving from from still more ancient popular Ākhyāna poetry, must be older than the MBh. version; but, the fact that the MBh. version actually mentions the deer-horn in connection with the sage which the Jātakas do not mention, seems to indicate that the MBh contains a more popular, and therefore, very likely, more ancient version.

45 Cf. VP. 110. 17.

tasya'r̥ṣyaśṛṅgam śirasi rājann āsīh mahātmanah /
tena'r̥ṣyaśṛṅga ity'evam tadā sa prathito'bhavat //

46 *Vedic Index*, Macdonell & Keith, under 'R̥ṣya-śṛṅga'.

of a horse with a lion's tail and with a straight, and spirally twisted horn".⁴⁷ It will be noted that the first explanation hints at the unicorn-legend, while the second explanation is the later development of the animal. The standard legend of the Unicorn runs as follows : "The Unicorn, something between a horn and a kid, is amazingly powerful for his size. He has one long sharp conically shaped horn on his brow. He cannot be taken by force, but only through the following trick : The hunters lead a virgin, into the woods, and as soon as the Unicorn smells and sees her runs to her and lays his horn in her lap. She fondles him until he falls asleep. Then the hunters approach and either capture him and lead him to the palace of the king, or kill him, cut off his horn, and bring it to the king."⁴⁸ Noel Conti, sixteenth century Italian writer, puts it rather bluntly: "The wild beast desires the virgin's sexual embrace."⁴⁸ A fifteenth century tapestry, placed now in the historic museum of Basle, Switzerland, shows a bare-breasted virgin caressing with her hand the single spirally twisted horn on the head of a Unicorn. (We may note here, that though this Unicorn is supposed to be originally from India, where it was identified with the Indian rhinoceros, and then to assimilate various characteristics of the snakes, horses, antelopes, goats and asses, he, as depicted in the tapestry of Basle Historic Museum, very much appears to be like a deer.) In a Far-Eastern version he is seduced, loses his powers and is taken to the royal palace with the girl riding him.⁴⁸ The Tibetan version is noteworthy in that it puts a number of different aspects of the tale together. According to it, the Unicorn "is first angered by his son who breaks his (the Unicorn's) vessels which contain water, and then, in his fury, he stops the rain in the land and causes a drought. The daughter of the king intoxicates and seduces him; and as long as he has intercourse with her it rains thereby securing the fertility of the land."⁴⁸

Two things go to prove that all these versions have sprung from the same origin. One is the extremely peculiar characteristic of the possession of a single horn on the forehead — either by a sage or an animal. The second is his seduction by a female — either virgin or a courtesan or a nymph. His ignorance of the female sex in Indian versions is introduced to emphasise his great strength of penance, his great chastity, as well as to rationalise his seduction by a member of the female sex which, in normal conditions, would be a contradiction of chastity. The motif of the sage's ignorance of the female sex thus serves to combine rationally two contradictory details of strong chastity and seduction. In the continental versions, the Unicorn is merely an animal acting instinctively, and therefore, no contradiction is felt in its being a symbol of chastity and purity and at the same time its feeling amorously attracted towards the virgin.

The first characteristic shows that the name of the sage itself is symbolically significant. The name of the sage which is appropriate to his characteristic of possessing a deer-horn is a phallic symbol. Horns have had sexual significance since the dawn

47 Random House Dictionary, p. 1552.

48 "The Unicorn as a Phallic Symbol", David Bar - Illan, in *EROS*. Ed. Ralph Ginzburg, Autumn 1962, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 30

of history, because of their shape, but also because “they represent power, virility, fierceness of the great god of fecundity worshipped by most early civilizations, the bull.⁴⁹ Some less inhibited tribes like that of the Papuans wear them on their waists.⁵⁰ “But usually they were worn on heads. However, the displacement does not change the horn’s symbolism. The terms of reference — conscious or otherwise — have always been the same.”⁵¹

Apart from this phallic significance of the horn, the first part of the compound also has its implications. The word *R̥ṣya*, spelt more accurately as *R̥ṣya*, means a ‘stag’, its feminine form being ‘*Rohit*’. “The procreative power of the stag (*ārsya* *vṛṣṇya*) was celebrated.”⁵² It is perhaps for this reason that Lord Prajāpati is almost always shown to have a close connection with deer in many of our mythical stories. There is a myth, for example, in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*⁵³ which says : Prajāpati enjoyed his daughter’s company from which the *Mrga* constellation was born. Another myth runs : Prajāpati and *Uṣas* together were transformed into the *Rohiṇī* (Doe) constellation. Another version of the former myth runs thus.⁵⁴ Prajāpati desired his daughter *Dyaus*. To prevent him from this, the gods created from their fierce forms *Raudra* and asked him to cut off the head of Prajāpati. *Raudra*, being promised that he would be made *Paśupati*, did accordingly. The pierced Prajāpati rose to the sky as ‘*Mrga*’ constellation. This version, it will be remembered, comes quite near to that famous *Purāṇic* myth⁵⁵ wherein Lord *Brahmā* chased in the form of a deer his own daughter *Sarasvatī* who, in order to escape her father’s amorous advances, had taken the form of a doe. Lord *Brahmā* was in turn chased and pierced by Lord *Mahādeva* in the form of a hunter.

Another important point is that this sage *R̥ṣyaśṛṅga* is said to be the son of sage *Vibhāṇḍaka*, son of *Kaśyapa*. Now “*Kaśyapa* is the name of a sage who is mentioned only once in the *Rigveda*, but is a common figure in the later *Saṁhitās*. He is always of a mythical character, as belonging to the distant past.”⁵⁶ In the *Purāṇas*, this *Kaśyapa* is always mentioned as Prajāpati who is the progenitor of all the creatures.⁵⁷

49 *ibid* p. 28.

50 Cf. *ibid*. “Papuans whose penises are sheathed in long, horn-like shields, tied to their waists to resemble the erect phallus”. p. 28.

51 *ibid*.

52 *Vedic Index*, under *R̥ṣya*.

53 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. 13.9.

54 *ibid*.

55 At many places in *Purāṇas*, e. g. *Śrīmadbhāgavata* III. 12. 28.
Vācam duhitaram tanvīm svayambhūr haratīm manāḥ /
akāmām cakame saktaḥ sakāma iti naḥ śrutam //

56 *Vedic Index*, under ‘*Kaśyapa*’.

57 Cf. *Purāṇa-parīśilana*, Mm. Pt. Giridhar Sharma Chaturvedi, Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, Patna, 1970. pp. 31, 159, etc.

Even in MBh, Kaśyapa is said to be the father of “these creatures”⁵⁸ through the thirteen daughters of Dakṣa. When, therefore, Kaśyapa’s son Vibhāṇḍaka is said to procreate a son named Ṛṣyaśṛṅga in a doe,⁵⁹ we need not resort to totemic or tribal interpretation of the myth as some do.⁶⁰ Of course, it is not unlikely that the sage wore a deer-horn on his head. Such a possibility has, in fact, been pointed out. Dange, for example, says: “In the case of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga it is doubtful if the Ṛṣi had an original horn on the head; it appears rather more probable that the horn was attached, in view of the belief in the power of fertility and virility in the horn.”⁶¹ But looking to the continuation of the mythical development of the tale from the Brāhmanas to the Purānas and the Great Epics, it seems more probable that the whole myth is nothing but simply the result of pastoral symbolisation, wherein the original Prajāpati (the lord of Creatures) becomes Kaśyapa, while his transformation into a deer combines, through the agency of Lord Rudra-Paśupati,⁶² to give the phallic symbol of deer-horn where horn stands as the phallic symbol *par excellence*. The intervention of Vibhāṇḍaka (‘one with lost or broken vessels’!) in the genealogy is rather difficult to explain but the Tibetan version might have some clue in that direction,⁶³ which we shall presently try to consider.

The second characteristic — the sage’s seduction by a female — points to another aspect of the tale. Once we grant that the name of the sage reveals a phallic symbol intended to serve for profuse procreation, the seduction part of the tale automatically falls into place as a sort of mimetic magic always shown to result in rains in the drought-stricken countries. In the Alambusā Jātaka, Indra releases rains after the nymph seduces the sage. The only change in the Naḷiṇikā-Jātaka is that the seducer there is the princess Naḷiṇikā instead of the nymph. The more sophisticated epic-versions show the princess Śāntā being actually given to the sage in marriage. The Tibetan version, on the other hand, is more outspoken. It tells us that ^{63c}“the

58 Cf. ĀdiP, 59, 11.

māriceḥ Kaśyapaḥ putraḥ Kaśyapāt tu imāḥ prajāḥ /
prajāñire mahābhāga dakṣa-kanyāś trayodaśa //

59 Cf. VanP. 110, 4 ab.

mṛgyām jātaḥ sa tejasvī kaśyapasya sutaḥ prabhuḥ

60 As, for example, Sitanath Pradhan does in *chronology of Ancient India* (Calcutta University, 1927). Cf. “There we find that Vibhāṇḍaka Kāśyapa... had his son named Ṛṣyaśṛṅga by a Mṛgī (evidently a non-Aryan maid)”. p. 156.

61 *Pastoral Symbolism from the Rgveda*, Dr.S.A. Dange, University of Poona, Poona 7.1970. p. 107

62 It will be interesting to note in this connection the myth given in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VI. 1.3.8-20. Prajāpati placed his energy in Uśas. Uśas gave birth to a son. The son cried as soon as he was born. So Prajāpati named him ‘Rudra’ from √rud-‘to cry’. But the son became Fire. So he was named ‘Agni’. He claimed, he was greater than his name, so he was called ‘Śarva’ (sarva). ‘Thus claiming to be greater than his name every time, he obtained the names of ‘Āp’, ‘Paśupati’, ‘Ugra’, ‘Aśani’, ‘Bhava’, ‘Mahādeva’, and ‘Īśāna’, thus obtaining eight names in all.

63 See above footnote No. 48. There, the son breaks up the father’s vessels which contain water. So the father virtually becomes ‘vi-bhāṇḍaka’!

daughter of the king intoxicates and seduces him, and as long as he has intercourse with her, it rains.” It is well-known among folklorists that the primitive folk almost always look upon human mating — particularly ritual or festive mating — as a sympathetic charm to induce rains. The mating of human couple is believed to be similar to the mating of the divine couple — the sky and the Earth — and is a microcosmic presentation of it, sympathetically inducing the macrocosm to imitate it resulting in rains which is the procreative energy divine. This belief of treating the ritual human mating as a fertility-rite is symbolised — mythified — in the entire story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga as is revealed in the common motif-structure observed in all the versions of the tale.

The basic motif-structure of the tale is familiar to us in a slightly different form. A sage takes to austere penance, and Indra gets frightened. He causes some nymph to ‘break’ the penance of the sage which task is invariably accomplished by seducing the sage. The pattern is too familiar to need any illustrations. The mention of the episode of Viśvāmitra and Menakā only will suffice. In the epic versions of the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga tale, the frightened Indra does not occur directly. But it is said there, that on account of some mistake of the priests the rain in the Aṅga country is withheld by Indra and released on account of the fear of Sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.⁶⁴ This role of Indra as the ‘penance-breaker’ is very clearly shown in both the Jātaka-versions of the tale. In the Alambusā-Jātaka he himself orders the nymph to seduce sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, whereas in the Naḷiṅikā-Jātaka he withholds rains thus compelling the king to persuade his princess daughter Naḷiṅikā to seduce the sage. This recurrence of the motif-pattern in numberless tales, therefore, points to its purely imaginary, rather mythical, character.

There is one more slightly different, motif-structure which is familiar to us through numerous episodes of sages in our traditional literature. The motif-pattern which leads to the birth of sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is also very characteristic. Sage Vibhāṇḍaka, being excited at the sight of nymph Ūrvaśī, drops his procreative energy into water, which results in the birth of Sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. The intervening motif of the seed passing with water into the mouth of a doe thus causing her to conceive⁶⁵ is only motivated to justify the son’s characteristic of possessing a deer-horn and is not necessary. In a folk-tale, the sage could be born even without her. “The blood or seed of gods, if it falls on the ground, is nearly always fertile.”⁶⁶ The seed of Mitrā-Varuṇā, dropping at the sight of Ūrvaśī, gives birth to the sages Vasiṣṭha and

64 VanP. 110.3, 21, 26 etc. The queer thing is that though the Brāhmaṇas advise the king to expiate, in the same breath, they promise that if Ṛṣyaśṛṅga comes into his country, it will rain! Are we to suppose that bringing Ṛṣyaśṛṅga or giving him the princess in marriage was a form of expiation?

65 VanP. 110. 14–16.

66 *The Nature of Greek Myths*, G. S. Kirk, Pelican Series p. 113. It will be interesting to note in this connection that the epithet ‘amogha-vīrya’ is very commonly applied to the sages and gods, particularly in such cases. Cf. the epithet given to Vibhāṇḍaka, VanP. 110. 11.

Agastya.⁶⁷ The seed of Lord Agni, dropping on the ground, gives birth to Lord Skanda Kārttikeya.⁶⁸ The seed of Sage Śaradvat, dropping at the sight of a nymph on a clump of grass (śara-stamba), gives birth to Sage Kṛpa and his sister Kṛpī — the mother of Aśvatthāman.⁶⁹ From the seed of Sage Bharadvāja dropping in a droṇī, Sage Droṇa is born.⁷⁰ The same pattern of motifs recurring in so many instances is a clear proof of its being the result of a characteristically folk-imagination.

The fact that the two motif-patterns have some similarity also should not be missed. The father is excited by a nymph, the son is seduced by a female. It will be remembered that in the Tibetan version the father himself, is 'Unicorn' as well as 'the one with the broken vessels' (which contained water !) — he is himself both 'R̥ṣyaśṛṅga' and 'Vibhāṇḍaka', and when seduced he causes rains. In the Indian versions the father loses the procreative energy, while the son achieves rains. And, is not the rain-water called the divine seed ? The father and the son of our native versions would thus appear to represent only two aspects of one and the same mythical character which as we have shown above is very likely only a transformation of Lord Prajāpati. Kaśyapa, Vibhāṇḍaka and R̥ṣyaśṛṅga will thus appear to be three different forms of the selfsame mythical character rather than three generation of a family of sages.

In the first chapter, we had agreed to eschew considering the other-than-the-epic versions of these tales. Yet, we have made here an exception just to show what dimensions each of these tales can take. And the implications of these considerations amply justify our act of excepting this tale.

(1) Most of our purāṇists like Pargiter, S. N. Pradhan, Hazra and others are generally prone to treat the Purāṇic and Epic persons and genealogies as pre-eminently historical and try to set up some sort of chronological relations between them by discussing and deciding upon contemporaneity of this or that 'historical' (?) persons. R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, for example, has been treated as a historical person, contemporary of King Daśaratha of the Solar line of Ayodhyā and of King Romapāda of Bengal and so on.⁷¹ But, if, as we have seen above, all the incidents of the tale are purely mythical,

67 *Vedic Index*, Vol. II. P. 276, under 'Vasiṣṭha'. The epithet 'born of a pitcher (kumbha)' is used number of times for Agastya (Cf. VanP. 96.2) which alludes to his divine birth.

68 BK. 36.16-18 & ff. Generally, this is narrated in the name of Lord Śiva, but in BK, in the name of Agni.

69 ĀdiP. 57. 90.

70 ĀdiP. 57,89.

71 See: *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*. F.E. Pargiter 1922, pp. 164,192,233,314; *Chronology of Ancient India*, Sita Natn Pradhan, 1927, pp. 23, 156,209; etc. A. D. Pusalkar's attempts to sift and interpret the Purāṇic data in a different way also proceed on an assumption of their historicity. See *The Vedic Age*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Fourth Edition, 1965, Book IV ('Historical Traditions'). pp. 271 ff.

then we will have to be very cautious in accepting the so-called historicity of our purāṇic personages, and the claims and attempts of our Purāṇists to construct some nomenclature of history from the Purāṇic genealogies will be thrown in serious doubt. At least, we shall have to wait till the tales we intend to utilise as our historical data are proved not to be purely mythical. We shall confirm this caution below while discussing the Ahalyā-tale.

(2) Another interesting aspect of the motif-pattern is the role of Indra as the 'Penance-breaker'. Apparently it seems to point to the well-known Brāhmaṇa-Śramaṇa dichotomy. The Śramaṇa attitude characterised by austere penance and renunciation of the worldly pleasures is symbolised in the sages whereas Indra is the highest god of the Vedas, the premier books of Brāhmaṇism, and his selfishly antagonistic attitude towards the sages has been a standard butt of joke. But there is more in it than meets the eye. Actually, the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga tale furnishes an important clue to all such seduction-tales. The basic structure of the male seduction by a female is similar in all these episodes but at other places the seduction of the sage merely means the loss of his accumulated power of penance. So Indra who causes the nymphs to seduce the sage is presented there as a very coward god trembling at the merest excess of the penance of some sage. In the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga-tale if the seduction of the sage means loss of accumulated penance, it also means bringing rains for the plenty. The real cause of always connecting Indra with the seductions of the sages is revealed here. Originally, the ritual human mating — the male seduction by the female — must have been intended to serve as a sympathetic mimetic magic to induce rains — symbolic of the earth's attempt to seduce the sky who is withdrawing his seed divine — the rain-water — thus laying the land barren.⁷² Indra is connected with the ritual since he is the god of rains. It is he who withdraws rains. It is he who should be propitiated by the act of human mating. The imposition of some reason on his act of withdrawing the rains — viz. his anxiety about the austere penance of some sage and his attempt to interrupt it — are only later, most probably since the time of the spread of śramaṇic religions, especially Buddhism. Indra in the jātakas is clearly shown to be antagonistic to the penance of the sages-ascetics. But there at least his characteristic as the God of rains is retained. In the Purāṇic versions, which seem to be still later, Indra's antagonism for the penance of the sages is rendered pointless since his status as the rain-god has been dissociated from the seduction-tales. What remains of him is only a coward — miserable god, almost the antithesis of his Vedic image. The śramaṇic influence has set the trend of the change in — the degradation of — the image of Vedic Indra.

(3) The motif of the 'Tempest in reverse'⁷³ has very well been exploited by the one who first wrote it out. The description of a female in the mouth of a sage who

72 Regarding the marriage of Heaven and Earth see S. A. Dange's paper. "The Marriage of Heaven and Earth in the Vedic Ritual", *Proceedings of AIOC*, XXVIII.

73 In 'The Tempest' of Shakespeare, the girl is living upon an island with her father and has not seen any other male. (Caliban is not fully human.) In the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga tale the sage is living with his father and has not seen any human female.

has never seen a woman in his life, and who, being ignorant of the sex-differences, tries to describe her also as a sage is full of humorous possibilities, and once again reminds one of and confirms the relation between Eros and laughter; of Śṛṅgāra and Hāsyā, so tacitly accepted by our prime Nāṭyācārya Bharata.⁷⁴

(4) Finally, the question remains : why was R̥ṣyaśṛṅga brought in when Vasiṣṭha was already there ? Vasiṣṭha is a famous Vedic Seer. He is fully capable of performing Aśvamedha which Daśaratha desires to do in order to obtain sons and which is expected to fulfil that desire as is attested by the rites of the sacrifice as well as by the textual evidence. What is more, he is the traditional family-priest of the Solar kings and in that capacity is supposed to have a right and a responsibility to perform the sacrifice. And he performs it ! There is absolutely no necessity of any other sage. Why R̥ṣyaśṛṅga ?

One possible answer could be this : the Upaveśana ceremony and the vulgar dialogues of the Aśvamedha sacrifice which are the core of the sacrifice and which can rightly be looked upon as the direct causes of the birth of the epic-heroes might, at some stage of the development of the culture (and perhaps of the epic), have seemed abhorrant to the more refined tastes of the people. So the redactors might have brought in another sage to do the job. The reason for choosing this sage might be its popularity on account of its comic element as well as its being famous as the tale symbolising the fertility-rite. But that is exactly the reason which makes this answer unacceptable. If the Upaveśana and the vulgar dialogues seemed abhorrant, could the ludicrous comic and the symbolised motif of the fertility-rite be less so ? Actually, the fact of the sage being given the princess in marriage itself shows the epic-authors' attempt to suppress its seemingly unethical aspect of merely ritual mating. The author of the RM-version suppresses even the comic element of the tale; therefore, it could not have been brought in for its entertainment value either.

The more probable answer seems to be this : R̥ṣyaśṛṅga is brought in with a purpose to perform Putreṣṭi and this Putreṣṭi is said to be Ātharvaṇa.⁷⁵ Vasiṣṭha is a Rigvedic Seer and cannot be supposed to perform an Ātharvaṇa rite which can rightly be entrusted only to a sage who is either an expert of Ātharvaṇa rites or belongs to the Atharvavedic tradition. Therefore, R̥ṣyaśṛṅga must be supposed to have close connection with the Atharvaveda. But the evidence of our Brāhmaṇic and Purāṇic genealogies does not show R̥ṣyaśṛṅga to be in some very special relation to the Ātharvaṇa tradition.⁷⁶ We have, however, seen in Chapter I that both the Atharvaveda and the Epics-Purāṇas are very closely linked with the folk-literature

74 Cf. Śṛṅgārād dhi bhaved dhāsyo. *Nāṭyāśāstra* of Bharata, VI. 39; GOS, Baroda, II edn., 1956,

75 Cf. iṣṭim te'ham kariṣyāmi putriyām putra-kāraṇāt |

atharva-śirasi proktair mantraiḥ siddhām vidhānataḥ // BK. 14, 2.

76 See Pargiter-Pradhan, *Vedic Index* etc.

and folk-customs. And we know that Bhṛḡus are closely connected with the Atharvaveda and also with the final redaction of the MBh. Can we now not suppose legitimately that they might have tried to similarly influence RM also? And then who else than the Bhṛḡus could be the authors of this redactorial act? The tale, at least, reflects a widely prevalent and popular folk-custom. Could we say that the Bhṛḡus were the great custodians of the folk-lore? It may be noted in this connection that the tale of Ṛsyśṅga in RM is put in the mouth of Sumantra who is said to be a 'sūta'⁷⁷ — belonging to the caste of bards who were the custodians of the traditional lore.

The purpose of this redactorial jugglery, then, should be very clear now. Though Vasiṣṭha was there, Ṛsyśṅga is brought in to show the hero of the epic being born from an Ātharvaṇa rite. This puts Atharvaveda at a premium at the cost of Ṛgveda to which Vasiṣṭha belongs and of Yajurveda of which Aśvamedha is an important sacrifice.

In this connection, the observations of Ganesh Thite⁷⁸ are worth considering. He sees creative, classical and decadent tendencies in the contents of Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda respectively. It goes without saying that the three saṁhitās are composed mainly for sacerdotal purposes. Could we say that the Atharvaveda reflects the popular tendency as contrasted with the sacerdotal-scientific tendency of the other three Vedas?

Between the performance of the Putrīyā iṣṭi and its result in the form of the four sons born to the three queens of Daśaratha, the tale of Genesis⁷⁹ — as Sukthankar would have called it — is included. The gods, troubled by the demon Rāvaṇa, request Viṣṇu to be born as the four sons of Daśaratha.⁸⁰ In Ādip also, the Earth oppressed by the demons complains to Brahmā who asks all gods including Viṣṇu to be born as human beings.⁸¹ In both, Viṣṇu is shown to be born as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The incarnation theory is pressed into service and the Vaiṣṇavaite influence is clear. Such tales are again a matter of common occurrence in the Purāṇas. Their inclusion in the Epics is motivated to provide one more point of contact between the Epics and the Purāṇas — one more justification for classing them together.

From the incarnation point of view, the characters of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa provide an interesting comparison. Rāma is an ideal sovereign, is the hero of Epic and the enthusiasm of the Vaiṣṇavāite redactors to show him as an incarnation of Viṣṇu can be understood. But when we come to the MBh, we find that in showing Kṛṣṇa to be

77 Cf. BK. 8.5.

78 Cf. 'Sāmavediya Sāhityāci Vaidika Yajñakarmāta bhara,'

Ganesh U. Thite, *Navabhārata*, (Marāṭhi) Sept. 1973. pp. 31-39.

79 *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, V. S. Sukthankar, p. 62.

80 BK. 14.4 - 15. 7. The Gods also are born as monkeys and bears, BK. 16.

81 ĀdiP. 58.25 - 59.6.

an incarnation of the Highest God, the redactor reveals a very deep sensitivity. Kṛṣṇa is not the hero of the epic, The Pāṇḍavas are the heroes. But Kṛṣṇa is the character commanding their highest respect and exerting greatest influence on their activities as well as guiding them deftly through many a thick of the situations. In showing this Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of the Highest God, the redactor very aptly shows the benevolent sākṣibhāva of the Supreme God. The creatures bear fruits of their actions but the Almighty helps the right succeed in the end. He is not the Actor, he is only Moulder.

(3) The Entourage Tales

Sargas 17 to 21 narrate the episode which, in a way, can be said to belong to the principal story. Viśvāmitra comes to Daśaratha and asks from him his son Rāma for ten days for guarding his (i.e. Viśvāmitra's) sacrifice from demons Mārica and Subāhu. Daśaratha hesitates, but Viśvāmitra narrates the history of the weapons⁸² which Viśvāmitra possesses, and persuades the king to comply with the wish of the sage whereupon the king agrees. The sage Viśvāmitra then proceeds with the two princes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the direction of Siddhāśrama where he intends to perform the sacrifice.

The episode has many significant implications. It is Viśvāmitra, and not Vasiṣṭha, who equips Rāma with those divine weapons which eventually become his strongpoint in his fight against Rāvaṇa and his commanders.⁸³ Viśvāmitra's image is raised at the cost of Vasiṣṭha who, as the family priest of the Solar race, has a right and a responsibility to shape the hero's personality properly so as to prepare him for the great task which awaits him. The demons obstructing the sacrifice are, again, said to be acting upon the instruction of Rāvaṇa;⁸⁴ of these demons, Tātakā, the wife of Sunda,⁸⁵ and Subāhu, the son of Upasunda, are killed by Rāma;⁸⁶ while Mārica is made senseless and flung into distant oceans.⁸⁷ On the one hand, this shows Rāma, the great bow-wielder, in the making. He, with the help of Lakṣmaṇa only, fights back the three demons with their host. On the other hand, the episode is also perhaps intended to serve as the starting point of the conflict between the hero and the antagonist, since the demons obstructing the sacrifice are said to be instigated by Rāvaṇa himself. The duplication is obvious. The real starting point of the epic conflict is the famous insult of Śūrpaṅkhā who, then, incites Rāvaṇa's lust for revenge as well as for the beautiful Sītā.

82 BK. 20.13-17.

83 BK. 26-27.

84 BK. 19.18.

85 BK. 23.25 & BK. 25.

86 BK. 29.19.

87 BK. 29. 16-17.

The history of the weapons which Viśvāmitra possesses is narrated by Vasiṣṭha. Kṛśāśva married two daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati, Jayā and Suprabhā by name. Each gave birth to fifty brilliant never-failing weapons. Viśvāmitra knows them all. This Kṛśāśva has been traced to the Vaiśālī line of kings by Pargiter,⁸⁸ but the name of the Vaiśālī king as given in the critical edition of BK is Kuśāśva. Kṛśāśva the father of the weapons, should have been a mythical person, while Kuśāśva perhaps refers to some historical person. It is better to believe them to be two different persons instead of identifying them as Pargiter does. Pradhan does not mention the name.

On their way from Ayodhyā to Siddhāśrama, Viśvāmitra narrates some tales connected with the places of their halts. On the bank of the confluence of the rivers Gaṅgā and Sarayū, they halt at Kāmāśrama where, Viśvāmitra narrates, Śiva burnt Kāma.⁸⁹ Then they are in the dense forests of the Malada and Kārūṣa. Indra incurred the sin of Brāhmicide by killing Vṛtra. He was washed here of the sin by gods, and he blessed the country with prosperity.⁹⁰ Presently, country is ravaged by Tātakā,⁹¹ the daughter of Suketu, wife of Sunda, mother of Mārica, and cursed by sage Agastya to become demoness for attacking him in fury upon the sage's killing of her husband.⁹² In order to remove Rāma's disinclination to kill a woman, Viśvāmitra refers very briefly, in one śloka each, to Indra's killing of Mantharā, the daughter of Virocana, who wanted to destroy the Earth,⁹³ and to Viṣṇu killing the wife of Bhṛgu who desired to make the world without Indra.⁹⁴ On reaching Siddhāśrama, Viśvāmitra tells the princes that that is place where Viṣṇu in his Vāmana incarnation took everything away from Bali in just three steps.⁹⁵

The tales of Kāmāśrama, and Siddhāśrama are clearly myths and, therefore, there is no justification in narrating them as events of local history.

Similarly the tale of the Malada-Kārūṣa country is artificially connected with the myth of Indra's Vṛtra-vadha by taking advantage of the names of the country. Such etymological stories are very common, not only in the epics and Purāṇas but also in Vedic literature. The metre śakvarī is so-called because with stanzas in that metre, Indra could ($\sqrt{\text{śak}}$) kill Vṛtra,⁹⁶ Fire obtained creatures as soon as he was born, so he is called Jātavedas.⁹⁷ In the same way, the Epics also either refer to the known legends

88 *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 147.

89 BK. 22. 9-15.

90 BK. 23. 16-23,

91 BK. 23. 24-27.

92 BK. 24. 4-12.

93 BK. 24. 17.

94 BK. 24.18.

95 BK. 28. 2-12.

96 *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, XXIII. 2 : tad yad ābhir vṛtram aśakid dhantum tac chakvarīṇām śakvarītvam.

97 *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*: IX, v. 1.68: yat taj jātaḥ paśūnn avindata iti taj jātavedaso jātavedastvam.

in a derivative manner or create stories to explain certain names. Cyavana is so called because he angrily slipped out ($\sqrt{\text{cyu}}$) of his mother's womb to become free;⁹⁸ Aurva is so called because he was born by breaking open his mother's thigh.⁹⁹ The legends of Cyavana and Aurva already exist and in explaining the name of the sages they are simply used in a derivative fashion. On the other hand the tale which relates Indra with the Malada-Kārūṣa country is freshly created to avail of the possibility latent in the name. Similar is the tale in which Brahmā creates waters, and then some beings to protect them. He orders them to protect ($\sqrt{\text{raks}}$). Those, who hear 'rakṣa' become Rākṣasas, those who hear 'yakṣa' become Yakṣas.¹⁰⁰ In fact, this tendency to justify names by explaining them in a derivative fashion and even to concoct a story to that end is extremely popular and variously reflected in all kinds of folk-literature.

The brief references to the tales of Indra and Viṣṇu are clearly to justify the apparently unlawful feminicide, and thus to break Rāma's disinclination to kill a female demon.

Sargas 30 to 49 form the second part of these entourage tales. After performing the sacrifice successfully at Siddhāśrama, the sage and the princes do not return to Ayodhyā, but, contrary to our expectations, proceed in the direction of Mithilā, the capital of King Janaka, to witness the famous divine bow¹⁰¹ placed in the royal court of that king. This part of the tour is entirely unwarranted.

The tales are grouped according to the places of halt. Their first halt is on the bank of the river Śoṇa or Kauśikī (modern Kosi) in the city of Girivraja.¹⁰² The tales of Kuśanābha's hundred daughters deformed by Vāyu, of their marriage with Brahmadaṭṭa, of the birth of Brahmadaṭṭa, and then of Kuśanābha's performance of paṭri ṣṭi to obtain a son, the genealogy of Kuśanābha > Gādhi > Satyavatī (married to R̥cika and after bodily going to heaven with her husband, turning into the river Kauśikī) and Viśvāmitra himself, are narrated here.¹⁰³ Since the character of Viśvāmitra is introduced in the BK, there is some justification in narrating the tales connected with his genealogy.

Their second halt is on the bank of the river Gaṅgā,¹⁰⁴ and the fact that Gaṅgā was brought from heaven by king Bhagīratha, an ancestor of Rāma himself, justifies the narration of the Gaṅgāvatarāṇa-story. Gaṅgā can symbolically be called the daughter of Himavat, and by availing himself of this device the redactor also accommodates the tale of the birth of Kārttikeya by making Umā the younger sister

98 ĀdiP. 60.44: yaḥ sa roṣāc cyuto mātur mokṣāya.....

99 ĀdiP. 60.45: aurvas tasyāḥ samabhadavad ūrum bhittvā mahāyasāḥ /

100 UK. 4.9-13. Also, see the names of Viśravas (UK. 2.27), and Vaiśravaṇa (UK. 3.7), and Apsarasas (BK. 44.18).

101 BK. 30. 7-8.

102 BK. 30.18.

103 BK. 31-33.

104 BK. 34. 6-7.

of Gaṅgā.¹⁰⁵ The tale is narrated in a peculiar way. Gaṅgā and Umā are daughters of Himavan. Umā marries Śiva, and her dalliance with Lord Śiva is interrupted by Gods. Śiva's energies, dropped on Earth, become the Śveta-mountain.¹⁰⁶ Gaṅgā, unable to bear the lustre of God Agni, throws the foetus out in the valley of Himavat,¹⁰⁷ presumably on the Śveta-mountain;¹⁰⁸ the foetus then is nourished by Kṛttikās and is called Kārttikeya.¹⁰⁹ He is thus not the child of Śiva and Umā, but of Agni and Gaṅgā. Kṛttikās do not bear him, they only nourish the foetus born prematurely. The differences in the details of the story are interesting. These tales occupy Sargas 34 to 36. Sargas 37 to 43 narrate the famous Gaṅgāvataṛaṇa in usual details with a phalaśruti¹¹¹ which makes the narrative a self-complete unit.

Then the tourists cross the Gaṅgā and the sight of the city of Viśālā¹¹¹ occasions two tales – that of the churning of ocean¹¹² and that of the birth of Mārutas.¹¹³ In the fight for nector churned out from the ocean, all the sons of Diti were slain. Diti then performed penance to obtain a son who could slay Indra. Indra, in the disguise of an attendant, kept her company. Once finding an opportunity when she was unclean, Indra entered into her womb and with the words 'do not weep' (*mā rudah*, hence they are called Mārutas) cut the embryo into seven, who then became seven Lokapālas. Here also, more than anything else, it is the etymological fancy that seems to be responsible for the creation of a new myth. Viśālā is said to be the place where Diti performed the penance, Indra stayed and cut the embryo, and the Lokapālas were born. Whether the myth contains some germinal truth is very doubtful. It is more likely that the author wanted to bring in the ocean-churning story, and concocting some tale with the etymology of Mārutas, he took an opportunity to do so. Viśālā, the founder of the city, is said to be the sons of Ikṣvaku from Alambusā.¹¹⁴ From Viśālā the genealogy is given down upto the king Sumati who is ruling there at the time.¹¹⁵

From Viśālā the tourists reach Mithilā on the outskirts of which the sight of the hermitage of sage Gautama creates an occasion for narrating the famous Ahalyā-tale.¹¹⁶ Once, when sage Gautama was out, Indra, in his guise, approached his wife Ahalyā who, though recognising him to be Indra, accepted his advances out of curiosity. But, when Indra was escaping from the hermitage, he was confronted by the sage entering just at that time. The sage cursed Indra to be fruitless (as a result of which his testicles fell on the ground and had to be replaced by those of a ram¹¹⁷) and Ahalyā to be condemned to solitude, unseen by others, in that very hermitage till Rāma visited the place. The prevalent notion that Ahalyā was cursed to turn into

105 BK. 34.14.

106 BK. 35.18.

107 BK. 36.17

108 BK. 35.18

109 BK. 36. 23-25.

110 BK. 43.20.

111 BK. 44.10.

112 BK. 44. 13-27.

113 BK. 45-46.

114 BK. 46.11.

115 BK. 46. 12-17.

116 BK. 47. 14-32.

117 BK. 48. 1-10.

a stone till the touch of Rāma's feet revived her, is not supported by the critical edition and shows the workings of popular imagination always revelling in a little exaggeration. The actual curse runs thus : "You will stay in this hermitage for many thousands of years, unseen by all the creatures, without food, living on air, and doing penance in the bed of ashes."¹¹⁸ It is more in nature of a sort of social seclusion rather than some miracle.

The central motif of the tale is the punishment of an unchaste woman. One is immediately reminded of another, equally famous tale attributed to Rāma Jāmadagnya. As Sukthankar narrates it:¹¹⁹ 'Jamadagni married Renukā, daughter of King Prasenajit. She gave birth to five sons : Rumaṅvat, Suṣeṇa, Vasu, Viśvāvasu, and last but not the least Rāma. The family lived happily for some time. Then one day when Renukā of rigid vows happened to see Citraratha, the handsome king of Mārttikāvataka, sporting in water with his numerous wives, her fortitude forsook her and she felt the pangs of desire. When she returned to the hermitage, Jamadagni noticed her pollution and guessed her secret. In a fit of rage he called in turn upon each of his sons to kill their unchaste mother. Four of them refused to do the atrocious deed and were cursed by the angry and disappointed father for their disobedience. Then came the last of all that "slayer of hostile heroes", Rāma Jāmadagnya. A military type, accustomed to receive and obey orders, Rāma, when sternly commanded by his father to slay his mother, took his axe and without hesitation chopped off his mother's head ! Jamadagni, mightily pleased with the instant obedience of his son, granted Rāma several boons, among them the boon that the mother whom Rāma had decapitated might be restored to life.'¹²⁰ The central motif in the tale is the same as that in the Ahalyā-tale but the details are completely different. Apart from the sin of feminicide, the very fact of a mother being capitally punished by her son is grossly inconsistent, and would appeal only to the crudely vulgar taste. The Bhārgava brāhmins must have closed their eyes to the obvious impropriety in their enthusiasm to show the quality of dutifulness in gaudy colours. The tale is very well in keeping with the haughty nature of the Bhārgavas.

The impropriety of this tale must not have escaped the notice of our traditional thinkers who have narrated a third tale — that of Cirakārin¹²¹ — with the same central motif. There was a sage Gautama of Āṅgirasa family. Once his wife incurred some transgression. The sage, in a fit of rage, asked his son Cirakārin to slay her and went out. Cirakārin, true to his name, used to take great time in pondering over matters and taking decisions in their regard. So he started thinking about the pros

118 BK. 47. 28-29. Cf. iha varṣa-sahasrāṇi bahūni tvam nivatsyasi //
vāyu-bhakṣā nirāhārā tapyanti bhasmaśāyini /
adṛśyā sarvabhūtānām āśrame'smin nivatsyasi //

119 *Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata*, V. S. Sukthankar, (V. S. Sukthankar Memorial Edition, Vol. I, Ed. P. K. Gode), 1944, Poona. p. 296

120 VanP. 116. 1-17.

121 ŚānP. 258.

and cons of the father's order. Quite a lot of time passed in this pondering during which the father, when his wrath subsided, realised the impropriety of his order and returning to the hermitage, was actually happy to find his son still hesitant and indecisive regarding the execution of his order. The tale is clearly an attempt to examine critically but indirectly both the tales given above. The motif of transgression and the name of sage Gautama remind one of the Ahalyā-tale, but the nature of punishment immediately shifts our attention to the Bhārgava-episode. And the deliberation-part of the story is clearly intended to gloss over the propriety of Jamadagni's order to his son to execute the deviating woman. The writer narrates the episode in the name of Gautama merely to escape the wrath of the Bhārgava brāhmins, most probably because, as Sukthankar has shown,¹²² their influence upon the epic in the stage of its final redaction was very strong. But the tale very effectively shows not only that the act of Paraśurāma was criticised even in the ancient days but that there also was a difference of opinion in the matter of taking the woman's fault for granted. Another interesting aspect of the tale is that it seeks to criticise the Bhārgava tale by changing some of the details, and by bringing in some motifs and details from some other tale with the similar central motif. It is an attempt at criticism by reshuffling of the motif-structure — an interesting method of folk-criticism.

The Ahalyā tale is nowhere fully narrated in the MBh. But from the stray references¹²³ we realise that the MBh-redactors know the tale in this form. On the other hand, there is no knowledge of the tale in Vedic literature, where we find Indra being addressed with some epithets having some bearing on the tale, that too only in the Brāhmaṇa literature.¹²⁴ In the Subrahmaṇya litany, Indra is invoked thus;

Subrahmaṇyom subrahmaṇyom subrahmaṇyom/
 indrāgaccha hariva āgaccha medhātiteh/ meṣa
 vṛṣaṇaśvasya men/ gaurāvaskandinn ahalyāyai jāra/
 kauśika brāhmaṇa gautama bruvāṇa iti/

This is quoted as given in Taittirīya Āraṇyaka of the Black Yajurveda, since it is in its purest form. The Brāhmaṇas break up the invocation into different epithets and intersperse them with explanations—arthavāda. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says: Indra is invoked since he is the god of the sacrifice. Then, the epithets upto 'Ahalyāyai Jāra' are addressed to Indra to wish him joy in those affairs of his. The last epithet

122 "The Bhṛgu and the Bhārata : A Text-Historical Study" in *Critical Studies* etc. See above fn. 119. pp. 278-337.

123 Like UdyP. 12.6.

124 See : *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* III. iii. 4. 18-19.

Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa II. 79-80 Ed. Lokesh Chandra, Nagpur 1950.

Ṣaḍvīmśa Brāhmaṇa I. i. 19-24. Ed. W. H. Julius, Leiden, 1908 and *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* I. 12.

'Gautama Bruvāṇa' is said to be recently devised by Āruṇi and is optional.¹²⁵ Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa explains: '*Hariva āgaccha*' — come with steeds. Either prāṇa and apāna or day and night are the steeds. '*Medhātīther meṣa*' — Indra drank up the king having become the ram of Medhātīthi. '*Vṛṣaṇaśvasya mene*' — Indra stayed at home becoming the beloved of Vṛṣaṇaśva. '*Gaurāvaskandin*' — Becoming white he dropped down into the sea. '*Ahalyāyai jāra*' — He was the paramour of Ahalyā Maitreyī. '*Kauśika brāhmaṇa, Kauśika bruvāṇa*' — When he was fighting with Asuras, he threw Vedas out. Then he learnt them from Viśvāmītra. Therefore he is called Kauśika. Some say '*Kauśika brahmaṇa Gautama bruvāṇa*.' It has been devised by the famous Āruṇi. Therefore, one should not go in his direction, but recite the original formula.¹²⁶ Ṣaḍvīmśa Brāhmaṇa gives different explanations: '*Hariva āgaccha*' — East and west are the two steeds ¹²⁷ '*Medhātīther Meṣa*' — Indra, becoming a ram, carried away Medhātīthi Kāṇvyāyana. '*Vṛṣaṇaśvasya mene*' — Indra desired the daughter, Menakā by name, of Vṛṣaṇaśva Menā. '*Gaurāvaskandin*' — Becoming white antelope, and dropping, he drinks the king from the forest.¹²⁸ '*Ahalyāyai Jāra*' — He was the paramour of Ahalyā Maitreyī. '*Kauśika Brāhmaṇa* — Kauśika Brāhmaṇa married her. '*Gautama bruvāṇa*' — "The gods and Asuras were at war with each other. Gotama was performing austerities between them. Indra went upto him and said, 'Go out as our spy.' 'I cannot' he replied. 'Then I will go in your form'. 'As thou thinkest fit.' And because he (Indra) went about in the form of Gotama, passing himself off as Gotama, therefore he says, 'thou who callest thee Gotama.'¹²⁹

It will be seen that in the above explanations of the epithets addressed to Indra in the Subrahmaṇya litany, some threads of the Ahalyā-tale as found in the epic are discernible. The detail which is common throughout is that Indra is the paramour of Ahalyā. The epithet is commonly accepted in all the Brāhmaṇas and confirmed by the epic-tale.

The next epithet 'Kauśika brāhmaṇa' is accepted in all the Brāhmaṇas but its significance is shown to be different. Śatapatha has nothing particular to be said on it. Jaiminīya explains it by saying that since Indra learnt Vedas from Viśvāmītra, a (?) Kauśika, he himself is called Kauśika. That Viśvāmītra is mentioned by name is significant. Ṣaḍvīmśa explains the epithet by saying that Kauśika brāhmaṇa married her, i. e. Ahalyā. The implication is brought out by the Vijnāpanabhāṣya. Kauśika is the husband of Ahalyā. Indra is her paramour. Therefore, Indra stands in the

125 III. iii. 4. 13.... indro vai yajñasya devatā tasmād āhendrāgaccheti... jāreti tad yāny evāsya caraṇāni tair evainam etat pramumudayiṣati/ III. iii. 4.19.... śasvad dhaitad āruṇinādhunopajñātam yad gautama bruvāṇeti sa yadi kāmāyeta brūyād.....

126 See op. cit.

127 Op. cit. pūrvaṇapākṣāparapakṣau vā indrasya harī tābhyām nvidam sarvam harati/

128 Op. cit. gaura-mṛgo ha sma bhūtvā' vaskadyāraṇyād rājānam pibati/

129 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Tr. J. Egging, SBE, Vol. XXVI p. 82. fn. 2.

position of her husband,¹³⁰ i. e. Kauśika; which means, in view of his relation with Ahalyā, the wife of Kauśika brāhmaṇa, Indra also is addressed as Kauśika brāhmaṇa. And if we accept the cue of Jaiminīya,¹³¹ this Kauśika, the husband of Indra's beloved, is none other than Viśvāmitra himself.

The final epithet 'Gautama bruvāṇa' is very interesting and enigmatic. It is known to all the three Brāhmaṇas, but two of them, Śatapatha and Jaiminiya know it to be lately introduced by Āruṇi. The former makes its utterance optional and is rather indifferent to it, but latter expressly prohibits its utterance and enjoins to stick to the original form of the address which, as mentioned therein, is 'Kauśika bruvāṇa'.¹³² We can understand the anxiety of the author of Jaiminīya to stick to the traditional form of the rite, resisting any changes in it. On the contrary, Āruṇi's attempt to introduce some change sets us thinking. It is, then not difficult to realize that Āruṇi, the famous Uddālaka Āruṇi, is himself a 'Gautama',¹³³ a descendent of Gotama, and in changing the epithet from 'Kauśika bruvāṇa' to Gautama bruvāṇa,' his intention must have been to show that his ancestor Gotama also, like Viśvāmitra, stood in some special relation with Indra.

The attitude of Ṣaḍvīmśa for the epithet is neither resistant nor indifferent. It mentions it without any reservations and actually explains it by an arthavāda-episode. Indra takes the form of Gautama to spy upon the activities of Asuras with whom gods are at war and calls himself Gautama. So he is addressed as 'Gautama bruvāṇa'.

In details, Ṣaḍvīmśa has come quite near to the epic form of the tale. Ahalyā is the beloved of Indra, and the wife of Kauśika who might as well be Viśvāmitra himself. By virtue of his relation with Ahalyā, Indra is Kauśika himself. And he takes the form of Gautama. That is the stage upto which Ṣaḍvīmśa brings us. The next stage is easy to imagine. A little inaccuracy can complete the story. Just as Kauśika has been replaced by Gautama in one epithet, he might as well be replaced by him in the other. The three epithets, then, will signify these details. Indra was the lover of Ahalyā. Gautama brāhmaṇa married her. (So Indra, by virtue of his relation with Gautama's wife, stood in the same position as Gautama himself.) And Indra took the form of Gautama. Add the curse motif and the tale is complete.

The curse to Indra is another interesting aspect of the story. He is cursed to be fruitless. Immediately, his testicles fall to the ground. He then approaches the gods saying that he has done the job of gods by making the sage angry, causing him to

130 Cf. tasya jāraḥ san tad bhartṛ-sthāne tiṣṭhatīti kauśika brāhmaṇety' upacārād āmantraye/-
Vijñāpana-bhāṣya on *Ṣaḍvīmśa Brāhmaṇa*. I. 19-22.

131 Cf. Kauśika brāhmaṇa kauśika bruvāṇa iti/ yad dha vā asurair mahā-saṅgrāmam samyete
tad dha vedān nirācakāra/ tān ha viśvāmitrād adbhijage/ tato haiva kauśika uce/-*Jaiminīya*
Brāhmaṇa II. 79.

132 Cf. *ibid*.

133 Cf. *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, Macdonell & Keith, p. 240,

curse and thereby destroying his tapas. But as a result, he is made fruitless. Now the gods should do something to restore his fruitfulness. The gods, headed by Agni, then, approach the Pitṛdevas who give Agni the testicles of a ram. Agni grafts these upon Indra. Since then, Indra is Meṣa-vṛṣaṇa.¹³⁴

About the curse destroying the tapas of a sage, we shall have more to say later on. But, looking closely, the motif of Indra's attempt to 'break' the penance of a sage by means of seduction can, once again, be seen here. We have seen above in the analysis of the Brāhmanical Arthavādas that the only detail which is constant is that Indra is the paramour of Ahalyā. All the other details are shifting and therefore historically unreliable. The tale, therefore, cannot be accepted as describing some historical incident.¹³⁵ Even if we grant that Ahalyā, Kauśika and Gotama might be historical persons in the Brāhmaṇas, their contemporaneity cannot be ascertained, since Gautama is introduced in the litany at a later date and Ahalyā is not proved to be an actual historical person yet even in the Brāhmaṇas. And in the epic-form of the tale, the workings of an attempt to graft some mythical concept upon the account are clear, Dr. G.H. Bhat remarks: "Attempts have been made to explain the account allegorically — *Ahalyā* meaning 'down' or 'night' ... or 'land'; and *jāra* meaning the 'destroyer' or 'adorable'. The meaning of the expression (i. e. ahalyāyai jāra) will then be — (1) Destroyer of dawn or night i. e. the Sun or Fire and (2) one who praises or develops land or agriculture. The first meaning is preferable."¹³⁶ In view of what we have seen above, we must differ from the learned editor and point out that the second meaning seems to be more probable. But even here a little contradiction still remains. If Indra, the god of rain, unites with Ahalyā the land, how could he be 'fruitless'? Should not the name A-halyā be reinterpreted more specifically to mean the land which is 'un-ploughable' (from 'hala' — meaning a 'plough')? If the land is unploughable, Gotama — the bull — will naturally be away since he is useless. Even Indra will be fruitless, the only fertility possible being that of 'ajāvika' — goats and rams. The unploughable being that land where, not agricultural but only animal fertility is possible could more probably be a hilly land. The life being hard there, the land is sparsely inhabited, thus the curse of sage Gotama upon Ahalyā to keep secluded is more in keeping, but, we should confess, to insist on this last point would be going rather far without enough supporting evidence.

After the testicles of a ram are grafted Indra becomes 'meṣa-vṛṣaṇa.' In the text of the Subrahmaṇya litany fully quoted above, the punctuations of the text are as given in Taittiriya Āraṇyaka. It will be seen that they do not correspond to the breaks adopted

134 BK. 48. 1-10. Cf. indras tu meṣa-vṛṣaṇas tadāprabhṛti rāghava/

135 F. E. Pargiter (Cf. *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 116, 222) and S. N. Pradhan (vide *Chronology of Ancient India*, pp. 11, 12, 16, 37) accept the incident as well as the characters to be historical and proceed to establish various contemporaneities and chronologies on their strength.

136 BK. p. 453.

in the explanations of the Brāhmaṇas.¹³⁷ Though the consecutive positions of the three words ‘medhātithēḥ,’ ‘meṣa’ and ‘vṛṣaṇaśvasya’ are the same, the Brāhmaṇas adopt a break after ‘meṣa’ while the Āraṇyaka puts the stop after ‘medhātithēḥ.’ This renders the affinity of the word ‘meṣa’ rather uncertain, Brāhmaṇas connect it with ‘medhātithēḥ,’ and read ‘medhātithē meṣa’ as an epithet, whereas according to the Āraṇyaka it will lean towards the following word ‘vṛṣaṇaśvasya’. We are not in a position to say whether the differences in punctuations are deliberate or inadvertent, but the juxtaposition of the words ‘meṣa’ and ‘vṛṣaṇaśvasya’ seems to have made easy the work of the story-teller who seems to have taken advantage of the ambiguity in making Indra ‘meṣa-vṛṣaṇa’.

At first sight, this might appear more smart than convincing; but upon a closer look, we find that somehow the epithets of Indra in the Subrahmaṇya litany have many points of contact with the tales of Viśvāmitra. (1) Indra is addressed as ‘Kauśika brāhmaṇa’ and we know that Viśvāmitra “was a protege of Indra, with whom he had an interview according to the Ṛigveda Āraṇyakas.”¹³⁸ Therefore, the situation wherein Indra should be the paramour of the wife of a Kauśika could have been embarrassing and it might have prompted the replacement of Kauśika (as the husband of Ahalyā) by Gautama in the epic-version of the tale where Kauśika actually becomes a *nimitta* in redeeming Ahalyā’s curse by bringing Rāma to her hermitage. (2) The words ‘meṣa’ and ‘Vṛṣaṇaśva’ also seem to bear upon the second part of the tale wherein Indra is provided by Agni with the testicles of a ram. Is it possible that Agni, who is constantly called simply ‘atithi’ (the guest in human dwellings)¹³⁹ might have specially been called here Medhātithi (the guest at the sacrifice)? Though there is a famous sage of that name,¹⁴⁰ and Ṣaḍvīmśa actually identifies the name with that sage belonging to the Kāṇva line;¹⁴¹ the detail of the tale of Agni providing the testicles of a ram connected with the epithet ‘medhātithē meṣa’ in the litany points to a strong probability that ‘medhātithi’ of the litany is Agni himself and not some sage of that name. (3) Then again, the word ‘mene’ will immediately remind us of the Viśvāmitra–Menakā–episode.¹⁴² It has the same motif of ‘breaking’ the penance of a sage by seduction. Moreover the word ‘menā’ is shown to have a ritual significance as the woman-counterpart of the Virile Horse (Vṛṣaṇ–Aśva).¹⁴³ Thus, the popular motif and the ritualistic implications go to prove the purely mythical nature of the episode. (4) The epithet ‘Gaurāvaskandin’ can also be seen reflected in Viśvāmitra’s attempt to snatch away the Kāmadhenu cow of Vasiṣṭha.¹⁴⁴ (5) It would look a bit far-fetched

137 The breaks adopted by the Brāhmaṇas are evident in their explanations given above.

138 *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, p. 311.

139 Cf. *Vedic Reader*, Macdonell A. A., 4th ed., 1957, p. 2.

140 Cf. *Vedic Index*, Vol. 11, p. 173.

141 vide: medhātithim ha kāṇvyāyanam meṣo bhūtvā jahāra| *Ṣaḍvīmśa Brāhmaṇa*, I. i. 15.

142 See Supra. Also BK. 6’. 4-13.

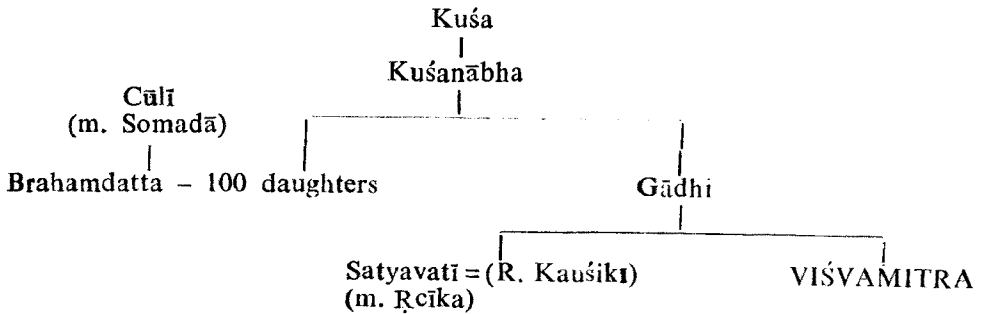
143 Cf. *Pastoral Symbolism from the Ṛgveda*, S. A. Dange. pp. 95, 97.

144 See Supra. Also BK. 52-53.

but Indra, in the litany, is addressed as 'Harivas' (lord of the bay steeds) and a very peculiar story is narrated in the MBh in the name of Viśvāmitra in which the sage asks from his pupil Gālava the fee of eight hundred horses.¹⁴⁵ (6) Even at the cost of appearing a little ridiculous, it may be pointed out that the very name of the litany—'Subrahmaṇya' 'highly worthy of Brahman'—seems to be exemplified in the steady pursuit of Viśvāmitra to obtain the status of a brahma-sage in the face of a number of obstacles created by gods, particularly Indra. There is a strong probability, in the light of what we have seen above, that the Subrahmaṇya litany and even perhaps the ceremony are very significantly related to the Viśvāmitra-story-cycle. But, of course, to study that relation is not within our office.

With the Ahalyā-story, our group of entourage tales ends. We must repeat the caution here which we have given while discussing the Ṛṣyaśṅga-tale. As the above analysis and discussion show, neither Ahalyā, nor Kauśika, nor Gautama is definitely historical. Even in the Brāhmaṇas, the references to Ahalyā seem to be purely mythical. And even if Kauśika and Gautama were historical, their contemporaneity is not supported by the Brāhmaṇas. How much more reliable can their contemporaneity with Rāma or Daśaratha be? It is clear that the attempts of Pargiter and Pradhan¹⁴⁶ at synchronisation of various sages and kings rest on very slippery and unreliable data of the epics-purāṇas and are misleading.

The tour of the sage and the princes is clearly divided into two parts. Their first major halt is Siddhāśrama, where Viśvāmitra performs the sacrifice and Rāma with Lakṣmaṇa protects it. The next part of the journey is a sort of pleasure-trip. And it should be noted that all the major tales are narrated in this second part of their journey. Again, a very conscious attempt has been made to connect all major tales with either the hero or his preceptor Viśvāmitra. The tale of the hundred daughters of Kuśanābha is justified on the ground that Kuśanābha is the grandfather of Viśvāmitra. The whole group of tales in Sargas 31 to 33 reveals Viśvāmitra's genealogy as under :



Sargas 34 to 36 describe the various tales connected with the river Gaṅgā, the tale of whose descent by Bhagīratha, an ancestor of Rāma himself, occupies Sargas 37 to 43.

¹⁴⁵ UdyP. 104-117.

¹⁴⁶ See above fn. 135.

These tales can loosely be called Gaṅgā-story-cycle. The story of the churning of ocean is also accommodated in connection with the city of Viśālā which is said to be founded by Viśāla, the son of Ikṣvāku who is also Rāma's ancestor. The tale of Ahalyā is brought into direct relation with Rāma as he is shown to end the curse. Thus all the major tales included in this part have been consciously shown to be related to the hero, even if the relation be of Bādarāyaṇa type.

In comparison, the tales in the first part are brief, few and not particularly connected with any character of the story. The tale of the burning of Kāma, for example, narrated in connection with the place called Kāmāśrama (the hermitage of Kāma) simply shows religious importance of the place. It is purely a tīrtha-kathā. Similarly the tale of the Malada-kārūṣa country where Indra is said to have washed his sin of Vṛtravadha is, in a way, to show the importance of a particular place. (Whether the tale is purely fictitious or otherwise is a different matter.) The narration of Tātakā's parentage, marriage and motherhood and her becoming a demoness on account of the curse of sage Agastya are given at the point where Tātakā herself is about to occur in the narrative. The back-histories of Jarāsandha¹⁴⁷ and Śiśupāla¹⁴⁸ in the MBh also are similarly given at the points where the characters are occurring in the stream of the principal narrative. All the three characters are slain shortly afterwards by the protagonists. The narration of their birth-stories and back-histories just at a point before their death create to some extent an impression of hearing a self-complete life-history of a character. Naturally, their deaths at the hands of the protagonists are intended to emphasise the latter's martial qualities. The tale narrated in connection with Siddhāśrama is that of the Vāmana-incarnation, and in that background, the career of the present incarnation of Viṣṇu is shown to begin. Thus, excepting one or two minor stories which are purely like Tīrtha-yātrā-tales showing the religious importance of the locales of visits, all the other tales of this group are shown to have some connection, even if distant, with either the hero or his preceptor. Some show his great lineage, some show his prowess, some his religious greatness. The tales showing the hero's martial or ideal qualities are, of course, intended to show the great hero of the epic in the making.

There are two groups of pilgrimage tales in the MBh which may be included here. One occurs in the VanP. Nārada, first, generally enumerates some three hundred holy places in Adhyāyas 80 to 83; then Dhaumya in Adhyāyas 85 to 88 once again enumerates the places classifying them according to the four directions; inspired by these enumerations (which are naturally accompanied by the very brief allusions to the tales connected with these places), the Pāṇḍavas decide to make a tour of some of these holy places in the company of sage Lomaśa. This device accommodates some of our very famous tales like those of sage Agastya, of Gaṅgā's descent, of Rṣyaśṛṅga, of Rāma Jāmadagnya, of Cyavana and Sukanyā, Śibi, of sage Aṣṭāvakra, of Yavakrita and others.

147 SabP. 16-18.

48 SabP. 40.

Another group of such tales is in the ŚalP. Balarāma decides to remain neutral in the great battle and goes out on pilgrimage. His return, just at the time of commencement of the mace-fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana, creates an occasion for including another large group of pilgrimage tales. The tales included here are comparatively less famous like those of the sage Trita, of Dakṣa's curse to the Moon, of sage Maṅkaka, of Baka Dālbhya, of the birth and career of Skanda Kārttikeya, of Śrutavātī, of sage Asita Devala, of Dadhīca, of the virgin ascetic, of Kurukṣetra and so on.

It can be observed that, with some rare exceptions like that of Śibi, all these tales are the tales of sages and ascetics. This is in keeping with the frame of pilgrimage within which they are brought together. Of course, the device of pilgrimage is very useful in accommodating tales (sometimes even cycles of tales like that of Agastya¹⁴⁹ in VanP) of various descriptions and various places, yet the seriousness of the purpose of pilgrimage puts a limit upon the variety; an accent on exaggeration — the constant feeling of wide eyes — is discernible. The religious attitude of the listeners also prompts the narrator to include more episodes of wonderful — supernatural elements.

A comparison of these tales with those of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' will be instructive. There, the pilgrims tell stories by turn. But the purpose of telling stories is nothing more serious than passing time on the way. The mood is light and the purpose frolic. The themes of the tales are also generally social, their treatment is realistic and sometimes even comic; this can potentially accommodate a much wider variety of tales. The narrator is different with each tale which reflects his individual characteristic; again, there is no necessity of connecting the tales with some place — holy or otherwise. The differences can be summed up by calling the native group as the pilgrimage tales, while the English group may be called as the pilgrims' tales.

The narrative style of the tales of the ŚalP leaves rather an impression of hurry, but the VanP-group of tales is narrated in a fully leisurely fashion since the pilgrims are supposed to have a lot of time. Actually pilgrimage and pilgrimage-tales are just one of the answers to the exiles' problem of filling up the twelve-years' gap of forest-life — 'the temporal hiatus' as Pisani and Sukthankar would call it. But we shall have occasion to refer to this function of filling up the temporal hiatus later on. Here we may just point out the characteristics of the entourage tales of BK by comparing them with the other group of tales.

The visitation of holy place lends only direction to the pilgrims' movement in the 'Cantebury Tales', it is not the end in the narration of the tales; the end is simply to pass the time pleasantly. On the other hand, in the two groups of tales in the MBh, such a visitation itself is the end, and even the tales are intended to serve the same religious purpose. That is the reason why all the tales are connected with the holy places visited or to be visited by the pilgrims. The tales included in the BK also

149 VanP, 94 – 103. The last tale in the cycle is how Agastya drank up the ocean. To explain how it was filled up again, the story of Gaṅgā's descent is narrated in VanP 104–108.

are connected with the places of halting, but halting, we may point out, is not the same as visiting, and the purpose of narrating the tales is not achieving some religious merit but satisfying the curiosity. Thus, the purpose of the English tales is entertainment, that of MBh tales is religious merit, that of BK tales is satisfying curiosity.

Again the tales of Chaucer are connected neither with any place nor with any character. Those of the MBh are connected with the holy places of visitation, while those in the BK are all connected with the places of halting and also, as we have shown above, a conscious attempt has been made to connect the tales with either the hero or his preceptor Viśvāmitra.

In fact, when we take a second look at the tales of BK, we find that all the major tales of this group — that of Viṣṇu's incarnation, of Skanda's birth, of Gaṅgā's descent, of the churning of ocean — are the famous Brāhmaṇical tales of wonder from the Purāṇas. It is then that we begin to realise that, in narrating these tales, the author of this story-group aims at achieving the threefold purpose: (1) he wants to include as many famous and wonderful tales from the Purāṇas as possible; (2) but he does not want to appear digressive and interested in the tales just for themselves; so he deliberately makes an attempt to show them connected with the characters of the epic — particularly the hero; (3) in doing this, he also achieves the purpose of gradually carving the character of the future hero, of showing the forces formative in the hero's personality, of showing the inherent potentials of the great hero in the making.

4. The Viśvāmitra Story — cycle

The sage Viśvāmitra and the princes then reach Mithilā where they are welcomed by King Janaka. The latter's priest Śātānanda, who is the son of sage Gautama and Ahalyā, hears of the redemption of his mother by Rāma who was taken to her by Viśvāmitra. Overwhelmed with gratitude towards sage Viśvāmitra, he narrates the life-history of the sage to Rāma showing him how fortunate he has been in obtaining the sage as his teacher-preceptor. The five episodes of Viśvāmitra occupy Sargas 50 to 64. (a) Viśvāmitra, the king, desiring to possess Vasiṣṭha's cow Śabalā, a Kāmadhenu, fails to obtain her by force, even after possessing all the weapons imaginable obtained from Lord Mahādeva by penance. Disappointed by the discomfiture of his royal prowess and strength of arms against Vasiṣṭha's strength of Brahma-tejas, he retires to South to penance for obtaining Brahma-tejas. This incident sows the seed of Viśvāmitra's ardent desire to attain the status of a Brahmaṛṣi.¹⁵⁰ (b) Triśāṅku, of Ikṣvāku line, desiring to perform a sacrifice to reach the heaven bodily, is repelled by Vasiṣṭha, the family-priest, as well as his sons, who curse him to become a cāṇḍāla. Viśvāmitra performs for him; the gods refuse to partake of their share in the sacrifice; Viśvāmitra raises, by the power of his penance, Triśāṅku to the heavens but gods throw him back. Viśvāmitra stops the king in the sky and begins to create a new world

150 BK. 50. 17 — BK. 56.9.

with constellations and is prevented with difficulty by the gods only when they recognise his creation with the king in it.¹⁵¹ (c) King Ambarīṣa of Ayodhyā loses his sacrificial victim (whom Indra has stolen) and replaces it by Śunaḥśepa, the middle son of Sage Ṛciḱa Bhārgava. On their way back, Śunaḥśepa learns two gāthās of Indra and Upendra from Viśvāmitra and is blessed with a long life by the gods themselves.¹⁵² (d) The sage is enamoured of Menakā, but after passing some happy years with her realises his mistake, and deserting her goes to East.¹⁵³ (e) On the bank of the river Kauśikī he is blessed by Lord Brahmā with the status of a great sage (Maharṣi) but not Brahmarṣi as he has not yet controlled his senses fully.¹⁵⁴ Indra sends Rambhā to disturb the sage who sees through and curses her.¹⁵⁵ Then once again, after severe austerities he is addressed by Lord Brahmā as well as by Vasiṣṭha as Brahmarṣi.¹⁵⁶

The significance of these tales are so obvious that a bare mention of them will suffice. The first tale is reminiscent of the famous Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra controversy reflected in the well-known Dāsarājña Śukta¹⁵⁷ of the Ṛgveda. The second tale is reactionary in nature. What Vasiṣṭha cannot do for Triśaṅku, Viśvāmitra can. In that way his superiority is established. The Śunaḥśepa-tale shows him as a great seer, specially favoured by Indra. It is his gāthās which please Indra and Upendra to set Śunaḥśepa free.¹⁵⁸ The stories of Menakā and Rambhā show the sage falling prey to the passions of lust and anger and eventually coming out of them.

In fact, the author of BK seems to observe twofold precaution in narrating the Viśvāmitra-story-cycle. One, he takes care not to show Viśvāmitra angry without cause. If the sage wishes to possess the cow, it is because the cow is a 'gem' and a king is the repository of all 'gems'.¹⁵⁹ That is the reason of his insistence on possessing the cow at all costs. He curses the sons of Vasiṣṭha and the sage Mahodaya to become cāṇḍālas because they have abused his sacrifice for Triśaṅku.¹⁶⁰ But the incidents which show him overly angry and revengeful without cause have been omitted. In MBh, for example, he orders the river Sarasvatī to bring Vasiṣṭha to him so that he can kill him.¹⁶¹ When Sarasvatī plays a trick to save Vasiṣṭha, he curses it to turn bloody and to be drunk by Rākṣasas. He, again, orders a kiṅkara to possess the King

151 BK. 56. 10-BK. 59. 33.

152 BK. 60-61.

153 BK. 62. 4-13.

154 BK. 62. 21.

155 BK. 62. 25-63.15'

156 BK. 64.1-64. 20.

157 Ṛgveda VII. 33. 2. 33. 5; 83. 8 etc.

158 BK. 61. 24-25.

159 Cf. BK. 52. 9.

ratnam hi bhagavann etad ratna-hāri ca pārthivaḥ/

160 See BK. 58. 14.

Ḳṣatriyo yājako yasya cāṇḍālasya viśeṣataḥ/

katham sadasi bhoktāro havis tasya surārśayāḥ//

161 ŚalP. 42.

Saudāsa Kalmāṣapāda, who thereby, when cursed by Śakti — the son of Vasiṣṭha — to become a cāṇḍāla, devours him only as his first victim.¹⁶² These tales of Viśvāmitra's irreconcilable vengeance are omitted in BK. Secondly, a particular care has been taken to show Viśvāmitra in good relations with the Ikṣvāku kings of Ayodhyā. When Triśaṅku is repelled by his own priest Vasiṣṭha and the Vāsiṣṭhas, Viśvāmitra stands by him and does his best to help him. Again when King Ambariṣa's sacrificial animal is stolen, he instructs Śunaḥśepa in such a way that gods may release him but may also give the king the fruit of his sacrifice.

The reasons for observing these precautions are not difficult to imagine. The teacher-preceptor of the hero of RM should not be unreasonably haughty, particularly against Vasiṣṭha, the very family-priest of the Solar kings themselves. Again, it is not Rāma only whom Viśvāmitra has favoured. Even in the past Solar kings have been helped by Viśvāmitra, particularly when their family-priest Vasiṣṭha spurned them.

The Viśvāmitra-story-group has been studied illuminatingly by H. L. Hariyappa in his well-known work 'R̥gvedic Legends through the Ages'¹⁶³ and we can hardly better him. Hariyappa, after considering the evidence of MBh-stories also, remarks in the last chapter of his work 'Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra' as follows:

“(a) Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra had a long life of activity before they were elevated to be among the chosen seven i. e. the Saptarṣis.

“(b) Vasiṣṭha was born great, all saintliness and virtue were natural to him, he was the embodiment of patience, of the quality of Sattva. His passive resistance when attacked by the enemy appears exemplary. His attempt at self-immolation in his bereavement is somewhat strange and savours of being too commonplace. His eminence, however, as saint and priest of kings (purohita) is undoubted.

“(c) Viśvāmitra achieved greatness. Son of a king, he perfected himself in the qualities and attainments of a rājanya; an embodiment of the quality of Rajas, he was. But seeing that the quality of Sattva had more enduring features, determined to acquire it (sic). The chief thing was to conquer passion and anger; this he did achieve by penance by patient but steadfast endeavour (puruṣakāra).

“(d) The Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra feud reveals itself as a thing of the ancient past even in the age of the MBh. Tradition, at any rate, believed that the two sages were once upon a time enemies of each other. The events connected therewith were remembered not because it was a quarrel between two great personalities but because it would serve as a beacon light of righteousness on the one hand and effective human endeavour on the other.

“(e) x x x The MBh. age conceives the sage as equally respectable; there was no question of their relative superiority. On the other hand, a word should be said to the

¹⁶² Ādip. 166. particularly ślokaś 16 ff.

¹⁶³ Pub. Deccan College, Poona, 1953.

credit of the self-made saint Viśvāmitra, who, by dint of his achievement, had inspired the people with a reverential awe. The world was amazed at his powers of making or unmaking it. It was not much wonder that he could as well be one of the founders of Brāhmaṇ tribes as it were and hence an inspirer of a tradition by itself; a veritable sampradāya-pravartaka.”¹⁶⁴

We have quoted Dr. Hariyappa rather extensively for a number of reasons. His deductions are based on an almost complete survey of the Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra tales of both the epics, and have therefore much relevance to our study. Again, his deductions regarding the total impression of the tales of these two sages set a proper viewpoint for the Viśvāmitra-story-group of BK also; the Viśvāmitra-story-cycle of BK begins by sowing the seed of desire for Brahmr̥ṣi-pada in the mind of Viśvāmitra and depicts his steadfast endeavour to achieve it through a number of obstacles till he succeeds. Thirdly, Dr. Hariyappa's excellent and eloquent exposition seems to cover up the fact that the tone of his interpretation appears to be more cultural than factual. For example, he is silent on the point that the author of BK omits the famous story of Saudāsa Kālmāṣapāda. Finally, he mentions Viśvāmitra as one of the four Gotra - establishers and justifies it.¹⁶⁵

The scholars are prone to show that there is no evidence in Ṛgveda to show the famous animosity between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha.¹⁶⁶ But we can point out that, at least, the potentials are there. Vasiṣṭha is in special favour of god Varuṇa, Viśvāmitra of Indra. Varuṇa is slowly receding into background and Indra is seen as the most important god of the Vedic Pantheon. Varuṇa is the famous Lord of Ṛta, and Vasiṣṭha is called Brahmar̥ṣi — the Seer of Brahman of which Ṛta is the most important aspect. Indra, on the other hand, is the warrior god and the fiery nature of his protégé Viśvāmitra is in keeping. Now when the principle of Ṛta gradually develops into the principle of Brahman, the sage Vasiṣṭha is bound to stand there as a symbol, though by the very nature of the development of the principle, any god as such — even Varuṇa — is bound to vanish. If Brahman is the highest principle, then Viśvāmitra also would be shown to try to attain to it; according to his nature, however, (or rather that of his Lord Indra) he would be shown fighting even for Brahman, (is it rather a contradiction in itself ?) striving hard to win it, and finally succeed. But Indra the fighter of numerous battles, and, lover of wine and women, cannot reach there. He is left out, all gods for that matter, are left on a lower plane it is Viśvāmitra who, through steadfast efforts, surpasses even his Lord, stands superior to him and attains the status of the Seer of Brahman. Not outer but inner fight should be won there. Our study of Ṛgveda is not enough to permit us to say whether Varuṇa

164 *ibid.* p. 312.

165 *Viśvāmitra* (in the Vedic, Epic and the Pūranic Literature, Saradār Patel University, Vallabh Vidya Nagar, First Edition, 1971) has also been studied by Dr. B. H. Kapadia but he hardly has anything significant to say on the subject.

166 Geldner, *Vedische Studien*, 2, 130. See *Vedic Index*, II, p. 275. See also Hariyappa, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-7.

was receding to give place to Indra or to the principle of Rta developing into that of Brahman, but the investigation is worth undertaking. To us, at least, it seems this way : The principle of Rta has the potential of developing into that of Brahman which by its very nature discards all godheads. Varuṇa is the Lord of Rta, so even after his godhood disappears, he can be seen inherently present in the developed principle of Brahman. But Indra is neither inherent to it in any way, nor can he reach it with his godhood intact. It is only through his protégé, his own symbol, Viśvāmitra, that he can reach it. From this point of view, we even have a reason to suspect the very names of the sages. Viśvāmitra 'the friend of All' suits the characteristics of Indra who is much on the talking-ground with the sages. On the other hand, Vasiṣṭha 'the most brilliant' ($\sqrt{\text{vas}}$ -‘to shine’) is not easily approachable. It will be seen that Viśvāmitra really helps a number of persons — kings and commons alike — among whom are Triśaṅku and Śunaḥṣepa also. His passions of lust and angry imprecations also tally very well with the characteristics of his Lord Indra. On the other hand Vasiṣṭha's silent forbearance and steady strength of forgiveness reflect very well the sober character of Vedic Varuṇa. Even if the names of these sages originally had belonged to some historical persons, the question will still remain to be answered; why these two names were chosen out of seven; why not Gṛtsamada, Atri, Vāmadeva, Bharadvāja ? Is it not probable that these names were chosen because they yielded meanings, which were consonant with the characteristics of the two gods of Vedic pantheon who were struggling for superiority ? If the Rgveda itself does not show Indra to be specially favourable to Viśvāmitra, then it is likely that the name of the sage refers to some historical person, and is chosen at a later date for the potentials of its meaning. If the Rgvedic data prove that Indra is specially favourable to Viśvāmitra, then it may not be unlikely that Indra himself is symbolised as Viśvāmitra whose historicity is rather questionable.

Are we reading too much between the lines ? Well, we must wait for some future scholar who may underline or undo our observations which, since they do not fall strictly within the scope of our subject, are stated here, for whatever worth they are, eventhough enough evidence in support has not been found.

But if this is acceptable, then the entire story-group of Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra conflict will be symbolic of the struggle of the two most eminent Vedic gods Varuṇa and Indra for superiority in which finally both stand equal. This is not in contradiction to what we have said before about the relation of Subrahmaṇya litany with Viśvāmitra-story-cycle; on the other hand, it actually gives a direction to the previous observation. We may point out here that Sukthankar takes the cow of Vasiṣṭha to be symbolic of the Vedic 'Virāj' and takes it to be a point of contact between the Vedic and epic ideologies. This means, the epic-stories are more often than not personifications or concretisations of some Abstract Vedic ideas. Philosophical concepts are often put in the concrete form of a story. Hariyappa also says ; ‘for the average man

with his preoccupations — and his class forms the teeming millions—a set of prepared ideas about the Supreme Power is necessary,.... The average man, again, would feel gratified to find some concrete story on which his Faith can lay anchor.”¹⁶⁷ We may also add here that the gradual process of this concretisation of abstract philosophical ideas is excellently shown by S. A. Dange in his treatment of the MBh-legends of Kaca, of Garuḍa, and of the churning of ocean. In fact, such studies in the development of our legends through ages can reveal the various traits of our cultural development and help us solve the riddles of many dichotomies like those of Brāhmaṇa-śramaṇa, of Vedic-non-Vedic, of Āryan-non-Āryan and so on.

After the Viśvāmitra-story-cycle is finished, Rāma is shown the famous śaiva-bow. He lifts it up and in trying to string it, breaks it in the middle. Janaka sends for Daśaratha and the four sons of Daśaratha are married at a time to the four daughters — two each of the brothers Janaka and Kuśadhvaḥ. Then Viśvāmitra takes leave of them and returns to the northern mountains,¹⁶⁸ and never appears in the epic tale again. The coincidence is noteworthy that Viśvāmitra had approached Daśaratha for Rāma's help in his sacrifice, just at a time when Daśaratha was thinking about the marriages of his sons,¹⁶⁹ and leaves immediately after their marriage. This creates an impression that Viśvāmitra is brought in to arrange for Rāma's marriage to Sītā, his another contribution to the principal tale being his educating Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the lore of arms. Thus he is shown to be responsible for two of the most important aspects of Rāma — his prowess and his marriage— which are of central importance to the principal epic.

The attempt to wipe out any significance that might be attached to Vasiṣṭha, the family-priest of the Solar kings, in the birth and growth of Rāma — in the development of Rāma's personality — is too glaring to be missed. The onslaught is consistent. Not Vasiṣṭha, but Ṛṣyaśṅga, is instrumental in the hero's birth. Not Vasiṣṭha, but Viśvāmitra, is the cause in educating the epic hero in arms, in shaping his personality as an ideal of virtue and martial prowess. Not Vasiṣṭha, but Viśvāmitra, becomes instrumental in Rāma's marriage. Viśvāmitra is thus shown to be behind the entire structure of the hero's personality. Does not this attempt to throw Vasiṣṭha's personality into insignificance by making Viśvāmitra do his jobs also smack of the famous Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra controversy? Are we in a position to postulate that the entire BK from Viśvāmitra's entry onwards is the handiwork of some Vaiśvāmitra-redactors?

Two things seem to favour such a hypothesis: One, the abruptness of Viśvāmitra's coming and going. He breaks the thread of the epic story at a time when the father of the hero is thinking of his son's marriage. He leaves the epic, after connecting up

167 *Rgvedic Legends Through the Ages*, Hariyappa, p. 135.

168 BK. 73. 1.

169 BK. 17. 22-23.

the broken thread, as it were, with the main story. Two, the profusion of secondary tales in this portion — so characteristically purāṇa-like and epic-unlike — climaxing, as it were, in the Viśvāmītra-story-cycle. The purpose of glorifying Viśvāmītra is obvious.

(5) The Paraśurāma Episode

After Viśvāmītra's departure, when the marriage-party is returning to Ayodhyā, Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, comes upon Rāma, the son of Jamadagni, who challenges him to fix an arrow on the Vaiṣṇava bow which the latter possesses, and succeeding in it, for a dual combat. Rāma fixes the arrow and asks the challenger whether he should shoot at his present position or at the worlds for him hereafter. The challenger turns pale, and chooses the second option. He also recognises the hero as an incarnation and says that it is not a shame to lose at the hands of the lord of three worlds.¹⁷⁰

The episode is found in some versions of the MBh, but is not properly supported by the MSS-evidence and is therefore relegated to the Appendix there.¹⁷¹ That the episode cannot form a part of the constituted text of an epic which is Bhṛguised through and through is only very natural in view of the defeat of Bhārgava Rāma — the greatest of them all — depicted therein.

This is the last episode of BK. Rāma, the son of Jamadagni, is one of the three famous Rāmas of the Epic literature, the other two being Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, and Rāma, the plough-bearer. This similarity of namesake is played upon in this small episode so often, rather so insistently,¹⁷² that the intentions of its author become too obvious to be missed. The author wants to show the Kṣatriya Rāma, the son of Daśaratha to be superior in martial prowess as well as religious splendour to the other famous Rāma, the son of Jamadagni. Rāma Jāmadagnya is known popularly as Paraśurāma and is famous for his feat of exterminating the Kṣatriya-tribes 3 x 7 times. The MBh refers to it at every conceivable opportunity in almost identical words; *triḥ sapta-kṛtvah pṛthivikṛtā niḥkṣatriyā purā*/This Paraśurāma — the very embodiment of haughtiness, the god of death for the Kṣatriyas — is, once again, cut to his size as it were by a Kṣatriya Rāma. The reaction against the Brāhmin superiority is obvious.

It is interesting to note here that this Paraśurāma is shown to be the teacher of Bhīṣma,¹⁷³ of Droṇa¹⁷⁴ and of Karṇa¹⁷⁵ in the MBh. Paraśurāma who is supposed to have lived in the interval between the Tṛtā and the Dvāpara Ages is here

170 BK. 73-75.

171 VanP, Appendix I, No. 14, pp. 1058-1060.

172 BK. 73. 22; 75.5; 75. 11; 75. 21; 75. 23.

173 VanP. 173-185; particularly 178. 16 ff.

174 ĀdiP. 121.

175 ŚānP. 2-3.

represented as the teacher of Ācārya Droṇa who lived in the interval between the Dvāpara and the Kali Ages. No inconsistency or anachronism is felt, because Rāma is assumed to be “ever-living” (*cirajīvin*).¹⁷⁶ In the case of Droṇa, “The pupilship is only symbolical, but the basis of the symbolism is significant. Ācārya Droṇa is the *guru* of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas and of all the other valiant Kṣatriyas of the time, and he was also one of the greatest warriors on the side of the Kauravas in the Bhārata war. But Ācārya Droṇa must also have a *guru*. And who would be more suitable as *guru* than the Bhārgava Rāma, who is the foremost of all weapon-bearers (*sarva-śāstra-bhṛtām varaḥ*)?”¹⁷⁷ But Paraśurāma had taken a vow not to teach arms to anyone but Brāhmins. And Bhīṣma and Karṇa are the two exceptions. We can condone Bhīṣma’s pupilship since if he is not a Brāhmin, at least he is a life-long Brahmācārin. Karṇa, of course, managed to enrol himself under Paraśurāma by telling a lie and was cursed upon its detection.

But the significant consequence of these three tales seems to have been lost sight of altogether. Neglecting Śalya who is the last and the least of the leaders of the Kaurava army, *all* the remaining three viz. Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karṇa, are thus shown to have been the pupils of Rāma Bhārgava. We do not know whether the enthusiasm of the Bhārgava redactors of the Bhārata-poem was misfired, but the resultant fact is that Paraśurāma is made the *guru* of all the leading heroes of the losing party of the war. The manner of reasoning might sound unreasonable, but it is perhaps the only one possible under the circumstances.

When we compare Paraśurāma and Viśvāmitra as teachers, we realise the intentions of the author of BK in making Viśvāmitra the teacher of Rāma. We realize that the best possible teacher is chosen for Rāma. Vasiṣṭha is the family-priest of the Solar kings, and is a famous Vedic Seer, a gotra-pravartaka also; in the Vedas he is said to have fought on the side of the famous king Sudās Paijavana, but for Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, the great bow-wielder, the great slayer of Rāvaṇa, he cannot be the proper *guru*, since by the age of the Epics, he has lost his martial glory altogether. Other famous teacher of arms could be found in Paraśurāma. But, however great might Paraśurāma’s reputation be as a warrior and as a brāhmin, to accept him as Rāma’s teacher would mean, one, to accept the *guru* of the losers of the Bhārata war as the *guru* of the greatest bow-wielder against Rāvaṇa, and two, to accept brahmin superiority once again. For though Paraśurāma is known for his martial achievements, basically he is a brāhmin. In other words, he is a brāhmin turned kṣatriya. On the other hand, if there is a Kṣatriya turned Brāhmin,¹⁷⁸

176 *Sukthankar Memorial Edition*, Vol. I. Ed. P. K. Gode, pp. 288-289.

177 *ibid.* p. 288.

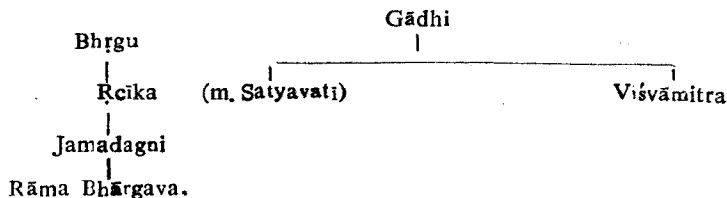
178 Cp. the famous story of the change of Caru. VanP. 115. Ṛcika, the son of Bhṛgu, married Satyavati, the daughter of Gāndhi, King of Kānyakubja. Bhṛgu granted a boon to Satyavati, that to obtain a religious son, she, in her season, should eat a caru (pot of rice and milk prepared specially) and embrace an Udumbara tree. Her mother should eat caru and

he would be a much happier choice for training Rāma, the great warrior in the making, in arms. And such a person is Viśvāmitra. First, he had been a great king; he had perfected the quality of Rajas as Hariyappa would put it; then realising the more enduring quality of Sattva he resolved to perfect that quality also and achieved his purpose by a steadfast endeavour. By attaining to the status of Brahmarṣi, he has proved himself equal of Vasiṣṭha. If, in the popular mind, a brāhmin is more proper as a teacher, he is a brāhmin in the real sense of the word, Again, he has, by steady penance, learnt to control the passion of anger which is a weak point of Paraśurāma, then whom, therefore, he proves himself better. And, basically, he is a Kṣatriya. He is the only sage combining the good qualities of both Vasiṣṭha and Paraśurāma, and eliminating their weaknesses. And though he is a Brahmarṣi, a great brāhmin-seer, to call him a 'brahmarṣi' itself is to break the brahmin monopoly of brāhminical superiority, for even Kṣatriyas by steady endeavour can achieve that position.

It should be noted that the final episode of BK has a clear affinity with the incarnation story referred to above. Paraśurāma recognises Rāma to be the lord of gods himself.¹⁷⁹ He says : "It should not be a matter of shame for me that I am defeated by the lord of the three worlds."¹⁸⁰ This reveals a knowledge and confirmation of the incarnation theme. The sectarian overtones are also clear. That, after breaking the Śaiva bow, Rāma is presented with the Vaiṣṇava bow is a repetition of motif. But the significant difference of detail is that Rāma breaks the Śaiva bow, but the Vaiṣṇava bow, he only handles easily and fixes an arrow upon it, but does not break it. The author is not satisfied merely by hinting at the Vaiṣṇava superiority and narrates an incident of the induced fight between Rudra and Viṣṇu wherein both stand equal, but the gods think of Viṣṇu's bow highly.

We should also note that the awareness of the hero being an incarnation of Viṣṇu is nearly completely absent in the portions wherein Viśvāmitra is present. The only possible covert hint is in Rāma's protecting the sacrifice which is performed in the Siddhāshrama in the background of a place where Vāmana had prevented Bali from completing the sacrifice. The redemption of Ahalyā does not involve any magical act

embrace Aśvattha tree for a valiant son. The ladies, however, changed the pots and the trees. The boon was infallible. Satyavati would give birth to a Brāhmin son of Kṣatriya character, her mother to a Kṣatriya son of Brāhmin character. At repeated entreaties of Satyavati, Bhṛgu granted that not her son but the grandson would be of valiant qualities. Thus her son Jamadagni was the father of the famous Rāma. The genealogy would be like this :



179 BK. 75.17.

180 BK. 75.19.

like turning the stony figure into a human being by touch or so; it is achieved only by Rāma's going to her hermitage and accepting her hospitality. The nature of the redemption does not anticipate any divinity on the part of Rām.

This raises a possibility that the central portions wherein Viśvāmitra is present are by one author, while the portions of Ṛṣyaśṅga, incarnation-theme and Paraśurāma-episode are by another author and added to the epic in the second stage of interpolations, the first most probably being the tales of entourage and Viśvāmitra. We can only say that the author of the central portions must be some redactor of the Viśvāmitra gotra, because Viśvāmitra is more prominent in these portions than even the hero of the epic. The episodes on either sides of these portions with Viśvāmitra are connected with incarnation-theme and are brought in by some Vaiṣṇava Sektarian, very likely a Kṣatriya. He could, under no circumstances, be a Bhārgava redactor. A Bhārgava would never end the BK with an episode in which Paraśurāma, the greatest of the Bhārgavas, is shown defeated even if at the hands of the hero of the poem, the lord of the three worlds. The almost complete neglect of Vasiṣṭha also precludes the possibility of the redaction being by some brāhmin of Vasiṣṭha gotra. What is probable is that the portion from Viśvāmitra's coming to his going must be by some Vaiśvāmitra, the episodes on the either sides of these portions must be by some Vaiṣṇava Kṣatriyas. Whether the two authors could be identical is a problem to be answered yet.

One more thing. In the popular belief Paraśurāma is the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu, Rāma is the seventh and Kṛṣṇa the eighth. It is often said that in the above encounter Paraśurāma realises that the task of his incarnation (avatāra-kārya) is over and in Rāma a new incarnation is coming of its age. But neither in this episode nor in the MBh anywhere is the Bhārgava Rāma called an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Actually the incarnation-theory itself seems to have been fostered by Vaiṣṇavas in the post-epic period with the fermentation of the Bhakti cult. Very likely the incarnationism has found a sound footing in the age of the Vaiṣṇava Gupta kings—it should be noted that Rāma in the RM and Kṛṣṇa in the MBh—both of them Kṣatriyas—are presented as the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Paraśurāma is greatly eulogised in the MBh for his prowess, but where Kṛṣṇa is already present as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, there is hardly any scope for another character in the same epic to be treated as an incarnation. Paraśurāma is not, could not be, treated as an incarnation in the epics. How did he become one later on?

One possibility is that the present episode might have been responsible for elevating Paraśurāma also to the level of an incarnation alongwith Rāma. Some parts and aspects of the episode could have been possible instruments in it: the similarity of namesake, the similarity of possessing great prowess in the use of arms, Paraśurāma's so-called possession and presentation of the Vaiṣṇava bow to Rāma (which can well be looked upon as a symbolic transfer of the divine power, and Rāma thereafter

becoming the greatest 'bow'-wielder),¹⁸¹ and Paraśurāma retiring thereafter to the Ma-hendra mountains for performing penances, symbolic of one form of eternal force—one incarnation of Viṣṇu retiring from activity and another coming into active force—these are the elements and overtones of the Paraśurāma episode which seem to have engendered and fostered the idea of Paraśurāma also to be an incarnation of the All-powerful Viṣṇu, in spite of the fact that Viṣṇu is nowhere in the epics presented as being born as Paraśurāma. The Amśāvātāra tales of any epic would naturally credit the hero only as the incarnation.

Well, if Paraśurāma is defeated in this episode, he is benefitted also.

B. UTTARA-KĀṆḌA

There is only one major group of tales – those of Rāvaṇa – in the UK. All the other tales form themselves into small groups with some insignificant purposes. We shall, therefore, divide the tales of UK in two major divisions, one of Rāvaṇa-Kathā-cakra and the other of the remaining tales. That the entire UK is a later addition and is secondary in that sense is well-known. The portion of Rāma's performing Aśvamedha is already referred to in the first section of BK-tales; the episode of Śambuka, we shall transpose to the next chapter.

(1) The Rāvaṇa-kathā cakra

As we saw above, the BK professes to narrate a group of incidents from the hero's earlier life, i. e. incidents prior to those narrated in the epic-nucleus; in the UK of RM, on the other hand, there is a whole group of episodes, almost a kathā-cakra, narrating episodes of Rāvaṇa's earlier life. It occupies almost one-third of the UK extending from Sargas 1 to 34, and narrates a number of episodes which seek to provide motivations for the incidents of the principal tale. Sarga 10 shows Rāvaṇa observing austere penance for thousands(!) of years and obtaining from Brahmā the boon that, except human beings about whom he does not care, he may be killed by no one. (Similarly Vibhīṣaṇa gets the boon of religiosity and Kumbhākarna, on whose tongue Sarasvatī sat for a moment in compliance with the gods' request and made it falter, says, he wishes to sleep for a number of years.) This is supposed to provide motivation for the wondersome fact that the demon Rāvaṇa who could bring even gods under his sway should lose battle against Rāma, a mere human being. The motif of making exception for human beings is introduced to make adjustment for the incarnation-story narrated in BK where Lord Viṣṇu is shown to be born as Rāma. Sarga 17 narrates the episode wherein Rāvaṇa saw a beautiful hermit-girl Vedavātī performing penance in order to obtain Viṣṇu as her husband according to the desire of her father Kuśa-dhvaja.

¹⁸¹ How else can we justify Paraśurāma, the wielder of an axe, to possess a bow?

Rāvaṇa was enamoured of her, asked her to marry him, and when she declined, tried to subdue her by force. The girl, however, entered fire promising to be reborn for Rāvaṇa's annihilation. She is reborn as Sītā. Thus this tale provides motivation for Sītā being the cause of Rāvaṇa's end. In Sarga 19, Rāvaṇa slays Anaraṇya, an ancestor of Rāma, who curses Rāvaṇa to be avenged by a king of his own line. According to the boon of Brahmā, Rāvaṇa is vincible only by human beings; the Anaraṇya-episode specifies that human being as the king of Ikṣvāku family. The incarnation tale of the BK narrows down the slayer of Rāvaṇa still as Rāma. Looking closely, however, the Anaraṇya-tale duplicates the motivation of the incarnation-tale since the distinction is only hair-splitting. Both the tales specify Rāma of the Ikṣvāku race, the human hero, as the slayer of Rāvaṇa. The BK-tale is in accordance with the standard *paurāṇika* pattern, and fits quite well in the context in which it is put. The UK-episode is entirely artless, charmless and does not assimilate itself well enough in the bunch of these episodes. Or rather, we may as well say, though it be a little early here, that all the episodes of this Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra are very loosely connected.

Sarga 26 contains the famous episode of curse of the Nalakūbara. Rambhā was going to meet Nalakūbara, the son of Kubera, to their rendezvous. On the way, she was accosted by Rāvaṇa who forced her to submit to his lust against her wish. Angered at such insolence, Nalakūbara pronounced a curse that if Rāvaṇa thenceforth tried to subject any woman to his lust against her wish, his head would split into seven. The episode has widespread implications. First, it attempts to motivate Rāvaṇa's respectful behaviour towards Sītā. But, it allows little respect left for the villain, for it compels us to conclude that Rāvaṇa's patiently persuasive behaviour with Sītā was merely out of helplessness and not as a result of some honourable motive to inspire spontaneous love in the heart of Sītā by gallantly risking everything for her without as much as even touching her against her wish. The tale taken along with that of Vedavati, paints Rāvaṇa as an unscrupulously lewd demon in dark colours and confirms the observation that the popular imagination has a tendency to reduce all characters into contrasted types. It would paint Rāvaṇa all black, all evil, and would not allow him to possess any graceful quality whatsoever. Secondly, it is said: "Hearing this horripilating curse, Rāvaṇa (thenceforth) did not cherish enjoying the unamorous women."¹⁸² In that case, Sītā was in no carnal danger from Rāvaṇa so long as she herself did not feel inclined. How shall we explain the fire-ordeal then? Does it test Rāvaṇa's fickleness? or Sītā's? Does it not throw a doubt upon Sītā's innate chastity? (For, it now does not remain a test of Rāvaṇa's power over her since it does not exist without the consent of the woman.) Finally, Rāma's act in abandoning Sītā is controversial enough even as it is, Nalakūbara's curse makes the act still more difficult to justify.

It is interesting to examine how the popular mind works at adjusting the meaning of the epic to its own understanding. The subtleties and complexities of the

¹⁸² UK, 26.47,

epic characters are, of course, beyond the grasp of the common man, of the average mind. That is the reason why popular imagination reduces the complex characters to contrasted types. Once the types are set, it is easy to underline the singularised characteristic by adding tales or episodes containing the same motif-structures but varying in details. Once the kidnapper of Sītā is decided as belonging to the 'lewd' type, fresh stories of Vedavatī and of Nalakūbara can easily be brought in to underline this characteristic of lewdness. Again, popular mind would naturally be weary of the abstract ideas, therefore, each important motif of the principal tale would be sought to be explained by one story which would put the motif into concrete and graspable form. Thus, it would not be easy for the popular mind to reconcile Rāvaṇa's act of abducting Sītā to his restrained and honourable behaviour with her. So the popular mind takes it the easy way. It explains Sītā's abduction as a cause of Rāvaṇa's end by the Vedavatī episode, and his peculiar behaviour by the Nalakūbara-episode. Thus, each tale either motivates some action of the epic-character or tries to explain some motif as understood by the popular imagination. But such an attempt to explain some action or some motif isolated from the epic-context often changes the implications of the action or motif, and it is quite likely that the total picture of the character as arising out of these tales may be quite different from the one presented by the epic-poet. Rāvaṇa of the epic may have been an honourable non-Aryan lover who abducts a beautiful Aryan woman; still, instead of forcing her to submit to his passions he shows the patience of adopting the persuasive techniques. But to the popular imagination, he is the villain of the piece; it quickly catches the force exhibited in abduction, quickly generalises it as the characteristic of Rāvaṇa, and if he does not use force again, his patience can be understood only as his helplessness, not his goodness. Hence the Nalakūbara-episode.

A little consideration of the contents of these episodes of Vedavatī and of Nalakūbara also will be interesting. In both the tales (even as in the principal tale) Rāvaṇa forcibly tries to subject a woman to his lust and in each case invites a curse (in the principal tale, his end) upon himself. The force succeeds in one case, does not in the other. The one in which it does not is that of Vedavatī who is Sītā herself in her previous birth. Therefore, her chastity is retained in this tale also, and here too she is shown to jump into fire. The propriety of these details is obvious. (This, by the way, also indicates that this story - as perhaps this whole group of tales - is added to the central portion either with or after the inclusion of the controversial fire-ordeal-episode into the epic.) The contents of the other tale are also noteworthy. Nalakūbara is a mere Yakṣa, and though he is called 'dharmātmā', his power of pronouncing a curse upon anyone is questionable. In spite of the fact that the woman is a nymph, Rāvaṇa's openly amorous address to Rambhā and the expression like *maithunāyopacakrame*¹⁸³ are rather vulgar, to say the least. Now, Rambhā herself being a nymph who is not supposed to have a fixed husband, the central

183 The same words are repeated in the tale of Daṇḍa raping Arajā, the daughter of Bhārgava Uśanas. Vide UK, 71.15.

motivating factor of the curse becomes very weak. Consequently, a little closer scrutiny will reveal that the whole episode of Nalakūbara and that aspect of Rāvaṇa's behaviour which it seeks to motivate and explain seems to lack enough justification.

The three curse-stories and one boon-story thus motivate Rāvaṇa's death at the hands of a human being, his death by an Ikṣvāku king only, the cause of his destruction being Sītā and his abstaining from using force to win over Sītā's love. As we saw, they serve only to undermine the human interest of the epic-tale. They under-rate or connive at the artistic finesse or idealistic overtones of the original tale by explaining almost everything in terms of curse-motif. This tendency to introduce the curse-motif in season and out of season to explain almost anything and everything can be seen at work in the MBh also. Take, for example, the incident of the death of King Pāṇḍu.¹⁸⁴ The very name 'Pāṇḍu' -- pale -- suggests that he was suffering from some anaemic illness and female company was fatal for him. Still, the advent of Spring in the forest-nature once so overpowered him that he was irresistibly drawn into the embrace of Mādri, knowing fully well that for him it meant an embrace of Death. The episode beautifully illustrates the human weakness for tender feelings even at the cost of one's life. But the overtones of these subtle emotions are allowed to die out by introducing the curse-motif to explain his situation. Once when a sage Kindama was enjoying his wife's company in the form of a deer-couple, Pāṇḍu hunted the sage without knowing him and was cursed by the dying sage that female company would now be fatal for Pāṇḍu.¹⁸⁵ Curse, therefore, and not illness, becomes the cause of his death. Karṇa's failure at the most crucial moment is shown to be the result of the curse of sage Paraśurāma who professes to teach only Brāhmīns but from whom Karṇa obtains the art of weapons by telling a lie that he is a Brāhmīn.¹⁸⁶ The internecine war ending in the annihilation of the Yādava clan¹⁸⁷ is due to the curse of mother Gāndhārī¹⁸⁸ The near-complete annihilation of the Nāgas in the so-called-sarpa-satra of Janamejaya¹⁸⁹ is because of the curse of mother Kadrū.¹⁹⁰ Though relegated to Appendix in the Critical Edition, the episode of Ūrvaśī¹⁹¹ also seeks to motivate Arjuna's deplorable condition as an eunuch dancing master by the curse-motif. It will be noticed that the persons pronouncing curse belong to various categories. Anaraṇya is a Kṣatriya king, Nalakūbara is a Yakṣa, Ūrvaśī is an apsaras, Gāndhārī is a human female, Kadrū is a semi-divine female, the parents of Śrāvaṇa are of lower caste. Kindama-Paraśurāma-Durvāsas are sages. The power to pronounce curse is, therefore, no monopoly of Brāhmīns. The motif is not used to imply the Brāhmīn superiority as it might be believed at first thought. On the contrary, it

184 Adip. 116.2-12.

185 Adip. 109.

186 ŚanP. 2-3.

187 MauP. 4.

188 StrP.24.

189 Adip. 47-48. particularly 48.19 where Vāsuki is called alpa-śeṣa-parivāro.

190 Adip. 18.7-8.

191 VanP. Appendix I, No.6. pp.1047-1953,

will be observed that, if at all, Brāhmins rarely pronounce curse and the gods never do. Though subjected to innumerable harrassments, Vasiṣṭha never pronounces a curse upon Viśvāmitra. Actually pronouncing a curse is taken to be so much waste of Tapas – the power of penance.¹⁹² Of course, there is always a just cause for pronouncing a curse, and the aggrieved person has a right, so to say, to pronounce the curse. (The only exception is that of Ūrvaśī who pronounces a curse for an unjust cause. The passage has rightly been relegated to the Appendix by Sukthankar.¹⁹³) All the same, pronouncing curse means giving way to feelings of resentment which definitely means losing control or restraint of emotions. The curse and the resultant loss of Tapas are thus symbolic.

Another aspect of this motif is that the curse never fails. Of course, most of the curse-episodes are secondary additions to the epics and are after-thoughts intended to motivate certain points in the principal tale which are incomprehensibly incompatible to the popular mind. If Rāvaṇa kidnaps Sītā, why he does not use force to subject her to his desire is difficult for a common man to understand. It is apparently incompatible. To remove this incompatibility of the two motifs the curse of Nalakūbara is pressed into service. Still, that does not alter the basic fact of the efficacy of the curse-motif. Curse is a power of hurt emotions set into motion. The word 'śāpa,' derived from the root √śap – 'to swear, to take an oath' and understood in the context of feelings hurt on account of injustice, signifies a vow, an oath to retaliate. It never fails, it can never fail, to achieve its end of the retaliation of injustice caused to the curser. Viewed thus, it appears as a corollary of the wider scheme of Action and its fruition — the eternal law of 'Karma' and its 'phala', with a qualification that the curser tries to influence its natural course in some specific manner and to that extent he has to utilize — or waste, for that matter — accumulated power of penance.

But the higher characters do not curse. The higher the character, the greater his forbearance. The gods are more often than not troubled by the demons, but they never curse. They try to influence the course of events by remaining within the limits of the natural course of 'karma' and its 'phala'. If Rāvaṇa, by his action of austere penance, has obtained a boon of invincibility except by human beings, then, in spite of his trouble-mongering, gods cannot subdue him. They, therefore, try to control him through human agency by making Viṣṇu incarnate as a human hero, Rāma. But the great sages like Vasiṣṭha, even when harrassed, never seek to retaliate by curse as the characters of lower level do; nor do they attempt to control or influence the natural course of events as the gods do. They simply witness the affairs of the world and let the things take their own natural course. Strength of forbearance is superior to the strength of pronouncing curse.

Forbearance—'khanti' (kṣānti-kṣamā) is one of the six Pāramitās — the basic tenets of Buddhism. The verse "na hi vereṇa verāṇi sammantīdha kadācana" is one of the famous lines of Buddhist Scriptures. And a number of stories of Buddha's

192 See, for example, BK. 48.3. Śāpa-mokṣeṇa mahatā tapo'syāpahṛtam mayā/

193 Vide his editorial note to Fascicule II, VanP.

previous births in the 'Cariyāpiṭaka' and the Jātaka-collection seek to illustrate this maxim of forbearance showing Buddha's tolerance of various kinds of assaults. The quality requires no small strength of character, and has exercised great influence on the popular Indian mind through milleniums even upto the present times in which Mahātmā Gāndhī's 'Ahimsā' of the strong is only another form of that forbearance. Now, though Tapas is found in a number of Vedic books, the extension of its meaning as 'forbearance' in the Brāhmiṇical tradition is seen only in the epic-purāṇic literature. Shall we say, it betrays a Buddhist influence ?

After this rather long digression on the curse-motif, let us now return to the tales of Rāvaṇa. There are, again, episodes of Rāvaṇa's successful march over Kubera, Yama and Varuṇa, lords of the directions of North,¹⁹⁴ South,¹⁹⁵ and West.¹⁹⁶ The East, the direction of Indra, is won over by his son who obtains the name 'Indra-jit'.¹⁹⁷ Thus, symbolically Rāvaṇa's sovereignty in all the four directions is established. Even Rāma's Ayodhyā was won over, though from Rāma's ancestor Anaraṇya. These Victories establish Rāvaṇa [as an invincible warrior. When Rāma subjugates this Rāvaṇa, his valour is automatically proved to be even superior to that of the invincible villain. If, the tales of BK were intended to show the character of Rāma, the great warrior and an ideal monarch, in the making, we can very well look upon these tales of Rāvaṇa's voluptuous adventures and political victories as intended to show even the lewd and invincible villain in the making. Tales of the hero are prefixed to the epic, those of the villain are suffixed to it. So it will be more proper to say that these tales try to explain and deepen the different lines of the sketch of his villainous personality.

There are, however, two episodes which describe Rāvaṇa's defeats also : one at the hands of Arjuna Kārtavīrya,¹⁹⁸ the other at the hand of Vālin.¹⁹⁹ In both the episodes, he is put in a very ludicrous position. Arjuna releases Rāvaṇa upon the request of the latter's father Pulastya. Vālin simply puts Rāvaṇa under his armpit and flies a long distance high up in the air. Rāvaṇa seeks his friendship, and makes him his ally. The fact that Vālin is an ally of Rāvaṇa will at once show us how politically wise Rāma was in removing Vālin first even if rather treacherously. Rāma's goal was to fight Rāvaṇa for recovering Sītā and his family-honour. Whatever he did must either remove the obstacles in the path of realising his goal or should at least bring him nearer to it. Now, Vālin was superior in strength to Rāvaṇa and Rāma should not incur the risk of inviting a straight duel with him without knowing his strength. So he kills Vālin by hiding himself behind a tree. By killing Vālin, he weakens the side of Rāvaṇa who loses an ally, and strengthens his own by getting in Sugrīva a friend under obligation. The army which, under Vālin, would have fought on Rāvaṇa's side against him will now fight under Sugrīva on his side against Rāvaṇa. The single Rāma wins thereby an ally as well as a friendly army to fight against the demon. A small unheroic act, thus, brings in an immense positive reward. When we

194 UK. 14.

195 UK. 20-22.

196 UK. 23.

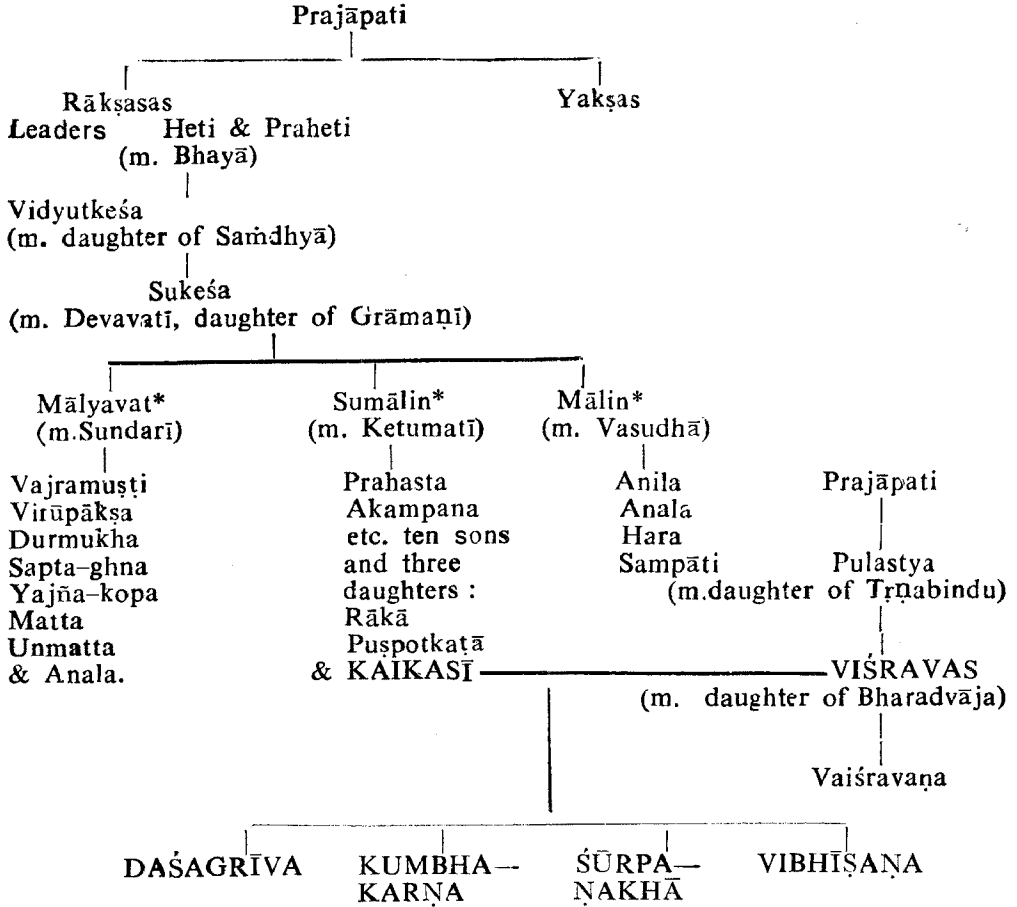
197 UK. 29.

198 UK. 31-32.

199 UK. 34.

consider it politically, we realize, Rāma also must have thought : 'Discretion is the better part of valour'.²⁰⁰

Two episodes show Rāvaṇa to be the devotee of lord Śaṅkara. After an austere penance performed for thousands of years, he obtains the name 'Rāvaṇa'²⁰¹ (and the divine sword²⁰²) from Śaṅkara. Again, he worships the Liṅga on the bank of river Narmadā.²⁰³ It is noteworthy that even in the earlier Sargas²⁰⁴ where the ancestral genealogy of Rāvaṇa is described in the Paurāṇika style with some sprinkling of narratives, Śaṅkara is shown to be favourably disposed towards these demons. The genealogy is given as under :-



(*In their war with gods, Mālin was slain and the other two were defeated by Lord Viṣṇu. They fled from Lankā, which was then occupied by Vaiśravaṇa. He was driven away by Rāvaṇa.)

200 The *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* ascribed to Bhāsa seeks to portray Rāma, the great politician, almost along these lines.

201 UK. 16. 21—28.

202 Relegated to Critical Apparatus; see under UK. 16.29. p. 106.

203 UK. 31.

204 UK. 1—9.

Sukeśa in the above line was favoured by Lord Śaṅkara, who gave him strength and an immediate growth.²⁰⁵ His three sons are compared with Tri-netra,²⁰⁶ When the gods, troubled by these three, approach Lord Śaṅkara with a request to destroy them, Śaṅkara says, "I shall not destroy them, they are undestroyable by me."²⁰⁷ Viṣṇu also calls Sukeśa as "intoxicated with the boon of Īśāna."²⁰⁸

Cumulatively, these tales give us an impression that Śaṅkara must have been the god of the tribes of which our Rāvaṇa was the king. He must have belonged to the tribes of Śiva-worshippers. We do not know whether the tales germinally contain some historical truth or whether they are all later concoctions. In either case, the suggestion will not be lost upon us. The defeat of the Śiva-worshipper Rāvaṇa and his tribe at the hands of Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, clearly aims at illustrating the superiority of the Vaiṣṇavaites over the Śaivaitees.

We should at once be clear that the central Kāṇḍas taken by themselves would never yield themselves to any such interpretations. It is only on the strength of the secondary tales prefixed and suffixed to the epic, that such a sectarian interpretation of the original tale has been made possible. The secondary tales thus take the epic tale on an entirely different level. In this context it will be interesting to note how greatly does Sukthankar rely on these Secondary tales in order to explain the MBh-story on Ethical as well as Metaphysical planes. As he shows in the third of his famous lectures *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*,²⁰⁹ the merest story of the fratricidal war narrated with a chronicler's faithfulness would not be very redeeming since there is nothing new in it. Such wars are a matter of common occurrence in the history. There is nothing special or grand about it. On the contrary, so many details of the story, "it must be conceded, put the emotion several degrees lower."²¹⁰ It is a second-rate subject. The real depth and significance of the story of genesis in the ĀdiP, or tales of Gods, Demons and Lord Viṣṇu Himself being born as Pāṇḍavas, Kauravas (viz. Duryodhana etc.) and Kṛṣṇa present the epic-story as a mere recurring incident of the constant struggle between Devas and Asuras, as mere phase in the cosmic evolution.²¹¹ The incarnation theory is harnessed into service for this purpose and a number of tales, in fact, a whole section of 'Ādivaṁśavataṇaparvan' is added to the epic simply to help it project on a cosmic level. The simple epic-story thus achieves a very different, rather cosmic dimension. Sukthankar calls it "The Epic on an Ethical plane."²¹²

205 UK. 4.26-30.

206 UK. 5.5. Trīṁs trīnetra-samān putrān.

207 UK. 6.9.

208 UK. 6.18.

209 Pub. Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1927.

210 Op. cit. p.62.

211 ibid. pp. 67-68, pp. 88-90.

212 This is the title, the topic of his third lecture.

The same epic-story, shows Sukthankar in his final lecture, can be viewed on a metaphysical plane also. He takes various epic characters as symbolizing various philosophical concepts—Kṛṣṇa, for example, is the symbol of the Highest Brahman,²¹³ Arjuna of Jīvātman,²¹⁴ Dhṛtarāṣṭra of the vacillating Ego, Vidura of Buddhi, Bhīṣma of tradition as “the time-binding element in human life and society”²¹⁵ and so on — but basically he takes his cue from the story of King Dambhodbhava²¹⁶ occurring in the Udy where Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are presented as incarnations of Nārāyaṇa and Nara.²¹⁷ Sukthankar further compares the Nara-Nārāyaṇa episode with that famous Upaniṣadic metaphor of the two birds²¹⁸ and shows that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa have, in our tradition been regarded as representing Jīvātman and the Highest Brahman.²¹⁹ The story thus affords a metaphysical viewpoint for the epic-story.

Though Sukthankar has not mentioned it—he has no necessity to—, we may point out that the Dambhodbhava-story is narrated in the epic by Rāma Jāmadagnya²²⁰ which is a sure proof of its inclusion in the epic in its final stage when the Bhārgava interest in and influence upon the epic-redaction were uppermost. The story is secondary because it describes no incident of the principal story, but also because it is included in the epic at a later stage. And it is this secondary tale that affords us the metaphysical viewpoint. No such tale to take the epic on a metaphysical plane is found in the RM, but the story of genesis in BK, and the tales of Rāvaṇa showing him as a demon-king do allow the ethico-cosmic interpretation of the RM also. On the other hand, the sectarian interpretation which is possible in the case of RM is not possible in the case of MBh simply because in the latter both the heroes and the villains belong to the same genealogy. It will be seen, therefore, that the secondary tales perform an important function of providing different view-points on the entire epic-stories to the extent that they succeed considerably in changing the significance and emphasis of the original epic nucleus. It will also be clear that the basic structures of the epic-tales themselves reveal certain potentials as well as limitations for different interpreta-

213 Cf. “.....there is no passage in the epic which does not presuppose, or which contradicts, his character as an incarnation of the Supreme Being, who is generally called in our Epic Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa”. Op. cit.p.67.

214 Cf. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna symbolize the Paramātman and the Jīvātman. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his hundred sons stand for the emperical ego and its entourage of desires and passions...” ibid. pp. 105-106.

215 ibid. p. 107.

216 ibid. pp. 99-100, Cf. UdyP. 94.

217 Cf. UdyP. 94.42ab.

nara-nārāyaṇau yau tau tāv evārjunakeśavau /

218 On the Meaning etc., p. 100. The Upaniṣadic parable referred to is found in *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* III. i.1. Read :

dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte /
tayor anyañ pippalam svādv atty—
anaśnann anyo' bhicākaśīti //

219 Read above fn. 214.

tions which might be super-imposed upon them by means of the secondary tales. The basic structures of the epic-nucleii also work as a check upon the type of secondary tales which would be added to the epics, and which in their turn would evolve different interpretations of the epic-nucleii.

(2) The Other Tales

The narration of Rāvaṇa's encounter with Vālin is the last episode of Rāvaṇa-group of tales. It occasions the tale of Hanūmat. Why Hanūmat, [more powerful and doer of many more wonderful valorous deeds than almost any other character of RM, did not burn Vālin, friend as he was of Sugrīva ? To answer this query of Rāma, sage Agastya narrates the story of the birth of Hanūmat, his childhood-adventures, and a minor curse in Sargas 35-36 of UK. His story is also sufficiently well-known to Indians. Hanūmat is said to be the levirate-son of Vāyu, born in Añjanā, the wife of King Kesarin of the Sumeru mountains.²²¹ Once, when his mother was away, the child, tormented by hunger, jumped at the Sun, believing him to be a fruit. Vāyu ran after him, lest the Sun should burn him. The Sun did not burn him as he was a mere child. But Rāhu who was going to swallow the Sun just at that time was afraid of this new creature claiming the Sun, and complained before Indra, who struck the child dead with his thunderbolt. Vāyu became angry and choked up the systems of urination and defecation of the beings. Brahmā, however, intervened, re-enlivened the child with his touch and asked all the gods to bless the child with various boons. The child, becoming unruly, troubled the sages who then cursed him to remain ignorant of his own strength.

If we were Agastya, we would have explained Hanūmat's strength and simplicity by pointing out the parallels of Shakespeare's Caliban in 'The Tempest' or Victor Hugo's Hunchback of Notre Dame. But in the Purāṇic world everything should be explained properly as resulting from either a divine parentage, or boons or a curse. All the three are present here. Every aspect of Hanūmat's personality is separately motivated, his great strength by the divine boons; his simplicity by the sages' curse, and jumping capacity by his divine parentage. This last is rather curious. One thing is very certain. Hanūmat's childhood feat of jumping at the rising Sun is brought in with a clear motivation of making his other great jump over the ocean described so poetically in the SK appear plausible. When we realize, following the recent deliberations of the scholars regarding the original Laṅkā,²²² that 'sāgara' is actually nothing more than a large, perhaps very large, lake, we immediately perceive that Hanūmat must have swum across the so-called 'sāgara' and his great swimming is described with poetic hyperbole as a jump. The hyperbole has, however, some actual basis. Hanūmat is a Kapi—a monkey' i.e. belonging to a

220 Cf. UdyP. 94.3-4

221 UK. 35. 19-20.

222 For a very complete discussion of the problem of the location of Laṅkā, read the Introduction to UK. by Dr. U.P. Shah, Baroda, 1975. pp. 31-50.

tribe having monkey as its totem.²²³ And monkeys do jump even across the trees. So, the great swimming of this hero of the 'monkey' tribe can very well be described as a great jump across the mountains. The fact of the hero being a 'monkey' justifies the transformation of the great swimming into a great jump and what is lacking in plausibility is filled up by the poetic imagination. Now, the strength of jumping through the air naturally needs to be fathered by the god of Wind. The great jump, itself a poetic hyperbole, is sought to be justified by a still further exaggerated act of the child's jumping at the Sun. Naturally, such feats cannot be justified without divine causation. Popular imagination, like poetic imagination, knows no bounds.

But another corollary of this mode of argument is rather significant. If we have succeeded in showing that the motif of Hanūmat's being the son of Vāyu has developed according to the logic as shown above, then we are removing an important corroboration of the theory that the Rāma-story is a metaphorical presentation of the rains-agriculture-phenomena²²⁴ in which Rāma, the lord of Hanūmat, represents Indra, the lord of Maruts. As we saw above, Vāyu's fatherhood of Hanūmat can more plausibly be explained in another way, and therefore, Rāma-Hanūmat-relationship is not intended to be similar to Indra-Maruts-relationship.

We may point out another fact which also weakens the agriculture-metaphorical-theory. The name 'Rāvaṇa' (sought to be explained as \sqrt{ru} 'to shout, to cry') is thought to be representing the thunder of the clouds in that theory. Recent studies have shown that "Rāvaṇa is a sanskritized form of the Tamil word *ireivaṇ* or *iraivaṇ* which means 'god', 'king', 'sovereign' and 'lord'."²²⁵ This will mean that 'Rāvaṇa' is not a personal name, but a general name meaning any king, at the most a king of a particular line, just as 'Janaka' means, not *the* father of Sītā, but any king of the line of Janakas.²²⁶ Again, this linguistic aspect of the name 'Rāvaṇa' renders all etymological explanations and consequently any deductions based thereon worthless. Apart from the agricultural-metaphor theory mentioned above, there is a tale which says Rāvaṇa obtained the name from Lord Mahādeva by making a roar which terrified all the three worlds.²²⁷ The tale, worthless as it is, is further confirmed to be a purely fictitious one, like all such etymological tales.

223 ".....the identifications of Vānaras and Rākṣasas by different scholars, Kibe430 (430. Festschrift Thomas, pp. 144-145.) and Hira Lal431 (431. Jha Comm. Vol., pp. 151-161.) take them to be inhabitants of the country round Amarkaṇṭhak;" *Studies in Epics And Purāṇas of India*, A. D. Pusalkar, Bombay, 1963. pp. 202-3.

224 The interpretation of the latter part of Rāma-story as an Agricultural myth has been given by H. Jacobi in *The Rāmāyaṇa* (Tr. by S. N. Ghosal, Baroda, 1960, pp. 97ff.). It has also been partly discussed by Camille Bulcke. Vide his *Rāmakathā*, Prayāg, 1950, pp. 14ff.

225 'Daśagrīva or Daśānana of the Rāmāyaṇa', S. N. Batra, *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, Vol. XXIII. Nos. 1-2, p. 43.

226 Cf. *Rāma-kathā*, Bulcke, p. 9.

227 See above, under the section 'The Entourage Tales.'

The word 'ireivaṇ' also seems to have been sanskritized as 'Lavaṇa'.²²⁸ Lavaṇa is the demon king of Madhurā, and son of the demon Madhu and Viśvāvasu's daughter Kumbhīnasī.²²⁹ He also has a lance obtained by his father from Lord Mahādeva.²³⁰ At the request of the sages troubled by this demon, Rāma dispatches Śatruḡhna to kill him.²³¹ The reason of making Śatruḡhna do this job is obvious. It is the sympathy for the neglected characters of a poem that prompts the redactors to make, not Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa or Bharata²³² all of whom have been shown to play important roles in the principal tale, but Śatruḡhna perform the task. The episode of Lavaṇavadha occupies Sargas 52 to 63, and shows all the processes of the development of the epic on a smaller level. Thus, when Śatruḡhna comes to the hermitage of Vālmiki, a story of his ancestor Saudāsa Mitrasaha Kalmāṣapāda is narrated.²³³ Further on his way when he is conversing with the sages headed by Cyavana,²³⁴ the sage tells him the story of one more ancestor of the hero, Māndhātṛ²³⁵ by name, whom Lavaṇa had killed. Now Śatruḡhna will kill Lavaṇa who, in the morning, is said to be 'unweaponed' (agrhītāyudha). Does it not remind us of the tale of Anaraṇya vanquished by Rāvaṇa who, in turn, is vanquished by Rāma, the descendent of Anaraṇya? And the sages had already informed, while complaining about this demon, of his equipment with a lance which his father obtained from Lord Mahādeva and which he eventually inherited. The imitation of the incidents of the main story is so close that, like Lakṣmaṇa, Śatruḡhna also falls unconscious²³⁶ and then regaining consciousness pierces the demon in heart, with an arrow, which then enters the underworlds and finally returns to the quiver of Śatruḡhna.²³⁷ "Know this arrow to be made of the lustre of Lord Viṣṇu and this same body was of that Viṣṇu previously".²³⁸ (The ambiguity makes it possible to mean by 'body' both the arrow as well as Śatruḡhna himself.) It was this arrow with which Viṣṇu had killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.²³⁹ Now with the same arrow, Śatruḡhna pierces the heart of Lavaṇa, the son of Madhu. Does the poet ambiguously want to suggest that Śatruḡhna also is an incarnation of Viṣṇu?

228 Cf. The famous axiom : ra-la-yor abhedah / Again, the phonemic affinity of r of Tamil language to various phonemes like r, l, ḍ, ḷ, z, etc. is well-known.

229 This Kumbhīnasī is the cousin sister of Rāvaṇa Cf. UK.25.

230 UK. 53.19-20.

231 UK. 54.15-16.

232 Mark Śatruḡhna's words in UK. 54.11-14.

233 UK. 57.

234 UK. 58.14, 59.1.

235 UK. 59.

236 UK. 61.12-15.

237 UK. 61.34-35.

238 UK. 61.28, vide.

evam etam prajānidhvam viṣṇos tejomayam śaram /
eṣā caiva tanuḥ pūrvā viṣṇos tasya mahātmanaḥ //

239 UK. 61.27,

And, if we agree that Lavaṇa also is Rāvaṇa only,²⁴⁰ then the redactors' epic-efforts to show Śatrughna also perform a task comparable to that of the heroes of the epic will prove successful !

Sargas 64 to 67 narrate the famous Śambūka-episode, which, as we have pointed out above, we intend to deal with in the next chapter. Rāma visits the forest of Daṇḍaka to slay the Śūdra sage Śambūka, and after performing that task, visits sage Agastya who presents him divine ornaments. The sage was given the ornaments by one king Śveta²⁴¹ who, though having attained heaven by penance, was still troubled by thirst and hunger as he had not given charity to anyone. Lord Brahmā punished him to eat his own corpse every day till Agastya would relieve him of the predicament. The sage had accepted the ornaments as charity from that king to set him free from the punishment. Charity is the highest virtue !

When Agastya came to that forest, it was full of fruits and trees, yet uninhabited by any animal or human beings. The reason is explained by a tale.²⁴² Daṇḍa was the last of a hundred sons of Ikṣvāku. Considering his foolishness, the father made him king of the land between Vindhya and Śaivala mountains. Once, the king Daṇḍa saw Arajā, the daughter of his own priest Uśanas Bhārgava, was enamoured of her and raped her. The sage cursed his kingdom to be covered with sands within seven days except the area around the habitation of Arajā. The kingdom of Daṇḍa was turned into Daṇḍaka-forest by the curse of Bhārgava sage Uśanas.²⁴³

Sargas 74 to 81 give us Rāma's deliberations with his brothers regarding the sacrifice he should perform. Rāma's suggestion of performing Rājasūya is not approved by his brothers.²⁴⁴ They suggest that he should perform Aśvamedha. The great efficacy of Aśvamedha is illustrated by two tales, one of Indra who expiates by Aśvamedha the great sin of Brahmicide which he has incurred in killing Vṛtra,²⁴⁵ and the second of Ila who, turned into a woman on account of entering the forbidden forest of Umā, regained his maleness by performing Aśvamedha.²⁴⁶ Both the tales are famous and serve the purpose of Arṥhavāda.

240 At least, etymologically they seem to be the same ! Refer above fn. 227.

241 UK. 68-69.

242 UK. 70-72.

243 Rāvaṇa knows of this curse. To console his sister Śūrpanakhā whose husband he has killed, through inadvertance, with Kālakeyas, he sends her with Khara to Daṇḍaka-forest which, he knows to have been cursed previously by Uśanas, Cf. UK. 24, particularly 24.32.

244 UK. 73, particularly 74.9-14, and 18. In 'Antipathy to Rājasūya : Why' (*Sambodhi*, Ahmedabad, Vol. I, No. 3, 1972) Gaṇesh Thiṭe makes some interesting observations. The possibility of wars in this sacrifice arises from the fact that in the ritual of the Rājasūya the sacrificer treats his own relatives and members of his family in an insulting manner and they are ritually denied the chance of being kings even in the future, thus causing inner struggles.

245 UK. 76-77.

246 UK. 78-81.

Now, the only portions of UK we have not touched so far are Sargas 37 to 51 in which Rāma, hearing of the popular censure, renounces Sītā, and Sargas 82 to the end in which he performs Aśvamedha at which the final tragedy occurs. In a way, both can be treated as incidents of the main story, since they are shown to develop as a result of the incident of para-gṛha-vāsa belonging to the principal narrative. While deciding to renounce Sītā, Rāma refers to the fact that Sītā was pronounced chaste by the Fire, the Wind, the Sky, the Moon and the Sun.²⁴⁷ But there is no reference to the fire-ordeal. Even in the Rāmopākhyāna in MBh, when Sītā appeals Mātriśvan, and then to the fire, the sky, the earth, the wind, in fact to the great elements, it is the wind, the fire, Lord Varuṇa, Lord Brahman, and Daśaratha who all pronounce Sītā's chastity.²⁴⁸ Reference is also made there to the curse of Nalakūbara²⁴⁹ and to the other details of Rāvaṇa's genealogy²⁵⁰ which shows that its author is conversant with the Rāvaṇa-story-cycle. The MBh version ends with a reference to the ten Aśvamedhas performed by Rāma on the bank of river Gomatī.²⁵¹ The incarnation-story is also referred to.²⁵² But the incident of Rāma's marriage with Sītā or Rāma's renouncing her is not referred to. The author of the MBh summary thus knows BK and UK, at least partially, and it is not easy to decide whether he knows other portions of these later Kāṇḍas. It is possible that he knows them but does not want to refer to them, since the context does not permit it. The summary is intended to console Yudhiṣṭhira in his grief on Draupadi's abduction by Jayadratha, and to narrate the tragic ending of the Rāma-story (as resulting out of the abduction-episode) would not be in order. The story then would make the listeners sorry instead of consoling them. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the author does not know of Rāma's marriage with and his renunciation of Sītā, of his two sons and of Vālmiki's authorship. If we agree with the second possibility, then, these portions must be supposed to have been added to the epic in its third stage.

The fire-ordeal episode must have been still later.²⁵³ It is not difficult to see that the fire ordeal is only a further intensification of the same motif which caused the incidents of renunciation and the eternal separation to be introduced into the epic. In the first stage, the intention of the author was to describe the hero's victory only (the name of the epic was probably 'Paulastya-vadha') and Sītā's abduction in it was intended to be nothing else than a legitimate reason for launching the war. But as the epic grew in popularity, and as Rāma came nearer and nearer to the godhood, the evil of para-gṛha-vāsa began to attract greater and greater attention,

247 UK. 44.6-7.

248 VanP. 275.23-36

249 VanP. 275.32.

250 VanP. 258-259.

251 VanP. 275.69.

252 VanP. 260.

253 YK.

the inclination to emphasise Sītā's purity became stronger, and no other intelligent answer except a recourse to divine intervention was possible to such a delicate and highly personal problem. Still, gods testifying to Sītā's purity was one thing, the actual fire-ordeal is quite another thing. The latter is crudely popular, it duplicates the motif very artlessly, and must have been added in the latest stages of the epic.

That brings us to the question of the authorship of UK. N. J. Shende had tried to show that "the Bhṛgvāṅgirasas influenced directly or indirectly the enlargement of the epic."²⁵⁴ He bases his conclusion on a survey of the Bhṛgvāṅgiras element in the epic as it was available then in its Bombay edition. But many of the references to and tales of the Bhṛgvāṅgiras sages are now relegated either to footnotes as star-passages or to appendices. For example, the references to Bhṛgvāṅgiras in B.Ayk. 32.33 now becomes star passage 763. Āṅgiras and Bhṛgu performing sacrifice for Nimi at B.UK. 55.9 are now thrown to Appendix I passage No. 8 with the whole sacrificial episode. The reference to Gārgya Trijaṭa as an Āṅgirasa is now *766 of Ayk. Bṛhaspati is born as Tāra, the chief of monkeys, now in *491 of BK. Bharadvāja, the pupil of Vālmiki, now accompanies him from footnote *139 of BK. Gautama performing at Nimi's sacrifice is now in Appendix I, passage No. 8 of UK. The story of Nimi Janaka being revived from a bodiless condition by Bhṛgu and that of Uśanas' curse to Yayāti are also now in Appendix passage No. 8 of UK, while in passage No. 7 is relegated the tale wherein Viṣṇu slays Bhṛgu's wife for giving shelter to demons and invites Bhṛgu's curse upon his own self to be born as mortal and to bear separation from his beloved wife. Of course, the tales of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, of Ahalyā Gautama, of Vedavati (daughter of Kuśadhvaja Bārhaspatya), of Uśanas' curse to Daṇḍa, of Śunaḥśepa (son of Ṛcika Bhārgava), and of Paraśurāma still remain. Bharadvāja, a sage of Prayāga receiving the exiles and showing the way to Citrakūṭa in Ayk still very much remains a character of the principal tale. A tale in which Sagara is shown to be born with poison (hence his name 'Sa-gara') on account of sage Cyavana's blessings in spite of his mother being poisoned by her co-wife is retained in Ayk. 102.16-18, while put in the footnote in BK as *1272. Still, however, the theory of Prof. Shende loses much of its force, as almost half of the references and tales supporting his theory are not accepted in the critical text.

We should point out at this stage that Sage Agastya is shown to narrate quite a large part of the UK. The entire Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra and the tales of Hanumat, plus the tales of King Śveta, and King Daṇḍa are narrated by Agastya. As Prof. Shende shows, "Agastya is the brother of Vasīṣṭha, the purohita of the Ikṣvākus. This explains the presence of Agastya-element in the epic".²⁵⁵ But it does not explain the prominence of Bhṛgvāṅgiras-element. Again, "In nearly 45 out of 77 chapters

254 'The Authorship of the Rāmāyaṇa'. *Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol.XII (New Series) part 2, Sept. 1943, p.24.

255 *ibid.*

of the 1st book, Viśvāmitra narrates various legends to Rāma. In about 15 more sections (51-65) Śatananda Āṅgīrasa narrates the greatness of Viśvāmitra to Rāma and others.²⁵⁶ The reason given for this prominence of Viśvāmitra is that he is "a relation of the Bhṛṅus".²⁵⁷ But as we have pointed out above, it is not possible for any Bhārgava redactor to end the BK with an episode in which Paraśurāma, the greatest of the Bhārgavas, is shown to be defeated. The only other reference in the entourage tales to Bhārgavas is in that single śloka in which Viṣṇu is said to slay the wife of Bhṛṅu for desiring the world to be without Indra.²⁵⁸ It is not a very honouring reference, and the tale showing Bhṛṅu's retaliation with a curse is not accepted in the critical text of the UK also. Since the Paraśurāma-episode seeks to show Rāma Dāśarathi to be more valiant than even Rāma Bhārgava, it can be surmised that the latter's martial reputation of having routed the Kṣatriyas 3 × 7 times must have been firmly established by that time, and it is some anti-Bhārgava, or at least, non-Bhārgava element that tries to handle the epic.

We may as well point out here that Viśvāmitra is finally shown to go to the Northern mountains.²⁵⁹ The places of his entourage are situated in the Kosala and Videha kingdoms, the north-eastern region of Āryāvarta. Agastya is intimately associated with the southern direction, Bhṛṅus are connected with the western part of the pristine Āryāvarta. Now, if these sages are brought in to narrate various tales connected with various places, would it be too hazardous to suggest some sort of collective authorship of the epic in the later stages of its redaction? It at least does not seem to be more hazardous than to suggest the Bhārgava authorship of RM in its final stage. In the case of MBh, it can be said that "The Bhṛṅus have to all appearances swallowed up the epic nucleus such as it was, and digested it completely; and it would be hazardous venture now to reconstruct the lost Kṣatriya ballad of love and war".²⁶⁰ In the case of RM, Bhṛṅus have not succeeded similarly. They must have tried to influence the epic, though in the Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra, for example, Rāvaṇa is shown to be defeated ridiculously at the hands of Arjuna Kārtavīrya. The tale has no curse-motif. It is not intended to motivate any incident of the principal narrative. Arjuna has no genealogical connection either with the hero or with the villain. Historically also, they cannot be contemporaries. What business does this Arjuna Kārtavīrya Haihaya of Māhiṣmatī have in RM? The only reason we can imagine is that of the Bhārgava interest. It is this Arjuna who is said to have incited the wrath of Paraśurāma who consequently routed the Kṣatriyas 3 × 7 times. We can, if we so wish, put the scale of martial superiority as Rāvaṇa > Arjuna > Rāma Jāmadagnya > Rāma

256 *ibid.*

257 *ibid.*

258 BK. 24.18.

259 BK. 73.1.

260 *On the meaning of the Mahābhārata*, Sukthakar, p.110.

Dāśarathi, but very likely the scale is intended only upto the third step. Again, Uśanas is said to perform sacrifices for Meghanāda, son of Rāvaṇa, but that again reminds us of the Bhārgava helping the side which finally loses the battle. Uśanas is also shown to curse the king Daṇḍa. The tales of Arjuna and Daṇḍa are, again, put in the mouth of Agastya. This shows that the authorship and authority of Agastya for the Rāvaṇa-story-group was rather well-established and Bhārgavas could not remove the Agastya-element. Similarly, in BK, they introduced Ṛṣyaśṛṅga with his Ātharvaṇa-rite but they could not remove Vasiṣṭha's Aśvamedha and Viśvāmītra's prominence. In this sense, then, let us hope, the suggestion of a collective authorship of the epic will not appear as hazardous as it might appear at first sight.

A comparative review of the tales of BK and UK will not be out of place here. All the tales of BK can, in one way or the other, be shown to have some connection with the hero of the epic. They are intended to show the hero — the great 'bow'-wielder, the moral ideal, the incarnation of Viṣṇu — in the making. And they are arranged in a pattern of crescendo, which begins with the tale of incarnation made possible by the sacrifices, then shows the hero of a great lineage — the incarnation — gradually attaining and exhibiting martial prowess and moral stature through a Brahmarṣi-teacher (whose own greatness is narrated in a story-cycle), and finally reaches the climax of the fullest flowering of incarnation in the Paraśurāma-episode. Most of the tales are narrated by Viśvāmītra himself who not only conducts the princes to the various places but also trains them in arms and educates them. The Viśvāmītra-story-cycle also has double justification. It is narrated by Śātānanda who feels obliged towards Viśvāmītra for conducting Rāma to his mother. And Viśvāmītra is the great teacher of the great hero of the epic. It again comes at the end of the group of tales narrated by Viśvāmītra himself, topping the collection of tales, as it were. And then, all this is emboxed within the motif of incarnation which supplies the beginning as well as the climax of BK.

The pattern of the tales of UK, on the other hand, is not very clear. The Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra, claiming almost one-third of the UK, looms large as compared to the other tales of UK which resolve themselves into small and unimportant groups. The groups themselves are again scattered through the flow of the narrative of the hero which itself also does not remain prominent. Thus, after the Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra (and the Hanūmat-tale) comes the episode of Rāma's renunciation of Sītā on account of public censure. Then come the Lavaṇa-episode (itself a small group of tales told by Vālmīki, by Cyavana and by Brahman), the Śambūka episode, the tales of Śveta and Daṇḍa, and two tales of the arthavāda of Aśvamedha told one each by Lakṣmaṇa and by Rāma. And finally comes, once again, Rāma performing Aśvamedha at which the final tragedy occurs. The fact that the narrators of the tales are different, also aggravates the impression of scatteredness. The narrator of the tales of Rāvaṇa and Hanūmat is Agastya. The episodes of Rāma's renunciation of Sītā, of Lavaṇa and of Śambūka are narrated as events of the principal narrative. Tales

of Śveta and Daṇḍa are again put into the mouth of Agastya, while Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa narrate one tale each of Aśvamedha. The final tragedy is again shown to be part of the principal narrative. The narrators of the tales in the Lavaṇa-episode are again as numerous as the tales themselves. The Lavaṇa-episode has no connection with the principal theme or its hero, except that Śatrughna is a brother to Rāma. It can stand by itself, since, not Rāma, but Śatrughna is the hero as far as that episode is concerned. This also damages the impression of the unity of UK. The tale of King Śveta also has no clear function to perform in the epic (unless, of course, we imagine that just as Sitā was given the sthāgara ointment by Anasūyā, Rāma also must be given something, divine ornaments for that matter, by someone !) and falls loose. There is, thus, no logical arrangement in the tales of UK. Consequently, the tragic end of the epic loses much of its poignance on account of a lack of consistently developing emotions which are interrupted by numerous tales, and on account of its paurāṇika style. The conception was grand, the execution is poor.

The pattern of the tales of BK is logical and systematic, that of the tales of UK is rather clumsy.

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CHAPTER III

THE TALES IN MAHĀBHĀRATA

When we come to the Mahābhārata, we are facing a veritable ocean of tales. We have been referring to some of these tales while dealing with those from RM. On the one hand, this has served to cover partly the material from MBh also; on the other hand, it has also pointed at certain similarities of content, intent and patterns. It must have been observed that though we tried to be exhaustive in our treatment of the tales of BK and UK, at certain places we could discuss them better by dealing with them into functional groups. Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra, for example, could be resolved into tales of the curse-motif, tales of his defeat, and tales of his devotion to lord Śiva. Even the redactors themselves often seem to adopt the method of functional grouping for the purposes of adding tales to the epics. Thus, the two tales of Indra's Brāhmicide and of Ila's partially losing and regaining maleness are completely different in their form and content, yet they are put together to serve the purpose of eulogizing Aśvamedha.

When we consider the unwieldy mass of the tales of MBh, it becomes clear that to group them according to their functions is better than to group them according to either their form or content. To group them according to their form would mean to bring a lot of heterogenous matter under a few set types of folk-tale-forms like myths, legends, fables, parables, anecdotes etc., each form thus forming by itself a distinct subject of study. Again, the forms of folk-tales are normally decided by the nature of their contents, and even within these forms the tales are grouped according to the similarity of motif-structures. The similarity of these motif-structures is often seen to serve a similar purpose. We have seen tales with such similar motif-structures while comparing the Ahalyā-tale with those of Reṇukā and of the mother of Cirakārin; also tales of genesis, tales of curse-motif etc. Thus, the method of functional grouping more often than not indicates the inherent similarity of motif-structures also. We, therefore, now propose to adopt this method of functional grouping in dealing with the tales of MBh.

1. The Sarpa-satra of Janamejaya

The very first group of tales in the MBh exemplifies the propriety of this functional approach. After the two indices of Anukramaṇī-parvan and Parva-saṅgraha-parvan begins the tale of Janamejaya¹ which is immediately interfered by a group of tales illustrating the ideal of obedience to the instructions of the preceptor. It should be noted that, quite in keeping with the tradition observed in the Vedic works, the characters

¹ ĀdiP. 3.1-18, taken up again at ĀdiP. 3.178.

are mentioned, even their tales are linked together, by their preceptilinear genealogy. Thus, Āyoda Dhaumya had three pupils : Āruṇi, Upamanyu and Veda. The teacher instructed Āruṇi, "Go, build a dyke!" When the latter could not dam the breach in the dyke, he put his own body in that place. When the teacher called him, he rose, thus breaking the dyke. Hence he was called Uddālaka (from ud + √dṛ — 'to tear up').² From this entire group of tales, he is the only character famous in Vedic literature, and the name 'Uddālaka' Āruṇi by which he is famous is obtained by him through a complete obedience to the instructions of his teacher. The etymological nature³ of the parable, connected to illustrate the ideal of obedience, is too obvious to need any emphasis,

The second tale of Upamanyu⁴ is humorously instructive. He was asked by the teacher to look after cows. He grew fat on alms collected during this time, and used up without presenting them to the teacher. To correct his fault, the teacher forbade him to partake of alms without first presenting them to him (i.e. the teacher). The ingenious pupil took a second round of alms! Then he drank the milk of the cows, and then the foam oozing out of the mouths of calves when their mothers breasted them. Prevented by his teacher every time, the poor fellow, tormented by hunger, ate up the leaves of Arka (the plant of *Calotropis Gigantea*), became blind and fell in a well. The teacher then instructed him to praise Aśvinā who gave him a cake. But this time, he insisted on presenting it first to the preceptor. He had learnt his lesson, the hard way, of course!

The third pupil Veda also was put to many severe tests. When, therefore, he became teacher, he was very lenient towards his pupils. Once in his absence, his pupil Uttāṅka stood firm against the advances of the teacher's wife.⁵ When this Uttāṅka was permitted to return, the teacher's wife demanded, as guru's fee, the earrings of the queen of King Pauṣya within four days. Uttāṅka immediately set out. On the way, he saw a large man riding a huge bull. At the rider's instance, he ate the bull's excreta. Then, only after cleaning himself properly, he obtained earrings from the queen with a warning that Takṣaka also was after them. Takṣaka actually stole them in the guise of a naked ascetic and then slipped through a hole to the netherlands, where he saw two women weaving a garment with white and black warps and woofs. He also saw six boys turning a wheel. Then a man asked him to blow a horse in the hind. He did it. Flames of fire emanating from the horse's apertures filled up the netherworlds with smoke upon which Takṣaka returned the earrings. Then, riding the same horse, Uttāṅka reached back just in time to escape

2 ĀdiP. 3.19-30.

3 ĀdiP. 3.29. yasmād bhavān kedāra-kbaṇḍam avadāryotthitas tasmād bhavān uddālaka eva nāmnā bhaviṣyatīti /

4 ĀdiP. 3.32-78.

5 ĀdiP. 3.85-91.

the curse of his teacher's wife.⁶ The scenes Uttanka saw were explained metaphorically by his teacher.⁷ The two women were Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ; the black and white warps were night and day; the wheel was the year, the six boys, seasons. The man was Parjanya, the horse, Fire. The great bull was Airāvata, king of Nāgas; the rider was Indra himself; the excreta was nectar itself. And though not explained, the earrings must have been the moon and the sun.⁸ The allegory of the tale is explained in the tale itself. The tale is intended to provide Uttanka a cause to be resentful towards Takṣaka against whom he eventually instigates Janamejaya.⁹ The king then takes up the famous serpent-sacrifice. But apart from providing a motivation for sacrifice, the tale is also intended to function as an example of the ideal of obedience to the teacher at any cost; and it is through this function that this tale is linked up with the previous two tales. The teacher-pupil-relationship of the characters of this group of tales is another link, but it is not as strong as the functional one. The genealogical relations may also be noted here. This Dhaumya is most probably the family-priest of the Pāṇḍavas.¹⁰ Thus, Āyoda Dhaumya is said to be the grand-teacher of Uttanka, Arjuna is the great-grand-father of Janamejaya. Even Veda, the teacher of Uttanka, is said to have been chosen as an Upādhyāya by Janamejaya.¹¹ So, the line of Dhaumya-Veda-Uttanka and that of Arjuna-(Abhimanyu)-Parīkṣit-Janamejaya can be shown to have maintained relations with each other, and there is enough justification in Uttanka and Janamejaya joining hands in their common cause of taking revenge upon Takṣaka.¹²

But the significant fact to be noted is that none of these characters, except Uddālaka Āruṇi is mentioned anywhere in the Vedic works. Uddālaka Āruṇi is a famous Brahmavādin but he is referred to as a student of his father Aruṇa and of Patañcala Kāpya of the Madra country.¹³ If Āyoda Dhaumya were his teacher and were the giver to him of that name by which he is famous, are we not justified in

6 ĀdiP. 3.97-164.

7 ĀdiP. 3.167-174.

8 There are reasons for this supposition : one, the desire of Takṣaka, the king of nether-lands, to possess them; two, the queen who gave them was not seen by Uttanka when he was impur.. Of course, the earrings, the ornaments of the ears, could as well be some two lores which the Brāhmin obtained from a Kṣatriya. The only difficulty in emphasising this interpretation is that the demander of the earrings as well as the giver are two ladies, and ladies interested in lores were, after everything is said in their favour, an exception.

9 ĀdiP. 3.177 & 185ff.

10 At the suggestion of Citraratha, Pāṇḍavas choose Dhaumya, the younger brother of Asita Devala as their purohita. Cf. ĀdiP. 174. In his *An Index to the Names of Mahābhārata* (Reprint Ed., Delhi, 1963), S. Sorensen refrains from identifying the two Dhaumyas but there is more justification in identifying them.

11 ĀdiP. 3.85.

12 Cf. ĀdiP. 3.184d. svam eva kāryam nṛpateś ca yat tat //

13 Cf. *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, p. 88.

expecting the teacher's name to be mentioned somewhere alongwith the famous student referred to so often in the Vedic works? True, Āyoda Dhaumya is said to be the younger brother of Asita Devala¹⁴ who is mentioned in some Vedic works,¹⁵ but that fact actually goes to corroborate our position. As a younger brother of Asita Devala and as a teacher of the famous Uddālaka Āruṇi, Dhaumya has a greater claim to be recorded somewhere in our numerous Vedic works! Is not the historicity of Dhaumya, and of his pupils Upamanyu and Veda and of the latter's pupil Uttānka, strongly doubtful? Considering the nature of these tales, the first is an etymological connection, the second is supernatural in its latter part, and the third is completely mythico-allegorical. It is very likely, therefore, that all the characters, except Uddālaka Āruṇi, of this tales-group are fictitious, and are shown to be connected with the famous Brahmavādin in order to give them an appearance of being historical.

We must note here that like two frames, MBh also has two beginnings. Both Adhyāya 1 and Adhyāya 4 of ĀdiP. begin with identical words in prose: loma-harṣaṇa-putra ugra-śravāḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇiko naimiṣārāṇye śaunakasya kulapater dvādaśa-vārṣike satre.... Adhyāya 1 breaks off abruptly at this point into verse and completes the sentence in anuṣṭubh metre. Adhyāya 4, on the other hand continues prose for a few lines more and then takes up verse. In both, Sūta Ugraśravas Paurāṇika comes to the twelve-year sattra of Sage Śaunaka and begins to narrate tales to the sages assembled at the sacrifice at their request. The first beginning, after anukramāṇi and parva-saṅgraha, begins in Adhyāya 3 straightway with the narrative of Janamejaya and attempts to introduce the Sarpa-satra episode through the Uttānka-story-group and Uttānka's animosity against Takṣaka. The second, on the other hand, begins with a group of tales of Bhṛgu-sages, since Sage Śaunaka at whose twelve-year-satra the entire epic is narrated is said to belong to the Bhṛgu-lineage,¹⁶ and introduces the Sarpa-satra by a story of Sage Ruru of that line and his beloved Pramadvarā¹⁷ containing a motif-structure similar to that of the Janamejaya-story.¹⁸

Now it can be shown that none of the two story-groups introducing the Janamejaya's Sarpa-satra are inherently connected with it. The portion of the first three Adhyāyas containing a summary of the epic, an index to the epic and a story-group narrated in Brāhmaṇical prose is entirely incongruent with the epic in spirit. Again, Uttānka is not necessarily required for instigating Janamejaya. The circumstances of

14 Refer above fn-10.

15 "A mythical sage of this name figures as a magician in the Atharvaveda in conjunction with Gaya or with Jamadagni". *Vedic Index*, I, p.47, vide also pp.376, 380.

16 ĀdiP. 5.7-8. The line is given thus : Bhṛgu — Cyavana — Pramati — Ruru — Śaunaka — Śaunaka.

17 ĀdiP. 8-11.

18 See below.

his father's death themselves are sufficient to infuriate Janamejaya against Takṣaka who prevented the senior king from coming back to life. Two, throughout the snake-sacrifice-story-group Uttānka is hardly ever mentioned except at one or two insignificant places.¹⁹ He does not occupy any office at the snake-sacrifice which is instigated by him. There is a whole list of the priests²⁰ who officiated at the snake-sacrifice, but there is none among them from the brāhmins mentioned in the Uttānka-story-group. If Uttānka really instigated the king, is it not strange that he himself does not participate in the sacrifice ?

The second story-group contains two tales. The first is of sage Bhṛgu.²¹ The demon Puloman had chosen the beautiful lady, also Puloman by name, for himself, but her father gave her away to sage Bhṛgu. Once, in the sage's absence, the demon came to his hermitage, asked Fire whether the enceinte woman was the wife of Bhṛgu and getting from him a correct answer in affirmative, kidnapped her. The angry embryo, however, slipped out (✓cyu, hence his name 'Cyavana') of its mother's womb and by its sun-like lustre, burnt the demon to ashes. The Fire who had answered correctly was cursed by the sage to be 'all-eater' but Lord Brahman explained that everything would be purified with his flames. The similarity of the names of the demon and his chosen woman remind us of the same motif occurring in the tale of Jaratkāru²² also. The curse of Bhṛgu and its remedy by Brahman are only a sort of a various interpretation of the fact. But the name Puloman which is also given as the name of the wife of Indra at some places²³, and the motif of the lover approaching his beloved — the wife of a sage in his absence, remind us of Indra approaching Ahalyā. Thus, every little spare-part of the tale is borrowed from elsewhere, and the tale reveals an entirely fictitious — not mythical — motif-structure.

The case of the second tale of the group is also not different. Pramadvarā, daughter of Menakā by Viśvāvasu, was left by her near the hermitage of sage Sthūlakeśa who kindly brought her up. She was bitten by a serpent and died only a few days before her marriage to Ruru, fourth in descent from Bhṛgu. Ruru was mad with grief. At the suggestion of an angel he gave half of his life and revived her. To avenge, he then decided to kill each and every serpent he saw. Once, a non-poisonous snake Dūdubha told him that it was not fair to avenge one serpent's folly upon the lives of all serpents, even non-poisonous, and that destruction of serpents was the task of Kṣatriya Janamejaya, not of a Brahmin. That occasions the tale of Janamejaya. The birth of Pramadvarā from Menakā and her bringing-up by sage Sthūlakeśa as well as the father's name Viśvāvasu (reminding us of Viśvāmītra) are clearly the motifs of the Śakuntalā-tale.²⁴ The two motifs of avenging one serpent's act of biting

19 at ĀdiP. 46.25, 46.41.

20 ĀdiP. 48.5-10.

21 ĀdiP. 5-7.

22 ĀdiP. 13.25a. Sā nāmnī yā bhavitri me.

23 Cf. *Skanda-purāṇa*. 4.4.80.

24 Cf. ĀdiP. 65.20-66.15.

one's beloved person upon the whole race of snakes and of being prevented from it by one of their own fold are taken from the Janamejaya-tale itself. The entire tale, therefore, is structured from borrowed motifs, with a view to provide an occasion for narrating the Sarpa-satra-story-group.

This means, that the second story-group of the Bhṛgu-sages is also fictitious. Let us hasten to add that the occasion at which these tales are narrated — the occasion of Śaunaka's twelve-year-sacrifice²⁵ — is also fictitious, otherwise we shall be compelled to admit that Śaunaka was hearing a fictitious tale about his own grandfather from an outsider at his own sacrifice.

Incidentally, the question may well be asked : why are there two tale-groups both intended to introduce the Sarpa-satra-episode ? When both of them are equally fictitious and when neither of them has any inherent connection with the sarpa-satra-story-group, why two ?

Very probably, the answer lies in the direction pointed out by F. Edgerton in his introduction to SabP. The incident of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, at Duryodhana's insistence, asking Vidura to invite Yudhiṣṭhira at the famous game of dice is narrated consecutively twice in the SabP. Once, however, Vidura is shown to go first to Bhīṣma²⁶ instead of Yudhiṣṭhira, while the second time he is shown to go, though much against his will, straight to Yudhiṣṭhira. And then there is no mention of his intended visit to Bhīṣma in the entire epic ! Again, Duryodhana is shown to send the Prātikāmin twice and then Duṣṣāsana to fetch Draupadī into the open assembly. But with her first refusal to come, Yudhiṣṭhira is shown to send a trusted servant to her and obeying her husband's wish, she comes of her own self into the assembly.²⁷ Still Duryodhana sends Prātikāmin and then Duṣṣāsana who drags her forcibly into the court. The contradictions of these two episodes are sought to be explained by Dr. Edgerton in this way : 'Clearly we have here parts of two entirely different versions of the story. In one Yudhiṣṭhira sends a trusted messenger commanding Draupadī to come, and she does so. In the other, Duṣṣāsana at Duryodhana's command drages her in by violence . . . the "original" author or redactor of the text to which all our manuscripts go back knew both the versions of the story, and tried to combine them, not very successfully.'²⁸

25 According to the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa*, XIII.v.4.1, Śaunaka is the performer of Aśva-medhā for Janamejaya. In the epic, Janamejaya is made the performer of Sarpa-satra in the first frame of the epic; Śaunaka is the performer of a twelve-year satra in the second frame. At Janamejaya's Sarpa-satra MBh is narrated; at Śaunaka's satra MBh together with the entire Sarpa-satra-story-group is narrated. Thus, Janamejaya and Śaunaka are directly connected as a performer and the priest in the Brāhmaṇa, they are separated in the epic and placed in the first and the second frame of the epic respectively.

26 SabP. 45.58.

27 SabP. 60.14-15.

28 SabP. Introduction, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

About the other inconsistency, he says: "It seems to me that two accounts of the same events are taken into the text side by side. The first is much briefer, and is no doubt truncated; it includes only adhy. 45. Note the significant fact... that this adhyāya ends with a statement that Vidura, who has just been commanded to carry the challenge to Yudhiṣṭhira, goes instead, full of misgivings, to Bhīṣma. Now the rest of our text has no reference to any interview between Vidura and Bhīṣma. But surely there must have been one in the version which began as in our adhy. 45. Such references in the MBh. always lead to something; they are not left hanging in the air But our text has no more of this version it seems to me clear that our text contains duplicate accounts of a story which (aside from that incident) is essentially the same, and this can be reasonably accounted for only on an assumption that it was composed with the use of different versions, parts of which were incorporated side by side in this text, the ancestor of all our known MSS."²⁹

The case of the duplication of the introductory-story-groups is slightly different from the above cases which are only different versions of the same stream of events with only small differences in details. Our case is different in that the stories are entirely different. But the fact that they are both used for the same purpose creates the duplication in the sense that the principal story with its framing Sarpa-satra episode is sought to be introduced by two different story-groups in two different versions; and in our text both are incorporated side by side. It may be argued that of the two at least Uttanka-story-group does have a reasonable connection with the Sarpa-satra-story. Uttanka also wants to avenge upon Takṣaka and hence joins hands with Janamejaya.³⁰ But, that is exactly the point. Does he really join hands with Janamejaya? He does not play any active or significant or even mentionable part in the actual satra. To be sure, the redundancy of the Uttanka-story-group is sought to be glossed over by making only a passing reference or two³¹ to him. The duplication, therefore, seems to indicate an attempt to incorporate side by side two different introductions to the frame-story from two separate versions.

That brings us to Janamejaya to whom Uttanka comes and instigates against Takṣaka. Janamejaya then decides to perform the Snake-sacrifice in which the entire MBh is narrated. Now, "Janam-ejaya ('man-impelling') is the name of a king, a Pārīkṣita, famous towards the end of the Brāhmaṇa period. He is mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as . . . a performer of the Aśvamedha . . . His capital, according to a Gāthā quoted in the Śatapatha and the Aitareya Brāhmaṇas, was Āsandīvant. His brothers Ugrasena, Bhīmasena and Śrutasena are mentioned as having by the horse sacrifice purified themselves from sin. The priest who performed the sacrifice for him was Indrota Daivāpi Śaunaka Aitareya . . . names Tura Kāvāṣeya as

29 *ibid.*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

30 See above fn.12.

31 *Supra* fn.19.

his priest . . . He was a Kuru prince . . . ”³² More interesting is the information about a second Janam-ejaya who “is in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa . . . a priest who officiated at the Snake-sacrifice.”³²

Turning to ĀdiP now, we find that Janamejaya is performing a long Satra at Kurukṣetra. He has three brothers Śrutasena, Ugrasena, Bhīmasena. A dog coming up near the sacrifice is beaten up by the brothers. The dog’s mother, Saramā, the divine bitch, curses Janamejaya to be visited upon by an unseen calamity. The king is dejected.³³ Upon the completion of the sacrifice, he returns to Hastināpura, and searches for a priest who can appease his pāpakṛtyā. Śrutaśravas recommends his son Somaśravas, born of a सर्पि (a female serpent). The son can appease all कृत्याs except that of Mahādeva; he has taken a vow that if any brāhmin asks of him anything he would give it away. Janamejaya accepts him as his priest and instructs his brothers to do whatever the priest says. He himself then goes to Taxila, achieves victory over it³⁴ and returns. Then Uttan̄ka comes to him at Hastināpura³⁵ and instigates him to perform the Snake-sacrifice. Then, after the interruption of the tales of Bhṛgu-sages,³⁶ the complete history of the snake-sacrifice is narrated.³⁷ Then, the entire story of the MBh, as it was narrated at this sacrifice by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya, follows. In the end,³⁸ it is again said that Janamejaya, having discharged the brāhmins who had completed the sacrificial ceremonies, returned from Taxila to Hastināpura.

We saw above that Jānamejaya is mentioned in the beginning of the MBh with many details which are similar to those mentioned in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. XIII. V. 4. We quote the relevant Brāhmaṇa text below :

etena hendroto daivāpaḥ śaunakaḥ Janamejayam pāriksitam yājayāñ cakāra tenestvā sarvām pāpa-kṛtyām sarvām brahma-hatyām apajaghāna sarvām ha vai pāpa-kṛtyām sarvām brahma-hatyām apahanti yo’śvamedhena yajate //1.

tad etad gāthayābhihitam —

āsandīvati dhānyādam rukmiṇam harita-srajam /

abadhnād āsvam sāraṅgam devebhyo janamejaya //iti//2.

ete eva purve’hanī jyotir-atirātras tena bhīmasenam ete eva purve’hanī gaur-atirātras tenograsenam ete eva purve’hanī āyur-atirātras tena śrutasenam ity ete pāriksitīyās tad etad gāthayā’bhigītam —

pāriksitā yajamānā āsvamedhaiḥ paro’varam /

ajahuḥ karma pāpakam puṇyāḥ puṇyena karmaṇ’eti //3.

32 *Vedic Index*, I, pp.273-4.

33 ĀdiP. 3.1-9

34 ĀdiP. 3.10-18.

35 ĀdiP. 3.178 ff.

36 ĀdiP. 4-12. See above fns. 16 & 17.

37 ĀdiP. 13-53.

38 SvaP. 5.29. Cf. tatas takṣaśīlāyāḥ as punar āyād gajāhvayam //

Many of these details are mentioned in the beginning of the MBh. The three brothers are mentioned by name.³⁹ The very manner of mentioning the name of the king as Janamejaya Pārikṣita⁴⁰ reminds one of the king mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa. His search for a proper priest is described in these words: 'purohitam anurūpam anvicchamānaḥ . . . yo me pāpakṛtyām śamayet iti'⁴¹ which are reminiscent of the relevant Brāhmaṇa passage. After the sarpa-satra is completed, he promises the sage Āstika to call him as a priest in his (i.e. Janamejaya's) Vājimedha sacrifice⁴² which again reminds one of the Brāhmaṇical Janamejaya who is a performer of Aśvamedha sacrifice. The Pauṣya-parvan⁴³ itself is almost entirely in prose which is reminiscent of the Brāhmaṇical prose. All these factors clearly indicate that the author of this portion intends to pass the supposed performer of this snake-sacrifice as the Janamejaya Pārikṣita, the king famous in the Brāhmaṇas; and for that purpose he brackets the entire group of story-cycles connected with the snake-sacrifice within the two references of the Pāpakṛtyā and the Aśvamedha which are both mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa passage quoted above. The actual occurrence of the Sarpa-satra of Janamejaya Pārikṣita, therefore, becomes rather doubtful.

It is said in the epic that, while searching for a proper priest, Janamejaya came upon one Soma-śravas, son of Śrutaśravas⁴⁴ and born of a sarpi⁴⁵ (a female-snake), and chose him as his priest. Now, the affinity of the two names with that of Ugra-śravas, the Sūta Purāṇī narrator of the MBh in its final stage, and particularly with Cakṣu-śravas, one of the many synonyms meaning 'a serpent' is obvious. This Soma-śravas is said to be able to appease all pāpa-kṛtyās except that of Mahādeva,⁴⁵ and the relation of serpents with Lord Mahādeva is too well-known to be reiterated here. The priest is also said to be born of a sarpi, as we noted above. Thus, the three factors viz. the names ending in '-śravas', the fact of his being born of a sarpi, and his inability to appease the kṛtyā of Mahādeva go to prove that Soma-śravas must be a so-called serpent himself, i.e. a priest of the Nāga tribe.

Having chosen this Soma-śravas as his priest, and having instructed his brothers to do exactly as this priest said, Janamejaya went to Takṣaśilā and conquered it. The snake-sacrifice is supposed to have been performed at Takṣaśilā, but the name of the city is very likely chosen for its apparent similarity with that of Takṣaka. More significant, however, is the contradiction that on the one hand, Janamejaya is shown to choose a Nāga as his priest; and on the other hand, immediately after, he is

39 ĀdiP. 3.2.

40 ĀdiP. 3.1.

41 ĀdiP. 3.10.

42 Cf. ĀdiP. 53.15. bhaviṣyasi sadasyo me vājimedhe mahākṛtau //

43 ĀdiP.3.

44 ĀdiP. 3.12.

45 ĀdiP. 3.15.

shown to slaughter the Nāga-tribes. The contradiction is irreconcilable unless we impose some metaphorical or mythical interpretation upon the episode of Sarpa-satra.

We may mention here that some fifty years before Winternitz had discussed⁴⁶ the nature of this Sarpa-satra and tried to show it to be a magic spell. 'What . . . is called sarpasattra "serpent sacrifice" in the Mahābhārata, is in reality not quite a sacrifice, but a magic spell, by means of which the serpents may be brought to self-annihilation. Indeed, a clear distinction between "magic" and "sacrifice" is as little possible in India as elsewhere . . . These sattras of which the ritualistic works give us an account, are in no way, as is often supposed, pure inventions of theory-mongers dealing with sacrifice -- though many of the sacrifices certainly existed only in theory --, but have come down to us from pre-historic popular magic-customs and cult-practices . . . Now, the ritual books mention among other sattras of a year's duration, a *sarpasattra*, though unfortunately no further details are given concerning that. Still from the fact of its being mentioned we might conclude that there was in Ancient India a particular sacrificial ceremony, the object of which was to expel the ever real danger of snakes. As a reminder of a sacrificial ceremony of this kind, we have to understand the serpent sacrifice of Janamejaya, which could still have, for all that, a mythological background.' In the footnote he refers to Śāṅkhāyana śrauta sūtra, XIII.23.8; Kātyāyana śrauta sūtra, XXI.4.48 and in detail to Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa XXV.15 where, he says, 'it is . . . described as being a sacrifice offered by the serpents. There it is said : "By means of this sacrificial ceremony, serpents have come to hold a firm foot in this world....." After this there are mentioned the names of those persons and priests who performed this sacrifice; and among these are the names of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Airāvata and Takṣaka, these being very often met (*sic*) as the names of serpent demons, and in a remarkable manner, of Janamejaya also.'⁴⁸ Winternitz then narrates in detail the entire story-cycle of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice and compares it with similar tales of snake-annihilation from some other countries. About the mother of serpents he says : 'That Kadrū ("red brown"), the mother of the serpents, means the Earth, can scarcely be doubted. The Earth is called in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (V. 23) Sarparājñī "queen of the Serpents." The serpents were regarded as the "offspring of the earth" among the Greeks, the Lithuanians and the Esthonians . . . Vinatā ("bent down")

46 "The Serpent Sacrifice mentioned in the Mahābhārata", M. Winternitz, Tr. N.B.Utgikar, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (New Series), Vol.2, No.1, 1926. pp, 74-91.

47 Op.cit. pp.75-76.

48 *ibid.* p.76. Cf. also above fn.32 and ĀdiP.52. 4,7,11,13, etc. where the names of the families of serpents who were victimised in the sacrifice are given as Vāsuki, Takṣaka, Airāvata, Kauravya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra etc. Cf. also : 'In the Atharvaveda (VIII.14,14-16) the well-known names of some mythical serpents viz. Takṣaka, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Airāvata occur.' *The History of Dharmasāstra*, P. V. Kane, Vol. II, ii p.823.

is called *Suparṇī* ("the fair-winged one") in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III.62 ... She is possibly the canopy of heaven, regarded as the mother of birds and of the Sun-bird *Garuḍa* in particular.⁴⁹ He also notes the fact that the 'serpent sacrifice of Janamejaya has been expressly designated as a sacrifice taught in the *Purāṇas*, and a *Sūta* well-versed in the *Purāṇas* (and not a *Brāhmin* sacrificing priest) marks out the sacrificial ground ... From this also we find that we have not in this case .. to deal with a Vedic sacrifice, but with a popular magic practice.⁵⁰ The stories of other countries normally run like this : A magician sets up either a burning pole, or an oven or a hollow pillar filled with inflammable things, and exorcises the noxious serpents which trouble the people of a particular place. There is, however, either an uncounted serpent or a white serpent about which the people have either not known or not informed the magician. He appears and drags the magician also alongwith him into the fire. In one story,⁵¹ the magician has taken the precaution to sit upon a consecrated object; therefore, the final serpent is not able to drag him alongwith him. Winternitz refers to an actual ceremony witnessed by Sir Vincent Eyre at Luchon in Pyrennes⁵² in which the people of that place set up a hollow column of plaited work, sixty feet high, decorate it with green leaves and plants, fill it with inflammable material, and then on the evening preceding the mid-summer day, throw very many living serpents into that column which is set on fire, and dance around it. This anthropological evidence of an actual ceremony is indeed very striking. Winternitz notes that Jacobi believes the Janamejaya-story to be a myth conceived on account of the new geographical conditions as the *Āryans* advanced towards Eastern India, Ludwig believes it to be rains-and-snow myth, whereas C. F. Oldham 'regards the serpent-demons or the *Nāgas* as being only a tribe of people, holds that the legends of the serpent sacrifice is a reminiscence of the victory of Janamejaya over some *Nāga* tribe and of somewhat violent extermination of the *Nāga* captives of war⁵³ and that J. J. Bachofen agrees with him. Winternitz himself believes that the resemblance of the extra-Indian tales with that of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice is not accidental. Either it points to some Indo-Germanic pre-historic myth or to the similar psychological motive everywhere. In either case, all the stories must be explained in the same way. They all agree in this 'that the serpents are constrained, by the power of the magicians, to hurl themselves in the flames. The primary thing is the fear of the serpents; the extirpation of the serpents has become the motive of a magnified magic process, in which — as in Luchon — even living serpents are thrown into the fire. The reminiscence of such primeval magic practices has preserved itself in the legends where, by exaggerating the power of the magician, the serpents as such are represented

49 Winternitz's article (fn. 46), p.79. Cf also *Suparṇādhyaṃya* : I.11.1 : *dyaur āsīt tatra vinatā suparṇī bhūmis tu nāgy abhavat kadrū-nāmā //*

50 *ibid.* p.90.

51 *ibid.* p.88. fn.15.

52 *ibid.* p.89.

53 *ibid.* p.90

as hurling themselves in the magic fire. The possibility, that, after all, there may be some mythological conception at the root of all these stories, cannot be disputed.⁵⁴

Methodologically, of course, the conclusion at which Winternitz arrives is unimpeachable. However, some of his evidences are not incontrovertible. His conclusion rests mainly on three evidences: (1) the mention of a Sarpa-satra in Śāṃkhāyana and Kātyāyana śrauta sūtras and Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa; (2) the parallel motif-structure of the tale of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice and of the other extra-Indian tales; (3) the actual ceremony at Luchon. The second and third evidences seem to reinforce the first one which is weak by itself. Looking closely, however, we realise that the Sarpasatra is a ceremony not performed by some human beings to avoid the serpents, but by the serpents themselves, to hold a firm foot on this earth. Janamejaya in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa is a serpent-priest performing for the security of serpents, while Janamejaya of the epic is an enemy of serpents performing to root the serpents out. The epic tale does not reflect the magic-practice mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa or Sūtra texts. Actually, the epic-tale and the magic-spell mentioned in other works stand in complete contradiction with each other. On the other hand, a ceremony of Sarpa-bali, an offering made to the serpents on the full-moon day of Śrāvaṇa (later, the day changed to the fifth of the bright fortnight of Śrāvaṇa, called Nāgapañcamī) is found actually described in our religious texts.⁵⁵ The religious practice also persists in many parts of our country even to this day. Now, if any practice of or some magic ceremony for the serpent-annihilation did exist in our country at some time, it is indeed strange that absolutely no mention of it should be made in our ancient texts (Sarpasatra is not meant for serpent-annihilation), particularly in view of the fact that it is as good as perpetuated in the form of the tale of Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice. As Winternitz notes, the MBh says⁵⁶ that the Sarpasatra is known to be devised by gods for Janamejaya only, yet we know that Purāṇas are not supposed to describe the sacrifices. Even if it were a popular practice, it should have been described, like Sarpabali, somewhere. There is, again, no tradition of such sacrifices intended to exterminate a particular species of living beings. We are, therefore, forced to fall back upon a metaphorical explanation by which the serpents should be taken to mean the Nāga tribes supposed to have been victimised in this sacrifice if at all it took place. It is more probable, however, that the sacrifice itself is a poetic metaphorisation of the burning of Nāga-tribes *en masse* rather than a description of an actual mass ceremonial serpent-victimisation as Winternitz suggests or of an actual mass sacerdotal human victimisation as Pradhan seems to suppose.⁵⁷ Let us be more explicit about the last supposition. We do not mean that there was no human sacrifice in ancient India. There are evidences to point to its probable existence. What we want to point out

54 *ibid.* pp.90-91.

55 *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Kane, II.ii, pp.821-824.

56 *ĀdiP.* 47.6-7.

57 *Chronology of Ancient India*, S. N. Pradhan, pp.71-72.

here is only this that Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice cannot be taken as an evidence to prove the existence of a ritual human sacrifice in ancient Indian society. If anything at all, it may be taken as metaphorising the mass burning of Nāga tribes as the comparison of the motifs, as we shall just see below, seems to indicate.

It will be seen that this raises a number of questions. Where did Janamejaya perform the so called snake-sacrifice? Before Uttan̄ka approaches him, he has already conquered Taxila and returned to Hastināpura.⁵⁸ He is not shown to go to Taxila again for performing the sacrifice. Towards the end of the MBh he is shown to return from Taxila⁵⁹ where he is shown to hear the entire principle narrative. Yet throughout the actual narration of Janamejaya-story-group, the mention of the place of sacrifice is carefully avoided. Thus, Janamejaya goes to Taxila, wins it, returns to Hastināpura, is approached by Uttan̄ka, performs the snake-sacrifice, is not shown to go to Taxila, yet returns therefrom. As it is, either we must accept the duplication of Janamejaya's visit to Taxila, or face the contradiction. Looking carefully at the evidence, however, it becomes obvious that the duplication arises on account of the Uttan̄ka-story-group; if we remove it, the duplication disappears. That Janamejaya is not shown to go to Taxila and yet is shown to return therefrom is a contradiction which must either mean that the king actually attacked Taxila and his mass-burning of Nāga-people there was metaphorised as a sacrifice, or that he mass-burnt them alive somewhere and the city of Takṣaśilā was mentioned as a place later on account of the similarity of its name with that of Takṣaka.

In either case mass-burning of the Nāga-people by Janamejaya seems to be historical. There is not much difficulty in accepting Janamejaya as historical. But could the serpents be accepted as human Nāga-tribals? It should be noted that in the epic itself, at one place at least the Nāgas are referred to as human beings. On seeing the fire consuming the Khāṇḍava forest, gods approached Indra saying: "Why, O lord of immortals, are these 'mānavāḥ' being burnt by Fire? Has the end of the worlds come?"⁶⁰ We must also note that the epic-writers attempt to suggest some sort of hereditary animosity between the Nāgas and the Kuru-princes. In the burning of the Khāṇḍava forest, Arjuna (and Kṛṣṇa also, of course) is shown to kill many serpents alongwith other animals. Takṣaka is said to be at Kurukṣetra at that time,⁶¹ so he is saved. His son Aśvasena is saved by his wife at the cost of her own life.⁶² Maya is allowed to escape,⁶³ probably because he is not a Nāga, but a Dānava. Then, Takṣaka takes his revenge by biting Arjuna's grandson Parikṣit. This is, again, avenged by the famous sarpa-satra in which the target is, of course Takṣaka. By impli-

58 ĀdiP. 3.179.

59 See above fn. 38.

60 ĀdiP. 217.16.

61 ĀdiP. 218.4.

62 ĀdiP. 218.5-9.

63 ĀdiP. 219.35-39.

cation, this must be taken to mean that the serpents are Nāga-tribals. And then, S. A. Dange has proved almost beyond doubt that the serpents are the Nāga-tribals.⁶⁴

Talking about the hereditary animosity of the Nāgas and Kurus, it should be noted that though the animosity continues through four generations at least on the side of the Kuru-princes, Takṣaka is not shown to be replaced by his successors. It is he only who continues to wage wars against the Kurus and even to refresh the animosity. This gives rise to a possibility that the name Takṣaka may not after all be a particular name but may be a general family name like that of Janaka,⁶⁵ or, though this is less probable, may be a word of some unfamiliar language-group generally meaning 'a king', 'a leader' like that other Sanskritized term 'rāvaṇa' ('ireivaṇ' in Tamil meaning 'god', 'king', 'lord' etc⁶⁶) We should make it clear that we are only pointing out a probability, and not postulating anything.

Then, everytime poor Takṣaka is frightened with fire only. In the Khāṇḍava-episode, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn the forest inhabited by the people of Takṣaka. In the Uttanka-story, he is compelled to return the carrings because the habitation of his people is filled with smoke and sparks of Fire in the form of a horse blown in the hind by Uttanka. Janamejaya also throws the Nāgas and intends to throw their king Takṣaka into the fire of sacrifice. Or was this last also actually setting fire to their habitations?⁶⁷ The parallelness of the motif, at least, makes it very probable.

It is again strange that Indra is shown to be closely associated with Takṣaka and the Nāgas. At this point it may be mentioned that among the Nāgas counted as victimised in the Sarpa-satra of Janamejaya, some are said to belong to the family of Vāsuki, some to that of Takṣaka, some to that of Airāvata of Kauravya, and even of Dhṛtarāṣṭra!⁶⁸ Now, Indra tried to protect the Khāṇḍava-forest because Takṣaka who stayed in it with his people was a friend of Indra.⁶⁹ Even when the serpents are being dragged into the fire of Janamejaya's sacrifice, Indra has given refuge to and tried to console Takṣaka.⁷⁰ It is, however, strange that Uttanka has been helped by two Men, one riding the bull, the other with the horse. The first is identified as Indra riding Airāvata who is called Nāgarāja. The second is Parjanya with fire.⁷¹ Parjanya is the god of rains which Indra also is. The first Man is said to have helped Uttanka because he is the friend of Uttanka's teacher. And if Parjanya

64 *Legends in the Mahābhārata*, Delhi, 1969. Ch.Ii pp.16-40.

65 cf. *Rāma-Kathā*, Bulcke, p.9.

66 'Daśagrīva or Daśānana of the Rāmāyaṇa', S. N. Batra, *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, Vol.XXIII. Nos. 1-2 p.43.

67 A conjecture, though it may appear a little wild, may not be considered out-of-place here. 'Takṣaka' in the classical Sanskrit means 'a carpenter'. Could it be another class-name of the Nāga-tribe? Did they live in wooden houses, which made them vulnerable to fire?

68 ĀdiP. 52. 4, 7, 11, 13, etc. See above fn. 48.

69 ĀdiP. 215.7

70 ĀdiP. 48.14-18; 51.5-13.

71 ĀdiP. 3.173-174.

is Indra, he also must have helped him for the same reason. Only, Indra's helping Uttanka against Takṣaka is strange. But he is shown to ride Airāvata Nāgarāja, and Airāvata is one of the families of Nāgas ! Indra, thus, can be shown to be closely associated with the Nāgas

There is a lot of confusion about the names of the serpents but a systematic analysis of them, a subject by itself for a separate investigation, is bound to lead to important results. The names of mythical serpents mentioned in the Atharvaveda are Takṣaka, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Airāvata. The names in Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa of serpents performing the Sarpaśatra are Takṣaka, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Airāvata and Janamejaya. In the epic, the serpents are said to belong to the families of Takṣaka, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Airāvata, Vāsuki and Kauravya. The consistency with which the names occur is significant.

Now, the fact that Airāvata is called a serpent in these places while in Purāṇas he is described as a white elephant with seven trunks churned out of the ocean is significant. Airāvata as an elephant has become a vehicle of Indra. From the churning of ocean, again, has come out a horse Uccaiḥśravas who also is said to be taken away by Indra. The '-śravas' ending of the name indicates his being a serpent i.e. a Nāga. Now, Airāvata and Uccaiḥśravas, both serpents, are associated with Indra in the Purāṇas. This fact accords well with Indra being presented as the protector of Takṣaka and his Nāga people at the Khāṇḍava forest.

Can we reconcile the facts that the serpents are presented as Lord Mahādeva's ornaments in the Purāṇas whereas are shown to be protected by Indra in the epics ? We know that the most popular image of Lord Mahādeva is the 'Linga', the symbol of phallus in union.⁷² Indra also can be shown to have a definite connection with the fertility-rites as the celebration of Indra-dhvaja festival and Indra's role in the Tapo-bhaṅga stories would indicate. The common phallic symbol on the one hand of Indra-dhvaja and on the other hand of lord Mahādeva seems to be the common link of Nāgas with both the gods. From this point of view, the connection of the Nāga-tribes with the well-known 'śiśna-devāḥ' of R̥gveda must also be investigated.

It would also be worthwhile to explore the evidences of Tantra-sect from this point of view. Kuṇḍalinī, for example, is "shown, when asleep, as being coiled around a standing inner lingam at the centre of the cakra, covering its orifice with her mouth"⁷³ Its connection with Nāga is particularly emphasised in the fact that "occa-

72 *The Art of Tantra*, Philip Rawson, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1973 p.165. Two illustrations in this book are interesting. Illustration No 68 shows a yoginī with serpentine energy manifesting from her yoni. No. 69 shows "Five-hooded serpent-power enclosing a stone-emblem of the original egg-lingam",

73 *ibid.*

sionally an elephant is shown in the Mūlādhāra cakra, which seems to represent the entire body of the senses which is to be transformed through the upper cakras.”⁷³ The fact of the serpentine energy occasionally being presented as an elephant is clearly the result of the two meanings of the word ‘Nāga’.⁷⁴

Another combination of facts leads to some very surprising probabilities. In the famous *Suparṇādhyaḡya*, the Soma is said to be guarded by the serpents. The names of the guards are given as ‘arbudo nahuṣo kādraveyaḡ’.⁷⁵ Now MBh tells us that Nahuṣa was an ancestor of the Kurus.⁷⁶ He held the position of Indra in the latter’s absence due to hiding on account of the sin of Brāhmicide-Vṛtravadha. He was cursed by sage Agastya to become a python. Nahuṣa catches Bhīma and is relieved from the curse by Yudhiṣṡhira in the place called Viśākhayūpa.⁷⁷ From here Pāṇḡavas go to Dvaita-forest on the bank of river Sarasvatī for their final year of forest-life.⁷⁸ Now, the region of this river Sarasvatī seems to be have been inhabited by the Nāgas.⁷⁹ Arbudha is the present Mount Ābu. Viśākhayūpa must be a place nearby. And the region to the North-East of Ābu was in ancient times the bed of river Sarasvatī.⁸⁰ Takṣaṣilā may after all be the capital of Takṣaka. That region was in ancient times the country of Gāndhāra.⁸⁰ The princess of this kingdom, queen-mother Gāndhārī, was married tō Dhṛtarāṣṡra. Now Dhṛtarāṣṡra also is the name of a Nāga⁸¹ whose progeny is said to be victimised in the Sarpa-satra by Janamejaya. The mention of a hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṡra also reminds one of the procreative profusion of serpents. Gāndhārī’s hundred-fold embryo delivered prematurely and then preserved in the hundred vessels filled with ghee,⁸² not unlikely, indicates the fact of the birth of serpentes from eggs. And the very name of their capital ‘Hastināpura’ indicates a Nāga establishment, since the two meanings of ‘Nāga’ are ‘a serpent’ and ‘an elephant’.⁸³ Some serpents forced into the altar of the Sarpa-satra are said to be of the ‘Kauravya’ family.⁸⁴

74 Dange refers to an account of Rāma-grāma-stūpa believed to be protected by Nāga according to one account, by elephants according to another. He quotes Vogel : “Now, if we remember that the term ‘nāga’ has the double meaning of the serpent-demon and the elephant, we may safely assume that the second story has developed from the first, the word ‘nāga’ having been taken in its another sense”. vide his *Legends in the Mahābhārata*, p. 47.

75 *Suparṇādhyaḡya*, XII 23.3. Dange also takes the line as referring to three different serpent guards (*Legends in the Mahābhārata*, p.87, and fn. 205) because each of the three guards is called to answer the fault of Soma-āharana.

76 VanP. 176.13 ff.

77 VanP. 174.16-19.

78 VanP. 174.21.

79 Cf. ĀdiP.205.3 :

te tayā taiṣ ca sā vīraiḡ patibhiḡ pañcabhiḡ saha /
babbhūva parama-pritē nāgair iva sarasvatī //

80 This can be seen in the map of ancient India. Refer *Vedic Index*, II

81 ĀdiP. 52.13.

82 ĀdiP. 107.8-22.

83 Refer above to fn. 74.

84 ĀdiP. 52.11.

The Kurus are antagonists of the Pāṇḍavas — the epic protagonists whose descendent Janamejaya again revives hostility against the Nāgas. Arjuna burnt the Khāṇḍava-forest and the name of the Pāṇḍava-capital is Khāṇḍava-prastha, also called Indra-prastha.⁸⁵ This Khāṇḍava forest is said to be the habitation of Nāgas whose King is Takṣaka.⁸⁶

*Vedic Index*⁸⁷ informs us that one “Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya . . . is mentioned in . . . Kāthaka Saṁhitā . . . But there is no ground for supposing that he was a Kuru-Pāncāla King; he seems rather to have lived at some distance from the Kuru-Pāncālas. There is no good reason to deny his identity with the Dhṛtarāṣṭra of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, King of Kāśī, who was defeated, when he attempted to offer a horse sacrifice, by Satrājita Śātānika. The fact that the latter was a Bhārata also points to Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s not having been a Kuru-Pāncāla at all . . . It is true that in the Epic Śantanu and Vicitravīrya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself are all connected, but this connexion seems to be due, as so often in the Epic, to a confused derangement of great figures of the past.” About Śantanu all that is stated is in the Ṛgveda “that Devāpi Ārṣiṣeṇa obtained (no doubt as priest) rain for Śāntanu (no doubt a king).⁸⁸ Now, between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Parīkṣit no other character of the Epic is found mentioned in any of the Vedic sources. Bhīṣma, Satyawatī, Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Sahadeva, Nakula, Draupadī, Drupada, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śalya, Śakuni — none is mentioned. About Parīkṣit, we are informed that he “appears in the Atharvaveda as a king in whose realm, that of the Kurus, prosperity and peace abound . . . the Brāhmaṇas explain that Agni is pari-kṣit because he dwells among men. Hence Roth and Bloomfield regard Parīkṣit in the Atharvaveda not as a human king at all. This may be correct, but it is not certain. Both Zimmer and Oldenberg recognize Parīkṣit as a real king. a view supported by the fact that in later Vedic literature king Janamejaya bears the patronymic Pārīkṣita.”⁸⁹ But the passage from Atharvaveda mentioned above refers to a ‘Vaiśvānara Parīkṣit’. Bloomfield translates the relevant portion thus: “Listen ye to the high praise of the king who rules over all peoples, the god who is above mortals, of Vaiśvānara Parīkṣhit! ‘Parīkṣhit has procured for us a secure dwelling, when he, the most excellent one, went to his seat’. (Thus) the husband in Kuru-land, when he founds his household, converses with his wife . . . The people thrive merrily in the kingdom of King Parīkṣhit.”⁹⁰ In the notes he remarks thus: “The Ait.Br. and Gop.Br. advances as one of the two expositions the theory that Agni is parikṣhit, ‘since he lives about among the people, and the people live around him’. The text itself admits of no doubt: Agni Vaiśvānara, the typical god

85 ĀdiP 199.26 & 35.

86 ĀdiP, 215.6-7.

87 Vol. I, p.403.

88 *Vedic Index*, II, p.353.

89 *Vedic Index*, I, pp.493-4

90 *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, Tr. Maurice Bloomfield, SBE, Vol. XLII, Delhi, 1964, pp.197-98.

of the Brāhmanical piety.....is a kindly ruler among men, and his presence secures the prosperity of the golden age. In the later legends Parīkṣhit is propogated variously as a terrestrial king."⁹¹ The words 'Vaiśvānara Parīkṣhit' seem to prove, at first sight, that the Vedic passage refers to Agni. But a little thinking reveals that Agni is nowhere else called Parīkṣhit. To call Agni as Parīkṣhit is rather unusual, and the passage seems to make a conscious attempt to identify Parīkṣhit with Vaiśvānara, the universal friendly form of Fire, by keeping the passage purposefully ambiguous. However, we must mention that the fact of Parīkṣhit being identified with Vaiśvānara agrees well with the fact of his son Janam-ejaya (the men-impeller) shown to threaten the Nāga-tribals with Agni. The agreement not only tilts the balance slightly in favour of Parīkṣhit being Agni only, but even points out another possibility that the same Vaiśvānara who is Parīkṣhit - 'the dweller around' in times of peace and prosperity may also be at other times Janam-ejaya 'the men-impeller'. Parīkṣhit and Janamejaya may thus be only two aspects of the same Vaiśvānara, just as Vibhāṇḍaka and Ṛṣyaśṛṅga are very likely two aspects of the same phallic fertility motif.⁹²

Let us recapitulate. Śāmtanu is mentioned merely as a king in the Ṛgveda. Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya is not a Kuru-pāñcāla king; one Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the king of Kāśī but he is not a Bhārata. His mention as a Nāga in some ancient Sūtra works, the name of his capital 'Hastināpura' including a synonymous term for 'nāga', his wife Gāndhārī coming from a country having Takṣaśilā as its capital and developing her premature embryos in vessels filled with ghee — these facts lead to a strong probability that Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his hundred sons are Nāgas. No other major character is mentioned anywhere in our Vedic sources. And when we come to Parīkṣhit and Janamejaya, their historicity and their mythical nature are equally probable. Janamejaya is, again, mentioned as Nāga-priest in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa. Arbuda, Hastināpura and Takṣaśilā are the places associated with Nahuṣa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Takṣaka, all mentioned as Nāgas in some place or other. Geographically, the area between these three cities covers the kingdom of Matsya, Kuru-jaṅgala, Pāñcāla, Brahmāvarta, Madra and Gāndhāra⁹³ all playing important part in the epic. This makes it probable that at one time these areas were inhabited by Nāga people.

On the other hand, the Pāṇḍavas are all sons of gods, Draupadī is born from sacrifice, the name of her father 'Drupada' means a sacrificial post, and their protector and benefactor is Kṛṣṇa, who himself has a conflict with Kālīya Nāga to his credit. His constant conflict with Indra as evinced in the Govardhana-mount-episode as well as in the Khāṇḍava-burning-episode also is significant since, as we have seen, Indra is closely associated with Nāgas.

A systematic analysis of these details is almost impossible without relating them fully to their Vedic sources, and that is very much beyond the scope of our investi-

91 *ibid.* pp.691-2.

92 See ante Ch. II, BK, section 2., p. 44

93 See the map of ancient India, *Vedic Index*, II.

gation. But, on the strength of the observations we have made here, it is not difficult to see that the epic itself embodies some Nāga-tribal myth which very probably is sought to be reinforced by the Sarpa-satra-frame-story of Janamejaya. Very probably he himself is mythical but the author of the Uttanka-story group tries to identify him with the historical Janamejaya mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Some contradictions like Indra being the protector of Nāgas, and yet being the progenitor of Arjuna who fights against him in the Khāṇḍava-burning-episode, indicate that there have been repeated attempts to superimpose some fresh interpretations or motivations even after the original myth took the form of the epic-poem.

We may mention here that the historicity of the epic-story or of isolated episodes is often suspected to be dubious by many scholars. Dr. A. D. Shastri, for example, has expressed an opinion that the entire Virāṭaparvan "contains the original nucleus out of which the story of the Mahābhārata itself is developed."⁹⁴ He also opines that the epic "has the form of a myth which may have its basis in some natural phenomenon",⁹⁵ and concludes that the story of Virāṭaparvan has a solar myth at its base. In another study he shows that the legend of Vasu Uparicara ('the luminous wanderer-above') "is a combination of various myths, all solar".⁹⁶ U. P. Arora shows at another place that similarity of motif-structure of the tale of Bhīṣma's birth when compared with similar tales from Greek myths reveals an ancient custom of the sacrifice of youth and children.⁹⁷ G. J. Held has shown that ethnological interpretation of the traditions is preserved by the MBh.⁹⁸ "Recently a new perspective has been opened by the discoveries of Stig Wikander and Georges Dumezil that Vedic, para-Vedic and pre-Vedic mythology has been conserved in the Mahābhārata, where archaic themes and relationships are transposed from the level of myth to that of legend."⁹⁹ Alf Hiltebeitel shows "that the great battle of the Mahābhārata, taking place at the end of one yuga and the beginning of another, itself preserves an eschatological myth transposed into epic."¹⁰⁰ And, if we now come up with one more possible interpretation that the epic is developed from some myth of the Nāga tri-

94 'Virāṭaparvan—A Study', Dr. A. D. Shastri, *Bulletin of the Chunilal Gandhi Vidyabhavan*, Surat. No. 4, 1957. (pp.31-46). p.39.

95 *ibid.* pp.39-40.

96 'The Legend of Vasu Uparicara', Dr. A. D. Shastri, *BCGVB*, Surat. No. 6-7, 1959-60. (pp.83-86). p.86.

97 'The Gaṅgā-Śantanu Legend', U. P. Arora, *Journal of the Gaṅgānātha Jhā Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*, Allahabad, Vol. XXVII, Parts 3-4, July-Oct. 1971, pp.9-19.

98 *The Mahābhārata : an Ethnological Study*, London, 1935.

99 Quoted from *Prāci-Jyoti*, Kurukṣetra, Vol. IX, 1973, entry No. 167, p.71. This writer regrets his inability to consult either of the authors in their original writings. They have also been referred to by Eliade Mircea in his *Yoga : Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton, (New Jersey, U.S.A.), 1969. Says he : "Recent studies have elucidated the traces of Vedic mythology discernible in the principal personages, the Pāṇḍavas". (p.146). Eliade gives complete reference thus : Wikander, Stig — "La Legende des Pāṇḍava et la substructure mythique du Mahābhārata" tr. and annotated in Dumezil, Georges — *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus, IV*. Paris, 1948. (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études LXII.)

100 Quoted from *Prāci-Jyoti*, op.cit.

bals and is reinforced by the Janamejaya-episode which itself seems to be another Nāga-myth, both possibly offshoots of the same myth of the Nāga-destruction, we shall, at least, be in good company.

2. Tales of the Heroes

As we saw in the first chapter, the very first probable tales added to the epics must have been those whose connection with the original heroic poem would be more or less casual, that is, tales connected — if not with the central theme — at least with the central heroes, referring either to their early histories or to all kinds of their adventures and without having any reference whatever to the great battle. Therefore, we shall observe the patterns of these tales.

It is often observed that the popular mind has a peculiar sense of propriety. It works at and handles the epic in its own way. When a genius poet composes an epic, he creates characters which are complexes of good and evil qualities in varying shades. He hardly paints types. But once the epic becomes popular, "The popular mind reduces the finely modelled characters of the epic histories into contrasted types, black against white. Duryodhana is a bad character;"¹⁰¹ Bhīma has a blind strength; Arjuna is romantically heroic; Yudhiṣṭhira is Dharma incarnate. Consequently, the fresh tales added to the epics in the name of a particular character conform to and emphasise that quality of that character which has become popular.

Thus, for example, the tales wherein Bhīma is the hero, form a group by themselves. Bhīma is the son of Vāyu, the Wind-god,¹⁰² and possesses superhuman strength. It is he who kills the demon Hiḍimba and marries his sister Hiḍimbā.¹⁰³ It is he who replaces the Brāhmin boy in the city of the Ekacakrā and kills the demon Baka.¹⁰⁴ It is he, again, who kills the demons Kirmira¹⁰⁵ and Jaṭa¹⁰⁶ in the VanP. He also kills Maṇimān with a host of Rākṣasas of Kubera on the Gandhamādana mountain.¹⁰⁷ The killing of the wrestler Jīmūta¹⁰⁸ and the hundred Kīcakas in VirP is also attributed to him.¹⁰⁹ It is he who takes the vow of killing Duḥśāsana,¹¹⁰ kills him and drinks his blood — the most horrible scene even as described in the epic. If Duryodhana represents the āsurī sampat, Bhīma represents the āsurī strength and is, indeed, the right match for Duryodhana. Both are born on the same day.¹¹¹ If Bhīma has

101 *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*; Krishna Chaitanya, 1962. p.301.

102 ĀdiP. 114.9-11.

103 ĀdiP. 139-142.

104 ĀdiP. 143-152.

105 VanP. 11.

106 VanP. 154.

107 VanP. 151-153.

108 VirP. 12.21-23.

109 VirP. 21-22.

110 SabP. 61.46.

111 ĀdiP. 114.14.

the strength of a demon, Duryodhana has the mind of a demon — which is much worse. Not sharp arrows, but the massive mace is, characteristically, his proper weapon, for the great strength of Bhīma is raw, crude, gross. In a way, it is blind, it lacks the refined intellect and pointed accuracy that is the strength of Arjuna. That, perhaps, is the reason why Arjuna is romantically more successful than Bhīma. The situation is characteristic wherein Draupadī loves Arjuna more than any other of the five, but if she has any wish to be fulfilled, she would immediately turn to Bhīma with a request. Characteristically, the tales with Bhīma as their hero are all children's tales.

The episode of Draupadī-svayamvara can be shown to have a symbolic significance. The condition for obtaining Draupadī for wife was shooting at a target set at the top of a pole, with not more than five arrows passing through the hole of a 'Yantra'.¹¹² The popular description of the candidate expected to shoot the right eye of the fish revolving at the top of a pole while balancing the feet on the two scales and looking into the waters of the pond below is not confirmed in the critical edition. The details must have been added by the popular imagination to make the feat appear more difficult and therefore more interesting. However, the basic condition of winning the bride by a shooting test is the motif most familiar in folk-stories. "The idea possibly works on the line of sympathetic action — one who fixes lance or the arrow is the husband fixed by destiny to give the girl perfect marital happiness. Viewed thus the test does not appear so much a show of strength as a sincere effort in finding out a proper match by means of luck and mimetic magic."¹¹³

That Arjuna, of all the five brothers, is chosen to shoot at the target is also not without significance. Even a cursory perusal of the MBh. will show that Arjuna has always been portrayed as "the Prince Charming" of the MBh. Nakula is the most handsome of all the brothers,¹¹⁴ but the one most successful with women is Arjuna. Draupadī is supposed to love all the five brothers equally, but she is said to love Arjuna more than the other four brothers.¹¹⁵ That is the reason, says Yudhiṣṭhira, why she fell first of all at the time of the Mahāprasthāna. In fact, a whole group of romantic tales is added to the epic in the name of Arjuna.¹¹⁶ As is well-known, he accepted the vow of twelve-years' celibate life for violating the self-imposed regulation of the Pāṇḍavas with regard to the privacy of their stay with Draupadī. But

112 ĀdiP. 176.9-10-11, 34.

113 A Folk-Custom in the Aśvamedha, S. A. Dange, *JOIB*, XVI, No. 4. June 1967. p.327.

114 Cf. SabP. 71.17.

nāham manānsy ādadeyam mārge strīṇām iti prabho /
pāmsūpacita-sarvāṅgo nakulas tena gacchati //

115 Cf. MahP. 2.6.

paṅṣapāto mahān asyā viśeṣeṇa dhanañjaye /
tasya'itat phalam adya'iṣā bhūṅkte puruṣa-sattama //

116 Vide. ĀdiP. (Arjuna-vanavāsa-parva) 205-210 and Subhadrā-haraṇa-parva. 211-212.

he hardly remains celibate. In fact, he is seduced by Ulūpī,¹¹⁷ is attracted to Citrāṅgadā,¹¹⁸ and abducts Subhadrā.¹¹⁹ As Hopkins shows, "This can have only one meaning. A brahmācārīn is not a man wandering about on love-adventures, but a chaste student. Above all, chastity is implied ... Each of these feats is a separate heroic tale and they are all contradictory to the setting in which they have been placed by the diadochoi. As heroic tales they are perfectly intelligible. Certain feats in separate stories were attributed to the hero. They had to be combined and they were combined by letting him go off by himself under a vow of wandering in the woods. The wanderer was usually a chaste ascetic, so he was given that character, but ... all pretence of his being brahmācārīn vanishes and the next we know he is comfortably mated and living in town ... The independent origin of these stories is seen at the beginning in the formula ... *tatra tasyādbhutam karma śṛṇu tvam janamejaya.*"¹²⁰

But we should note that though the Prince Charming of the MBh, Arjuna has never been painted as Casanova. His romances are always bound within the limits of Dharma. His purity of character is emphasised by the fact that he causes his taught, princess Uttarā, to marry his son Abhimanyu.¹²¹ The episode which emphasises his purity of character is the one in which he refuses the advances of Urvaśī to him, on the ground that she has been the consort of Purūravas, his ancestor. Urvaśī curses him to become eunuch. Sukthankar omits the whole passage from the critical edition with the comment: "The object of the interpolation seems to be clear. It is primarily to motivate Arjuna's masquerading as the dancing master to Princess Uttarā ... It also serves to testify to Arjuna's strength of will and purity of character".¹²²

A little closer consideration of the incident, which this Urvaśī-episode seeks to motivate, will reveal that already there is enough justification in the situation itself for Arjuna's incognito stay as the sexless dancing master, and no other motivation is required for it. In their one year's incognito stay, the Pāṇḍavas, above all, must remain their easy natural self. They should not appear uneasy or unnatural so as to attract attention of others and to jeopardise their incognito. The valiant hero Arjuna, it seems, can remain his natural self only in the company of females. This inclination towards the softer sex is, again, an unquestionable trait of Kṛṣṇa's personality and it is perhaps this common characteristic of their personalities which has brought

117 ĀdiP. 206.

118 ĀdiP. 207.

119 ĀdiP. 211-212.

120 *The Great Epic of India*, E. W. Hopkins, pp.310-11. The v.l. accepted in the Crit. Ed. is *śṛṇu me* etc. Cf. ĀdiP. 206.7.

121 VirP. 67.7. *snuṣārtham uttarām rājan pratigrhṇāmi te sutām /*

122 Editorial note to fascicule II of MBh, Crit. Ed. Partly reproduced in Introduction to VanP. p.XX.

Arjuna of all the five brothers nearest to Kṛṣṇa. It will be noticed that towards the end of ĀdiP, just before the episode of Khāṇḍava-dāha, it is only Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna who enjoy themselves in the company of beautiful women in the lovely forests on the bank of river Yamunā.¹²³ We have just seen above how the romantically attractive trait of his personality leads him to numerous love-adventures. If then, this Arjuna must keep to his easy natural self so as not to rouse any suspicion, he must remain in the company of women. So there is no better ruse than becoming a dancing-master of the royal harem who is naturally expected to remain almost constantly in the company of women.

Now it is obvious that either the princess or the other girls of the royal harem would not normally be trusted with an alien male. Therefore, it is almost incumbent upon Arjuna to present himself as a sexless person, a eunuch.¹²⁴ But this is actually a boon in disguise. However freely do the girls behave with their dancing master, they will never fall in love with a eunuch. So by presenting himself as a sexless person, Arjuna actually makes himself immune from any possible potential love-affair which, otherwise, can in all likelihood expose his identity before the stipulated time. Arjuna's incognito, thus, is adopted after properly sizing up the dangers of his personality against the situation

A similar thoughtfulness is obvious in the guises of other characters also. Bhīma's problem would be the amount of food he needs. That can attract anyone's attention. He is presented as a cook¹²⁵ and kept in the royal kitchen so he can manage his meals without arousing any suspicion. Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī choose to keep company to the king and the queen respectively.¹²⁶ The atmosphere around the royal figures would be pompous enough, in which the dignified demeanours of Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī will not be a matter of much distinction.

The two episodes where Yudhiṣṭhira is the hero are more sober, quite in keeping with the character of Yudhiṣṭhira. In Ājagara-Parvan,¹²⁷ a python catches Bhīma and would not release him until Yudhiṣṭhira answers his questions which are mainly ethical. The python in the end is revealed as Nahuṣa, an ancestor of the Kurus. Similarly, in Āraṇeya-parvan,¹²⁸ the four brothers, being thirsty, rush to drink from a lake, ignore the guarding Yakṣa's warning not to drink without answering his questions, and life dead. Finally Yudhiṣṭhira answers all the questions — again mostly ethical, religious and philosophical — to the Yakṣa's satisfaction, and with his grace,

123 ĀdiP. 214.

124 VirP. 2.21. pratijñām ṣaṇḍhako'ṣmiti karisyāmi mṅhipate /

125 VirP. 2.2. supān asya karisyāmi kuśalo'smi mahānase /

126 VirP. 1.20. sabhāstāro bhaviṣyāmi tasya rājño mahātmanah /

VirP. 3.16-17. sairandhryo rakṣitā loke bhujisyāḥ santi bhārata / sāham bruvānā sairandhri...

127 VanP. 173-178.

128 VanP. 295-298.

brings all the four back to life. Yakṣa finally reveals himself as Yudhiṣṭhira's progenitor Dharma himself.

The similarity of pattern in both these tales is note-worthy. In both, brothers are either dead or threatened with death. The taboo is answering the questions. The questions are mainly ethical, philosophical. The person chosen to answer them is Yudhiṣṭhira, because "Yudhiṣṭhira is conceived as standing in special relation to Dharma, as being in fact the embodiment of Dharma ... of the five brothers Yudhiṣṭhira alone is able to answer the questions of Dharma, who confronts him in the shape of a Yakṣa."¹²⁹ The questioner finally is revealed in one as his ancestor, in the other as his progenitor.

The style of putting such questions and answers in the form of riddles is also very interesting. Such riddles are found in R̥gveda, in Atharvaveda, in Upaniṣads, in the famous Buddhist work "Milinda-pañho" (The Questions of King Milinda), in the epics, in the stray subhāṣitas of the classical period — in fact, at every stage of our traditional literature, as it is a very popular conventional element of folk-style. Even the apparent form of the tale — enigmatic ethical and philosophical questions and their answers framed in some Upaniṣadic episodes like that famous one of Naciketas in the Kathopanīṣad — conforms to the folk-style.

But most interesting to us is the central motif of both the episodes — which is compulsion to answer the enigmatic questions, failure in which being punishable by death. The compulsion takes the form of the threat of death of brother Bhīma in the first story, of the water-taboo in the second story of Yakṣa. The motif is well-known even in the folk-literatures of the other parts of the world. Its independent origin everywhere is confirmed by the very different details filled in the tales of those areas. Take, for example, the famous Sphinx-story of ancient Egypt. The half-lion half-man creature asked every passer-by : "Which is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, on three in the evening?" and for centuries went on eating up the numberless passers-by who all failed to solve the riddle. Finally, when someone answered : "it is man" (which is the correct answer, the morning, noon and evening metaphorically being those of the human life viz. the childhood, youth and old age) the sphinx turned into stone. There is another tale of "The Emperor and the Abbot" or "King John and the Bishop" which is very well-known in the European countries, of which 571 variants have been collected and collated and analysed by Anderson, and noted as an example of the historico-geographic method of studying folk-tales by Stith Thompson.¹³⁰ In it, a king asks a bishop certain questions failure to answer which within a stipulated period would be punishable by the latter's death. Finally, some friend of the bishop (either a cow-herd or a miller or any other common man) goes to the king in the dress of the bishop and answers the questions. The bishop heaves a sigh of relief.

¹²⁹ *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, V. S. Sukthankar, 1955. pp.63-64.

¹³⁰ *Folk-tale*, Stith Thompson, Indiana, 1946. pp.432 ff.

It is obvious that the central motif in all the four tales — two native and two from other countries — is the same, the wide differences as to the details which fill out the motif into fullfledged stories betray their independent origins, which fact, in view of the sameness of the motif, is a sure sign of the tales being purely fictitious popular folk-tales.

An important difference in the forms of these tales will be interesting to note. The European form of the tale is that of an episode, since there are no supernatural elements occurring in it. The Egyptian tale presents the motif in the garb of a myth. The Sphinx symbolises death. We fear death until we have not known the nature of life. Once we know that the human life is comparable to a day, it rises, it shines, it sets, we are no longer afraid of the black abyss of the night — that endless void of death. (Does it imply a hope of rebirth also? Does it show the very unstable, very momentary, transitory nature of life thus making one indifferent to it? For us, it is only a matter of guess.) Death remains no Death. So viewed, the tale tries to explain the nature of life and death symbolically, which makes it a myth. The two native forms, particularly the second one with the Yakṣa in it, are almost fairy-tales. "The fairy-tale's miracles occur on the material plane; on the spiritual plane (affections, characters, justice, love) law abides ... In the fairy-tale, the youngest son, the ugly duckling, the Cinderella, submits patiently until heaven (in the shape of the fairy godmother) stoops to virtue's aid. Fairy land is the happy hunting ground of children."¹³¹ The miracle of the four brothers dying and coming back to life is on the material plane only; the law on the spiritual plane — Yudhiṣṭhira's complying with the taboo of the Yakṣa rewarded with the life of one brother, and his sense of justice and propriety in asking Mādri's son Nakula back to life rewarded with the lives of all the brothers — abides. Instead of the youngest, here we find the eldest succeeding. Heaven stoops to virtue's aid, not in the shape of the fairy godmother, but in the form of Yakṣa — the progenitor father (or the ancestor). The story-land is an easy learning ground for the psychological children. The two tales thus show almost all the characteristics of a fairy-tale. Even Stith Thompson would agree that "the hero-tale may be ... no more than an ordinary folk-tale of wonder, which we generally know as the fairy-tale. Our term is inaccurate, since most of the tales thus described have nothing to do with fairies but only with marvels of all kinds".¹³² Both the tales of Yudhiṣṭhira show these characteristics completely; they are folk-tales of wonder, they tell of the marvels, but Stith Thompson would not allow them to be called fairy-tales without reservations. "The fairy-tale is more nearly pure fiction than any other folk-tale form, since it is not bound by any religious belief or any demands of truth to life."¹³³ How can we say of these two tales that they are not

¹³¹ *DWLT*, p.115.

¹³² *ibid.* p.125.

¹³³ *ibid.*

bound by any religious belief ? But we shall class them as fairytales all-right. Stith Thompson may try to put the reservation, but we shall point out that the distinction between a myth and a fairy-tale often blurs and "our term is inaccurate".

In a slightly different way, we may as well point out, even the tales of Arjuna and of Bhīma are "no more than an ordinary folk-tale of wonder", and, therefore, all, at a stroke, can be classed as fairy-tales. Of course, the atmosphere group-wise differs considerably. It is romantic in Arjuna-tales, full of awe and wonder in Bhīma's tales, it very definitely becomes religiously sober in the tales of Yudhiṣṭhira. But whether pleasant or awe-inspiring or reverentially impressive, they are all tales of wonders. They are all fairy-tales.

It should be noted here that the folk-tradition of the epic has almost entirely neglected the two sons of Mādri in the sense that no secondary tales are added to the epic in their names. This is a little surprising in view of the fact that the twins are said to be the sons of Aśvinā who played such an important role in restoring Cyavana, an eminent Bhārgava sage, to youth and vigour. The story itself is included in the Tīrthayātrā section of VanP.¹³⁴ However, the Bhārgava redactors of the MBh in its final stage have nearly completely failed to reveal any interest in them.

Draupadī also, being a woman, is ignored in this respect, the only exception being the inclusion of the episode of her penance for obtaining a husband in her previous birth,¹³⁵ but that is rather to explain away the obsolete custom of polyandry which later on came to be abhorred but which, by that time, also had become an unavoidable part of the epic-story.

The valorous aspect of Arjuna's personality is more famous than the romantic one. He is a past master in archery which requires greater concentration and more refined and accurate intelligence. This is in sharp contrast to the crude and blunt weapon of mace which Bhīma holds. The sharp arrows and the blunt mace are clearly symbolic of the respective qualities of Arjuna and Bhīma. The contrast can be seen throughout the epic. In the Draupadī-svayamvara-episode, Arjuna pierces the target, Bhīma handles the angry host of the kings.¹³⁶ In the episodes of duels with Jarāsandha¹³⁷ or Duryodhana,¹³⁸ Bhīma is always equal to the opponent. He can better him only after receiving some hint either from Kṛṣṇa or from Arjuna. Arjuna the superb archer wins over Citraratha,¹³⁹ pleases even Lord Mahādeva in the form of Kirāta,¹⁴⁰ deals successfully with the nivātakavacas,¹⁴¹ removes the Kālikeya and

134 Adhyāyas 122-125.

135 ĀdiP. 189.

136 ĀdiP. 181.

137 SabP. 21.19-22.

138 ŚalP. 30.

139 ĀdiP. 158-159.

140 VanP. 13-42, particularly 39-42.

141 VanP. 166-169.

the Pauloma demons,¹⁴² and drives back the entire Kaurava army single-handed in the VirP.¹⁴³

But our author is entirely impartial. He does not hesitate to show the blots on the escutcheon of this most glorious hero of the war of MBh. After Kṛṣṇa's passing away in the MauP, Arjuna, a seasoned victor of many a battle, could not hold his own against the mere ābhīra robbers and failed miserably to protect the Yādava women-folk from being forcibly carried away by them.¹⁴⁴ Vyāsa's observation is prophetically passionless : "Strength, intelligence, glory and achievement all appear at their proper time and retire when their time is over. Time is the source of this entire world; Time, when He so desires, takes it back into Himself. Time becomes strong and Time, again, becomes weak. He becomes the Lord, and then He is commanded by others."¹⁴⁵ As our popular saying goes : it is Time, not man, that is powerful. Arjuna, with the same bow and the same arrows, was robbed by Kābā.

It is, indeed, not impossible to reconcile to this situation philosophically. But the other two incidents where the hero stoops low are almost irreconcilable to the glorious picture of this hero. The incident of Ekalavya¹⁴⁶ is too famous to need any reiteration here. Had Ekalavya not dutifully surrendered the thumb of his right hand — and his entire future as an archer with it — to Droṇa in satisfaction of the latter's designing and preposterous demand of the Guru's fee, the chapter of Arjuna's glory as an unrivalled archer would have been differently written. But the simple young man was ensnared with wrong ideals. The story shows that vested interests had always adopted questionable means to retain their rights to superiority.

With this goes also the episode wherein Indra approaches Karṇa at the time of the latter's daily worship and demands the latter's solar armour and earrings knowing well that the latter would not refuse anything to anyone at that particular time.¹⁴⁷ Without the crafty helpers like Droṇa and Indra, one does not know, where the great archer Arjuna would have stood. And even after this, he had to shoot arrows at Karṇa when the latter was trying to lift his chariot-wheels sinking in mire ! What a great hero Arjuna is !

We, of course, do not wish to sound political, but the similarity of the social situation, to which both the episodes of Ekalavya and of Karṇa point, is too insistent to be missed. Persons of lower strata of society have to struggle hard to come up, have to fight against a number of odds erected by the vested aristocratic interests and often have to lose the battle. Even after they succeed in coming up, the

142 VanP. 170.

143 Adhyāyas 24-62. Cf. VanP. 48.1.

144 MauP. 8.48-61.

145 MauP. 9.32-34.

146 ĀdiP. 123.1-39.

147 VanP. 284-294.

fight is not over. Ekalavya is an aboriginal youth and is never seen again throughout the epic, but Karṇa is almost constantly seen among the great warriors of the day. In fact, a number of episodes are narrated in the name of Karṇa and characteristically, they are all stories of his being socially rejected. Upon his birth, he is rejected by his mother;¹⁴⁸ when young he is refused an equal combat by Arjuna who would not stoop to fight a low-born;¹⁴⁹ as a pupil he is rejected by Paraśurāma who would teach only Brāhmins;¹⁵⁰ as a suitor he is rejected in the open assembly by Draupadī who would not marry a charioteer's son.¹⁵¹ "His greatest rival is Arjuna, for although he was the equal of the latter in archery, the world gave pre-eminence to a noble as against a charioteer's son."¹⁵² In the beginning of ŚānP, Nārada describes how severe his struggle was.¹⁵³ Sukthankar's analysis of his character is brilliant and penetrating¹⁵⁴ and it is difficult to disagree with him. But the fact remains too clear to be ignored. "Vyāsa sees all his faults. But he also sees that they were generated by the cruel ostracism of the world."¹⁵⁵

The Śambūka episode from RM¹⁵⁶ should also be included here since it also shows, in a slightly different way, the attempts of the priestly class to retain their rights to social superiority by questionable means. The fact of its being in the UK is a clear proof of its interpolatory nature. While Rāma was ruling, the son of a Brāhmin met with a premature death. Rāma convenes an assembly of the sages to know the cause of it. Nārada says : a śūdra must be performing penance somewhere in Rāma's kingdom as a result of which the Brāhmin child has died.¹⁵⁷ Rāma then finds out the śūdra sage Śambūka practising penance on the Śaivala mountain for obtaining heaven. He kills him with a sword. H. Jacobi comments : "The higher religious life has been denied to a śūdra from the very beginning, specially he has been prevented from obtaining the highest stage of the 4th Āśrama, which the Brāhmins wanted to preserve as their special privilege. The restriction was, however, broken through by the mighty forces of Buddhism and Jainism, which did not debar even a śūdra from becoming a bhikṣu. Such a scandal should not happen in the kingdom of Rāma. A severe punishment of the same would be a warning for a time, which did not rigidly maintain the holy order. So I am inclined to the view that the legend of Śambūka has originated in a country and a time, where the mixed monastic order, probably

148 VanP, 287-293. Also ĀdiP. 104, 4-15.

149 ĀdiP. 126-127.

150 ŚānP. 2-3.

151 ĀdiP. 178. *1827.

152 *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*, Krishna Chaitanya. p.21.

153 ŚānP. 1-6.

154 *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, pp.49-54.

155 *A New History of the Sanskrit Literature*, Krishna Chaitanya, p.211.

156 UK. 64-67.

157 UK. 65.23.

that of Buddhists and Jains, had evienced itself.”¹⁵⁸ We may or may not accept the historical extension of the implications of the episode, but the picture in it of the brāhminical attempts to prevent, even by questionable means, the persons of lower strata from infiltrating into their folds is undeniable. In the MBh episodes, the attempts are on a secular level, in the RM episode, they are on an ethico-religious level.

It is interesting to note that one peculiar incident is narrated in connection with Duryodhana. In VanP,¹⁵⁹ Duryodhana with his companions visits the forests in all his royal pomp and glory with a view to Putting Pāṇḍavas to shame. On the way, however, he picks up a quarrel with Gandharva Citrasena who quickly takes him captive. He is rescued by the efforts of the Pāṇḍavas themselves. Duryodhana’s embitterment is enhanced. For “the man with an inferiority complex does not forgive anyone who has witnessed his humiliation even though the latter subsequently helps him out of his predicament.”¹⁶⁰ Duryodhana, in his chagrin, vows to starve himself to death. He is dissuaded by the Daityas and the Dānavas who take him to the nether-worlds and tell him that if he dies, their cause will be lost. He is their only refuge as the Pāṇḍavas are of the gods. Daityas and Dānavas are born among the Kṣatriyas who will fight Duryodhana’s enemies. They thus succeed in making Duryodhana give up his vow of fasting unto death.

The episode is clearly a later addition. It is an anti-heroic tale in the sense that it is narrated in connection with the villain of the epic. To popular mind, Duryodhana is a bad character. His evil nature is emphasised in the episode. Thus it conforms to the type to which the popular mind has reduced his character. But the more important function of the episode is that it puts the entire epic on a different level. The episode is “a very clear proof of the fact that the Kauravas were viewed by the epic poets as incarnations of the Asuras.”¹⁶¹

Apart from this single episode, no other tale is added to the MBh in the name of Duryodhana. In the UK, on the other hand, there is a whole group of episodes narrated in connection with Rāvaṇa. His genealogy, his parentage, his previous victories, his devotion to Śiva, his austere penance and its reward as boons, his tyrannies, his lewdness, even his defeats, in fact, a complete kathā-cakra¹⁶² bringing out the salient aspects of his personality is given there. Looking for the reasons of such a glaring difference, we realize that the villain of the MBh belongs to the same race and the same genealogy as its heroes; again, since the story of the family-faction is narrated from the beginning, the tales of the heroes almost automatically become the tales of

158 *The Rāmāyaṇa*, H. Jacobi, Tr. S. N. Ghosal, Baroda, 1960, pp. 74-75.

159 The Sub-Parvan called Ghoṣa-yātrā-parva. 239-240.

160 *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*, Krishna Chaitanya.

161 *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, Sukthankar, p.65.

162 UK. 1-34.

the villain also. For example, the narration of the education of the heroes is common for the villain also. The tales of the Kuru ancestors are the same for the heroes and the villain. The episodes of their escape from the lac-house or their winning Draupadī for bride inevitably become the tales of Duryodhana's villainy or of his undoing and the resultant feeling of inferiority. Therefore, the fact that the villain of the RM belongs to a different race creates a scope for bringing in tales in connection with the villain also, while there is no such scope in the MBh since the villain also in it belongs to the same race and even family as the heroes do. The different race, genealogy and sect of the villain, thus, make room for more extraneous matter in the epic. The nature of the theme of principal story, thus, seems to affect the scope and nature of the secondary tales also. This, in its turn, will potentially affect the further interpretation of the principal tales by superimposition of the secondary material. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the sectarian interpretation is possible in the case of RM, not in the case of MBh.

3. The Birth-stories

The stories narrating the super-normal births of sages and the epic-heroes form another important group of tales. We have seen above in the consideration of the R̥ṣyaśṅga-episode that the birth-stories of the sages reveal a pattern which is characteristically folk-imaginative. As we confirmed there¹⁶³ even the Greek myths reveal a pattern indicating that the seed of gods or great sages is nearly always fertile. Dr. Minoru Hara¹⁶⁴ recently tries to show that "These elements — Indra's fear of ascetics' *tapas*, his tricks of seducing the ascetics through *apsaras-es*, the desertion of their offspring, and the motif of the *etymologische legende* — enable us to discern a line of artifice in Sanskrit literary composition."¹⁶⁵ He says: "...the question of the fate of the orphaned embryos leads to the formation of, and has a further connection with, the so called *etymologische Legende*."¹⁶⁶ The logic of the line of artifice indicated by him is explained thus: ".....on earth below a human being who is endowed with extraordinary qualities is supposed to have an extraordinary origin. Extraordinary beings originate out of the seed of ascetics who possess *tapas* in abundance, and are conceived by heavenly women. In order to explain the birth of such extraordinary children here a literary artifice is invented which links ascetics and *apsaras-es*, and this unusual combination is made possible only through the above-mentioned cycle, that is, Indra's fear caused by ascetics; Indra's order to the *apsaras-es* to seduce the ascetics to sensuality; and the ascetics breaking their vow of celibacy."¹⁶⁷ We quote Dr. Hara rather extensively because he treads very much

163 See fn.66 of Ch.II.

164 'Indra and Tapas', *Brahmavidyā* (The Adyar Library Bulletin), Adyar, Vol.XXXIX 1975. pp.129-160.

165 *ibid.* p.152.

166 *ibid.* p.150.

167 *ibid.* pp. 157-8.

upon the same ground as we did in the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-episode but explains the function of the motif-structure rather differently. To us, it appears that the artifice, or more accurately the motif-structure, is not *invented* to explain the extraordinary origin of great characters, but has developed from the fertility-rites connected with the rain-god Indra, and later on used to reflect the Brāhmaṇa-ascetic-dichotomy. The very word 'apsaras' — 'one having the gait of water' shows the connection of the motif-structure with rains. The difficulty in accepting Dr. Hara's deductions is that they are arrived at by comparing the motif-structures of the tales only as they are found in the epics, purāṇas and at the most Jātakas. They are not related to the other aspects like traditional, Vedic, folk-loristic, ritualistic ones, but if the tales are to be assessed and interpreted properly they must be so related. As Prof. Kirk points out, "The hard truth is that before offering a reasoned interpretation of any single myth one has to make a systematic investigation of the complex nature of myths as a whole."¹⁶⁸ The four elements connected up by Dr. Hara in the artifice can be explained differently : Thus, in Indra's fear of ascetics' tapas, the fear is a later element; originally it was not fear but rather an aggressiveness reflecting the Brāhmaṇa-Śramaṇa-controversy. The seduction-motif has origin in the fertility rite. The motif of the desertion of the offspring is only interim, it does not have a distribution wide enough to warrant a hypothetical pattern of motifs and 'to arrive at a real conclusion';¹⁶⁹ on the contrary, more often than not, it is the most widely popular crave for justifying the name by explaining its propriety which gives rise to what are called the 'etymologische legende'. Thus, Droṇa is so called because the seed from which he is born was kept in a trough - 'droṇa'.¹⁷⁰ Kṛpā and Kṛpī are so named because they were brought with compassion (kṛpā) by Śantanu.¹⁷¹ Matsya and Matsyagandhā were born out of a fish (matsya) !¹⁷² Drupada was so named because the seed from which he was born was trampled upon with feet by his father !¹⁷³ 'R̥ṣya-śṛṅga' had a deer-horn on his head.¹⁷⁴ Sārasvata is sought to be explained metronymically by making him son of the river Sarasvatī.¹⁷⁵ Uddālaka was given that name because he rose, breaking the dyke.¹⁷⁶ Cyavana was so named because he dropped out of his mother's womb.¹⁷⁷ All these and many more of such legends are formed to justify the name; but many of them like those of Droṇa, Drupada, R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, Sārasvata, Uddālaka, Cyavana are not the cases of orphaned embryos. To us, therefore, it seems that it is not the question of the fate of the

168 *The Nature of Greek Myths*, G. S. Kirk, Pelican, 1974. p.13.

169 *Folk-Tales*, Stith Thompson, New York, 1946. p.379.

170 ĀdiP. 121. 4-5.

171 ĀdiP. 120. 14-18.

172 ĀdiP. 57. 39-54.

173 ĀdiP. Appendix I, Passage 79, 11.174-176. p.926.

174 VanP. 110.17.

175 ŚalP. 50. 20-21.

176 ĀdiP. 3.29.

177 ĀdiP. 6.2.

orphaned embryos that leads to the formation of etymological legends. It is rather the popular desire to justify the name of a character that acts as a motivating force in the formation of such legends. This popular tendency is also reflected in the general linguistic tendency to justify the meaning of a name as observed even in popular etymologies as well as in such etymological legends. As R. Anttila puts it, "Language has a general iconic tendency, whereby semantic sameness is reflected also by formal sameness".¹⁷⁸ If some of such legends are connected with the Ascetics' Tapas — Indra's Fear — Seduction by Apsarases — motif-structure, the connection is only secondary, more accidental than inherent.¹⁷⁹

It will be observed that such etymological tales are more frequently narrated in connection with sages and brāhmins than with kṣatriyas. Tales of Matsya or of Drupada (this is relegated to the Appendix) are rather exceptional. But the etymological nature of tales is most general in tales of gods which are more generally known as myths or divine legends. Dr. Hara ends his article with a reference to the story of the birth of Skanda Kārttikeya. The names of gods when explained etymologically, do normally give a clue to the central traits of those gods. Thus, the attempts to explain the name of Varuṇa from √vr̥ - 'to cover', or of Uṣas from √vas - 'shine', of Pūṣan from √puṣ - 'nourish', of Viṣṇu from √viś - 'enter, pervade', of Dyaus from √dyu - 'shine', of Pṛthvī from √prath - 'expand' may not, after all, be futile; on the contrary, it is more likely that they might, with due precautions, help reveal the real meanings of many myths.

The observation that the etymological tales are mostly narrated in connection with sages might seem, at first sight, to favour Dr. Hara's deduction about the orphaned embryos since the sages do not breed a family; but a little thinking will reveal that whenever the tale-teller thinks of the embryo as an orphan he always takes care to provide a foster-parent for the orphan, as he provides sage Kaṇva in the case of Śakuntalā, or sage Sthūlakeśa in the case of Pramadvarā, or king Śantanu in the case of Kṛpa and Kṛpi. The motif of the orphaned embryo, therefore, is brought in by Dr. Hara only to explain the imagined gap in the motif-structure, but is not necessary, as we have already shown in the discussion of the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga episode.¹⁸⁰

A greater variety of forms i.e. of content-structures as well as of functions can be observed in the birth-stories of the heroes and other characters of the epic. The

178 *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*, Raimo Anttila, 1972. p.89.

179 Regarding the story of Yavakṛita referred to by Dr. Hara, it may be pointed out here that this story also reflects the Brāhmaṇa-Śramaṇa dichotomy. Indra is the highest god of Vedic pantheon and it appears strange that he should oppose Yavakṛita's efforts to learn Vedas. The reason is that Yavakṛita's mode of learning Vedas is not Brāhmanical. The correct way of learning the Brahminical Vedas is to hear them from the mouth of a teacher. Indra first tries to make him realise this by instructing him to learn them 'guror mukhāt'. It is the sage's insistence to learn the Brāhmanical lore in a non-Brāhminical way—through penance which is characteristic of the Śramaṇa tradition—that turns him wrathful.

180 vide above p.43.

reason of this variety is obvious. These heroes and the related characters play important roles in the principal narrative. The epic-poets, therefore, would naturally try to make the characters interesting by narrating different birth-stories in connection with them and trying thereby to emphasise and explain their characteristic peculiarities. The birth-stories of these characters occupy two sub-parvans of considerable length : the Ādivamśāvatarana-parvan and the Sambhava-parvan.

The former sub-parvan, after a summary of the events mainly from ĀdiP¹⁸¹ (Adhyāya 55) and a regular phalaśruti (adhyāya 56), begins in Adhyāya 57 with the story of King Vasu Uparicara. The name, translated literally, means — ‘the luminous wanderer above’ — most probably suggesting the sun. The story of Vasu Uparicara is divided into two parts : the first narrates his institution of the worship of Śakra-dhvaja, the second contains a myth leading to the birth of Satyavatī — the arch queen-mother of the Kuru-heroes and the mother of Sage Vyāsa, the traditional author of the epic.

In the first part,¹⁸² Indra himself appears before the king performing penance, instructs him to stay in the country of Cedi, gives him a *vaijayantī* garland to make him unconquerable and also gives him a bamboo-pole.¹⁸³ After a year, the king ‘made the stick enter the earth’¹⁸⁴ in order to perform Indra’s worship. Since then, the kings every year perform the ceremony of digging the stick into earth just as Vasu did and take it out the next day. Significant also is the remark that, in this ceremony, lord Śankara is also worshipped in a comic form which he took of his own accord out of affection for the great king Vasu.¹⁸⁵ Indra was pleased. He granted the boon that the persons and kings and kingdoms celebrating this Indra-festival will be rich and happy.

The ceremony of making the stick enter the earth is symbolic of the mating of the divine pair Dyāvā-prthivī Performed in connection with Indra, the god of rains, the ceremony is nothing but a fertility rite,¹⁸⁶ and Indra’s promise of richness and happiness for the performers of this ceremony is well justified. But more important is the reference to the worship of the comic form of Śankara. It is probable that the Indra-dhvaja festival was originally a ritualised form of the fertility rites and since mating is symbolised in the image of liṅga — the form in which Śankara is worshipped — Śankara was attached to the festival. This part of the story definitely shows that the image of liṅga symbolising the act of procreation is the link bringing Indra and Śankara together. This little description of the details of Indra-dhvaja festival strongly

181 ĀdiP. vide above p. 20, last section of Ch.I.

182 ĀdiP. 57. 1-27.

183 ĀdiP. 57.17. Cf. *yaṣṭim ca vainavīm* etc.

184 ĀdiP. 51.18. Cf. *tasyāḥ.....bhūmau.....praveśam kārayāmāsa....*

185 Cf. *bhagavān pūjate cātra hāsya-rupeṇa śaṅkaraḥ / svayam eva gṛhītena vasoḥ pṛītyā mahātmanaḥ // ĀdiP. 57.21.*

186 For Indra and fertility rites again, see above discussion in Ch.II.ii, under *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga-episode*, S.T. 16

corroborates our remark about the Indra-fertility-liṅga-Śaṅkara connection made above in the context of the probable lines of the study of the traditional names of Nāga-chiefs.¹⁸⁷

It is worthwhile to note here that Prin. J. T. Parikh has made a comprehensive study of the references to Indra-dhvaja festival and prepared a hypothesis¹⁸⁸ that the festival could after all be the origin of the Sanskrit drama. Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata itself declares in its opening chapter that the first drama had adopted the beautiful Kaiśikī vṛtti from the dancing Nīlakaṇṭha¹⁸⁹ and it was performed on the occasion of the Indra-dhvaja festival.¹⁹⁰ The erotic element in a fertility festival is too obvious to need to be stressed. The relation of the erotic and the comic is also apparent in our everyday life. Our private jokes, or the permissiveness that prevails at the Holī-festival are the evidences in point. The relation is acknowledged in Nāṭyaśāstra also. Śṛṅgāra (>'śṛṅga' — phallic symbol !) is said to be the origin of Hāsyā.¹⁹¹ Imitation of Śṛṅgāra is said to be Hāsyā.¹⁹² The relation of the erotic and the comic is also reflected in the characters of many a classical Sanskrit play in which the hero is normally occupied with amorous endeavours and is always accompanied by the traditional comic character of Vidūṣaka. We may add a supporting evidence. Nāṭyaśāstra mentions Viṣṇu as the deity of Śṛṅgāra and Pramathas as the deities of Hāsyā.¹⁹³ Viṣṇu is only another aspect of the Vedic Indra and later on called Upa-Indra. Pramathas are the attendants of Śiva. The relation of Indra and Śaṅkara has originated in the symbol of liṅga, is reflected in the erotic and comic aspects of the Indra-dhvaja festival and is continued in the traditional theory and practice of the Sanskrit drama. A closer examination of Prin. Parikh's hypothesis may perhaps be very highly rewarding.

Prin. D. S. Phatak¹⁹⁴ has collected some data regarding the festival but he hardly does anything beyond it. In the final paragraph, he says : "...Indra was not only the god of rain in Vedic literature. He was equally a god of Agriculture".¹⁹⁵ As if the two aspects were different from each other ! Then though on a scanty and unimportant data and rather hastily, he draws an important and plausible conclusion : "Indra had already become the god of harvest and Indra-mahotsava was, thus, a harvest festival."¹⁹⁵

187 Above Section i of this chapter.

188 Vide his article: 'Rise and Growth of the Vidūṣaka,' *BCGVB*, Surat, No. 22-23, 1978-79. pp. 1-41, particularly sections 12, 13-14 of the article.

189 *Nāṭyaśāstra*, (Vol.I, GOS Second ed., 1956). 1.45

190 *ibid.* 1.54-55-56.

191 *ibid.* 6.39. Cf. śṛṅgārād dhi bhaved dhāsyo.

192 *ibid.* 6.40 Śṛṅgārānukṛtir yā tu sa hāsyas tu prakīrtitaḥ /

193 *ibid.* 6.44. Cf. śṛṅgāro Viṣṇudevatyō hāsyah pramatha-daivataḥ /

194 'Indra-Mahotsav'. *Journal of the S. N. D. T. Women's University*, Bombay, Vol. IV, 1973, pp. 1-6.

195 *ibid.* p. 6.

The statement about Indra becoming the god of harvest is only lop-sided. But that Indra-Mahotsava was a harvest festival is very plausible. The period around the full-moon day of Bhādrapada—Indra-dhvaja festival was celebrated about this time—is the harvesting season in India. Prin. Phatak has missed the step next to this conclusion. The full-moon day of Phālguna is exactly at six months' distance, is about the period of another harvesting season in India and marks the day of the Holi-festival throughout the northern part of India. The erotic-comic-permissive elements connected with the Holi-festival have just been referred to. Is Holi-festival another Indra-Mahotsava ?

The second part of the story of Vasu Uparicara is clearly a myth. Girikā, the daughter of the mountain Kolāhala and river Śuktimatī, is married to king Vasu. Once, when the king is on a hunting expedition, and the queen in a receptive state, a hawk, commissioned by the king to carry his seed to his queen, drops it in the river Yamunā where it is swallowed by a fish Adrikā, a cursed apsaras, who gives birth thereby after ten months to the twins—king Matsya and Satyavatī—and is released from the curse.¹⁹⁶ The names Girikā and Adrikā are synonymous. Both are from rivers. One is said to be the queen of, the other to bear the seed of, king Vasu. The mountain, the rivers and the significant names of the characters show the story to be a myth. Dr. Shastri considers the tale to be a solar myth.¹⁹⁷ We may add a supporting evidence by pointing out that the hawk—śyena—connects the myth with the Suparṇa-story-cycle, for Suparṇa, as shown by Dange, originally meant a śyena and not Garuḍa.¹⁹⁸

The narrative proceeds further to describe the birth of Vyāsa, the traditional author of the epic.¹⁹⁹ Of the twins of the fish Adrikā, the daughter Matsyā was given to the fisherman Dāśa. Since she stayed for some time under the care of a fisherman, she was Matsya-sagandhā. Once sage Parāśara desired her. She obtained two boons from him—that of virginity even after accepting the sage and an excellent bodily odour. She complied with the sage's desire and gave birth to sage Vyāsa on the island of river Yamunā. Born on an island, the sage was called Dvaipāyana (>dvīpa-'an island').²⁰⁰ As a son of Parāśara, he was called Pārāśarya.²⁰¹ Since he arranged Vedas, he became Vyāsa (>vi+√ās - 'to arrange').²⁰²

Satyavatī is the daughter of a cursed Apsaras. She, from union with sage Parāśara, gives birth to sage Vyāsa, but there is no motif of an orphaned embryo. Again, Satyavatī is nowhere called Matsyagandhā—one with the fish-like smell. She

196 Ādip. 57.32-53.

197 Vide above fn. 96.

198 Cf. "This śyena is called 'suparṇa' " (p.70) and "Garuḍa and Suparṇa are not one and the same". (p.90). *Legends in the Mahābhārata*, S. A. Dange. Read also pp. 88-91 therein.

199 ĀdiP. 57.54-71.

200 ĀbiP. 57.71.

201 Ādip. 57.69.

202 ĀdiP. 57.73.

is referred to as Matsya-sagandhā²⁰³—the kin of a fisherman—which is quite a different thing. Quite likely, her birth from a fish, her being related to a fisherman, the easy glide from 'Matsya-sagandhā' to 'Matsya-gandhā', and the contrast it provided to the fact of an excellent body-odour which she obtained from the sage later on—all these factors seem to have incited the popular imagination to give the fish-smell—hence her name Matsyagandhā—to Satyavati.

The fact that the arch queen-mother of the entire host of the epic-heroes should be the daughter of a fisherman and, what is more, should be a virgin mother seems to have made the epic-poet quite upset. Therefore, he has overdone in providing the divine parentage to Satyavati. Her father Vasu Uparicara is shown to stand in very special relation with Indra. Her mother Adrikā is shown to be a cursed Apsaras. The fishy smell of her body perhaps motivates the fact of the cursed Apsaras-mother being given the form of a fish. Her pre-marital lover is shown to be a great sage, and her pre-marital child is shown to be a rare literary genius! The over-doing itself renders the attempt to cover up her low birth rather suspicious.

In the remaining portion of Adhyāya 57 are very briefly narrated, or rather simply counted, the births of the principal characters of the epic. Bhīṣma, the son of Śantanu, was born in Gaṅgā with the parts of Vasu.²⁰⁴ Dharma suffered a low birth by being born as Vidura on account of the curse of Sage Aṅimāṇḍavya. The only fault that the sage had incurred was that in childhood he had pierced a female bird with a sharp grass-blade. The fault was not compensated for even by a thousandfold penance. It had to be repaid. So the sage, though not a thief, was yet suspected and impaled on a stake. Even a great sage is not spared from the irreversible law of karma-phala. For harbouring such a ruthless, almost mean, attitude, Dharma was cursed by the sage to suffer a mean birth. The divine births of Karṇa and the five Pāṇḍava brothers, the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa, the birth of Droṇa from a trough in which the seed of sage Bharadvāja had dropped, the birth of twins Kṛpa and Kṛpī (the mother of Aśvatthāman) in the bunch of śara from the seed of sage Gautama Śaradvat, the birth of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī from the sacrificial altar of Drupada, births of Śakuni and Gāndhārī, births of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu in the wives of Vicitravīrya from the seed of sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, births of Abhimanyu in Subhadra, of the five sons of five Pāṇḍavas in Draupadī and of Ghaṭotkaca in Hidimbā, of Śikhaṇḍin as Drupada's daughter turned later on by a Yakṣa into a male—such are the various births briefly counted in this portion of Adhyāya 57. Many of these are again narrated in greater details at different places in the MBh. But their brief indications here with particular references to their original divine aspects are intended to prepare a background for what Dr. Sukthankar calls the tale of Genesis in Adhyāya 58-59. After Paraśurāma's annihilation of the

²⁰³ Cf. ĀdiP. 57.54; 57.55.

matsya-gāhty-abhisamārayāt/āsīn matsya-sagandha'iva. 'sagandha' means 'belonging to one's own fold'. Cp. sarvaḥ sagandheṣu viśvasīti/ Śakuntalam, Act v.

²⁰⁴ The story of Bhīṣma's birth is narrated in greater detail in ĀdiP. 91-92-93. Also see below.

Kṣatriyas 3×7 times, Brāhmaṇas begot in the Kṣatriya-women a fresh Kṣatriya clan to protect the earth. For some time all was well. Then Asuras were born and they oppressed the Earth. The Earth complained to Lord Brahman who ordered the gods to be born on earth. The gods, with Indra at their head, went to Lord Nārāyaṇa with a request to be born on earth. The gods adopted partial incarnation and destroyed the evil beings. At this point, Janamejaya's insatiable curiosity to hear everything right from the beginning creates an occasion for including a complete account of cosmology in the Purāṇic fashion. As many species of living beings as possible are accounted for in Adhyāyas 59 and 60. Adhyāya 61 gives an account of human species ending with a list of the dramatis personae of the great epic itself shown to be partial incarnations of various gods and demons. It is obvious that the tale of Genesis as well as the purāṇic cosmological account could not have formed part of the original. The cosmological account serves to bring the epic nearer to Purāṇas, while in the tale of Genesis the incarnation theory is pressed into service and it helps to project the epic, as Śukthankar has shown, on the ethical plane, on a cosmic level.²⁰⁵

A bird's eye view of the entire ĀdiP. reveals a definite design in the arrangement of its matter. The movement from the most general or universal to the particular is clearly perceived. The following stages of the movement of the narrative towards its central event can broadly be pointed out: The tale of Genesis (ĀdiP. 58-59); a Purāṇa-like cosmological account of all the living creatures (59-60), among them an account of the origin of human beings, tribe-wise and country-wise, ending with a list of the epic-personae introduced as partial incarnations of gods and demons (61); greatness of the race of Kurus illustrated by two stories—that of Śakuntalā (62-69) and that of Yayāti (70-88) — one of national interest, the other of anthropologico-mythological interest—; two formal genealogical accounts of the race of Puru (89-90); the individual accounts of births and careers of the various epic-characters beginning with that of Bhīṣma (91-93); the births of the other warrior-heroes of the epic (94 ff.); the jealousy of Kauravas (particularly of Duryodhana) (118 ff.); their attempts upon the lives of the Pāṇḍavas (119.39 ff; particularly 124 ff. viz. the Jatugṛha-dāha-parvan); the latter's escape, achievements, marriage, return and regainment of their share of kingdom. So the arranger of the contents of ĀdiP—the 'Vyāsa' of ĀdiP—begins by throwing light, as it were, upon the origin of the world, then gradually narrows the focus upon the origin of the race of the epic-heroes, narrows it further upon the origin of the various epic-characters and then, concentrating upon the events which simultaneously show the progressive achievements of the heroes as well as accentuation of the jealousy of Duryodhana—the principal cause of the epic-conflict, gears the narrative in the direction of those events of SabP which, as we have already seen, mark the starting point of the nuclear epic. The gradual movement from general to particular is clear.

205 See above p. 78.

Of course, we can speak of such movement of the narrative only in a broad sense, for here and there, many divergencies in the broad outline will be observed. But once we perceive this basic principle of arrangement, the deviations from it can more easily be spotted and their causes or the functions they are intended to serve can be reasoned out more accurately.

Thus, for example, the Janamejaya-story-cycle providing a sacrificial frame to the epic is formally completed in Adhyāya 53, and Ādivamśāvatarāṇa parvan is said to begin from Adhyāya 54. Yet the first four Adhyāyas, viz. 54-57, are taken up by more-or-less prefatory matter. Adhyāya 54 makes a formal announcement of Vyāsa's arrival in Janamejaya's sacrifice. Adhyāya 55 gives an index-like summary of the epic-events the proper significance of which we have already seen above in Ch. I. i. Adhyāya 56 presents a formal statement of the great importance of the epic, as it were, by giving a semi-mythical account of his extra-ethical origin. Incidentally, the births of the other main characters are also briefly enumerated since, in this case, the mother of the epic-author also happens to be the arch-queen-mother of the epic-heroes. Divine or incarnative origins of some of the characters like Bhīṣma, Vidura, Karṇa, Kṛṣṇa²⁰⁶ and the five Pāṇḍavas are referred to; but a more proper account of their origin, based on the well-known principle of incarnation is found only after the tale of Genesis. Some references to the divine or incarnative origins of the epic-characters are bound to be repeated from the first into this second list²⁰⁷ which is intended to be exhaustive, which applies the principle of incarnation systematically to all the characters of the epic :(which the first enumeration does not do) and which finds justification, coming as it does after it, from the tale of Genesis.

The tale of Genesis, the purāṇic account of the origin of living beings, and a systematic and exhaustive application of the theory of incarnation to the epic-characters envelop the epic-tale in a different atmosphere. They lend, as it were, a different viewpoint to the principal story, put the tale on an ethical plane, raise it to the cosmic level. They add, as it were, a fresh dimension to the epic tale. It should be noted that throughout the Ādivamśāvatarāṇa-parvan, the Purāṇic atmosphere prevails and it is this sub-parvan which puts the tale on an ethical plane. The fact that in the next sub-parvan, called the Sambhava-parvan, the style and atmosphere become quite different in tone, become very classical, marks out the Ādivamśāvatarāṇa-parvan as unitary in character, authored by some Purāṇic scholar, rather than some bardic poet, with a clear intention to give the story an ethical dimension. It is noteworthy that the unitary characteristics of such singular subparvans are also retained. The fact leads to a possibility that the division into sub-parvans may not be arbitrary; it may reveal some stylistic and functional peculiarities.

The fact that the Sambhava-parvan falls more clearly into the pattern of the movement indicated above lends a sort of prefatory character to the entire Ādivamśā-

206 respectively at Ādip. 57.76, 77-81, 82, 83-87 and 97-98.

207 respectively again at ĀdiP. 61.69, 79, 89, 90 and 84-85.

vatarāṇa-parvan which, it seems probable now, may have come into the epic later than the Sambhava-parvan. In Sambhava-parvan, the atmosphere and the style become very near to classical; in fact, at number of places, the tale of Śakuntalā (ĀdiP. 62-69) reminds us of classical poems. The greatness of Duḥṣanta in Adhyāya 62,²⁰⁸ the description of the ladies watching the hero from the terraces of their mansions,²⁰⁹ and praising his valour (!) in Adhyāya 63, Duḥṣanta's hunting expedition (Adhyāya 63) and the beauties of the forest²¹⁰ (Adhyāya 64), the hermitages and the activities therein (Adhyāya 64), are all described in a leisurely, rather a little grand, style reminding us of similar descriptions in the classical works. It is, therefore, not unlikely that they might have been penned under the influence of those famous classical descriptions. In that case, they will reflect the age of their composition (!) and admission into the epic. Some utterances in the grandiloquent speech of Śakuntalā (Adhyāya 68-69) having close parallels in Manusmṛti²¹¹ also point to the same line of approach.

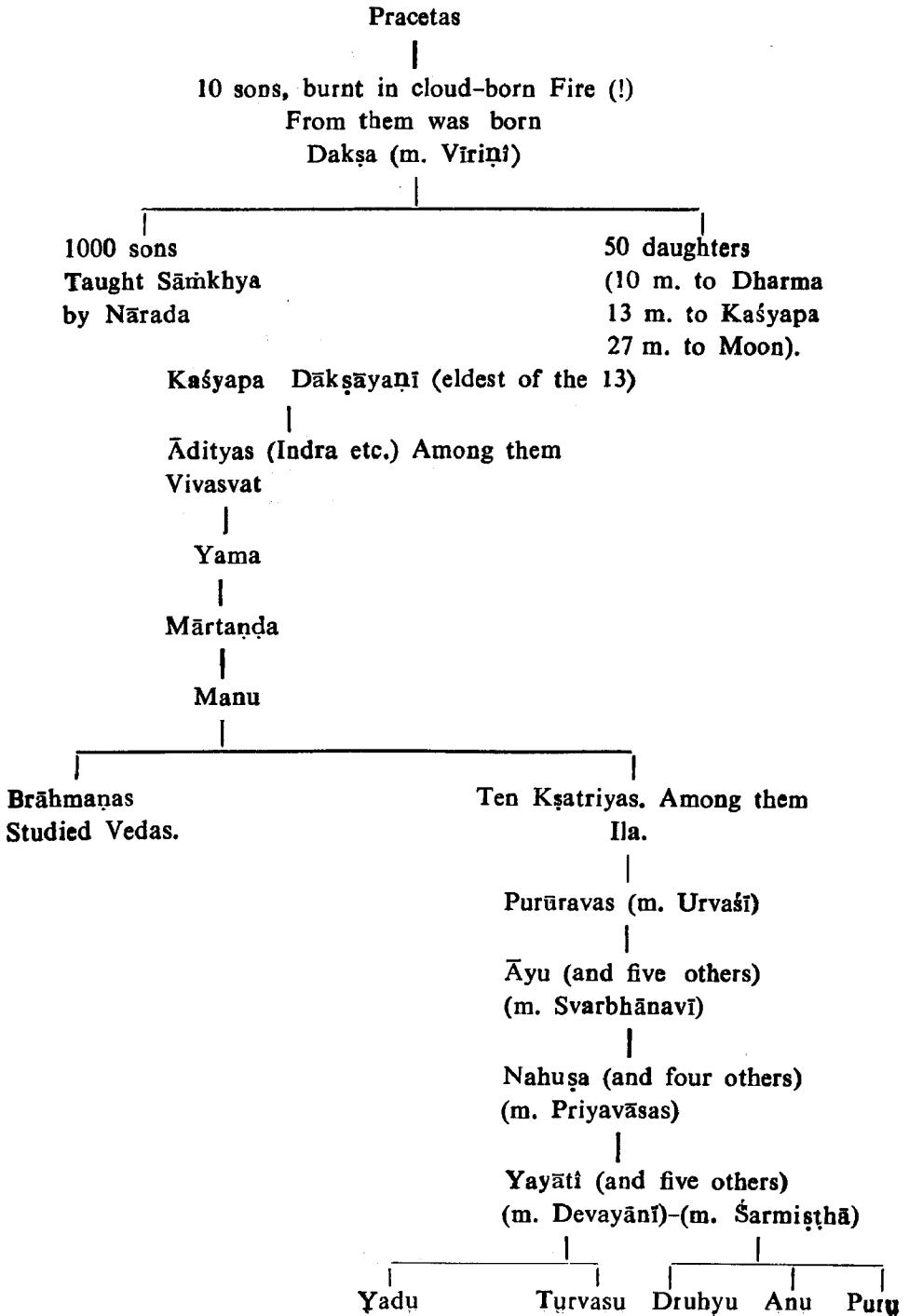
Adhyāya 7 gives a genealogy of the line of Kurus, in which most of the names are mythical. Consequently, the genealogy seems more fictitiously Purāṇic than real, as a glance below will show.

208 Comparable in comprehensiveness to some description of royal greatness from Bāṇa.

209 Cp. *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa, Canto III.

210 Comparable, again, in comprehensiveness to the descriptions of Bāṇa.

211 Compare, for example, ĀdiP. 68.25, 68.27, 68.28, 68.30 etc. with *Manusmṛti* 8.84, 8.91, 8.85, 8.92 and so on.



The genealogy, however, is not a bare enumeration of the names. Occasionally it also alludes briefly to the outstanding achievements of these great ancestors of the epic-heroes. Purūravas is said to have stayed with Urvaśī in the Gandharva region and brought the three-fold fire for ceremonies. Nahuṣa made even sages pay the taxes, made them, like animals, carry him on their back, and having defeated gods became Indra. The story of the Yayāti-Devayānī-Śarmiṣṭhā triangle is also briefly alluded to. The allusion to this last story, however, appears to be slightly more detailed – to rouse Janamejaya's interest, we suspect, who intervenes with a request for a detailed narration. So, the famous Yayāti-story is narrated in the next ten Adhyāyas (71-80) and a sequel called 'uttara-yāyātam' in the further eight Adhyāyas (81-88),

The Yayāti tale has been one of the few tales of India which have remained popular through the ages. One of the reasons of its popularity is the deduction of that famous maxim : "Desire is, indeed, never satiated with the enjoyment of the worldly pleasures. It is only aggravated like fire fed with butter".²¹² The maxim is pronounced by Yayāti while returning the youth of his son Puru which, he, after the curse of Śukrācārya, had borrowed in order to enjoy the worldly pleasures to his heart's content.

The three parts of the tale are very obvious : (1) The legend of Kaca (Adhy. 71-72), (2) The story of Yayāti's marriage with Devayānī, his attraction for Śarmiṣṭhā, the five sons, Śukrācārya's curse, Yayāti's accepting and returning the youth of his youngest son Puru, (3) Yayāti's return from the heavens and his regaining them on the strength of his grandson's merits.

S. A. Dange has fully dealt with the first part of the tale which he proves to be entirely mythical. He shows that "The main motif in the legend of Kaca is the swallowing and the disgorging of the initiate by the preceptor, with the gain of new life on the part of the initiate. The legend represents a fine blending of the sacrificial rite of consecration described in the Brāhmaṇas and the initiation rites of the savages".²¹³ In the conclusion of his study of this legend, he again says : "The legend of Kaca mainly imbibes the main features of sacrificial consecration and initiation or Upanayana...The same motif of swallowing, disgorging and the gain of new knowledge can be seen in the initiation-rites of the savages, and this gives additional support to the contention that the Kaca legend is the legend of initiation"²¹⁴

Regarding the second part also, it has often been observed that the names of the five sons of Yayāti are actually the names of five tribes. "In the Purāṇas tribal

212 The passage is famous, though relegated to footnote on text-critical grounds. Cf. Adip. 693* and 840* : na jātu kānaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śāmyati/ haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate//

213 *Legends in the Mahābhārata*, 1969. p. 155.

214 *ibid.*, p. 236.

names are often inserted in the genealogies under the disguise of eponymous ancestors... Thus Puru, Anu, Druhyu, Yadu, Turvasha are the eponymous ancestors of the five allied tribes of the Rigveda. There is nothing in the Rigveda to indicate any blood relation between these tribes... But for the time being those five tribes were in confederacy against the powerful Bharatas. Probably this fact accounts for the statement in the Purāṇas that the five eponymous heroes were brothers, being the sons of the mythical king Yayāti".²¹⁵ But, "how can we accept the common descent of Puru, Yadu, Turvasha. Anu and Druhyu from Yajāti, who is as mythical or as historical as Vaivaswata Manu?"²¹⁶ The name, 'Yayāti' itself points to the tale being mythical. Derived from the duplicative form of the root √yā-'go, move', the word 'Yayāti' probably indicates the nomadic character of the Aryan tribes. Someone has also tried to show some Tāntrik symbolism in the words like Śukra, Devayāni, Śarmiṣṭhā, Yayāti, even Vṛṣaparvan, and so on.

Again, the very sub-title "Uttara-yāyātam" (Cp. The title "Uttarakāṇḍa" of RM VII) of the third part betrays its later composition. The contents, mainly concerning eschatology, also underline its fictitious nature.

Thus the entire story-cycle of Yayāti is mythical, symbolic, fictitious, and there is no point in insisting upon the historicity of its characters. The tale itself is indeed an interpolation in the epic. But how even these tales are subjected to further interpolations within themselves is interesting to note. On ĀdiP. 87.5, the editor of the ĀdiP remarks : "This stanza, which seems to make a fresh beginning to the conversation between Yayāti and his grandsons, seems to link up directly with the end of adhyā. 83; the intervening eschatological discourse between Yayāti and Aṣṭaka which is in part most obscure and incoherent, and so clumsily worded as to be almost unintelligible, has all the appearance of being an old interpolation."²¹⁷ This will show how varied are the stages by which interpolations have poured into the great epic.

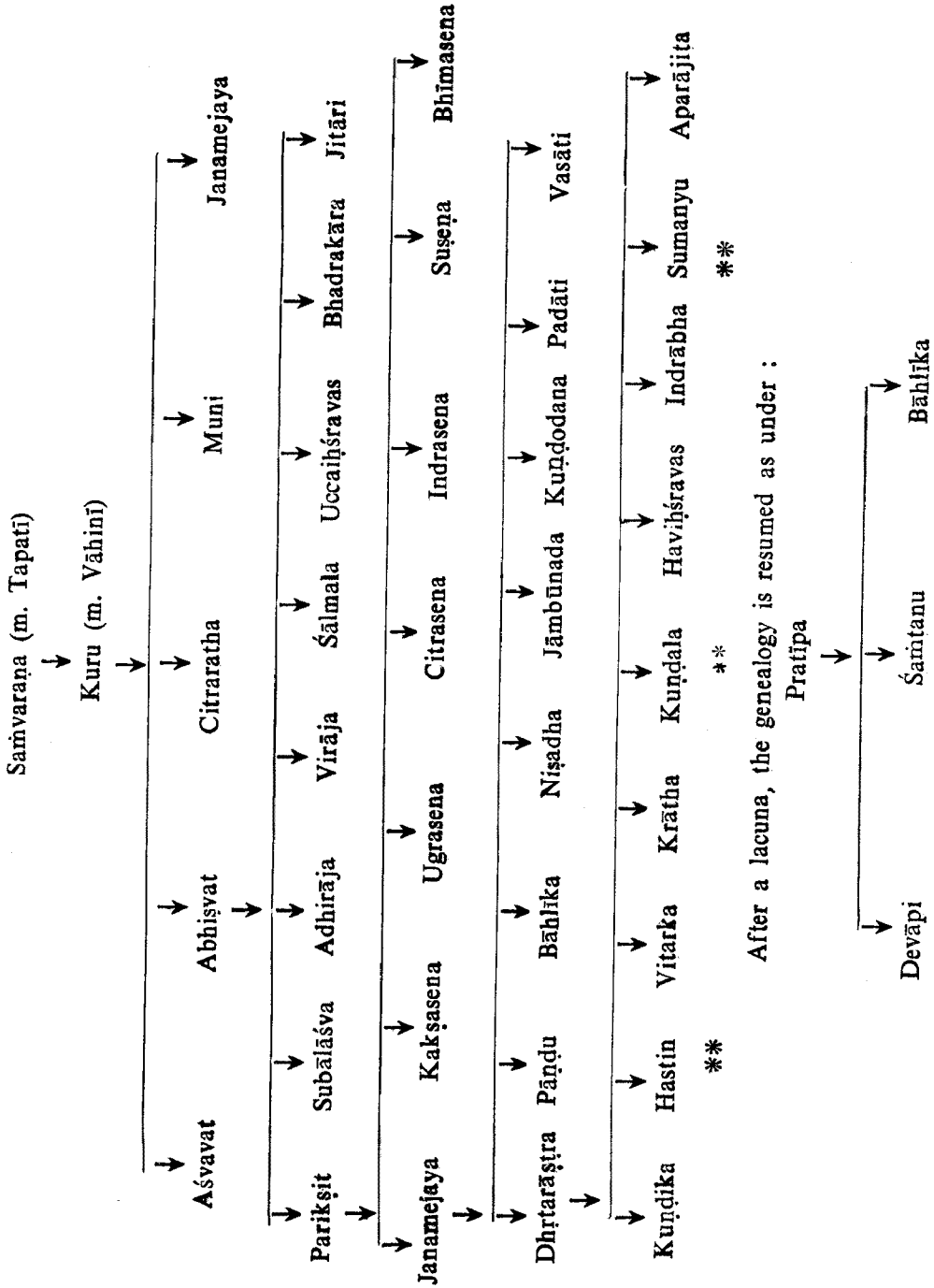
One might as well question the propriety of discussing these two stories : that of Śakuntalā and of Yayāti in the section of the birth-stories. Well, if the author of ĀdiP can include them in the Sambhava-parvan, why can't we put them under the group of the birth-stories ?

Adhyāya 89 and 90 give us again two genealogies which are interesting in many ways. One of the two is in the usual śloka metre but the other is in Brāhmanical prose. Apart from some deviations in the chronological details, the following genealogy, given in Adhyāya 89, is rather curious.

215 *The Aryanisation of India*, Nripendra Kumar Dutt, Calcutta, 2nd Edition, 1971. pp. 105-106

216 *ibid.* p. 140.

217 *Adiparvan*, BORI, Poona, p. 992.



The genealogy should have naturally ended with the generation next to that of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, since at that point we have reached upto the generation of the epic heroes. What is felt to be a lacuna should have been a natural completion. The resumption of the genealogy after the lacuna also ends rather unsatisfactorily, since Pratīpa and Śantanu belong to the two steps higher than that of Dhṛtarāṣṭra-Pāṇḍu and the line was expected to continue for three to six generations after Śantanu. Parīkṣit and Janamejaya are shown to be the immediate ancestors of Dhṛtarāṣṭra-Pāṇḍu instead of being their descendents in the fourth-fifth generation. Even the children of Dhṛtarāṣṭra are different from Duryodhana and his 99 brothers. Actually the names Kuṇḍika, Hastin, Kuṇḍala, Haviṣśravas of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra as well as other names in the genealogy like Janamejaya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Uccaiḥśravas, Kuṇḍodara, Krātha create a strong impression that this genealogy has more to do with some Nāga-tradition rather than with the Kuru-race known to us from the Purāṇas. Some sort of attempt at superimposition of the Nāga-myth upon the heroic tale may well be suspected.

Janamejaya's insatiable curiosity to hear the genealogy of his ancestors once again with fuller details occasions its second narration in Adhyāya 90. This second genealogy is in Brāhmanical prose. It is also interspersed with Anuvamśa ślokas, just as Brāhmaṇas would be interspersed with Gāthās. Fresh names occur in the line. Their chronology is, of course, different. In this Adhyāya, the chronology of the names from Pratīpa onwards runs properly, i. e. in accordance with their mutual relations as found in the epic. A slight variation in style within the genealogy is noteworthy. The genealogy begins with Dakṣa Prajāpati and runs upto Pratīpa for about 40 generations in a more-or-less stereotyped fashion—"So-and-so married so-and-so. In her, so-and-so was born of him" — with very few negligible exceptions. From Pratīpa downwards the genealogy is a little more detailed, and creates also an impression of summarising the events of ĀdiP with the only exception of the incident of Uttarā's giving birth to a still-born child Parīkṣit whom Kṛṣṇa re-enlivened. The genealogy is carried down upto Aśvamedhadatta, the grandson of Janamejaya himself !

With the story-group of Bhīṣma's birth and youth,²¹⁸ the Sambhavaparvan, true-to-its-name begins. (1) In the assembly of Brahman, the hem of Gaṅgā's garment was blown by wind. Mahābhīṣa stared at her. For this shamelessness, he was punished to suffer a mortal birth. He was born as Śantanu, the son of Pratīpa.²¹⁹ (2) The eight Vasus were cursed by Vasiṣṭha for some small fault to suffer human birth. They requested Gaṅgā²²⁰ who, in the form of a beautiful woman, married Śantanu, (with an understanding not to be questioned why for whatever she did),²²¹ gave

218 ĀdiP, 91-94.

219 ĀdiP. 91. 1-7.

220 ĀdiP. 91.9-19.

221 ĀdiP. 92.33-35.

birth to the eight Vasus one after the other, and threw them in her waters as soon as they were born, thus freeing them immediately from the curse.²²² The last, however, who possessed one-eighth parts of all the Vasus,²²³ was retained as a token of their gratitude for Śantanu who helped in their release. This last Vasu was Bhīṣma. He, however, was destined not to marry and create progeny,²²⁴ so that with his death no part of the Vasus would be left over in this mortal world. Then, when the youthful prince saw his father's attachment for Satyawatī he took the 'fierce' vow (hence his name 'Bhīṣmā' > √bhī-'fear') that he would not marry, thus ensuring that only the progeny of his step-mother could claim the royal heritage.²²⁵ The incident causing him to take the vow of a life-long celibacy provides only a 'nimitta' but his childlessness is actually pre-destined. Similarly the births of Śantanu and Bhīṣma are also pre-destined by their actions. Both of them are divine beings originally. They incur some transgression of the moral law, receive a curse as its punishment and suffer a mortal birth. It is just an extension, as we have seen above,²²⁶ of our traditional karmaphala theory. This provides the second pattern of the birth-stories of the heroes based on the action-fruit motif-structure, the first pattern being that of the incarnation motif reinforced by the tale of Genesis. The birth of Dharma as Vidura, the son of a slave-woman, as a result of the curse of sage Anīmāṇḍavya, also falls in this second pattern.

U. P. Arora makes some interesting observations on 'The Gaṅgā-Śantanu Legend.'²²⁷ He compares the legend with that of Peleus and Thetis in Greek mythology and draws following deductions : "(i) Like Gaṅgā and Śantanu the marriage of Thetis and Peleus is also a mixed marriage of the water-goddess with a mortal man. (ii) There is a Taboo of keeping silence for the king i. e. he will not interfere in the acts of the nymph. (iii) The nymph bore six children, but the seventh one was saved. (vi) (sic.) Children were burnt or dipped in the river Styx. (v) The immortality was attained by fire or by taking a dip in the river Styx."²²⁸ He also remarks : "The legends of Gaṅgā and Śantanu, Urvaśī and Purūravas, Jaratkāru and his wife of the snake race on one hand, and Peleus and Thetis and Eros and Psyche on other hand, seem to have their roots in totemism which has broken the hearts of many lovers. There came a stage in primitive society when this system ceased to exist, and people forgot the principles on which totemism was based. But the tales of mixed marriages based on the idea of totemism continued."²²⁹ Whether we agree with them or

222 ĀdiP. 92.43-45.

223 ĀdiP. 91.20.

224 ĀdiP. 91.21 and ĀdiP. 93, 38-39. The slight discrepancy in the two accounts may be noted. In the former reference, the decision is taken by the Vasus, in the latter, by Sage Vasiṣṭha.

225 ĀdiP. 94.87-88.

226 On p. 75, under Ch. II, UK, Rāvaṇa-Kathā-Cakra.

Journal of the Gaṅgānāth Jhā Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyāpeetha, Allahabad. Vol. XXVII, part 3-4, July-Oct. 1971. pp. 9-19.

228 *ibid.* pp. 11-12.

229 *ibid.* pp. 14-15.

not, the remarks are interesting indeed. He also rightly observes that the motif of throwing the child into water or fire in such folk-tales points to the popular belief that a dip into water or passing through fire removes all impurities or sins of a person.

Bhīṣma's step-brother Citrāṅgada died young in a battle against a Gandharva king. The younger Vicitravīrya was consecrated after Śantanu.²³⁰ For him, Bhīṣma abducted from Svayamvara the three daughters of the king of Kāśī, defying the host of other kings assembled there. The eldest sister Ambā had pre-decided to marry the king of Śālva, so Bhīṣma respectfully sent her to Śālva-rāja.²³¹ The story is carried further and completed in the UdyP.²³² Ambā was repudiated by Śālva-rāja. So she turned to Bhīṣma. Bhīṣma was firm on his vow of celibacy. Spurned from both the sides, Ambā immolated herself with a desire to avenge, and was born as Śikhāṇḍin—born a female and then turned into a male. Bhīṣma would fight all the heroes but Śikhāṇḍin who was originally a female. So Arjuna finally puts Śikhāṇḍin in front of him, and pierces Bhīṣma from behind Śikhāṇḍin. The extension of the Ambā-episode in UdyP thus provides motivation for the death of Bhīṣma who is, otherwise, blessed with a death at will.²³³

The other two princesses Ambikā and Ambālikā accepted to marry Vicitravīrya who was so enamoured of these two beautiful ladies, and expended himself so heavily in carnal enjoyment with them as to invite upon himself pulmonary consumption and died childless.²³⁴ Satyavatī now requested Bhīṣma to produce children in the wives of his dead step-brother in conformity with the accepted practice of Niyoga,²³⁵ but Bhīṣma was firm upon his vow of celibacy.²³⁶ Instead, he suggested that, in such cases, Brāhmins should be requested to produce children in the Kṣatriya-women. To corroborate his suggestion, he gives two illustrations; first, he points out that, after Paraśurāma's annihilation of the Kṣatriyas, Brāhmins created progeny in the Kṣatriya-women.²³⁷ Then, he narrates the story of Sage Dīrghatamas. The story can be divided in two parts. (1) Bṛhaspati lustfully approached Mamatā, the wife of his elder brother Utathya. She was carrying her husband's child at the time, and explained the situation but Bṛhaspati could not control himself. Then the embryo protested, upon which Bṛhaspati became angry and cursed it to lifelong darkness. Hence the child came to be known as Dīrghatamas.²³⁸ (2) The blind and aged sage Dīrghatamas was

230 ĀdiP. 95.

231 ĀdiP. 96.2-51.

232 UdyP. 173-192

233 Cf. ĀdiP. 94.94

234 ĀdiP. 96. 52-59

235 ĀdiP. 97. 9-10

236 ĀdiP. 97.14 ff.

237 ĀdiP. 98. 1-4.

238 ĀdiP. 98. 6-16.

abandoned and thrown into the waters of Gaṅgā and was resurrected therefrom by King Bali who wanted a child to be produced in his queen by the sage. The queen, however, sent her maid-servant in her place. In the maid, the sage produced eleven children—sage Kakṣivat etc. When Bali knew of the folly of her queen, he sent her again to the sage and a pious prince Aṅga was born.²³⁹

The motifs of the two parts of this story are found repeated in that portion of the principal story which now follows. Satyavati next turned to her previous son Vyāsa Dvaipāyana Pārāśarya with a request to perform Niyoga upon her widow daughters-in-law. The sage agreed.²⁴⁰ When, however, he approached the queens, the first queen closed her eyes being unable to look at the ugly sage, so her child Dhṛtarāṣṭra was born blind.²⁴¹ Then the second queen turned pale out of fear. So her child was born anaemic, 'pale' as the very name 'Pāṇḍu' would indicate.²⁴² When Satyavati was told of this by Vyāsa, she asked the senior queen to receive the sage once again. But the queen could not bear the idea of having one more encounter with the sage and put in her place a maid who, however, received the sage with a devoted mind and gave birth to Vidura, an incarnation of Dharma.²⁴³ In all these cases, the mother's attitude towards the sage who approached her, is shown to have psychological repercussions so deep as to reflect upon her child. Mamatā's unwillingness to receive Brhaspati is similarly shown to result in the child's blindness. All the four incidents are intended to illustrate the rule that the mother's psychological condition at the time of conception invariably affects the constitution of the child to be born. Further, the motif of tricking the sage possessing repulsive qualities by switching a maid in the place of a queen is also repeated in the illustrative as well as the principal story.

A question, not very significant, may arise. When Bhīṣma narrated the incident of sage Dirghatamas being tricked with a maid by the queen of King Bali, was he anticipating something like it also on the part of the widow queens of his step-brother? It is not very unlikely, since the sages, completely engrossed in spiritual pursuits, would naturally be inattentive to their rustic, rather uncouth, appearance, thus causing repulsion in the sophisticated ladies of the upper and royal classes, particularly when it comes to having intimate relations with them.

More pertinent is, however, the question of Niyoga. The tale of Dirghatamas is obviously intended to prepare us psychologically to receive the fact that the immediate ancestors of the epic-heroes were born of the custom of Niyoga. Bhīṣma has pre-faced the tale with the words that he would indicate the eternal law for the kṣatri-

239 ĀdiP. 98. 17-32.

240 ĀdiP. 99. 34-35, 42-43

241 ĀdiP. 100. 6-10.

242 ĀdiP. 100. 14-17.

243 ĀdiP. 100. 22-29

yas. After hearing it, and having observed the ways of the world, the queen-mother may decide the course of action in consultation with wise priests expert in the matter of Āpad-dharma.²⁴⁴ The ways of the world are very well reflected in Bhīṣma's discourse. The first part of the story of Dīrghatamas describes a situation in which a sage like Bṛhaspati also approaches his elder brother's wife simply for the sake of carnal enjoyment even when she is 'enceinte'. In comparison, Bali's desire to obtain progeny in his queen with the energies of a sage like Dīrghatamas is more acceptable, though it cannot be called an āpad-dharma. But in a situation where there is no progeny, there is nothing wrong in approaching Brāhmins with a request to procreate in the kṣatriya-women. On the contrary, as an āpad-dharma it is entirely acceptable.

It will not be out-of-place to note here [that Manusmṛti also enjoins Niyoga as an āpad-dharma. It is enjoined that when there is no progeny, the widow may obtain the desired progeny by Niyoga either with a younger brother-in-law or a sapiṇḍa.²⁴⁵ In the same breath, Manusmṛti denounces the custom and makes it clear that Niyoga should be looked upon only as an unavoidable evil.²⁴⁶ Bhīṣma's words-āpad-dharmārtha-kuśalaiḥ and lokatantram avekṣya also reveal a similar attitude.²⁴⁷ Bhīṣma's discourse more than justifies Satyavatī's choice of Vyāsa for Niyoga. The situation wherein Vicitravīrya dies childless has necessitated recourse to Niyoga as an āpad-dharma, an unavoidable evil. That Bhīṣma is not the proper person for this is also obvious. For one, he is not the *younger* brother-in-law, and again if he is to procreate in his step-brother's wives in order to produce a royal heir, where was the sense in his renouncing the throne and his vow of celibacy?²⁴⁸ The next choice is a Sapiṇḍa. Vyāsa can be called a Sapiṇḍa on the mother's side. Moreover, he is a brāhmin, the son of sage Parāśara; and Bhīṣma has unwittingly²⁴⁹ pointed out that it is the traditional Dharma that, when the situation demands, brāhmins should procreate in the kṣatriya-women for kṣatriya-women are seen in the world to resort even to

244 AdīP. 97. 25-26, Cf. Tat te dharmam pravakṣyāmi kṣātram rājñi sanātanam//
śrutvā tam pratipadyethāḥ prājñaiḥ saha purohitaiḥ/
āpad-dharmārtha-kuśalair lokatantram avekṣya ca//

245 Cf. Manusmṛti IX. 58-59. jyeṣṭho yaviyaso bhāryām yaviyan vāgrajastriyam/
paitau bhavato gatvā niyuktāv apy anāpadī//
devarād vā sapiṇḍād vā strīyā samyañ niyuktayā/
prajepsitā' dhigantavyā santānasya parikṣaye//

246 ibid. ix. 64-68.

247 See above fn. 244.

248 Satyavatī herself has realised the irony of the situation as her request to Bhīṣma almost to go back upon his vow reveals. Cf. AdīP, 97.11
rājye caivābhīṣicyasva bharatān anuśādhi ca/
dārāns ca kuru dharmeṇa mā nimajjih pītāmahān//

249 because when Bhīṣma gives his view about the situation, he does not know that Vyāsa Pārāśarya is Satyavatī's son. His relation to Satyavatī is revealed to Bhīṣma only when Satyavatī tells him after his discourse. Cf. AdīP. 99. 4-17.

remarriage.²⁵⁰ If, therefore, Niyoga must be resorted to, Vyāsa as a mātṛ-sapiṇḍa and as a brāhmin sage is doubly qualified to perform the duty.

An attempt to closely follow the rules laid down in Manusmṛti is obvious here. At other places even ideal and verbal closeness to Manusmṛti is so insistent throughout the epic that their mutual relation merits a study by itself. The verbal similarity has been indicated above in the case of the Śakuntalā-story. We shall also have an occasion below to refer to more of such cases. Here we may only point out that this relation between the epic and the smṛti-work seems to have an important bearing upon the period of the second stage of the epic. It is very likely, that the first redaction of the epic was made under a strong influence of the Manusmṛti. We may put it as a hypothesis open for a further scrutiny.

It will be interesting to note here the views of a lawyer-scholar on this point of Niyoga. 'Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, without doubt, were the issue of niyoga practised on the wives of the deceased king but without any special preparatory confabulation of the kind outlined in the Epic... Niyoga could not have been an Aryan practice... It nevertheless unfortunately is the case that any practice anywhere observed to have been followed in that country, once it was able to find lodgement in some form or other of written literature, had a tendency in times which were very different from ours to take rank as ācāra with a possibility of becoming even sadācāra.. I feel bound and constrained to cut out the whole Satyavati-Bhīṣma colloquy and its uncomely issue as Brāhmaṇic elaboration more ingenious than artistic. A practice which is disapproved is made to take on a sacred ritualistic character and the last trace of doubt and misgiving is caused to be removed by the Veda-Vyāsa counterfeit. Its very perfection as a counterfeit condemns it. The person selected does, for a miracle, turn out to be just the one who is able to satisfy the opposing points of view of both the Dowager and the Regent; for is not Vyāsa at the same time a very "superior" Brāhmaṇ and a "brother" too of the deceased ?'²⁵¹

In answer to Janamejaya's curiosity, the tale of Dharma being born as Vidura on account of the curse of Sage Aṇimāṇḍavya is once again narrated in detail in Adhy.101. Karṇa's birth, alongwith his parenthood by Adhiratha, his famous generosity and his consequent loss of the inborn protective armour and earrings at the hands of Indra is briefly narrated in Adhy. 104. Gāndhārī's prematurely forced delivery of the hundred sons who were then reared up in hundred vessels filled with ghee is already referred to above on p. 104. We find a small complex of tales woven round the births of the five epic heroes occupying Adhy. 109-115. The tale of sage

250 ĀdiP. 98.5.

loke'py' ācarito dṛṣṭaḥ kṣatriyāṇām punarbhavaḥ/

251 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origin)*, Nagendranath Ghose, Second Edition, Choukhamba, Varanasi, 1965. pp. 184-86,

Kindama's curse upon Pāṇḍu (Adhy. 109) has been referred to and discussed above on p. 174. Consequently Pāṇḍu with his two wives goes to live on Mount Śataśrṅga (Adh. 110.) Pāṇḍu's inability to procreate on account of the curse once again brings in the problem of Niyoga. The situation is twice referred to as 'Āpad'.²⁵² Pāṇḍu mentions a number of types of sons almost in the same descending order of preference²⁵³ as found in the Manusmṛti.²⁵⁴ What is more, Manu himself has been mentioned by name in this context.²⁵⁵ Soon after in the speech, Pāṇḍu requests Kuntī to create progeny by Niyoga, and to support his stand, he alludes to one Śāradāṇḍāyanī (daughter of Śāradāṇḍa) who was the wife of a hero (? Virapatnī), and who, at the instance of her elders, gave birth to three valiant sons Durjaya etc. by choosing to stay with a twice-born.²⁵⁶ Kuntī vehemently repudiates the suggestion fervently hoping that Pāṇḍu himself should approach her for the sake of progeny. She corroborates her view by narrating a queer ancient tale: There was great love between the famous king Vyūṣitāśva and his beautiful queen Bhadrā Kākṣivātī. By over-indulgence with her, he invited upon himself pulmonary consumption and died childless. While the queen, embracing the dead-body, was wailing piteously, some inherent voice told her that on certain days she should sleep on her bed with her dead husband. She did so and obtained three Śālva and four Madra princes. Kuntī hopes that some such miracle will take place in the case of Pāṇḍu also who will be able to procreate in her with the power of Tapas or Yoga (Adhy. 112). Pāṇḍu again explains calmly that, in ancient times, there was no restriction for women in regard to their association with men even outside marriage. But once when the wife of sage Uddālaka was being taken away by a brāhmin in front of her husband, the son, sage Śvetaketu could not bear the insult and laid down that thenceforward no woman should court a man other than her husband unless he himself asks her to do so for the sake of progeny. Any woman transgressing this restriction will incur a sin of embryonicide. Thus, under instruction of her husband king Saudāsa Kalmāṣapāda, queen Madayantī approached sage Vasiṣṭha and obtained a son, Aśmaka by name. Kuntī also should emulate her example (Adhy. 113). Kuntī, then, obtains Yudhiṣṭhira from Dharma, Bhīma from Vāyu and Arjuna from Indra (Adhy. 114). Mādrī obtains the twins Nakula and Sahadeva from Aśvinā (Adhy. 115). Adhy. 116 describes the end of king Pāṇḍu.²⁵⁷

The complex is interesting in many ways. Pāṇḍu refers to the episode of Madayantī approaching Vasiṣṭha for progeny following her husband's instruction. The reference is fully set out in Adhy. 173 below. King Kalmāṣapāda was cursed by sage Śakti to become a man-eater. Once he caught the male of a brāhmin couple about

252 ĀdiP. 111.22 & 30.

253 ĀdiP. 111.27-30.

254 Manusmṛti. IX. 166-181.

255 ĀdiP. 111.31. Cf. manuḥ svāyambhuvo' bravīṭ //

256 ĀdiP. 111. 33-35

257 Refer above p. 74.

to become intimate, and devoured him in spite of the beseeching cries of the woman whose fertile period was thus being rendered futile. The woman cursed the king that he would meet his death when trying to approach his queen in her fertile period, and immolated herself.

It can be seen that the motif-structures of the three tales—that of Pāṇḍu, that of Kalmāṣapāda and of Krauñcavadha in RM— are closely parallel. In all of them, killing the male of a pair in union results in a curse upon his killer. Of course, the curse is pronounced in one by the pierced sage himself, in the other by the bereaved woman. In the RM-tale it is pronounced by the sympathetic witness – sage Vālmiki. The curse also reflects such a distinction. In the MBh-tales the killer is denied the enjoyment of the female company with a threat of death; in the RM-tale, the killer is denied the happiness of a steady life for breaking a steadfast pair.

A comparison of the kinds of sons mentioned by Pāṇḍu with those mentioned in the Manusmṛti as well as a reference to Manu by name seems to support the hypothesis we have just presented above. Pāṇḍu's allusion to Śāradanḍāyanī is one more example of the custom of Niyoga so widely prevalent in the society as reflected in the MBh. It is observed in connection with this episode along with such others that "Though the smṛtis usually allow only one son, the Epic tradition permits maximum of three sons perhaps because of the belief that having one son was as good as having no son. When Pāṇḍu desired more sons, Kuntī refused saying that the limit is of only three sons and she would be a bad woman if she indulged further in that practice. Similarly Vyāsa gave three sons to the widows of Vicitravīrya and Śāradanḍāyanī also bore three sons called Durjaya and his two brothers".²⁵⁸ At such places, Dr. Vora's observations seem acceptable, but at many other places, her deductions seem ill-informed and therefore misguided. For example, the tale of Vyuṣitāśva and Bhadrā is taken by the doctor to be an "example of the very chaste wife."²⁵⁹ Observes she: "Absolute fidelity in marriage, wherein sexual relations outside wedlock, even for the purpose of procreation were not approved of, is held to be the ideal in support of which is cited an example of the chaste queen Bhadrā, who when forced to procure sons from outside agency conceived them by lying by the side of the corpse of her husband through the power of her chastity".²⁶⁰ Now a little thinking will make it clear that the tale has something to do with the upasamveśana ceremony of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice. Dissolved as a Karmadhāraya compound, the name Vyuṣitāśva (vyuṣitaḥ aśvah) can mean 'a dead horse' where the first member of the compound is past passive participle of vi+√vas-'to stay, to go far, (metaphorically) to die.'²⁶¹ In the upasamveśana ceremony of Aśvamedha the

258 *Evolution of Morals in the Epics*, Dhairyabala P. Vora, Bombay, 1959. p. 88.

259 *ibid.* p. 88.

260 *ibid.* p. 41.

261 Cp. also the root pra+√i - 'to die' (derivative p.p.p. 'preta'). The root vi - vas - also has the advantage of the second meaning 'to shine'. Thus, the name 'Vyuṣitāśva'

queen is expected to lie down with the sacrificed horse. We have also already pointed out that the sacrifice is a fertility-rite.²⁶² The queen Bhadrā in this tale is shown to sleep with the dead body of her husband named "Dead Horse", in order to obtain progeny. The name of the queen 'Bhadrā' will also be found very significant in the light of the Brahmodya which "is associated with the ritual of coitus"²⁶³ and which is recited by "The queen who lies with the sacrificially killed horse."²⁶³ The queen repeats thrice : "O Ambā, Ambikā, Ambālikā ! None leads me, the horse sleeps with Subhadrā from Kāmpila."²⁶³ The affinity of the names Bhadrā and Subhadrā, the name Vyūṣitāśva and the sacrificed horse, the ceremony of Upasamveśana and the motif of sleeping with the dead body of the husband (called "Dead Horse"), the the common purpose of fertility, — all these factors go to prove that the words of the brahmodya are ideally reflected in the central motif of the tale which has, thus, a very vital relation with the upasamveśana ceremony of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice. Dr. Vora examines the tale from a sociological point of view and takes it to present an ideal of conjugal fidelity and chastity upheld by Kuntī in protest of Pāṇḍu's suggestion for Niyoga, but the irony of the situation is that the tale itself idealises the upasamveśana ceremony which in its turn is based on the custom of Niyoga as pointed out by Willibald Kirfel.²⁶⁴ The tales should first have been studied from a folk-loristic-anthropological point of view, and then the outcome of such a study should have been utilised as data for further sociological studies. Dropping the first step can lead to contradictory results.

Again, Dr. Vora says : "It should be noted that throughout the Epic Kuntī stands for the new conception of sex-morals eventhough she had herself committed breaches according to the moral standard of those concepts." The doctor seems to be over-enthusiastic in her attempts to save the character of Kuntī. Actually, unless we can ascertain the dates of the various portions of the epic there is hardly any point in talking about old sex-morals or new ones.

The temptation to express an unholy idea in this context is irresistible. Kuntī knows that the female company is fatal for Pāṇḍu. In answer to Pāṇḍu's suggestion of Niyoga for progeny, the example she cites shows the woman securing progeny from the crop of her husband. And mark her words; "You only, O joy of the Kurus !

(dissolved as a Bahuvrihi compound, 'one who possesses shining horses') may also mean the sun, and the relation Sun (=Indra) = the god of fertility obtains in many primitive religions.

262 See above p. 35

263 'A Folk-Custom in the Aśvamedha', S. A. Dange, *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, June 1967. p. 323. Cf. ambe ambike'mbālike na mā nayati kaścana/ sasaty aśvakah subhadrikāñ kāmpila-vāsinim// *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* : XXIII.18.

264 Cf. Dange's article, p. 323; "...the ritual of coitus imbibes the idea of Niyoga current in ancient India to obtain a 'kṣetraja' son". Cf. 'Aśvamedha, the king of Sacrifices', B. H. Kapadia, *JUB*, Vol. XXX, part 2. Also see above pp. 35-36

approach me for progeny."²⁶⁵ The tale cited by her imbibes the upasrñvešana ceremony, in which, originally, the male was slowly strangled while he impregnated the chief queen.²⁶⁶ Does Kuntī wish to convey that even as he would die, Pāṇḍu himself should impregnate the queen in order to obtain progeny? that she would stick fast to her vow of chastity even at the cost of her husband's life? Should not her over-justificatory attitude be understood as an attempt to cover up (may be, unconsciously) her pre-marriage motherhood of Karna? Does the author of this portion realise what a damage he is doing to the character of this mother of the epic-heroes?

Though Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, is a well-known figure of the later Upaniṣadic times, there is no reference to him as a social reformer in any of the Vedic works. The Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana, however, refers to him as one who abridged the original science of love enunciated by Nandin into 500 Chapters. He is also referred to there as being responsible for prohibiting wine and extra-marital sex for the brāhmins so that they can protect their wives in a better way.²⁶⁷ The epic-tale of Śvetaketu laying down the rules of fidelity of the married couple to each other seems to be an extension of the rules for brāhmins ascribed to him in the Kāmasūtras. The exception of Niyoga to be adopted in the cases of childlessness is also appended to the genral 'exposition', which makes the tale relevant in the context.

The stories of the births of sage Kṛṣṇa (Adhy. 120) and of sage Droṇa (Adhy. 121) have already been dealt with in the beginning of this section. To Droṇa, Aśvatthāman was born in Gautamī. As soon as he was born, he cried loudly. Having heard his cry, the internal spirit said: Because his strength like that of a horse has gone into all directions with his cry, this boy will be named Asvatthāman (Aśva+sthāman, 'Having the strength of a horse'). It may be noted, that though a case of etymologische legende, this is not an example of the orphan-motif-story. One more example against Dr. Hara's theory. The final portion of Adhy. 121 relates the incident of Droṇa's pupilship under sage Paraśurāma.²⁶⁸ The tale of Ekalavya also has been referred to.²⁶⁹ After the education of the Pāṇḍavas and their escape from the

265 Adip. 112.4. apatyāya ca mām gaccha tvam eva kuru-nandana // also see the ślokas preceding and following.

266 Cf. Dr. B. H. Kapadia's article: "After this, the Mahiṣī, the first queen of the king was caused to lie down by the side of the dead horse so that she can insert in her organ the penis of the horse. She should have cohabitation with it." (p.15) "The Mahiṣī should lie (sic) by the side of the dead man and under a cloth should carry on cohabitation." (p.16) "While or shortly after his sacrificial death he was made to cohabit with the first queen of the king. As he was throttled, his penis would be made to get erected, there will be discharge of semen. Through this type of sacerdotal procreation the queen can be really pregnant, the god king can have a corresponding offspring." "(p. 17) JUB, Vol. XXX, part 2.

267 Cf. Vātsyāyana Kāma-Sūtras I.i.9, and V. vi.48.

268 See above pp. 68-69.

269 See above pp. 115 ff.

lac-house built by Duryodhana to burn them alive, the episodes of Bhīma's slaying the demons Hiḍimba and Baka²⁷⁰ run upto Adhy. 152. The next section called Caitraratha sub-parvan occupies Adhy. 153-173. Therein are narrated (1) the story of the birth of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī from the altar of Sacrifice enunciated by king Drupada in order to avenge the insult inflicted upon him by Droṇa (Adhy. 154-155); (2) the story of Draupadī's former birth in which she could not get a proper husband, pleased Lord Śankara with penance, whom she, in elation at her success, requested for a husband five times, and obtaining a boon of five husbands, chose to have them in her next birth (Adhy. 157, the story is repeated below at Ādip. 189. 41-47); (3) the episode of Gandharva Aṅgāraparṇa who is defeated by Arjuna, becomes his friend and narrates the following cluster of tales (Adhy. 158-159); (4) the story of Tapatī, the daughter of Sun, and Saṁvaraṇa, a famous king in the line of Kurus, who obtained rains by bringing Vasiṣṭha in his kingdom (Adhy. 160-163); (5) (a) the story of Viśvāmitra's unsuccessful attempt to snatch away the Kāma-duḥ Cow of Vasiṣṭha, and his consequent performance of penance; (b) Śakti's curse to Kalmāṣapāda to become a man-eater who, possessed by an evil spirit inspired by the ever-vengent Viśvāmitra, began by first eating up his curser - sage Śakti, the eldest son of Vasiṣṭha and then devoured all other sons of his (Adhy.166); (c) Vasiṣṭha's unsuccessful attempts of suicide which he eventually gave up when he knew that Adṛśyantī, his daughter-in-law, was bearing the child of his son Śakti (Adhy.166-167); (d) Vasiṣṭha's procreating a child upon the queen of king Kalmāṣapāda who was rendered unable to procreate due to a Brāhmin-woman's curse (Adhy.168), (we have dealt with this story above in this section only); (e) Vasiṣṭha's attempt to appease the wrath of his grandson Parāśara by narrating the story of Aurva, whereupon Parāśara vented his wrath in the Sacrifice of Rākṣasas from which he was desisted after some time by the sages Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu (Adhy. 169 and 172); (f) the story of Aurva whose Bhārgava clan was annihilated by Kṛtavīrya and who, as soon as he was born, blinded the entire host of kṣatriyas by his lustre, and then threw his anger into the ocean where, in the form of the vāḍava-fire, it constantly consumes the water (Adhy. 169-171).

The last tale of the bunch has links in many directions. Its first close parallel is the tale of Cyavana,²⁷¹ another sage of the Bhṛgu line. The names of both the sages are justified etymologically. Cyavana was so called because he slipped (√cyu) from the womb of his mother. Aurva is so called because he was born by breaking open his mother's thigh.²⁷² As soon as he was born, Cyavana burnt his father's thief to ashes. Aurva also, as soon as he was born, blinded the kṣatriyas — the enemies of his ancestors. The irresistible anger of the child for the killer or antagonist of his father

270 pp. 108 ff. above.

271 See above p.93.

272 Cf. Ādip. 170.8. sa aurva iti vipraṁṣir ūrum bhittvā vyajāyata // This, of course, should be understood metaphorically only.

or ancestors is the central element in the tales of Parāśara and Janamejaya also. Aurva, Parāśara and Janamejaya, further, are checked by ancestors or sages, who are related either to the aggrieved or the afflicted party. Aurva is said to have only heated the worlds with his penance intended to destroy the worlds, but Parāśara is reported to have actually instituted a sacrifice of Rākṣasas just as Janamejaya did that of Nāgas. Thus, the tales of Cyavana, Aurva, Parāśara and Janamejaya form a cluster which reveals a gradual shift in the motif structures, leading to the tale of Janamejaya.

The story of Kalmāṣapāda and other episodes connected with the Viśvāmitra-Vasiṣṭha-controversy are already referred to above.²⁷³ The story of Tapatī is interesting in two ways. (1) It seems to have some connection with the present river Tāptī. It will not be missed that the present city of Surat is often referred to as Sūryapura and the sub-town on the opposite bank of Taptī is called Rānder, the seat of Rannāde or Rāndaldevī—the wife of the Sun-god. The area of South Gujarat is still known among the traditional brāhmins as Bhṛgu-kṣetra; Sukthankar has shown that the final edition of MBh was prepared under a very strong influence of the Bhārgava Brāhmins. It is quite likely that the Bhārgava redactors might have left in the epic some imprints of their geographical associations in the form of such tales. (2) It is said in the latter part of the tale, that after his marriage with Tapatī, king Saṁvaraṇa enjoyed himself in her company for twelve years in the mountains and during those twelve years it did not rain in his capital and kingdom. Then Vasiṣṭha brought him to the town and all was well again. Apparently it reminds us of the tale of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. But the case is reverse here. The king himself has to be brought back to to his kingdom by his priest so that it may rain.

It is then said that Tapatī eventually gave birth to Kuru in whose line finally the epic-heroes appeared. This Kuru is famous through the Kurukṣetra the land of which, it is said, he tilled with his own hands.²⁷⁴ The story has, therefore, twofold relevance: it is the birth-story of the progenitor of the race of the epic-heroes, and of the person who tilled the field which finally became the battlefield of the epic-heroes.

We may be pardoned, however, if we suspect some agricultural myth even in this tale. Tapatī has often been called in this tale the “younger sister of Sāvitrī”²⁷⁵ She is another aspect, the heat, of the sun. Saṁvaraṇa (derived from saṁ+√vr-‘to cover, cover up’,) taking her into the mountains may symbolise the heat of the sun being covered up by the clouds. So long as the clouds are away, it does not rain. Only when they return, it rains. And only then the heat covered up with clouds gives birth to Kuru—the tiller of the field.²⁷⁶ Whether this interpretation be acceptable or not, the

273 See above p. 61 ff.

274 ŚaIP. 53.

275 ‘Savitri-avarajā’. Cf. Ādip. 160.7, 161.20, 163.1.

276 The name Kuru has a protonym Kurus in Avestā. Whether it has some connection with the root √krs — ‘to plough’ is still a matter of research.

names of Tapatī and Samvaraṇa, Tapatī being the second daughter of Sun, association of rains with the presence of Samvaraṇa, and the birth of the tiller-king – all these elements point to a strong probability of a myth being imbibed in the tale.

It should be noted that the tale is introduced with the merest pretext of Arjuna being addressed as Tāpatya— “the descendant of Tapatī”. The address is the most unusual and unique in the entire MBh and is clearly intended to introduce the tale.

The episode of Arjuna’s fight with the Gandharva may be considered a part of the principal tale, since here by becoming a friend of Arjuna, and later on in VanP by taking Duryodhana prisoner, he plays some part in the principal tale, and becomes a character in it.

Finally, we come to the episodes connected with the birth and the polyandrous marriage of Draupadī. “She is the central figure of the story...and every other figure derives importance from the relation in which he or she stands towards her, as friend, kin or enemy”.²⁷⁷ She is shown to be born, alongwith her brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna, from the sacrifice which Drupada performs in order to be able to avenge the insult which his brāhmin schoolfriend Droṇa has inflicted upon him. But, she is shown to be married to the Pāṇḍavas, and “The Pāṇḍavas, it will be remembered, were Kauravas and had taken as active a part (Arjuna’s, according to the Epic, was the most determinative) as their cousins in the transaction which gave occasion for the special creation of these instruments of revenge”.²⁷⁸ Could she, then, be married to the Pāṇḍavas? Mr. Ghose, in his forceful language of a lawyer, makes out the case that Droṇa is entirely fictitious and is imposed upon the Epic from outside. “One fiction breeds a dozen others. The dressed-up defeat and humiliation of Drupada at the hands of his Brāhman adversary makes it a poetical necessity, on the part of the Brāhman author, to provide that Drupada in his turn should get (as a gift from Brāhman, of course) a son who will square his accounts for him with Droṇa, and a daughter destined in a parallel manner to bring death and destruction upon the House of Droṇa’s Kaurava allies. But to allow these children to be begotten on the body of Drupada’s chaste consort would have so unduly delayed the scheme of revenge (Droṇa was getting on in years and the Pāṇḍavas had already attained marriageable age), that the miracle-working Brāhman cause them to come out of the materials of the very yajña through the magic efficacy of which all this was to be accomplished. So are born (Sūta-Māgadha fashion) Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the son, fully armed and accoutred for the act of revenge; and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī (she of the Saga) in the full glory of beauteous maidenhood”.²⁷⁹ Stripping off of its linguistic intonations, basically the argument seems very sound. That Droṇa might have belonged to the

277 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins)*; Nagendra Nath Ghose, Varanasi, 1965. p.170.

278 *ibid.* p.193.

279 *ibid* pp. 192-3.

original Epic may well be suspected also from the fact that it was felt necessary to emphasise his character by repeating the tale of his birth and growth almost in the same words within a small span of some thirty Adhyāyas of ĀdiP only !²⁸⁰

If Droṇa is fictitious, the motif of Drupada's intention of taking revenge upon him, the sacrifice for the purpose of revenge and Draupadī's birth alongwith Dhṛṣṭadyumna from it will all fall down as mere Brāhmaṇic concoctions. Mr. Ghose contends, that even the Svayamvara of Draupadī is a mere poetic fiction. "Draupadī's marriage with the Pāṇḍavas was arranged, without advertisement (at least of the kind which is implied in a *svayamvara* ceremony) by private treaty, Kṛṣṇa-Mādhava taking a leading, and perhaps the determinative, part in the negotiations. It was a deliberately planned out political marriage. Every other consideration was subordinated to the one and only object of the marriage, namely, the alignment of the Kurus, the Pāṇḍavas and the Vṛṣṇis on one side in the struggle that was being waged against Jarāsandha... the marriage had to be concluded in the way it was, against the wishes it might be of the Pāṇḍavas themselves, but in accordance possibly with the dictation of Drupada and his kin, because at that time at any rate the marriage was in accordance with the custom of his House, and a group-marriage provided a better guarantee for the success of his plans...²⁸¹ According to this opinion, the polyandrous marriage, being a political necessity, was slyly winked at by Kṛṣṇa, was accepted by the Pāṇḍavas probably against their wish but under the oppression of the circumstances and was well in accordance with the custom of the House of Drupada. S. A. Dange also justifies this non-aryan type of marriage of the Aryan princes very much by the same arguments of political necessity.²⁸² It will, however, be interesting to note that, in his book 'Himalayan Polyandry'²⁸³ D. N. Majumdar has drawn attention to the fact that, even to this day, the people of the two villages Jaunsar and Bawar situated at the foot of the hills of the Himālaya believe themselves to be the descendants of Duryodhana and Pāṇḍavas respectively, and traces of the polyandrous marriage-customs are still discernible in their society. Whether the Pāṇḍavas were Āryans, and whether the custom of polyandry was once prevalent even among Āryans are further disputable questions much beyond the scope of our investigation. But the anthropological study of the customs of the people of Jaunsar-Bawar makes it possible that the Pāṇḍavas, after all, may not have been as unwilling to enter into such a marriage as is normally supposed.

280 Cp. ĀdiP. 121.3-10 and ĀdiP. 154.1-8;
 ĀdiP. 121.16-22 and ĀdiP. 154.8-12;
 ĀdiP. 122.1-11 and ĀdiP. 154.14-16, and
 ĀdiP. 123.1-3 and ĀdiP. 154.18-24.

281 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins)*, pp.196-8.

282 'The Pāṇḍava Riddle', S. A. Dange, *Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol. XXVI, pt.2, Arts No. 32, 1957.

283 *Himalayan Polyandry*, D. N. Majumdar, Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1. 1962,

And that is the bedrock of the problem – this polyandrous marriage of Draupadī. “...there is no possibility of any doubt that such customs as polyandry and levirate were existing in their society. But in course of time these customs were gradually coming into disfavour.”²⁸⁴ “...although at the time the Māhābhārata came to be written, Kuru-Pāñcāla...was a country where the most approved Āryan practices were observed, at the date at any rate of the events of the Saga, it might have been and apparently was a good deal behind this stage, considering the proneness for resorting to *niyoga* found in the former principality and the five-husband marriage which admittedly took place in the teeth of all *śāstric* precedents.”²⁸⁵ The problem has been neatly put by Mr. Ghose in these words. “The fact is that the Brāhmaṇ author of this part of the Epic found himself up against a stubborn piece of the original Saga narrative which had become traditionally so fixed and notorious that it did not admit of exclusion or erasure, against a fact (in other words) which he could neither ignore, explain away nor satisfactorily account for.”²⁸⁶ It has taxed all the ingenuities of the Brāhmin author of these portions of ĀdiP who was hard pressed by the incumbent necessity of explaining in a satisfactory manner this polyandrous marriage of Draupadī to a society in which the custom of polyandry had long before become obsolete, unheard-of, alien, even abhorrent. On the one hand, Dharmasāstras were entirely against such a marriage. On the other hand, the portion had become an unavoidable part of the original narrative. What a hard pill it must have been to the epic-redactor can be surmised from the number of ways in which he tries to explain away the unpalatable fact.

“What could indeed be more puerile than to seek to account for this marriage (i) by the necessity which existed of seeing to that even a casually dropped remark of that “living flame of a woman” (*arccirivānālasya*),²⁸⁷ Kuntī (who imagining that her son had brought in food to eat and not a live girl to marry had advised them to divide the same up amongst themselves), was literally fulfilled!²⁸⁸ (ii) by the apprehension which had to be eliminated that over such a prize girl the Pāñḍavas might fall out amongst themselves in the way Sunda and Upasunda,²⁸⁹ the Daityas, did over Tilottamā in the legend...?”²⁹⁰

There is also a tale of Draupadī’s previous birth in which she, as an ascetic maiden, pleased lord Śaṅkara by her fierce penance and asking in elation for a husband five times, obtained the boon of getting five husbands; she then chose the realisation

284 ‘The Origin of the Pāñḍavas’, M. J. Kashalikar, *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, June 1967, p.359.

285 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture*, pp.198–99.

286 *ibid.* p 197.

287 ĀdiP. 185.7.

288 ĀdiP. 182. ff.

289 ĀdiP. 201–204.

290 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture*, p.197.

of her boon to be postponed to her next birth; i.e. her birth as Draupadī.²⁹¹ Her five-husband marriage, therefore, is presented to be as good as pre-destined in accordance with the famous principle of Karma-phala. Like the tale of Droṇa, this tale is also twice narrated in almost identical words and the very attempt to emphasise it by repeating it condemns it !

Even her birth from sacrifice and her five husbands' births due to the divine levirate are such details as can be looked upon as attempts to render this polyandrous marriage unblemishable. Such an attempt to forestall any possibility of blemish upon the character of the heroine by showing her birth from sacrifice (or sacrificial ground) can also be observed in the case of Sītā. There, even Rāma's character is shown to be born of the sacrifice. Such is the strong impress of the sacredness of sacrifice in popular mind that birth out of a sacrifice immediately renders the character crystal-pure and his actions unrepachable and beyond question. Some of Rāma's undignified but politically wise steps, Sītā's stay at Rāvaṇa's house, and Draupadī's polyandrous marriage are such details as are glossed over by making the characters born from sacrifice.

The Pāṇḍavas are shown to be born not from sacrifice, but of the custom of levirate. We have already seen above that Manusmṛti does grant approval to the custom of Niyoga but only with great reluctance. We have noted there the discrepancy between the smṛti-allowance and the Epic-practice in regard to the number of sons to be obtained through this custom of Niyoga.²⁹² Mr. Ghose has something else to say on the point : "I can well believe Pāṇḍu (who though younger became heir to the Royal succession according to law superseding his born-blind elder brother, Dhṛtarāṣṭra) falling so seriously, and to all appearances hopelessly, ill that he had to take leave of and retire from the toils and responsibilities of the Royal office, of his withdrawing accompanied by his still sonless wives (Pṛthā-Kuntī and Mādri) into a salubrious hill-*tapovana* for health's sake; and then recovering from these ailments sufficiently to be the actual father of as many as five lusty healthy sons...and truly, when you find the widow of a person, circumstanced as (when he retired) Pāṇḍu was, return home after many years' absence and present before the world not one but five strapping lads as the issue from the loins of her invalided (and now deceased) husband, the matter is naturally made the subject of ill-natured speculation and comment by persons who have an interest in making them...One can understand the reason why the authors of the Epic (whose partiality for the Pāṇḍavas and their cause is open and undisguised) should avoid all allusion to it, and at the same time *pro abundantia cautela* seek to cover up the traces by some acceptable theory of *kṣetraja* procreation. The most natural to suggest would have been, of course, to assign the credit of actual fatherhood to some superior Ṛṣi denizen of the *tapovana* to

291 ĀdiP. 157 and 189.41-47.

292 Fn. 258 above.

which Pāṇḍu had retired ... But neither law nor propriety would sanction the vicarious procreation by even a superior Brahman of five hefty sons in succession. This I conceive to have been the real origin of the cock-and-bull story that figures in the Epic of gods, real gods, being made by *mantras*, derived (only those gods knew how) from a holy Brāhman again, to come down and perform this obliging service for Pāṇḍu.²⁹³ Mr. Ghose arranges the pieces of zigsaw so perfectly that it is difficult to find a hole in it.

The author, therefore, chooses to show the five sons of Pāṇḍu as born of divine levirate. But a levirate is a levirate. Making it divine does not remove the stigma attached to it. The author tries to show the practice of *niyoga* as one widely practised. The fathers of the epic-heroes and villains are also shown to be born of levirate. Kings like Kalmāṣapāda had taken to the practice. After Paraśurāma's total annihilation of the Kṣatriyas, even Brāhmins had performed Niyoga upon the Kṣatriya-women. Both Śvetaketu and Manu have sanctioned it. Still, in spite of the fact that levirate is shown to be so widely prevalent, the author yet feels constrained to add a Pañcendropākhyāna²⁹⁴ — the tale of the five Indras —, an ingenious piece of Brāhmanical concoction.

The tale runs thus : In the gods' sacrifice at Naimiṣa-forest, Yama was engaged as the sacrificial killer. So he could not kill people who grew both in number and years. Gods complained to Brahman who pacified them. While returning, they saw a lotus in the river Gaṅgā. Going near, Indra saw a woman crying whose tears had become the lotus. On inquiry about the cause of her weeping, she led Indra to a god who steadied the arrogant Indra, and showing four other previous Indras like him ordered all the five to be born on earth. They, however, were granted the request to be procreated by gods, namely Dharma, Vāyu, Maghavan and Aśvinau. The woman was made their wife. The god himself with Nārāyaṇa was born as Balarāma with Keśava.

According to this tale, then, the five epic-heroes are the five Indras born as Pāṇḍavas. The subtle distinction will have to be made that Dharma, Vāyu etc. are the seed-layers while the epic-heroes themselves are actually all the incarnations of five Indras. The contradiction in the case of Arjuna that Indra will be the seed-layer as well as the incarnation will have to be overlooked. Draupadī, according to this version, will be an incarnation of Lakṣmī; according to the other story about her previous birth, just mentioned above and which follows on the heels of this tale in this very Adhyāya, she will be a woman born with a destiny to have five husbands. To some extent, this story contradicts the incarnation motif of the Ādivaṃśāvatarāṇa-parvan also. Yet, the tale is very much there, and reveals by its over-doing the anxiety of its author to cover up the fact of the heroine's polyandrous marriage. He author leaves no stone unturned, as it were. He musters up as many justifications as

293 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture*, p.188.

294 ĀdiP. 189.1-40.

he can lay his hands on — the principle of Karma-phala, the theory of incarnation, the custom of Niyoga, the efficacy of a sacrifice (and even fabricating an entirely new character — that of Droṇa — if we believe Mr. Ghose) — all conceivable things are set together in one big bunch to justify one centrally important, obsolete and unavoidable detail of the original Saga. They sometimes even cancel each other. Apparently, the author lacks any sense of propriety and proportion. But through a maze of tales we can see the singularity of purpose and uniformity of pattern. Except for some few narratives of the ancestors of the epic-heroes, all other tales are, in one way or the other, intended to validate and consolidate the polyandrous marriage of the epic-heroes and its heroine.

A minor observation may be added. All the tales of Niyoga are narrated in connection with the kṣatriyas only. The brahmins play the role of the procreator, but the 'kṣetra' is always a kṣatriya-woman. No brāhmin is shown to be born of Niyoga. Śāradaṇḍāyanī appears by name to be a brāhmin-woman, but she is called there a vīra-patnī. This may be adduced to the superioristic arrogance of the Brāhmins, but another fact is more important. Manu says : "This animal-custom, which is denounced by the learned brāhmins, was laid down even for human beings when king Vena was rulling the territory."²⁹⁵ Brahmins denounced it, but since the time of king Vena, the custom has been prevalent among human beings. This distinction is clearly reflected and consistently maintained throughout in the birth-stories of the epics. The arrogant tendency of the brāhmin-redactors apart, this once again provides a close link between the MBh and the Manusmṛti.

Another point of contact between ĀdiP and Manusmṛti also must be noted. We see that Manusmṛti gives some allowance, though reluctantly, to the custom of Niyoga. So we also find in the MBh the custom of Niyoga to be widely prevalent, and rather often resorted to. But the polyandrous type of marriage, Manusmṛti does not countenance at all. And the author of the ĀdiP is hard put to justify the stubborn and notorious detail of the polyandrous marriage of Draupadī, and the fellow has to take recourse to the superhuman agency — the fatalistic tendency in the case of Draupadī and divine agency in the birth of the Pāṇḍavas. It will not be missed that no other Niyoga than that of the epic-heroes is ascribed to divine agencies. A normal Niyoga in the case of the heroes would not have been enough to justify and sanctify their peculiar type of marriage. This difference in the treatment of the customs of polyandry and levirate also points to some affinity between the MBh and Manusmṛti.

The tales of the ĀdiP which now follow have already been dealt with in the previous section. The last episode of the ĀdiP — that of Khāṇḍava-burning has also been dealt with in the last section of the first chapter. That brings us to the end of ĀdiP.

295 *Manusmṛti*, IX.66. Cf. :

ayam dvijair hi vidvadbhiḥ paśu-dharmo vigarhitaḥ /
manuṣyāṇāṃ api prokto vene rājyam praśāsati //

(4) The Tales of Sabhāparvan

Compared to those in the ĀdiP, the tales as such in the SabP are very few and far between. More frequent, however, are allusions to certain famous tales or episodes. Sometimes even complete tales are set so briefly that they would look more like a summary of the tale than a tale itself. Fully set secondary tales in SabP are only these : (1) The tale of the birth of Jarāsandha (16.12 to 18.27), (2) that of the birth of Śiśupāla (Adhy.40), (3) that of the hypocrite old swan (38.30-40), (4) that of the quarrel of Virocana and Sudhanvan (61.58-79), (5) and that, relegated to the appendix of the Fire and the princess of king Nilā.

Allusions to some famous tales or episodes are also very interesting in SabP. In Adhy. 3, there are a number of allusions to the sacrificial achievements of Bhagīratha, Indra, Śaṅkara, Brahman, Vāsudeva etc.²⁹⁶ intended to show the greatness of the place of Bindu Lake on the Mount 'Gold-Peak' from where Maya Dānava brings the wealth to build the wonderful assembly-hall for Yudhiṣṭhira. The brief reference to the only king Hariścandra who obtained a place in Indra's assembly by performing Rājasūya²⁹⁷ is calculated to provoke Yudhiṣṭhira to emulate his example. A passing reference to the annihilation of the Kṣatriya clan by Paraśurāma is again of Bhṛgu-interest.²⁹⁸ Adhy. 13 narrates the history of Yādavas-Kaṁsa-Jarāsandha conflict recreating the political situation. Within it is briefly given the episode of the deaths of the great friends Haṁsa and Dibhaka each of whom, having heard of the death of the other committed suicide.²⁹⁹ Their death has weakened the position of Jarāsandha very much. The memory of Bṛhad-ratha's great achievement in killing the strong bull and getting three drums prepared from bull's leather, is associated with main entrance of the city of Girivraja where the drums are still beaten.³⁰⁰ We may note here that the rather over-accurate time indication of the duel between Bhīma and Jarāsandha, said to begin with the first day of Kārtika, and to continue day-and-night till on the fourteenth night the anti-hero gets tired and killed brutally, smells of some mythical superimposition upon the episode.³⁰¹ The chariot on which the victorious heroes ride is associated with the victories of Indra against Dānavas and in the war caused by the Tārā's abduction by Moon.³⁰² Its history is also given.³⁰³ Apart from the chariot's divine association, such references also seem to remind one of Kṛṣṇa's being an incarnation of Viṣṇu by

296 SabP. 3.8 15.

297 SabP. 11.52-60.

298 SabP. 13.2.

299 SabP. 13.39-42.

300 SabP. 19.14-16.

301 SabP. 21.17-18. In the Pūrṇimānta Lunar Calendar these days would correspond to the dark half of the month of Āśvina of our Vikrama-samvat Calendar and the night of Jarāsandha's death would correspond to that of Kāli Caturdaśī.

302 SabP. 22.16 & 18.

303 SabP. 22.27.

which name he is actually addressed in this context.³⁰⁴ Nārada also is reminded of the event of partial incarnation which took place before, and sees Kṛṣṇa as such.³⁰⁵ Bhīṣma also conforms to such an attitude.³⁰⁶ Such references pre-justify in a philosophical way Kṛṣṇa's act of slaying Śiśupāla which would otherwise have appeared autocratic.

There is a profusion of derogatory allusions to the events in the past lives of Bhīṣma and Kṛṣṇa in the speeches of Śiśupāla in Adhyāya 38 where Śiśupāla revitalizes his oratorical attack. Allusions to Kṛṣṇa's childhood adventures in killing the demons in various forms, in his breaking down the axis of the cart, in his holding up the Mount Govardhana, his killing Kaṁsa³⁰⁷ etc. are followed by allusions to Bhīṣma's past life — his abduction of Ambā who loved someone else, his 'inability' to have children, the insult of *niyoga* in his brother's wives being performed by a stranger (i.e. Vyāsa) etc.³⁰⁸ In between he also refers to the bird Bhūliṅga³⁰⁹ and narrates the tale of the hypocrite swan. Bhīṣma simply derides him by relating his birth-story. Then Kṛṣṇa himself alludes to some episodes showing Śiśupāla's attempts to harrass the Yādavas in an ignominious manner.³¹⁰ An insulting retort from Śiśupāla on the point of Rukmiṇī's abduction³¹¹ brings his death on a flash at the hands of Kṛṣṇa.

Duryodhana, while explaining his plan to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, alludes to Indra's betrayal of Namuci³¹² to justify betrayal as a rightful code of political conduct.

In the latter part of SabP, all the allusions or tales are put into the mouth of Vidura, that Aesop of the MBh. Thus in the speech with which he tries to dissuade the intoxicated gamesters from the game of dice which has reached a dangerous stage, there are three allusions. The first is to the very famous "Man-in-the Well" story. Vidura says: "Having found toddy, a drunkard would never recognize the fall. Either, having climbed (the tree) he sinks himself (in the intoxication) or suffers a fall".³¹³ The words *madhu* and *prapāta* have a covert reference to the famous story which is completely related by Vidura himself at the instance of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in StrP.³¹⁴

304 SabP 22.33, where Kṛṣṇa is addressed as 'viṣno' and 'puruṣottama'.

305 SabP. 33.12, 14-17, 19-20.

306 SabP 37.11. Cf.

nūnāṁ etat samādātum punar icchaty adhokṣajāḥ /
yad asya śiśupālastham tejas tiṣṭhati bhārata //

307 SabP. 38.7-11.

308 SabP. 38.21-23.

309 SabP. 38.17.

310 SabP. 42.7-11.

311 SabP. 42.15 & 18-19.

312 SabP. 50.20.

313 SabP. 55.4. Cf.

madhu vai mādhviko labdhvā prapātam nā'vabudhyate /
āruhya tam majjati vā patanam vā'dhigacchati //

314 Cf. StrP. 5-6.

Some twice-born lost his way into a dreadful forest infested with ferocious animals fearsome even to Death. Seeing them the fellow was horripilated and much perturbed. Then he saw the dense forest covered with the hands of a fearful woman. It was also surrounded by the five-hooded serpents. In the middle of the forest was a well covered by creepers and concealed. The man fell there and got entangled in the bough of creepers and was hanging there head-down, feet-high. Then, again, he saw on the well a mighty elephant with six heads and twelve feet. On the branches of the trees lived dreadful bees, collecting honey. The dripping honey was drunk by that man as he was hanging. His thirst, however, was never quenched. And even in that situation, his hope of life did not diminish. The tree was also being cut by black and white rats.

The tale is only a sustained metaphor which is explained by Vidura himself. This world is the forest; diseases, the ferocious animals; old-age, the fearful woman; human body, the well; Time, the great serpent; the hope of life, the creepers from which the man hangs; year with its six seasons and the twelve months, the elephant; days and nights are the white and black rats; desires are the bees and the joy in the earthly objects of desire is the dripping honey. It does not become a tale, it remains only a metaphor. But it is a gem of such metaphor-stories reflecting the Śramaṇa view of life, as Winternitz rightly points out.³¹⁵ The motif seems to have been so popular that the epic-redactors have used it for a completely opposite purpose. While wandering in the forest, the sages Jaratkāru³¹⁶ and Agastya³¹⁷ see their ancestors hanging head-down from the branch of tree sprung from the side-wall of a pit in the forest, and the branch is being cut by a rat. The branch is the body of the sage himself, the rat is Time. When the sage, who has not yet been married, dies childless, the ancestors will fall in the hell. The sage, thereupon, agrees to get married and procreate so that his ancestors may obtain deliverance. Thus the very motif which the ascetics used for preaching the renunciation of the world has been used craftily by the Brāhmin redactors for preaching acceptance of the world.

Vidura also refers in the same speech to an "historical" episode in which Śukrācārya advises the Asuras to give up one of their own brethren, Jambha, in order to save the whole clan. Vidura quotes the famous śloka of the sage which says: a man should be given up to salve one's family, one's family should be given up for the sake of one's own village, the village for the territory, and for the sake of one's Self, this entire earth should be given up.³¹⁸ Vidura had quoted the same śloka once before, at the time of the birth of Duryodhana,³¹⁹ when, seeing the ill-omens upon the prince's birth, he had advised the Kauravas to give the child up. Vidura repeats that advice now.

315 *History of Indian Literature*. M. Winternitz, Tr. Mrs. S. Ketkar, Calcutta, 1927. Vol.I.ii. p.408.

316 ĀdiP. 13.11-27.

317 VanP. 94.11-15.

318 SabP. 55.11-12.

319 ĀdiP. 107. 32

Just as, Vidura says, Duryodhana should be abandoned, Pāṇḍavas should be enfolded under wings. Vidura almost summarily relates the tale of a person who, out of greed, killed some gold-laying (lit. gold-spitting) wild birds staying in his house, in order to get all the gold immediately, and thereby destroyed both present and future gains.³²⁰ Similar is the attempt of the Kauravas to snatch away everything from the Pāṇḍavas immediately. The story of the gold-laying birds is famous. The motif is well-known. There is a story in ŚānP in which Sṛñjaya “from the grace of Nārada obtained a son whose excreta were gold; Suvarṇashthīvin was slain by some robbers but afterwards revived by Nārada”.³²¹ “There is an ass with the same gift in *Sicilianaische Märchen* No. 52”.³²² There is in *Pañcatantra* a story of a bird which has a golden excreta. The bird, however, is caught by a hunter, is presented to the king and let loose carelessly by the minister.³²³ But the tale as referred to by Vidura itself is very famous even as an Aesopic fable.

When Draupadī also is finally won over in the famous game of dice, Duryodhana asks Vidura to bring Draupadī in the assembly-hall to receive commands from her new masters. Vidura warns him that he is digging his own grave like that goat which, having dug up with his feet the earth in which was buried a bent-up sword and which, thus being sprung up, cut the throat of the goat itself.³²⁴ Kavathekar³²⁵ compares the tale to its various versions in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa³²⁶ and in Jātakakathā,³²⁷ and concludes that the tale must be a very popular one. This is also confirmed from that fact that Patañjali refers to a maxim called *ajakṛpāṇīya-nyāya*.³²⁸ Usages like “digging one’s grave” found in almost all the languages, also point to the popular currency of the central motif of the tale.

There is a rather detailed reference to a bird called Bhūliṅga,³²⁹ which is said to live on the far side of the Himālayas, which is said always to speak “mā sāhasam”

320 SabP. 55.12-13.

321 *Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata*, S. Sørensen, Delhi. 1963. p.667. ŚānP.31.

322 *The Ocean of Story*, Ed Penzer, Vol.I, p.11. fn.1.

323 *Pañcatantram*, Nirṇayasāgar Press, Bombay, Tenth Edn., 1959. Story III.14. pp.257-8.

324 SabP. 59.8. As F. Edgerton has shown (“*The Goat and the Knife*” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.LIX, pp.366-8) the critical reading solves a number of difficulties of interpretation created by corrupt reading. The critical version is as follows :

ajo hi śāstram akhanat kila'ikaḥ
śāstre vipanne padbhir apāsya bhūmim /
nikṛntanam svasya kaṇṭhasya ghoram
tadvad vairam mā khañiḥ pāṇḍuputraih //

325 *Samskṛta Sāhitya Men Nītikathā Kā Udgama Evam Vikāsa* (Hindi), P. N. Kavathekar, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, 1909. pp.357 ff.

326 II.vi.3.

327 No.481, Takkāriya jātaka.

328 Cf. *Laukika-nyāyāñjalih*, Ed. G. A. Jacob, Bombay, 1907. p.1, Referred to in Kavathekar, p.141.

329 SabP. 38.17 and 41.18-22,

(‘don’t act rash’) and yet to pick up particles of flesh sticking between the teeth of an eating lion. This is, however, not a tale. The speech and action of the bird are presented as its mutually contradictory characteristics of both of which, put together, constitute the single motif of a hypocrite person. The single motif by itself, however, does not give us a tale. It is only when the motif is linked with another motif to create a structure that a tale results. This is seen in the tale of the old hypocrite swan.³³⁰ Thus, the old swan by the sea-shore was dharmavāc, so the other birds put faith in him and left their eggs and young ones in his care. But the action of the old swan was quite the opposite, so he ate up the things to be cared for. When this was noticed, it led to the inevitable result: the birds killed the old swan!

The tale is interesting in a number of ways. As a tale, it offers an interesting comparison with the description of that other bird Bhūliṅga which is merely a motif, but not a tale, though both illustrate the quality of hypocrisy. It is said that in connection with the tale, the Purāṇa-vid people relate a gāthā also. In the constituted text, the gāthā is reconstructed in a very unusual metre called ‘Halāmukhī’. It runs thus: “When your heart is put aside, O bird, you are crying falsely! Your unholy act of eating up the eggs belies your speech.”³³¹

The tale reminds us of that another famous tale from *Hitopadeśa*, the tale of ‘the vulture and the cat.’³³² There, an old and invalid vulture who is looking after the eggs and young ones of other vultures when they are out, gives shelter to a hypocrite cat who eats up the eggs etc. unknown to the old bird. When he knows that the birds have noticed the loss, he escapes and the old vulture becomes the scapegoat and is killed by the birds.

The comparison of the two versions of the tale is very interesting. An old invalided bird, taking care of the eggs and small ones of a group and, in return, being taken care of by the young reflects the structure of our traditional joint family. Again that the sufferance of the punishment lies in both the tales with the old bird points to the fact that basically the tale is the same. But in the *Hitopadeśa* version, the motif of hypocrisy is transferred to the cat, though its punishment remains with the bird. The bird, here again, is a vulture, instead of a swan. A vulture is known for its qualities of keen observation and sharp attack. A cat is known for its quality of cunningness, at least in Indian culture. All the qualities are desirable for political success. The purpose of *Hitopadeśa* is obviously to teach the political maxims. In the MBh version, an old hypocrite is exposed to punishment. In the *Hitopadeśa* version an old and weakened politician falls prey to a crafty opportunist whose punishment he bears. The MBh version is intended, apparently to teach a forthright behaviour,

330 SabP. 38.28-40.

331 SabP. 38.40

antarātmani vinihite rauṣi patraratha vitatham /
anḍa-bhakṣaṇam aśuci te karma vācam atīṣayate //

actually to instigate the assembled kings against Bhīṣma; the *Hitopadeśa* version purports to teach a constant alertness of all the faculties lest a weakened politician be cheated by a cunning opportunist at any time. The Jātaka-version of the tale³³³ exactly corresponds to the MBh-version with just one difference that the hypocrite bird there is a crow, a better substitute for the purpose for a swan. This correspondence with the Jātaka version which is generally supposed to be older, the particle 'kila' used at the beginning of the narrative,³³⁴ the retention of a gāthā which itself appears to be very old, and the comparatively simple structure of the narrative — all these aspects go to prove that here we have a very old form of a popular fable, which reappears later in the *Hitopadeśa* in a different form developed with a view to extract from it, not ethical, but political wisdom.

The two tales of the births of anti-heroes narrated in the SabP — those of Jarāsandha and Śiśupāla — have already been referred to above.³³⁵ We saw there that they are narrated in the stream of the principal story at a point where the characters themselves occur — of course, to meet with their end at the hands of the hero. The birth-tale and the death-episode put together create an impression of having heard a complete — almost a self-complete — life-story. Since they are antagonists, some repulsive elements are bound to be added to their birth-stories. Thus, to justify the name 'Jarā-sandha',³³⁶ the child is shown to be born in two halves (in the two queens because they ate each a half of the mango-fruit given by the sage), which are then joined by the demoness, Jarā by name. Śiśupāla is born with the deformations of having three eyes (one in the forehead), four hands and the cry like that of a donkey!³³⁷ The peculiar popular sense of propriety can be seen at work in such cases.

A peculiar feature in both of these cases must be carefully noted. Jarāsandha is said to have captured some eighty six kings and kept them herded together in his capital Girivraja. When the number of the captive kings reaches a hundred he would sacrifice them as an offering to Lord Mahādeva.³³⁸ He is said to stand in special favour of Lord Śaṅkara³³⁹ whom he has seen with his physical eyes. He is then overcome and crushed by the crafty policy of Kṛṣṇa. The deformations with which Śiśupāla is said to be born — particularly the three eyes and four hands — are again reminiscent of Lord Śaṅkara. His Śaivaite peculiarities are shown to drop off as soon as

332 *Hitopadeśa*. Nirṇayasāgar Press, Bombay; Sixteenth Edn., 1958. Story 1.3. pp.16-19.

333 Jātaka No. 384. Dhammaddhaja Jātaka.

334 SabP. 38.30. vṛddhah kila samudrānte...etc.

335 See above p.59.

336 SabP. 16.31-40, 17.6.

337 SabP. 40.1.

338 Cf. SabP. 13.62-63, 14.17-19.

339 SabP 17.19.

Kṛṣṇa takes him on his lap.³⁴⁰ Śaivism thus is symbolically shown to lose ground before Vaiṣṇavism. Śiṣupāla is also slain in the wink of an eye by Kṛṣṇa. And this Kṛṣṇa, let us not forget, has been, oft and on, identified with the Highest Principle, has been referred to and praised as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. It seems that in its final stage, the epic has been consistently retouched from the Vaiṣṇavaite point of view, which is shown throughout the epic to be superior to all other sectarian viewpoints, śaivaite in particular. This we have also shown above in the case of Rāvaṇa-kathā-cakra.³⁴¹

Looking at it in a dispassionate manner, there seems to be much truth in what Mr. Ghose (again!) has to say about the Jarāsandha-episode. "Jarāsandha, it appears, was not only subduing the other kings, he was, contrary to prevailing Indo-Āryan political practice and understanding, annexing their kingdoms to his own, which indeed was the reason of his keeping so many kings in his capital city as captives. Śiṣupāla and the other so-called allies of his appear from the accounts to have been his satraps or generals or other similar mandatories rather than feudal vassals or tributaries. The fear and hatred inspired by this unprecedented policy of annexation, pursued as it moreover appears to have been with ruthless determination for years on end, would naturally give currency to stories (unquestionably false) of his cruel disposition, of the plans which he had matured of offering his prisoners as victims at a great thanks-giving sacrifice to be held for victories won, and other like canards which made him pass into oral tradition for a veritable ogre, an impression which is entirely contradicted by even a superficial examination of what written records we find of him ... It is Jarāsandha's chivalry, coupled with Kṛṣṇa's disregard of it, which enables this unexpected result (i.e. of the former's death) to be so easily achieved ... There is in all these descriptions of Jarāsandha and his country just that suggestion of envious regard which shows that the superiority of this land in point of civilization and culture over the rest of Northern India and the superior capacity for governance of its kings were not open to question".³⁴²

In the Digvijaya sub-Parvan, Sahadeva went to conquer the southern direction. When he reached the city of Māhīṣmatī, King Nila there countered him severely with the help of Fire. Why did Fire help him against a sacrificial cause? It is said: Formerly, Fire in that city was enjoying extragamous relations in the form of a Brāhmin. When the king tried to punish him, he became fiery. The king became supplicant. Then, the Fire gave a boon to the females of that country of free enjoyment. The females became unpunishable for indulgences at their will. The king also obtained a boon that his army would then have no fear from Fire.³⁴³ The popular version of the tale shows Fire being caught with the princess herself. Failing to subdue

340 SabP. 40.16-17.

341 See above p.78.

342 *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins)*, PP.202-4.

343 SabP. 28.17-36.

Fire, the king gave away the princess to him. Substantially the tale remains the same.

The cultural implications of the tale are interesting. Women in the south used to become priestesses in the temples. Their society was female-centred. When the Vedic religion reached in that matri-centric country, the fire was kindled by women only. They had the right of performing the daily worship-ceremony which was gradually taken over by the Brāhmins. The priestesses have now remained merely as temple-dancers or Devadāsīs. But the above tale indicates that though the original Vedic tradition would have frowned upon such practices, yet when the Āryans reached these countries, they had no other alternative than to come to an understanding with them, and accept the customary practices of the female-centric societies willy-nilly.³⁴⁴

In Adhyāya 61, there is an interesting tale told by Vidura. Draupadī has been won over by Śakuni for Duryodhana in the famous game of dice. Her pertinent question is : Had Yudhiṣṭhira lost his own self first in the game of dice or had he lost Draupadī first ? The intricacy of the problem is this. If Yudhiṣṭhira loses his own self first, he becomes a slave and loses all rights to property in which a wife is also included. He then has no property even in the form of a wife whom he can stake; if at all he does so, the stake may not be considered legal. Consequently Draupadī may not be considered as won as a stake in the game of dice, may not be considered as a slave and be ill-treated. Karṇa takes the view that if Yudhiṣṭhira has lost everything and himself and become a slave, whatever property that belonged to him (including a wife, Draupadī) formerly now automatically becomes the property of the winner who is free to treat of his booty in a way he likes. Karṇa then asks Duṣṣāsana to take away the clothes of all the Pāṇḍavas as well as of Draupadī. Then follows the famous episode of Draupadī-vastraharaṇa in which Duṣṣāsana struggles hopelessly to insult Draupadī by disrobing her but fails. Vidura then urges the members of the assembly to express their dispassionate opinion about the problem posed by Draupadī, and narrates the episode of Prahlāda.³⁴⁵ The episode runs thus : Prahlāda was the king of Daityas. His son Virocana had an argument with Sudhanvan, a descendent of Aṅgiras, about their relative supremacy over each other for the sake of a girl. They had a bet of their lives. For decision, they approached Prahlāda. But Sudhanvan warned that if the latter gave a false judgment, Indra would shatter his head. Prahlāda, afraid at this, asked Kaśyapa about the fruit of not answering a question or answering it falsely. Kaśyapa enunciates to him the fruit of not answering a question either personally or in an assembly, and of answering it wrongly. Prahlāda then gives the judgment in favour of Sudhanvan.

The tale becomes still more interesting when we notice that the rules enunciated by Kaśyapa about answering a problem are almost entirely taken verbatim from

344 For a fuller treatment, read "Bhārat mān Anek Sanskritio no Sangam". Gujarati (Confluence of Many Cultures in India). Ksitimohan Sen, Tr. R. Raval, *Buddhiprakāśh*, Vol CXVI. No. 6, June 1969.

345 SabP. 61.58-78.

Manusmṛti.³⁴⁶ This proves that the ślokas concerning the rules of the responsibility of the senators in regard to the correct solution of a problem paused before them by an inflicted person were already existing, either in the Smṛti-work or even in popular currency, and the tale within which they are framed now is entirely fictitious, concocted merely to provide a pretext for including those ślokas into the epic. The ślokas by themselves are, however, very pertinent in the context of the episode of Draupadī-vastraharaṇa in an open assembly of elders and scholars which is of central and a source-like importance to the epic-narrative. That also explains the necessity of concocting a tale for the inclusion of those ślokas. If Vidura is shown to quote them from a current Smṛti-work, it would obviously be a fault of anachronism — the character of a tale of yore quoting from a current Book of Ethics. So the ślokas are shown to be quoted, not from a recent Smṛti-text, but from an ancient, so-called 'historical, tale. The tale is prefixed with the recurrent refrain : 'atrāpy udāharant' imam itihāsam purātanam',³⁴⁷ so well-known to us from a number of tales of the Śānti and Anuśāsana Parvans. Like that other recurrent refrain 'tatra tasyādbhutam karma śruṇu me janamejaya'³⁴⁸ which indicates a fictitious heroic tale, this refrain also is a sort of hallmark for the fictitious nature of the tale prefixed by it. Mostly such historical tales are intended to frame a didactic discourse. This is a sort of a customary tale-form which is seen to be prevalent even in the philosophical discourses of the Upaniṣads. The episodic or story-element in all such epic-tales is so thin and evidently pretextual that no one would claim for it any historicity particularly in the epics and Purāṇas where fiction and concoction are the order of the day, are more a practice than an exception. Their reliability as historical material is as certain in the Upaniṣads as it is uncertain in the epics. The reason of this difference is obvious. The very search of the Upaniṣads is for the ultimate truth, the very atmosphere of the Upaniṣads rings with this veritability. On the other hand, the romantic popular imagination is seen rampant in the streets of the epic-world. So, whenever a didactic discourse must be included in the epic, the customary itihāsa-form of folk-tale is resorted to, but the form is no guarantee of the episode described in the tale being actually historical. The epic-atmosphere does not care for, and therefore, offers no guarantee of its historical reliability. The Upaniṣadic tale-form is adopted for didactic purposes, but without the Upaniṣadic sincerity for truth.

The fuller tales of the SabP seem, more or less, to represent the three large groups of tales in the MBh. The birth-stories of Jarāsandha and Śiśupāla represent the birth-story-group which occupies such a huge portion of ĀdiP. The tale of King Nila and Fire contains some legendary material concealing some cultural aspect. Many of such legendary tales of different regions are collected in the VanP. The parable of the hypocritic bird and the didactic Itihāsa-tale of Virocana-Sudhanvan represent the forms

346 Cp. SabP. 61.67-68, 69, 70, 71, 76 with Manusmṛti, VIII. 82, 12, 14, 18, 19 and 74 respectively.

347 SabP. 61.58ab.

348 Cf. ĀdiP. 206.7.

which are so commonly met with in the Śānti-Anuśāsana-parvans. The general uniformity of the respective groups of tales is noteworthy. The reason of such uniformity lies in the functions these groups are intended to serve. The birth-stories are intended to satisfy the popular curiosity to hear everything from the beginning. The event of birth in itself does not offer much variety, hence the varieties of the birth-stories as we saw in the previous section also serve to break the monotony of the stories having the same basic motif. The tales of the VanP are intended to serve only as pastime. So any tale is welcome. A wide variety of tales can very naturally be accommodated in the group, the only condition being that the tale must please. The tales of the third and the largest group are, on the other hand, collected with an intention of edifying. The newly-crowned prince Yudhiṣṭhira must be instructed in the laws of an ideal statesmanship, to which end, not only Itihāsa-tales but even some fables and parables are employed, just as they are in the *Pañcatantra*. (It should be noted, that they are very rarely, if at all, employed in the VanP.) The two most important of the functions of poetry as counted by Mammaṭa — namely, to delight and to edify³⁴⁹ — are seen to motivate the two largest collections of tales within the epic.

It is possible to show some further broad sub-patterns even within these large groups. The three main sections of the ŚānP are the Rāja-dharma-parvan, the Āpad-dharma-parvan and the Mokṣa-dharma-parvan. It will be observed that most of the tales in the first section are of the didactic-itihāsa-type.³⁵⁰ The reason is obvious. The section is intended to teach the duties of an ideal statesman, and such itihāsa-tales can serve as very convenient containers of the laws to be enunciated, besides adding to them the stamp of a traditional authority. The next section — that of Āpad-dharma — however, abounds in fable-type of tales and reminds one of the *Pañcatantra*.³⁵¹ The obvious similarity of function is that both the Āpad-dharma-section and the *Pañcatantra* are intended to teach practical politics, where, not ideal, but practical, basic, down-to-earth viewpoint must prevail. Hence the majority of the animal-tales. The last section of Mokṣa-dharma (including the Nārāyaṇīya section) by the very nature of its subjects justifies the profusion in it of the allegorical tales and philosophical dialogues³⁵² of the Upaniṣadic kind. Anuśāsana-parvan has no

349 *Kāvya-prakāśa* of Mammaṭa, I.2. Cf.

Kāvyam yaśase'rtha-kṛte vyavahāravide śiveta-kaṣṭhaye /
sadyaḥ para-nirvṛtaye kāntā-sammitatayopadeśayuje //

350 e.g. the itihāsa of sage Utathya and king Māndhātṛ (ŚānP., Adhy.91-92), of king Vasu-manas and sage Vāmadeva (Adhy.93-95), of king Vasumanas and Bṛhaspati (102-104), of Prince Kṣemadarśin (105-107), of the origin of Daṇḍa (121), of sage Kāmaṇḍa and king Aṅgariṣṭha (123), of Indra and Prahlāda (124) and so on.

351 Cf. "The most interesting and instructive part of the present Sub-parvan are the beast-fables, the most attractive of them all being that of a tiny little mouse". S. K. Belvalkar, Introduction to Śāntiparvan, Cr. Edn., Poona, 1966. p.cxcvi.

352 Many of these like that of Jājali and Tulādhāra (Adhy.253-256) of Prahrāda and sage Ājagara (Adhy.172), of Bhṛgu and Bharadvāja (175-185), of Manu and Bṛhaspati (194-199), the Guru-śiṣya-saṁvāda (203-210), that of Jaigīṣavya and Asita-Devala (222) of Indra

definite topic. It deals with a variety of subjects and has, therefore, a variety of the tale-types.

The tales in the VanP, on the other hand, lend themselves to easy groupings under four heads. The most obvious two large groups are (1) the Tīrtha-yātra-parvan³⁵³ and (2) the Mārkaṇḍeya-samāsyā-parvan.³⁵⁴ Both of them relate mostly tales of sages, gods-goddesses, famous ancient kings and myths. The distinction is superfluous; in the former group, some tales are shown to be connected with some holy places, while in the latter, even this flimsy pretense is given up. (3) The three Upākhyānas — those of Nala,³⁵⁵ Rāma³⁵⁶ and Sāvitrī³⁵⁷ — are included to console the disconsolate on the maxim of 'duḥkhe duḥkhādhikam paśyet'.³⁵⁸ And all these overgrowths of stories are interspersed with (4) the heroic tales — Arjuna's achievement of divine weapons from Indra and Śiva, Bhīma's slaying the demons Kirmīra, Jaṭāsura, Rākṣasas, Gandharvas etc., Yudhiṣṭhira's extricating his brothers from the clutches of Nahuṣa-pyhton and Dharmaykṣa.³⁵⁹

The great collection of tales in VanP also brings up the question of the so-called temporal hiatuses. There is no doubt, that all the tales and episodes in VanP are intended to serve just one purpose — that of filling up the gap of the uneventful twelve years of compulsory seclusion to the forest-life. It is observed that such large gaps of uneventful years are bound to occur in any tale which runs for some decades and into generations. Such tales, no doubt, disturb the flow of the principal narrative, but Sukthankar eloquently tries to justify their inclusion in the epics. Talking of the digressions in MBh in the form of secondary tales, he says: "At places these digressions crowd together, rising up in big imposing piles, as in the Āryaṇyaka, Śānti and Anuṣāsana Pa.vans : sometimes they are far and few between, when the story advances at a more rapid and, to us, congenial pace, as in the Sabhā, Virāṭa, Sauptika and Strī parvans. These excursions do not, in reality, disturb the archetonic beauty and harmony of the composition as a whole, though at first sight they may appear to do so. For, as PISANI has pointed out, at least the longer ones of these digressions have been introduced into the story in such a manner as to fill up "Temporal hiatuses" consisting of uneventful years, hiatuses which are bound to occur in a very detailed and elaborate narrative covering a period of nearly two centuries."³⁶⁰

and Bali (216-218), of Indra and Namuci (219), of Vyāsa and his son Śuka (224-247) have become famous. For a complete and detailed conspectus, one should refer to the introduction to Śānti-parvan (Critical Edition) by S. K. Belvalkar and P. L. Vaidya.

353 VanP. 80-153.

354 VanP. 179-221.

355 VanP. 50-78.

356 VanP. 258-275.

357 VanP. 277-283.

358 Cf. VanP. 49.36. yas tvatto duḥkhitataro rājā'sit etc.

359 See above the section of 'Tales of the Heroes', pp.108ff.

360 *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, Sukthankar, p.33,

We only need to point out that the glaring fact that ratio between the span of these so-called 'temporal hiatuses' and the amount of such extraneous element seems to be rather in an inverse proportion does not seem to corroborate the observation. The period between the fall of Bhīṣma and his death — from Dakṣiṇāyana to Uttarāyana—the period of a few days, at the most of six months, is filled up with two voluminous parvans—Śānti and Anuśāsana—with a total of some seventeen thousand verses. Against this, the twelve years of the Pāṇḍavas' exile into forest are filled up with a single parvan—the Vanaparvan—and with some twelve thousand verses. Still greater wonder is that the period of ĀdiP can be shown to be from the beginning of the Earth — we are not joking, the tale of Vasu Uparicara and the Ādivamśāvatarana-parvan stand testimony to this — upto the event of Arjuna's burning the Khāṇḍava forest; yet this nearly infinite gap of time is filled with a parvan of about six thousand verses. We shall not be blamed if we feel disinclined to agree with Dr. Sukthankar's eloquent observations regarding the temporal hiatuses. The author of these voluminous digressions had actually no sense of the archetectonic beauty and harmony of a composition of art. Dr. Sukthankar's observations might be acceptable only in the case of VanP, but not in the other two cases.

It is not difficult to observe even within the small compass of the SabP that the secondary tales when narrated fully do hamper the smooth flow of the epic-narrative. When there is only a passing reference or allusion to some famous story or some past event in the life of an epic-character, such reference or allusion adds to the force of the narrative, particularly of the emotive arguments. Thus, in the dialogues of Śiśupāla and Kṛṣṇa derogatory references to each other's past deeds add to the conflicting tension of the episode which very dramatically mounts up in a small but sharp repartee about Rukmiṇī and the surprisingly quick climax of Śiśupāla's abrupt death at the hands of Kṛṣṇa. But, compare the effect that Bhīṣma's narration of the birth-story of Śiśupāla creates. It definitely slackens the pace of the rising graph and weakens the tension. Similarly, the allusive references in Vidura's speeches do add to the force of his arguments, but in the midst of the horripilating experience of the shameless episode of Draupadī-vastra-haraṇa which leaves even elderly scions of Dharma like Bhīṣma and Droṇa dumbfounded, what effect does the itihāsa-tale of Prahlāda-Virocana-Sudhanvan create? Does it add to the grimness of the atmosphere in any way? Does it accelerate the emotive force of the situation? To us it seems that a detailed narration of even a single secondary tale definitely acts as a detriment to the flow of impassioned dialogues or forceful narrative. It is not without an aesthetic reason, that the poet of the central Kāṇḍas of RM has almost completely refrained from including narrations of any secondary tales!

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In a study of this type, the consideration of individual tales and groups would contain discussion and criticism on them and would embody its results. Therefore, much may not remain to be said by way of conclusions. However, a sort of general recapitulation of the observations already made before and some further observations on their basis will not be found out-of-place here.

(1)

The two Great Epics occupy an important place in our national life. Primarily they profess to narrate only one single connected tale each. Yet the presence of innumerable secondary tales in them, though inessential, is yet imposing and glaring. An enquiry into the purposes they serve would be interesting and instructive.

The tales are for the most part drawn from the floating mass of folk-literature. The relation of the epics with Atharvaveda, with the Bhṛguś, their being called "itihāsa", their relation with and development from the popular bardic poetry, their preservation, amplification and popularity in the oral folk tradition – all of these go to prove the folk-literary character of the epics, which can be shown to possess the characteristics of folk-literature as described by Stith Thompson.

As collections of tales, the epics are unique. In introducing secondary tales, the techniques of frame-stories and emboxing-tales are resorted to, and in these the epics are similar to the other world-famous tale-collections; but unlike them, the epics were primarily intended to narrate only one single connected tale each, and the overgrowth succeeded in completely obviating their epic-characteristic.

The emphasis in folk-literature is on the tale, i.e. the content-structure, and not on the aesthetic form. The verbal form of a folk-tale is not steady; therefore, the form of a folk-tale is decided by the nature of its contents, whereas the content-structure of a folk-tale, which can be called its inner form, often decides in the epics the function of a particular tale. A functional approach to the study of these tales, therefore, would be more appropriate. The epics themselves often reveal such an approach adopted in grouping their secondary tales.

The term 'Secondary' is relative. To decide what is secondary, we should first decide what is 'primary' or 'original'. The motif-pattern of the opening episodes of the Nala-story, of RM (AyK) and MBh; the index in AdīP, 55; and an analysis of the chain of events concerning Maya Dānava yield that the entire ĀdīP, like BK, is secondary. Implications of the MBh being called "Jaya" itihāsa make it very proba-

ble that the original MBh ended with Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation. Therefore, that tale or episode may be called secondary which is not original, which is not connected in any way with the principal characters, or more correctly, with the central event of the epic, or again, shows stylistic differences or creates internal contradictions or unnecessary duplications etc.

A peculiar sense of propriety is observed in the tales of the heroes. The epic-poets portray the epic-heroes as human characters with complex personalities. But when the epics become popular, the popular mind reduces the finely modelled characters into contrasted types, and "the characteristics once chosen are preserved, and become only clearer as the drama develops";¹ fresh tales added to the epic, then, conform to and emphasise only the chosen characteristics of a character. Such tales reveal a peculiar pattern in characterisation.

Birth-stories also reveal some definite patterns. Birth-stories of many a sage possess the motif of tapo-bhaṅga — deliberate or accidental — due to an apsarās. If it is deliberate, the efficient cause is invariably Indra. In such tales, he is generally portrayed as coward and mean under śramaṇic influence, but the R̥ṣyaśṅga-tale gives us the clue that all such tales have their origin in the primitive rites of agricultural as well as procreative fertility the god of which is Indra.

The so-called "etymologische legende" must be explained as due to what is known in Linguistics as the general iconic tendency of a language "whereby semantic sameness is reflected also by formal sameness"². This means that it is a natural tendency of any language (or of any language-speaking people) to use the language always meaningfully and to try to render the words (including names) meaningful even by creating tales if needs be. Etymological tales are due to this tendency of language. All other explanations would be only incidental and, therefore, insignificant.

The birth-stories of the Kṣatriya-protagonists reveal a pattern of Brāhmaṇical motifs, in which the institution of sacrifice and the theory of incarnation are both pressed into service to establish the super-normal character of the epic-principalities. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are incarnations of Viṣṇu. Rāma, moreover, is born due to the sacrifice. Sītā and Draupadī (and Dhṛṣṭadyumna) are born from sacrifice. The Pāṇḍava-brothers are born as partial incarnations of the five gods, Bhīṣma is born out of the eighth parts of the eight Vasus. Vidura is Dharma incarnate !

The MBh poets could not do away with the two unsavoury facts about their heroes — the mystery around their births and their polyandrous marriage.

To explain the former they resort to the custom of Niyoga. They appear to put in very special efforts to play down the effect of the custom by showing it to be a

1 *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, Sukthankar, p. 44.

2 *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*, Raimo Anttila 1972. p. 89.

widely practised one. The MBh-heroes, Dhṛtarāṣṭra-Pāṇḍu-Vidura, the three sons of Śāradaṇḍāyanī, the son of Kalmāṣapāda, Aṅga – the son of king Bali, rather the entire fresh race of Kṣatriyas after they were once totally exterminated by Rāma Jāmadagnya, – all these are illustrations of the births due to the custom of Niyoga

The latter is sought to be explained by resorting to the famous motif-structure of action-fruit-rebirth. Draupadī, as a virgin ascetic in her previous birth, has performed penance as a result of which she has obtained the boon of five husbands from Lord Śankara. She must enjoy the fruit in this birth now. The curse-motif is just another form of the same basic structure. All actions have their fruit – good or bad. They are accumulated. When ripe they must be enjoyed by their doer for which he should be reborn. His actions thus become his destiny. Boons or curses are nothing but only symbols of the fruit of his own actions. And destiny is unalterable. So was Draupadī's marriage.

Obviously, in both the above cases, the secondary epic poets were dealing with customs which had become obsolete and unpalatable in their contemporary societies but which, at the same time, were undetachably welded to the original principal tale. The difference in the treatment given to those two is significant. The mystery around the births of the heroes is sought to be explained by the custom of Niyoga which is shown to be widely prevalent among Kṣatriyas. The fact of the polyandrous marriage, however, is justified not by prevalence but by the destiny or the karma-phala-principle. This difference in treatment is in accordance with the attitude of Manu-smṛti which condones Niyoga as an āpad-dharma but does not countenance a polyandrous marriage under any circumstances. The influence of Manu-smṛti on MBh is clearly visible at a number of places. Manu is often mentioned by name and quoted verbatim and in extenso. This relation of Manu-smṛti and MBh may have some bearing on the problem of the period of the first recast of the MBh.

In connection with the custom of Niyoga, it should be noted that the custom is shown to obtain in the Kṣatriya class only. And the procreators are almost invariably the Brāhmins or the sages. The custom is never shown to be practised among the Brāhmins, because they rank with gods (Cf. Bhū-devas) and sages and we have seen that the seed of gods and sages is believed to be infallibly fertile.

In connection with the karma-phala theory, it is observed that the principle is resorted to for motivating almost each and every detail of the principal narratives. Such a tendency seeks to explain everything as predestined in accordance with the karma-phala theory, completely undermines the human interest and often damages the subtle characterisation of the original poem by reducing the characters to broad simplifications and destroying thereby their finer shades. If Rāvaṇa kidnaps Sītā, he is lewd, he cannot be gallant; but if he did not so much as touch Sītā, that must be due to the curse of Nalakūbara.

The epics are consistent in showing all the antagonists (except Duryodhana, who belongs to the same fold as protagonists) to be the worshippers of Śiva. Thus, the tales of Rāvaṇa and his clan and ancestors in RM, and of Jarāsandha and Śiśupāla (and even of Aśvatthāman³) in MBh, show them to be worshippers of Śiva from whom they derive their strength ultimately to lose at the hands of the protagonists who are always the incarnations of Viṣṇu. The tales clearly reveal the marks of the struggle for supremacy between the Vaiṣṇava and the Śaiva sectarian, the epics being shamelessly and consistently used in the service of Vaiṣṇavism.

In the case of MBh, Sukthankar shows that the merest story of the fratricidal war narrated with a chronicler's faithfulness is only a second-rate subject. But by adding a number of secondary tales based on the incarnation-motif, the epic-tale is presented as a mere recurring incident of the constant struggle between Devas and Asuras, as a mere phase in the cosmic evolution. Only by its projection on an Ethical Plane in this way is achieved the real depth and significance of the epic-story. Sukthankar shows that, with the help of the stories like that of king Dambhodbhava, the same epic-story can be viewed on a metaphysical plane also. In the case of RM, as we have shown above, only on the strength of the secondary tales, a sectarian interpretation of the original tale is made possible. The secondary tales thus help project the epic-stories on the various levels of interpretation.

In the beginning of this study, we had agreed to eschew the comparative aspect of these tales for fear of unwieldiness of the matter. But by making some exceptions, as, for example, in the case of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-tale, Ahalyā-tale, Viśvāmitra-story-cycle, Janamejaya-sarpa-satra, etc. we have also made amply clear that, in order to understand the exact implications of any tale, it must be properly viewed against the background of its full development. It must be related to its mythical, ritualistic, traditional, linguistic aspects so as to decide whether it yields any real historical data or has a ritualistic iconisation, or symbolises some philosophical concept or metaphorises some actual event. When this precaution is not taken, and the tales are studied simply as they are found in the epics-purāṇas and Jātakas, the study may not turn out to be anything more significant than a mere patternistic study (as Dr. Hara's), or it may lead to false (R̥ṣyaśṛṅga's historicity established by Pargiter etc.) or even contradictory (Dr. Vora on the Vyūṣitāśva-Bhadrā-tale) results. A proper approach to these tales is a "must", a great desideratum. The results arrived at by such studies may then be used as historical or sociological data.

The R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-tale, the Ahalyā-tale and the Vyūṣitāśva-Bhadrā-tale very clearly show that they are purely mythical. They iconise certain ritual, agricultural or sacerdotal beliefs rooted in primitive folk-life and preserved traditionally. The characters are only symbolic. To believe them to be historical, to try to establish their contem-

3 SauP. 7 and 17-18.

poraneities and chronologies on the basis of such tales and, then, to attempt to reconstruct some history on the basis of such data would be, to say the least, misdirected efforts.

Sukthankar takes the cow in the story-group of Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra-conflict to be symbolic of Virāj. The cow, according to him, is a point of contact between the Vedic and the epic ideology. Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra are taken by Hariyappa to be embodiments of Sattva and Rajas. We have pointed out a possibility that their conflict might be symbolic of the struggle of the two most eminent Vedic gods Varuṇa and Indra for superiority. Similarly the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-tale, the Ahalyā-tale, the Tapatī Samvaraṇa-tale are possibly agricultural-fertility-myths. Vyūṣitāśva-Bhadra-tale is symbolic of the Upasamveśana rite of Aśvamedha. Dange has shown that the Kacalegend is symbolic of the initiation rites, the Ocean-churning legend represents the Soma-pressing-ceremony. Cumulatively speaking the epic-stories are more often than not personifications or concretisations of some Abstract Vedic ideas. Philosophical concepts or sacrificial rites are often put in the concrete form of a story.

.....It is only a corollary of the above that the tales often indicate the vicissitudes through which our Vedic gods pass. R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-tale points out the Vedic Indra, who, from being aggressive, turns to be coward under the Śramaṇic influence. The tales of Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra-conflict might indicate the stages through which the Vedic gods Indra and Varuṇa pass, or, in other words, indicate "a silent transition in thought from the many gods to whom the most elaborate forms of sacrifices were ordained in the Vedas to the one Absolute of the Upaniṣads".⁴ The tales, thus, might show some very interesting mythical developments.

It is interesting to compare certain recurrent motif-structures which sometimes yield very striking results. The tapo-bhaṅga motif-structure, for example, studied in relation to the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga tale, reveals the real nature of Indra's role in it which originally was a fertility-rite. The motif of punishing the sinful mother reflected in the Cirakārin-tale shows a popular method of criticism by rearranging certain details in the same motif-structure. Comparison of the motif-structures at the beginning of the two epics with that of Nala-story reveals SabP to begin the original epic. Revenge of the father's murder is the motif of the tales of Cyavana, Aurva, Parāśara, Janamejaya, Paraśurāma. The last three are reported to have attempted to exterminate the whole races of the enemies - of Rākṣasas, of Nāgas, of Kṣatriyas. Tales like those of Puloman, or of Ruru-Pramadvarā turn out to be purely fictitious as revealed by a study of their motif-structure.

The secondary tales often introduce peculiar contradictions in the epics. The episode of Rāma's performing Aśvamedha beautifully frames the epic, but strikes at the ideal of Rāma, the steadfast lover, symbol of conjugal fidelity. The Vyūṣitāśva-

4 On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata, Sukthankar, p. 69,

Bhadra-tale is cited to illustrate the ideal of conjugal fidelity, but the ritual ceremony it symbolises imbibes the custom of Niyoga. The Nalakūbara episode seeks to protect Sita's chastity against Rāvaṇa, but it devalues both the characters.

(2)

It is observed that even within the epics groups of tales are generally formed according to their functions, and the sameness of their function is often reflected in the formal similarity of those tales. This we have particularly noted towards the end of last chapter where we have shown the functional patterns in the tales of VanP., ŚānP. and AnuP. In the cases of RM, ĀdiP and SabP also we have shown this by studying the tales groupwise. It also seems likely that where such bunches of tales are found, they were introduced into the epics as bunches only and not as separate tales one after another.

This can be corroborated in another way also. From our detailed discussion of the tales of ĀdiP, we can point out that almost all the sub-parvans therein are constituted of a functionally homogenous groups of tales. Thus, PauṣyaP. has the Uttanka-story-group held together by the common moral of strict obedience to the preceptor's instructions, linked preceptilinely, and intended to introduce the Janamejaya-story-cycle as well as to instigate him to perform the sacrifice. The PaulomaP, made up of fictitious tales of Bhārgava interest, also serves to introduce the Janamejaya-story group by the parallel motif-structure in the tale of Ruru and Pramadvarā. ĀstikaP, as the story group of Janamejaya's snakesacrifice is titled, serves to frame the epic-narrative. ĀdivamśāvatarāṇaP. is Purāṇic in style and content, presses the tale of Genesis and the motif of incarnation in service, and is intended, most probably, to project the epic-tale on a cosmic dimension. SambhavaP., apart from the two tales of the ancestors of Kuru race, is mostly made up of the birth-stories of the epic-personae, the chief interest being in justifying the birth of the epic-heroes through Niyoga. The Hidimba-vadha-P and Baka-vadha-P are heroic tales of Bhīma; the Arjuna-vanavāsi-P, Subhadra-haraṇa-P. and Haraṇa-hārika-P. are tales of Arjuna's love-affairs; the CaitrarathaP once again narrates tales of Kuru-ancestor Saṁvaraṇa and Vyāsa's ancestors Vasiṣṭha-Śakti-Parāśara. The SvayamvaraP tries to explain and solve the confusion about the polyandrous marriage of the epic-heroes; the Jatu-grha-dāhaP, the VaivāhikaP, VidurāgamaP and the Rājya-lambhaP take the epic in the direction of its central episode. The Khāṇḍava-dāha-P connects the entire ĀdiP with the SabP.

This shows that the division of MBh into sub-parvans is more useful in deciding the original or secondary nature of the contents since the sub-parvans are, for the most part, homogeneous in the nature of their content, style or function. Besides these sub-parvans, the redactors leave their fingerprints in a number of ways. Stylistic differences, genealogies and index-summaries, references to and reflections and influences of the contemporary works, divisions into sub-parvans, and even titles and

sub-titles of the portions, and matter creating internal contradictions — these are the various indicators of secondary material in the epics. We have tried to show the utility of each one of these types of evidences in the body of the present thesis and, we are in position to say that, if attacked methodically, the problem of deciding the secondary material in the epics — particularly, in the MBh — may not be as difficult as it seems at first sight. At least, many major portions will be easily sifted. Of course, it goes without saying that any dogmatic approach or preconceived notions about things will prove strong hindrances in the path of truth. Sexual symbols might be in abundance. Fertility rites might have been believed as sacred as the sacrificial ones ! Droṇa might not have belonged to the original saga ! The index in ĀdiP. 55 and genealogies in Ādip 89-90 might turn out to be quite different from what they appear to be at first sight. We shall have to be prepared to make a number of adjustments conceptually and psychologically.

(3)

In regard to the inclusion of secondary tales, certain functional patterns are observed to be common to both the epics. Sacrifices provide the occasion for narrating the epic-tales. Automatically, they also function as frames for the epics. Epic principalities are, again, shown to be born from sacrifices. The tales of Genesis and the incarnation-motif are brought in to provide the heroes with divine qualities. Tales which show the epic-personalities of the heroes in making are prefixed to the original epic. For this, there is the justification of the chronological arrangement of events. There is a system in the arrangement of the tales of BK and those of ĀdiP. The former are arranged in a pattern of ascendo, the latter reveal pattern of from general to particular, of a focus gradually concentrating upon the event of the beginning of the original epic. Significant again is the pattern in both the epics in which the heroes, when they are on their way to win a bride, achieve certain feats which add to their epic-stature, whether it be moral or martial. They are both almost entirely made up of secondary tales, thus making the original epic begin with the second book. So far, Ādikāṇḍa (= BK, see above pp 21-22) and ĀdiP are similar.

But their differences are also equally significant. BK combines the pilgrimage-motif and the purpose of including the wondrous purāṇic tales with the same group of tales showing the hero-in-the-making. In the MBh, these two functions are associated with the other groups of the tales. Again, RM is content with narrating the birth-stories of the hero and the heroine only. On the other hand, the MBh narrates the birth-stories of the heroine, the heroes, their fathers and grand-fathers, their protector and their procreator, of the arch-queen-mother, and so on. Again, RM is content by framing the epic in Rāma's Aśvamedha sacrifice. In the MBh, the epic is framed in Janamejaya's sacrifice, and this again is framed with Śaunaka's 12-year sattra. Two tale-groups — that of Uttanka and of Ruru — Pramadvarā —

are brought in to introduce the Janamejaya-tales-group. Again, the fact of the five brothers being the heroes, the mystery around their births and their polyandrous marriage create easy occasions for bringing in many more tales. Thus, the tales introduced in the ĀdiP for these purposes have no parallel pattern in the BK.

It is again a commonplace observation that in the RM, the secondary tales are either prefixed or suffixed to the original epic in two special Kāṇḍas—BK and UK. In the MBh no such scruple is observed, and the secondary tales are pushed in at any conceivable opportunity. Yet two large collections of secondary episodes (other than the ĀdiP) are the two so-called temporal hiatuses. We have observed that there is no conceivable pattern in the tales of UK which are roughly clustered around persons (Rāvaṇa, Hanūmat, Śatrughna) or events (Aśvamedha) or places (Daṇḍa). The two temporal-hiatus-groups, on the other hand, do have at least the unity of function. The VanP tales are intended to fill up the yawning gap of twelve years and they are all narrated primarily to please. The tales of the other large group — those of ŚānP and AnuP — are all intended to edify. There are also observed some further patterns of formal nature appropriate to the functions the tales must serve. At other places in the MBh tales are also clustered as pilgrimage tales to console such as the famous group of tales of the sixteen kings called the ṣoḍaśa-rājakiya. MBh, thus, reveals a wonderfully varied mosaic of the patterns of groups of secondary tales. In the RM, things are simple. Tales are grouped at the two ends. Those prefixed reveal a well-thought-out purposeful pattern. Those suffixed have no pattern at all.

The mode of occurrence of the secondary tales in the body of the epics is also observed to have significant patterns. When the tales are briefly alluded to, i.e., summarily referred to in a passing manner in a stanza or two, they add to the force of emotion or argument of the principal narrative. Such allusions are found in abundance in the dialogue-ports of the SabP where they make the dialogues more forceful, emotions more turbulent, conflict sharper and atmosphere darker. In the MBh, such allusions, when they occur in bunches, nearly always mark the genuine portions of the original epic. It is further observed that normally, such allusions in the MBh are either to the past events in the life of the character or to some famous parable. With regard to the 'Itihāsa'-type of tales (i.e. tales of events that are supposed to have taken place in the lives of persons other than the epic-personae), the tendency is to set them in all the relevant details systematically. In the RM, on the other hand, even in its central Kāṇḍas allusions themselves are rare, with the result that the depiction of emotions in RM is more chaste, the characterisation more 'ideal' the dialogues more sober, the atmosphere more serene, and the style more evenly dignified. Whenever, again, the allusions do occur in the RM, they allude to the famous tales of the 'Itihāsa'-type (such as those of Śakuntalā or Damayantī etc.) and not to the parables or past events. Thus, freedom from allusions to famous tales

is a characteristic of the dialogues of RM, whereas a free and significant occurrence of such allusions is characteristic of the dialogues of MBh.

When, however, a secondary tale is fully set, it does harm the unity of the epic-tale, for it removes for the time being our attention from the flow of the principal narrative. In the original RM, there are no secondary narratives in the sense that they remove our attention from the principal narrative. The so-called *Śrāvāṇa*-episode,⁵ coming as it does after Rāma's departure for the forest-life, shocks us into realisation that this must mean a painful death for the aged king, thus preparing us for the coming events. The crow-episode⁶ is, again, the best and the most personal token of recognition of Sitā, the very expression of love in which is enough to goad Rāma to rescue her from the captivity of the demon antagonist. What is more, there is no duplication in their narration. They are set here for the first time, and the fact that the principal characters in both the episodes are not different from their narrators gives them a reminiscent character and a surprise value. There is no insistence on a chronological narration of events.

On the other hand, there are, in the MBh, a number of tales which have characters entirely different from the epic-personae, which are complete in themselves and which are brought into the epic-narrative with clearly parabolous intentions. Such are the tales, for example, of the demon brothers Sunda and Upasunda, of Prahlāda-Sudhanvan-Virocana, of the old hypocrite bird and many others. They have no aesthetically inherent connection with the principal narrative. The moral drawn from such a tale serves as a tag to attach the tale to the epic. This moralising attitude is a distinct characteristic of the secondary tales of the MBh. Two large parvans—*Śānti* and *Anuśāsana*—are nearly entirely filled up with didactic tales. The purpose of the two collections is openly didactic. There is no question of any aesthetic or even tag connection. As opposed to this, the didactic purpose as a primary function in the inclusion of any secondary tale is almost entirely absent in RM. You may draw a moral from the *Ahalyā*-tale or the *Viśvāmitra*-story-group but to teach that moral is not the primary function of that tale in the epic. This difference in the attitude behind inclusion of the secondary tales stands well in agreement with the general concepts of the epics — of RM as a *kāvya*, of MBh as a *śāstra*.

(4)

We may conclude this chapter by making certain suggestions for further studies. The story-cycle of *Vasiṣṭha*-*Viśvāmitra*-conflict must be studied vis-a-vis their position in relation to the Vedic gods *Varuṇa* and *Indra*. It can also be studied in relation with the *Subrahmaṇya* litany. *Indradhvaja* festival in *Dharmaśāstras*, in popular practice and literature, needs to be studied in relation with the origin of

5 AyK. 57-58.

6 SK. 36. 12-32.

Sanskrit Drama, as Prin. J. T. Parikh has suggested. The relation of Manusmṛti and MBh should be made more clear. The Nāga-element as reflected in the MBh (alongwith the Purāṇas) should be studied more completely by setting it in its historical and cultural background from Vedic literature. Dange has studied the Nāga-theme in relation with the Garuḍa-legends. It can also be studied in relation to the gods Indra and Mahādeva. In fact, the whole of the Nāga-culture needs to be excavated from the mounds of oblivion. Similarly a study of RM vis-a-vis the Muṇḍā-culture holds the potentiality of throwing some useful light in the hitherto unknown corners. And, perhaps, a small study of the etymological stories of the two epics may also have its own usefulness.

INDEX I

SANSKRIT NAMES AND IMPORTANT WORDS

1. Names of Rivers (R) Mountains (Mt.) and Cities (C), kingdoms (K) and Classes (cl.) are also included.
2. References to story-cycles or tales are also included herein.
3. Some topics and motifs like *niyoga*, *karma-phala* etc. are also included.
4. Names occurring *only* in genealogical tables on pp. 77, 128 & 131 are omitted, but if they occur elsewhere, they are indicated.]

Amśāvatāra-(see Avatāra)

Agastya-44, 49, 59, 60, 80, 83, 85, 88,
104, 152.

Agni (=Fire)-20, 42, 44, 51, 56, 57, 84, 91,
93, 102, 105, 106, 150, 156, 158.

Aṅga-135, 164.

Aṅga (K)-34, 43.

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