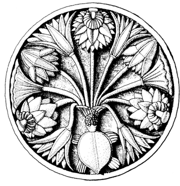

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PRADIP BHATTACHARYA, trans. from Sanskrit, *The Mahābhārata of Vyasa: The Complete Shantiparva Part 2: Mokshadharma,* Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2016, 1107 pages.

The book reviewed here is Pradip Bhattacharya's translation of *Mokṣadharmaparvan* in the *Śānti-Parvan* of the Mahābhārata, which starts from Section 174 of the *Śānti-Parvan* in Kisari Mohan Ganguli's (KMG) prose translation, and corresponds to Section 168 of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) or Pune Critical Edition (C.E).

Padma Shri Professor Purushottam Lal, D. Litt. began the first ever attempt to a verse "transcreation" of the Mahābhārata in 1968; unfortunately, his timeless ongoing work lost to time in 2010 with his untimely demise, so that "transcreation" of only sixteen and a half of the epic's eighteen books could be published. Bhattacharya takes up the unfinished job of his *Guru*, and offers this verse-prose *Guru-Dakṣiṇā* to his "much-admired guru and beloved acharya", Prof. Lal. He, however, is on his own in that he does "translate rather than transcreate".

Bhattacharya proposes "keeping to the original syntax as far as possible without making the reading too awkward" and sets out on his translation venture "in free verse (alternate lines of ten and four-to-six feet) and in prose (as in original) faithful to Prof. Lal's objective of providing the full 'ragbag' version."

Mokṣadharmaparvan being the philosophic and soteriological culmination of Mahābhārata and *Ancient India*'s message and wisdom, Bhattacharya's work is culturally important in bringing to the English speaking world this very important *parvan*.

The idea of *Mokṣa* that Kr̥ṣṇa teaches Arjuna in the Gītā (*Udyoga Parvan*) and found elsewhere (though mostly in the sense of liberty from any *Tyrannous Power*) is elaborated in *Mokṣadharmaparvan* through *Itihāsa-Puraṇa*, narratives, recollections and fables. *Mokṣa* is the final of the Four *Puruṣārthas* – following *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*; yet it would not arrive automatically or inevitably by law of chronology

unless *Puruṣakāra* blends with *Daiva*, and *Daiva* may favour only when Balance of *Puruṣārthas – Dharma-Artha-Kāma –* is attained through *Buddhi*, *Upāya* (Strategy/Policy), Will and *Karma*.

The *parvan* stands out as unique in its advocacy of a *Liberal Varṇa System* (portraying non-*Brāhmiṇ* characters like Sulabhā, the prostitute Piṅgalā and *Śūdras* as qualified for higher merit and social status through wisdom), and carries the important and interesting message that understanding *Gender Relation* or *Evolutionary Nature* of Gender is essential for *Prajñā* leading to *Mokṣa*. Yudhiṣṭhira learns all these theoretically from grandfather Bhīṣma, who is then on his Bed of Arrows. This is not without significance. Bhīṣma's physical life-in-death or death-in-life is apt parallel and metaphor for Yudhiṣṭhira's mental state. Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers and Draupadī qualify to gain knowledge on *Mokṣa-Dharma* only after their growing realization through dialogues, debates, experiences and feelings that victory in war has been futile, and Kurukṣetra War is as much external as internal. Yet, at the end of *Śānti-Parvan*, theoretical knowledge does not suffice, and the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī emerge Dynamic in their quest for more quests – that sets the stage for further of Bhīṣma's advice in *Anuśāsana Parvan*. The message that emerges from *Mokṣadharmaparvan* is that, one has to actually attain *Mokṣa*; mere theorizing is only furthering *Bandhana*.

Bhattacharya has long been a critic of the C.E considered almost sacrosanct by perhaps most of the *Videśi* and *Svadeśī* scholars alike, while, ironically, even V.S. Sukhtankhar (1887-1943), the first general editor of the project, was tentative in calling it an approximation of the earliest recoverable form of the *Mahākāvya*. Bhattacharya's taking up the massive project of translation is, in a way, his critical commentary on C.E through action; he boldly declares about his project "whatever the C.E. has left out has been sought to be included" – ringing like Mahābhārata's famous self-proclamation - *yad ihāsti tad anyatra yan nehāsti na tat kva cit* (1.56.33).

Bhattacharya's project is thus, what James Hegarty calls "(recovery of) embarrassment of riches" and perhaps more, because it is "a conflation of the editions published by the Gita Press (Gorakhpur, 9th edition, 1980), *Āryaśāstra* (Calcutta, 1937) and that translated and edited by Haridās Siddhāntavāgiś Bhattacharya in Bengali with the *Bhāratakaumudī* and Nīlakaṅṭha's *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* annotations (Bishwabani Prakashani, Calcutta, 1939)."

Bhattacharya has done an invaluable job to English readership by providing four episodes found in Haridās Siddhāntavāgiś (Nibandhana-Bhogavatī, Nārada, Garuḍa and Kapilā Āsurī narratives) and many verses not found in the Gorakhpur edition. Of these, the Kapilā Āsurī *Saṃvāda* at Section 321-A (p. 815) is only found in the Siddhāntavāgiś edition (vol. 37, pp. 3345-3359). Just as, in archaeology, every piece of human-treated rock delved from earth is beyond value, I would say that every unique variation or every narrative in Mahābhārata recensions is of similar value particularly in marking a curious interaction point between *Classical* and *Folk Mahābhārata* – something that no serious Mahābhārata scholar can ignore.

Bhattacharya deserves kudos for bringing into light the stupendous work and name of Siddhāntavāgiś, an almost forgotten name even to most Bengalis, and an unknown scholar to most Mahābhārata scholars or readers, almost eclipsed by the other popular Bengali translator Kālī Prasanna Siṃha.

Translation is a difficult and complex ball-game, particularly when it comes to Sanskrit. India and the Mahābhārata-World have witnessed much *Translation Game* all in the name of scholarship. The *Translation Game* as a part of *Colonizer's Agenda* as well as the *Game*-calling is already cliché – having been pointed out and criticized by stalwarts from Rsi Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay to Edward W. Saïd. Sometimes *Agenda* sometimes peculiar whims have done injustice to Sanskrit. While Alf Hiltebeitel's constant rendering of *Itihāsa* as "History", or *Mahākāvya* as "Epic", or translation of *Dharma* as

"religion" or "law" or "foundation" (the latter also in Patrick Olivelle) is the most common example of the former, Van Buitenen's rendering of *Kṣatriya* as "Baron" is a signal case of the latter.

The whole *Vedic* (later, *Hindu*) tradition is contained in culturally sensitive lexicons that should not be subjected to *Free Play* in the name of translation. Needless to say, *Dharma* holds the Key to *Bhāratiya Itihāsa* as also understanding Mahābhārata. Given the inclusion of *Dharma* in Oxford dictionary, and given definition of *Itihāsa* in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (anywhere between c.a 300 BCE – 300 CE) and Kalhana's (c. 12th century) *Rājātaraṅgini*, I wonder why *Dharma* has to be translated at all, or why *Itihāsa* has to be translated as "History", a signifier that falls shorter to the signified of *Itihāsa*. Bhattacharya arrives at a compromise by rendering "*Itihāsa*-history" (*e.g.* Section 343, p. 998).

Bhattacharya's translation venture has to be understood at the backdrop of above-mentioned translation-scenario. He declares he has been cautious on the matter of translation in having cross-checked with Kaliprasanna Sinha's Bengali translation (1886), KMG's first English translation (1883-96) and the shorter BORI edition. Such crosschecking with available translations in different languages of a time-tested Sanskrit work is no doubt the safest and most appropriate translation-methodology that every aspiring translator of already rendered works should follow. Mahābhārata can neither be reduced into simplistic narratives, nor it can be thought in terms of *Grand Narrative*; more so because Sanskrit denies singular and straightjacket interpretation of signifiers. Varied translations are actually explorations of various narrative possibilities in the Sanskrit lexicon and *Ślokas*. The wise way therefore, is to keep open to different narrative possibilities.

As one reads Bhattacharya's translation, one finds that his work is as much experimentation with translating Sanskrit into English, as much with English language itself. If Sanskrit is not a translatable language, then English must transform into a

worthy receptacle language – this, it seems, is Bhattacharya's underlying purpose and belief. He retains Sanskrit words that are in the Oxford English Dictionary, and following Prof. Lal's style of rendering some Sanskrit words and giving their common or contextual English synonym with a hyphen, also coins Sanskrit-English compounds or retain Sanskrit word as it is. In latter cases, initially, the unused eye and ear may miss the rhythm; however, the Sanskrit-English compound has a rhythm of its own, adds to poetic flavor, enables Bhattacharya to maintain syllable counts in feet, and also enables him to be the simultaneous translator and reader.

Bhattacharya's Sanskrit-English compounding is utilitarian and perhaps *Political* too, and surely comes under the purview of *Skopostheorie.* The reader has the option either to make sense of the Sanskrit on his/her own, or take the English suggested by Bhattacharya. In 'pure' translation, this option is unavailable and the reader has to be at the receiving end.

At times, however, over-use of Sanskrit-English compounds makes the reading strenuous and breaks the rhythm. For example, "Likewise by force do I *Pṛthivī*-earth verily for the welfare of all creatures" (Section 339, verse 71, p. 936) is not a sonorous rendering. Similarly, in "*Niṣāda*-tribals" (Section 328, verse 14, p. 863), compounding 'tribal' is neither politically correct, nor historically or *Mahābhāratically* correct, because *Niṣāda* is *Varṇasaṃkara* (12.285.8-9), and sometimes considered *Kṣatriya* – though "fallen", and overall a very complex entity.

In some cases, where the *Śloka* itself offers the explanation to an epithet or name, Bhattacharya's retaining the Sanskrit word for what is already explained in the *Śloka* is a laudable strategy to introduce the Sanskrit word into English vocabulary. For example, "śitikaṇṭha" (verse 98) and "Khaṇḍaparaśu" (verse 100) at Section 342 (p. 990). However, the "ś" in former is lower-case, but "K" in the latter is upper-case; consistency should have been maintained, as also in the case of "maha". For example, *mahāprājña* (12.200.1a) rendered as "Maha wise" is

with capital "M" (verse 1, 12, p. 157, 159), whereas it is not in other cases like "maha rishis" (p. 1026, 1027). 'P' in *Puruṣottama* is not capitalized at Section 235 verse 39 (p. 908), but capitalized at page- 910 (verse 53). *Guṇa* is not transcripted (Sec- 205, verse 10-12, p. 142); it is in lower-case "g" in most cases, even at page-143, verse 17 where once it is lower-case and once with a capital "G". *Kāla* is transcripted but in same verse-line *saṃsār*a is not (Sec- 213, verse 13, p. 217). Similarly, "atman" (*Ātmā*) is sometimes with small "a" sometimes capital "A" (*e.g.* pp. 386-7).

Bhattacharya may address these minor issues in his next edition; minor, because his laudable retention of culturally exclusive words like "*arghya*" (*e.g.* Section 343, p. 1000) and "*āñjali*" ["palms joined in āñjali" (*e.g.* Section 325, verse 30 & 32, p. 846)], as also *Praṇāma* in "pranam-ed" (verse 19, p. 176) and "pranam-ing" (Sec- 209A, verse 25, 28, 29, 33; p. 177), outweighs occasional capitalization-italicization inconsistency or misses.

Even if it is not "inconsistency" but deliberate, Bhattacharya's dual strategy of transcripting Sanskrit words in IAST, and non-transcripting Oxford accepted Sanskrit words, may appear confusing to readers. For example, he does not transcript the prefix 'maha' or italicize it. Similar is "rishis". In my opinion, the recurrence of the prefix 'maha' could have been avoided in some cases. For example, "maha-humans" (Section 343, p. 999) and '*mahāyaśāḥ*' (12.200.33a) translated as "maha-renowned" (Sec- 207, vn. 33, p. 161) sounds odd and breaks the rhythm.

The translation experimentation is Bhattacharya's commentary too – which Sanskrit words English should accept in its vocabulary instead of futile indulging in *Translation Game*. Take for example the word *Puruṣa*, which is a Key word in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* and in the doctrine of *Puruṣārthas*. *Puruṣa* has been translated in various ways. Renowned scholars like Julius Eggeling, Max Muller, Arthur Berriedale Keith and Hanns Oertel have mostly translated *Puruṣa* as "man" or

"person" in their renderings of ancient *Vedic* texts. Needless to say, these renderings are misleading because, originally, *Puruṣa* is a non-gendered concept. Bhattacharya has it both ways; he retains *Puruṣa* and offers different compounding in different contexts – *Puruṣa*-Spirit (*e.g.* Sec- 348, p. 1026), "*Puruṣa*-being" (*e.g.* Sec- 321, verse 37, p. 817; Sec- 343, p. 1000), and "*Puruṣa* the Supreme Person" (Sec- 334, verse 29, p. 900).

While the contextual compounding offers the reader the choice to make his own sense of *Puruṣa*, in my opinion, Bhattacharya could have retained *Puruṣa* as it is, because the compounded English translation is at times etymologically problematic. For example, Bhattacharya translates *ekāntinas tu puruṣā gacchanti paramaṃ padam* (12.336.3c) as "those exclusive devotees, reaching *Puruṣa*-spirit the supreme station" (Sec- 348, p. 1026). But, 'Spirit' from PIE *(s)*peis*- "to blow" does not go well with *Puruṣa* (though "*ru*" connotes "sound"), and though the Latin *spiritus* connotes "soul" (other than "courage, vigor, breath"), the modern English connotation (since c.1250) "animating or vital principle in man and animals," and *Puruṣa* is indeed identified with *Prāṇa* in *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*, yet *Puruṣa* is much more than all those combined connotations and significances. Perhaps, Bhattacharya could have left *Puruṣa* as *Puruṣa*, and *Pada* as *Pada* given the immense significations of *Pada*. "Supreme station" does not seem to be an adequate translation of *paramaṃ padam*. 'Station' from PIE base *$steh_2$- "to stand" is rather *Static*, whereas, *Puruṣa* is a Dynamic principle in the *Vedas*, with "thousand feet" (RV- 10.90). Bhattacharya seems to have followed Griffith's translation of *Paramaṃ Padaṃ* as "supreme station" (*e.g.* Griffith's trans. in RV- 1.22.21 – "Vishnu's station most sublime" for *viṣṇoḥ yat paramam padam*). Further, the punctuation 'comma' is missing after *Puruṣa*-spirit.

Bhattacharya has sometimes quoted the whole Sanskrit *Śloka* and then given its translation. Mostly these are well-known and oft-quoted famous *Ślokas*; at times, it seems these are his

personal favourites. This strategy is a severe jolt to conventional translation. Bhattacharya makes the point that despite reading translation, the reader must have the reminder of the original. In some renderings, he has used popular English idioms in addition to the translation, which carry the sense of the *Śloka* though not literally implied. Such experimentation makes the communication forceful. For example, he translates *karoti yādṛśaṃ karma tādṛśaṃ pratipadyate* (12.279.21c) as "as is the karma done, similar is the result obtained"; and then further adds, "as you sow, so shall you reap" (verse 22, p. 639). This being a popular idiom, succeeds in better communication with the reader, which is no doubt the translator's achievement.

Bhattacharya's translation is crisp, compact and lucid. For example, KMG renders - *manoratharathaṃ prāpya indriyārthahayaṃ naraḥ / raśmibhir jñānasaṃbhūtair yo gacchati sa buddhimān* (12.280.1) as "That man who, having obtained this car, viz., his body endued with mind, goes on, curbing with the reins of-knowledge the steeds represented by the objects of the senses, should certainly be regarded as possessed of intelligence." The result is loosening and dispersing of the original sense; besides, "curbing" adds a negative dimension. Bhattacharya translates this as "obtaining this chariot of the mind drawn by the horses of the sense-objects, the man who guides it by the reins of knowledge…" – which is a more practical and easy-flowing rendering, retaining the poetic flavour; besides, "guiding" instead of KMG's "curbing" is positive and does justice to the optimistic philosophy implied here.

Bhattacharya's task is indeed a "Himalayan task" (preface, p.6) as he is aware of the "challenge". With all humbleness that befits an Indian scholar's *Śraddhā* to Indian tradition, Bhattacharya is open-minded to revise towards perfection and admits "all errors are mine and I shall be grateful if these are pointed out" (Preface, p. 6).

As an experimentation in translation, Bhattacharya's methodology is here to last; future translators of Sanskrit may

improve the system, but surely cannot indulge in whimsical translations without mentioning the original Sanskrit words that hold the key to the overall meaning of a *Śloka* or a section or even the whole Text.

The annexures provided at the end of the translation work is useful and enlightening. Annexure-1 gives the internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari. Annexure-2 is Prof. P. Lal's sketch of the Mahābhāratan North India (based on the Historical Atlas of South Asia) showing important places and rivers; however, one feels, the sketch could have been magnified a bit for better legibility. This document and Annexure-3, another sketch of the whole of India, is historically valuable as reminiscence of Prof. P. Lal. Annexure-4 provides a comprehensive list of all the episodes of *Mokṣa-Dharma parvan* courtesy Madhusraba Dasgupta. This document is an instant information provider of what is contained in *Mokṣa-Dharma parvan*. One wishes, Bhattacharya could have provided the corresponding page numbers to the episodes of his translation.

In final analysis, Bhattacharya's rendering is a must in library for serious scholars and readers alike.

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V. ADLURI and J. BAGCHEE, *Argument and Design – the unity of the Mahābhārata*. Brill, Leiden, 2016, 478 pages.

What the Ancillary Stories do in the Mahābhārata

Traditional Indological scholarship has believed in early Kshatriya ballads being edited into the Mahābhārata (MB). Alf Hiltebeitel, once of the most prolific and provocative of MB scholars, has persistently been advocating that it is the written work of a committee of Brahmins of the Panchala area between 150 BCE and 100 CE. A few years ago Adluri, his devoted *shishya*, and Bagchee, Adluri's nephew-cum-*chela* in the *parampara*, collected the guru's papers in two volumes running to over 1200 pages. Now they have edited a superb collection of papers by twelve MB scholars from Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA with two articles by Hiltebeitel preceding and rounding off the set. As usual with conferences held abroad, India is not represented although the epic is grounded there. In India, on the other hand, no seminar on her ancient traditions is considered worthwhile unless some foreign scholars feature, irrespective of the standard of their contribution.

What provoked this book's riveting outpouring is Hiltebeitel's proposition that the "sub-tales" are not fringe episodes or "digressions" as Sukthankar, the editor of the Critical Edition, called them, but are central to the architectonics of the MB. The papers, all focusing on this argument, featured in the 41st annual conference on South Asia in Madison, Wisconsin, in October 2012. From the excellent Foreword by R.P. Goldman, editor of the translation of the Ramayana's Critical Edition (R), it is clear that the book is very much of a *Festschrift* from loving friends, admiring colleagues and students. Adluri provides a fine Introduction happily titled, "From supplementary narratives to narrative supplements," presenting a succinct survey of the highlights. As Goldman points out, thematic proximity is what characterizes these stories which are by no means lesser or subordinate tales. Adluri proposes that they are the best way to rethink the nature of the MB as the repository of all knowledge.

Hiltebeitel notes that among the various terms the MB applies to itself one is *upakhyana*, a non-Vedic word which might be used for the first time here and not occurring in the R. He lists 67 stories (almost 15% of the epic's total slokas) that are so termed, taking "the reverberations between them as a kind of sonar with which to plumb the epic's depths." Whereas *akhyana* is a long narrative often interrupted, the *upakhyana* is a major tale that is not broken up. These are almost all addressed to the Pandavas (primarily Yudhishthira) and a few to Duryodhana and Karna. In saying that only one is narrated by a woman (Kunti to Pandu) Hiltebeitel overlooks the fiery tale of Vidula she tells Krishna for retelling to her sons for screwing their courage to the sticking place so as not to fail. Where tales are repeated, they are always from a different angle. Because of this, Hiltebeitel argues for reading the *Shanti* and the *Anushasana Parvas* as part of the total design, not as the consequence of "an anthology-by-anthology approach." It is relevant that the MB's oldest *parva* list occurring in the Spitzer manuscript (c. 250 CE) does not have the *Anushasana*. It might have formed part of the *Shanti* at that time as it does in the Indonesian MB. These stories build up a nexus of values such as *anrishansya* (non-cruelty), friendship, hospitality, gratitude. This is not so clear in the R. In discussing the Parashurama-Rama encounter, Hiltebeitel erroneously states that the former demands that the latter break Vishnu's bow and he does so (p. 50). Actually, Parashurama challenges him to shoot an arrow with the bow, which Rama does, blocking his path to Swarga. There is a pattern in the encounters Rama has with sages: Hiltebeitel claims that he meets all the eight founders of Brahmin lineages, arguing not very convincingly that Rishyashringa is a substitute for his grandfather Kashyapa and Parashurama for Jamadagni. Childless Parashurama cannot be considered a *gotra*-founder. Seven of these rishis make up the *Saptarshi* constellation, pointing Rama southwards. Hiltebeitel argues that the two epics have similar designs and therefore the MB's story of Rama, beginning with material from canto 7 of the R, cannot be an epitome of Valmiki's epic. Valmiki went beyond it to posit new values about dharma based upon a bhakti

relationship between subjects and monarch, bolstered by rishis of Vedic antiquity. In the course of this discussion, Hiltebeitel very uncharacteristically calls for correcting the Critical Edition of the MB (held sacrosanct by him and his ilk), for having turned the 18 chapter "Narayaniya" section of the *Mokshadharma Parva* into 19, thereby spoiling his ideal "18" paradigm. This smacks of that very "higher criticism" which he is wont to condemn. He contends that these *upakhyanas* aim at churning out the secret of achieving liberation through dharma and truth, something that Shuka attains and finally Yudhishthira too. But does he? After all, in Swarga he is prevented from putting a question to Draupadi-Shri.

Robert Goldman argues that *upakhyana* does not connote subordinate tales but rather complementary or supplementary narratives that are instructive in nature, repeating motifs in the main story. He examines the R's *Uttarakanda* as such a narrative encapsulating core components of the MB's central story. Here the poet appears to be attempting to project Rama as the *chakravartin* who achieves universal imperium through conquest as idealised in the MB. It is only in this last canto that we find mention of armies of 300 rajas massing, too late, to help Rama in besieging Lanka. After the *rajasuya* yagya Yudhishthira's sway extends from Antioch in the West to China in the East. But why should this imperial concept be seen as emulating the Persian Empire? Further, Yudhishthira certainly does not "lay waste to all rival kingdoms" and commit "wholesale slaughter" for the *rajasuya*. Unlike the Dharmaraja, Rama does not annex kingdoms (not even Lanka). He establishes Shatrughna to rule in Mathura. Bharata conquers Gandhara by releasing a WMD annihilating thirty million *gandharvas*- veritable ethnic cleansing- and establishes his sons at Pushkaravati (Peshawar) and Takshashila. Then Rama commands Lakshmana to take over Karupatha without bloodshed. He refrains from the *rajasuya* because Bharata convinces him that the world is already under his sway. The horse-sacrifice which he performs instead at Lakshmana's suggestion emulates Dasharatha's in being devoid of conquests or battles. It is not only Bhavabhuti (8th century CE) who sought

to remedy this omission by introducing the battle with Lava and Kusha in *Uttararamacharita*, as Goldman notes, but also Jaimini who did the same in his MB's *Ashvamedha Parva*. Rama is the ideal pacific and righteous emperor, very different from Dharmaraja Yudhishthira who does not shrink from imperial conquests. The *Uttarakanda* fails to remodel Rama "in the model of the idealized *cakravartin*, Yudhishthira, held up as an ideal template for Kshatriya rule in the Mahābhārata." Goldman believes that its authors were familiar with the MB. He goes further to suggest a probable chronology as Pushkaravati and Takshashila were major towns of the Persian satrapy of Gandaris and then under Alexander (4th c. BCE) and Menander (2nd c. BCE). Their importance would have inspired the authors to claim them as part of the Kosalan Empire. Would that not hold equally true for the MB which is recited to Janamejaya in Taxila?

Bagchee focuses on the variations in the Shakuntala story in the northern and southern recensions. Like Yagyavalkya defying his maternal uncle-and-guru Vaishampayana, he challenges grand guru Hiltebeitel's views and proposes a novel concept, viz. that southern scribes composed extra slokas restoring a better sequential order of chapters in terms of Paurava geneaology. He asserts, they "*heal the breaches in the text*" as they had "*an architecture in their heads*" (emphasis in the original). This is very much like the "higher criticism" which he condemns strongly otherwise. The order in the southern recension is superior to the northern in which "the transitions…are quite awkward." He also alleges that the scribes deleted entire segments, as in the beginning of chapter 90. To him the southern version is "a more complete retelling of the Mahābhārata." Hence he suggests rethinking the relation between the two recensions. As he and Adluri are revising the Critical Edition, we will be seeing the results of their editing work seeking to preserve the tradition of the Indian scribes, as they claim. Bagchee asserts that the southern is not descended from the northern, as argued by T.P. Mahadevan and strongly backed by Hiltebeitel. In proposing a common source for both he is reverting to the German theory of an "Ur-Mahābhārata".

According to him, Mahadevan is mistaken in saying that Sukthankar chose the shortest text as the archetype because of his training in the German school of Philology. Bagchee himself reveals his own Germanic affiliations by speaking of this being "a case of *Vorlage* that makes a certain *Vorgabe*".

Greg Bailey shows how the section in the *Vana Parva* dealing with Markandeya's narratives mirrors the use of multiple and mixed genres in the MB text, besides aiming at providing a "totalistic view of things." There is theogony, cosmogony, tyrannical rajas, raging rishis and differing views of dharma. There is no overarching plot holding this part together, except that all of it educates Yudhishthira. This is particularly interesting because nothing happens to the Pandavas who are the interlocutors all through. The only actors are the sage and Krishna. The focus appears to be on presenting Brahmins with a unified interpretation of dharma through tales of widely varied content.

Sally Goldman examines the MB's *Ramopakhyana* and the R's account of the Rakshasas in the *Uttarakanda* to show that sexual transgression by females and misogyny inhere in the demonic in Valmiki's imagination, not in Vyasa's. Vyasa is not bothered about Rakshasa women and even omits Ravana's mother Kaikasi. She holds that the *Ramopakhyana* is refashioning the *Uttarakanda* to fit in with its views. Why can it not be the other way round, particularly when it is quite certain that the *Uttarakanda* is later (cf. Hiltebeitel)?

Bruce Sullivan seeks to find out what Bhima's encounter with Hanuman can tell us about the MB. Firstly, the MB mostly uses the name "Hanoomaan" instead of "Hanumaan". Sullivan makes the excellent point that there is no reason to assign several centuries for the size of the MB, or a committee as Hiltebeitel proposes, when Isaac Asimov could write 500 books on subjects covering all ten major categories of the Dewey Decimal System while working as a professor of biochemistry. This episode is the only instance in which Bhima cites knowledge of the quality-less supreme soul (*nirgunah paramatmeti*) as the reason for not jumping over the monkey, and refuses the amrita-like food offered. Further, he mentions

this meeting to no one, not even Hanuman's presence on Arjuna's pennant. Even later, when the Pandavas hear the *Ramopakhyana*, Bhima does not mention that he has met Hanuman. Yet, when he meets Hanuman, he says he is aware of his exploits in the R. Hanuman refers to Rama as Vishnu and uses the word *avatara*. Besides this, it is a parallel to first Arjuna and then Yudhishthira meeting their fathers, with Bhima's encounter with Hanuman appropriately in the middle. It also links up with the burning of Khandava when Arjuna received the celestial chariot with a divine ape on the flagstaff, which we are now told is Hanuman. This episode, therefore, seeks to explain Hanuman's presence on Arjuna's flagstaff. In this episode Hanuman is linked four times to Indra. In the *Rigveda* Indra is "Vrishakapi," the bull-ape. Nowhere else in the MB is the ape on the banner known as Hanuman, which suggests that this episode was added at the very end of its composition. Hanuman's assuming his incomparable form to teach Bhima about dharma and the yugas, advocating puja with bhakti, is modelled on Krishna's *Gita*, as is the forgiveness both brothers beg of the deities. Just as Arjuna alone can see this form of Krishna and hear him, so it is with Bhima and Hanuman, Yudhishthira and Dharma. Sullivan sees a parallel between Bhima's double quest for wondrous flowers on Gandhamadana and Indra's mountain-climbing to seek the source of golden lotuses floating in the Ganga. Since here Hanuman is depicted as more divine than in the R, does that indicate composition at a time when he was worshipped as a deity (c. 1st century BCE - 400 CE)? Possibly not, as evidence of such worship comes much later.

Fernando Alonso's thesis is that the committee writing the MB was presenting an answer to competing ideologies like Buddhism and bhakti following Alexander's invasion. He focuses on "the architectures of power and the role of Indra". In doing so he surveys the epic of Gilgamesh where the heroic king is punished by gods for misrule. Both the MB and this epic deal with kings who are intermediaries between men and gods and need to be righteous. Though Alonso asserts that both epics have a divine plan of massacre, in the MB this affects not all

humanity, as in Gilgamesh, but only Kshatriyas. Further, how is the good side "degraded…paving the way for their slaughter" when the Pandavas are left unscathed with a resurrected heir? Nor do bad kings or the absence of kings imply attacks by demons or perversion of the social order and a lack of yagyas. None of these occur during Duryodhana's reign which is extolled by the subjects when they bid tearful farewell to Dhritarashtra. An excellent insight is how sages contribute to the daivic plan through rape (of Matsyagandha), boons (to Kunti, Gandhari, Drona), curses (on Dyaus-Bhishma, Dharma-Vidura, Karna), engendering (by Bharadvaja, Vyasa). Besides incarnating, the gods empower both parties (Arjuna, Shikhandi, Dhrishtadyumna, Draupadi, Jayadratha and Ashvatthama) while the demons possess Duryodhana and Karna. In this list, Alonso misses out Duryodhana whose torso is adamantine being Shiva's creation but waist-downwards is delicate having been made by Uma. As for Indra, he is much more of a figurehead than Homer's Zeus who actively intervenes in the Trojan War. In the *upakhyanas* he is shown as lecherous and scared, never as the demon-smiting Rigvedic hero, but a god who bows to Brahmin-dom. The tirtha stories show that the gods are not all that superior and can be overcome by rishis, asuras and even humans. Their inferiority to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, to kings like Kuru and even to asuras like Bali and Namuchi is made amply clear. The bhakti trinity has overtaken the Rigvedic deities and Indra has no place in the new bhakti ideology. His Swarga is rejected as inferior to moksha. The critical role is played by Kshatriyas who act like Brahmins (Bhishma's celibacy, Yudhishthira's ahimsa) and vice-versa (Drona, Kripa, Ashvatthama) the latter being all on the Kaurava side: "there is no MB without out-of-role Brahmans." The very onset of the Dvapara epoch is because of Brahmin Parashurama's massacres, while Yudhishthira's obsession with nonviolence ushers in Kali Yuga. Alonso proposes that the makers of the MB made it a war story so that it was closed off to competing groups like the *Shramanas* and their cycles of tales. Thus, the *Samyutta Nikaya* shows Indra as a devotee of Buddha and the

gods as inferior to *arhants*. It would have been similar in Jain texts.

Adheesh Sathaye tries to make sense of the Madhavi episode by using a unique approach. He conceptualizes the architectonics of the MB as resembling a modern museum whose text panels guide the audience's reaction to the exhibit. He argues that the story of Galava and Madhavi provides "a unique fusion of morality and political discourse" advocating gathering power through friendship, not conquest. He notes Dumezil's linking of Madhavi with the Celtic epic heroine Medb, both names deriving from the Indo-European root "medhua" meaning "intoxicating", which we hear still in the Santhal "mahua," the Sanskrit "madhu". It is not cognate to the English "mead" as Sathaye says, that word being Germanic. Sathaye argues that Garuda is shown to be "a morally problematic friend and guide" as he disrespects women in the encounter with the female sanyasi Shandili, foreshadowing Galava's "pimping" of Madhavi. As he is a pupil of the arch-rebel Vishvamitra, we are predisposed to accept his operating at the fringes of social propriety and his being as stubborn as his guru. Here a story about a different kind of Brahmin is glued on to the Vishvamitra meta-myth. Vishvamitra's very birth is linked to the black-eared horses he demands from Galava which is also the name of Vishvamitra's son in the *Harivansha*. Ashtaka, his son from Madhavi, is a Rigvedic seer. The yagya the grandsons of Yayati perform for him is the epic's version of the Rigvedic verse 10.179 attributed to three of the same kings (Shibi, Pratardana and Vasumanas) ruling over Kashi, Ayodhya and Bhojapura plus Ashtaka at Kanyakubja, all important sites in early Buddhist and Jain literature. Shibi, in particular, is an epitome of moral kingship in both Brahminical and Buddhist traditions. Sathaye suggests that linking these kingdoms through matrilocal genealogy constructs a new way of looking at consolidating power through regional alliances instead of conquest following the collapse of the Mauryas. To these Sathaye adds Pratishthana, Yayati's capital, identifying it with the Satavahana capital of Paithan in the post-Mauryan period, known as important commercially in Buddhist texts. He

overlooks that Khandavaprastha is given to the Pandavas as having been the capital of their ancestor Yayati. Simultaneously, the Galava-Garuda tale highlights the supremacy of Vishnu which is stressed in the story of Dambodhbhava that follows. This arrogant king is trounced by Nara with a fistful of grass. This is very interesting because in the *Mairavana* and the *Sahasramukharavana* tales from the *Jaiminiya Mahābhārata*, both Hanuman and Sita use similar mantra-infused grass to destroy the demons. Vaishnava theology is thus being brought to the fore. As these stories focus on obstinate pride leading to destruction, the audience is guided to realise the anxieties of post-Mauryan rulers in whose despotic times the MB is trying to push a new vision of moral rule, *dharmartha*, for governing effectively, ruthless conquest no longer being a feasible option.

The lengthiest paper, running to 45 pages, is by the editor Adluri: a provocative contribution claiming that Amba-Shikhandi represents *Ardhanarishvara*. The name, of course, is that of the Goddess-as-Mother, but how does her turning male recall Shiva's "gender ambiguity"? Nor does *ardhanarishvara* mean "half woman" but rather "the-half-woman-God." The MB does not know the *Ardhanarishvara* concept. Adluri argues that Arjuna, empowered by Shiva, and Shikhandi resemble the Purusha-Prakriti dyad. However, the Purusha is always a witness, never acting, whereas it is Arjuna's arrows, not Amba-Shikhandi's, that bring down Bhishma. It could be argued that by using Shikhandi as a stalking horse, Arjuna is, in effect, pretending to be witness, but Adluri does not resort to that. For him, the "ultimate androgyne" Shikhandhi challenges the "ultimate masculine figure" Bhishma (but does not celibacy undercut this maleness?), and the ultimate mortal (Nara-Arjuna) opposes the ultimate immortal (Bhishma). There is no evidence that Amba/Shikhandi remembers "to become the divine androgyne." Adluri calls the Arjuna-Shikhandi pair "the double androgynes" referring to the former's year as Brihannada. He could have added the instances of Bhangashvana (man to woman by Indra), Ila (woman to man by Shiva), particularly as the story of the former is related by Bhishma and of Samba

(born by Shiva's boon) whose cross-dressing results in the doom of his clan. Adluri, while making the perceptive point that feminist interventions alter the Kshatriya dynasties, as through Ganga, Satyavati, Draupadi, forgets the most important of these, viz. Kunti. If Satyavati abruptly replaces the dynasty sought to be founded through Ganga and the heavenly Vasus by her own, Kunti substitutes her grandmother-in-law's designs by reverting to the gods for progeny. Merely by producing offspring how can Ambika and Ambalika be parallels to Vinata and Kadru? Pandu abdicates in favour of Dhritarashtra. If progenition makes a character a symbol of "the *sristi* aspect of the *pravritti* cycle," then why leave out the amazingly fecund Gandhari? The point is well made that the rejection of Amba creates the void in which the epic action occurs – a space that "rapidly folds in on itself" with her return, for she symbolizes the *laya* (destruction) motif. Germanic study of the New Testament, which is what informs the Critical Edition of the MB, again rears its head with Adluri's reference to "the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this text". Adluri reaches out very far indeed in claiming that as a crocodile-infested river Amba symbolizes the MB at whose end Arjuna sees Krishna and Balarama as dead crocodiles. In agreeing with Hiltebeitel that the text never allows anyone to run amuck (even Parashurama), Adluri overlooks Parashurama and Ashvatthama who do exactly that, the latter with the support of Rudra. Instead, he claims that the story of Amba shows Shiva and the Devi acting jointly as the divine androgyne, overcoming gender. He adds a section showing how the number five is significant: the fifth Veda, the five Pandavas, Shuka as the fifth son (the 4 pupils being like sons) who attains moksha, the five elements that combine for creation, the five-tufted Shiva in Uma's lap as the symbol of birth whom Indra seeks to strike and is paralysed.

Adam Bowles focuses on 3 ancillary tales about fish, doves and the ungrateful man. The first of these does not feature in Hiltebeitel's list, because, Bowles finds, the list of colophons in the Critical Edition is erroneous (all the more reason for a properly revised edition, a proposal being stoutly resisted by Western Indologists who will only correct typos). These tales

are mirrors for rulers on the art of governance, and resemble those in the Buddhist Jatakas, in which the fish tale occurs (as well as in the *Panchatantra*), and shares concerns found in the *Arthashastra* rather than the *dharmashastras*. These impart lessons on proper alliances, distinguishing traitors from friends and right action. The doves' tale with its motif of sheltering the refugee recurs often, climaxing in Yudhishthira not abandoning the dog accompanying him (but what about abandoning his dying wife and brothers?) Like the female dove, Draupadi exhorts her spouses to practice appropriate dharma. However, to equate the female dove's burning herself on her mate's pyre with Draupadi adopting *sahagamana* is incorrect, because she does not follow her dead spouse. On the contrary, at Yudhishthira's command all the husbands abandon her when she falls. The tale of the ungrateful Brahmin is not the only instance of a Brahmin acting abnormally, as Bowles thinks. Parashurama, Sharadvat, his son Kripa, Drona, his son Ashvatthama, Raibhya, Paravasu and Aravasu all violate the Brahmin code. Further, though this tale comes after the end of the war, it precedes the internecine massacre of the Yadavas where the harbingers of death are, again, Brahmins. These are the arch-rebel Vishvamitra, father of Shakuntala founder of the Bharata dynasty, Kanva her foster father, and the ubiquitous mischief-maker Narada.

Nicolas Dejenne deals with Madeleine Biardeau's crucial contribution in highlighting ignored aspects of the *upakhyanas*. Thus, she considered that Damayanti, a reflection of Draupadi and suffering earth, takes up the role of the avatara, bringing in a new dimension to the epic. That, in turn, prompts rumination on the connection between Krishna as avatara and Draupadi. Biardeau argued that the MB was an ideological instrument countering the prevalence of Buddhism in society. In the R, she posited, the Buddhists were displaced to Lanka as rakshasas. She focused on the "mirror-stories" noting how the *Virataparva* reflects part of the epic plot. Without these tales we would miss significant analogies. It is a great pity that her major study of the MB has not been translated into English.

T. Mahadevan's paper is on Mudgala, the gleaning Brahmin of the MB, the ideal ritualist whose story Vyasa himself narrates in the *Vanaparva* and again in the *Mokshadharmaparva*. He features in the *Rigveda's* Shakala branch in east Panchala and Kosala. These gleaners are presumed by Hiltebeitel to be in small kingdoms like the Shungas in the 2nd century BCE, interfacing with Vyasa and writing out the first draft of the MB. Mahadevan finds Mudgala to be a real person with a *gotra* identity, part of a distinct Brahmin group found in the *Rigveda* and continuing through the epic into the future. Vaishampayana, the reciter, is also the redactor of the *Taittiriya Samhita* belonging to Panchala where the elaborate Soma rituals developed. Vyasa's other pupils Jaimini and Paila are founders of Vedic schools of rituals. Mudgala rejects being sent bodily to Swarga, preferring to practise serenity on earth for nirvana. These gleaners were part of Brahmin migrations of whom the Purvashikhas came south around 150 BCE (mentioned in Sangam poetry) followed by the Aparashikhas (6th to 17th centuries CE), both carrying the MB. Epigraphic evidence for them exists. They still exist performing complex soma rituals and narrating the MB in Srirangam, covering a remarkable history of nearly 3000 years and providing evidence of organised Brahmin migrations of at least four *gotra* affiliates-a unique phenomenon. There is a major error here when the 8th regnal year for Rajendra Chola is given as 1929-31 instead of 1022-23.

Simon Brodbeck is the only scholar in this collection to study the *upakhyanas* in the *Harivansha* (HV). Andre Couture is the only other foreign Indologist to research this neglected text. Dr. A. Harindranath and A. Purushothaman have been researching it within India. Brodbeck asks the reader to consider what these ancillary stories might mean to him, for we are as much receivers of the tales as Yudhishthira (to whom 49 of the 67 are addressed) but even more so Janamejaya who, like us, hears them all. Thus, the frame-story is an integral part of the MB. At no stage was it merely a Kuru-Pandava story. Shulman and Hiltebeitel argue that the statement that Vyasa made a *Bharata* of 24,000 verses without *upakhyanas* could mean a

digest, not an "ur-text" that was later enlarged. There is no reason why an *upakhyana*-less MB should be a bizarre idea as Brodbeck feels. After all, all the retellings for children in Indian lanugages are precisely that. Like Couture, Brodbeck argues that the HV is part and parcel of the MB, as it is mentioned in the list of contents of 101 *parvas*, the last being called "the greatly wondrous *Ashcharyaparva*". Hiltebeitel's list of *upakhyanas* leaves out those of the HV, chiefly the ancillary story of Krishna and his clan. Brodbeck points out that even the MB itself is called an *upakhyana* at 1.2.236, which indicates the risk in treating it as a technical genre. Hence, to depend upon the colophons for the classification is erroneous, specially as they were added much later. Brodbeck adds 4 sub-stories from the HV to Hiltebeitel's 67, two which are alluded to in the *Shanti Parva*. He shows how these four stories serve "as stepping stones" through the text and are inter-related, suggesting a new approach to the *upakhayanas*. For instance, the "Dhanya upakhayana," which is the last one, contains the birth of Samba by Shiva-Uma's boon, whose dressing as a woman (a parallel to the androgyne Amba-Shikhandi, Arjuna-Brihannada) precipitates the curse leading to the destruction of Krishna's clan.

The final paper is Hiltebeitel's study of the geography of the ancillary stories proposing, as suggested by Rajesh Purohit of the Sri Krishna Museum Kurukshetra, that they fit the main story into the spatial and temporal geography of the MB, constructing a Bakhtinan "chronotype". He suggests that this is the first text to project the Ganga-Yamuna doab "as a total land and a total people," while the R "envisions India as a total land but not as a total people". Unfortunately he does not elaborate. These tales also help to build "its cosmograph into its geography" (a concept formulated by R. Kloetzli). Hiltebeitel asserts that Kuru and his parents Tapati and Samvarana are invented by the MB composers because the stories are "especially dreamlike and elliptical" – hardly an objective criterion! He shows how the story of Shakuntala is part of accomplishing the devas' plan by engendering the Bharata dynasty. So is the story of Yayati who divides the world among

his five sons, assigning four to the northwestern lands and Puru to rule in the heartland. There is another series of stories centred on Kurukshetra that imply familiarity with it on part of the composer(s) who "may actually be writing a Mahābhārata ethnography out of their own experience there." Here he adopts Mahadevan's thesis of the Purvashikha Brahmins of this area composing the MB around the second to first century BCE.

What we have here a scintillating necklace of twelve iridescent gems with a Hiltebeitel solitaire at either end. It is a collection that no Mahābhārata acolyte can afford to miss.

Pradip Bhattacharya

KEVIN MCGRATH, *Rāja Yudhiṣṭhira – Kingship in Epic Mahābhārata*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2017, 246 pages.

"Because he *ranjita*-delighted
all his people,
he was called a raja."

Models of Monarchy in the Mahābhārata[1]

"There was a raja named Uparicara, a dharma-following monarch, fond of hunting,"[2] is how Vaishampayana begins the detailed recital of his guru Vyasa's Mahābhārata (MB) at Janamejaya's request, striking what McGrath regards as the keynote of the epic: kingship. Buddhadeb Basu was the first to argue that Yudhishthira, not Krishna or Arjuna, was the protagonist of the MB in *Mohabharoter Kotha* (1974), Englished by Sujit Mukherjee as *The Story of Yudhishthira* (1986). McGrath's sixth book on the MB studies Yudhishthira as a model of dualistic monarchy, shared with Krishna and his brothers, in a "pre-Hindu," pre-monetary, pre-literate Bronze Age society of the first millennium BC. This monarchy, based upon agreement of the family, the clan and the people, is juxtaposed with the *Shanti Parva*'s paradigm of autarchy ("more classical, early Hinduism"). McGrath strongly feels that it is Mauryan and, even more so, Gupta epitomes of kingship that are represented here. Vaishampayana ends saying that this "itihasa" named *Jaya* is to be heard by one who desires to rule the earth. The epic, therefore, is focussed on kingship.

McGrath also explores how pre-literacy is portrayed, again dually. Externally, there is the drama of recitation before an audience; internally, the narrative of Yudhishthira's kinship group which is the foundation for preliterate poetry. The great variations in style are evidence of different poetic traditions that are amalgamated into a single vast poem: Vedic, pre-Hindu,

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[1] A shorter version of this review was published on 14.1.2018 in the 8th Day literary supplement of The Sunday Statesman.

[2] All quotations are from the P. Lal transcreation (www.writersworkshopindia.com)

Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist. McGrath believes that MB became a written text in the time of Samudragupta, which is why a coin of that king features on the cover. However, he falls into the trap of believing that one person could not have composed the MB. What about the enormous output of Isaac Asimov in almost all branches of knowledge in modern times and of Shakespeare in the past with wide stylistic variations?

In a time long long ago north of the Vindhyas lived communities who for protection chose from among Kshatriya families a ruler. The *Shanti Parva* chapters 57, 59, 67 have this to say:-

> *tena dharmottaraś cāyaṁ kr̥to loko mahātmanā /*
> *rañjitāś ca prajāḥ sarvās tena rājeti śabdyate //*
> That mahatma ensured
> the sway of dharma
> in the world.
> Because he *ranjita*-delighted
> all his people,
> he was called a raja.
>
> First find a raja.
> Then get a wife.
> Then wealth, they say.
> Without a raja-
> Your wife and wealth,
> What good are they?
>
> There is only one Sanatana Dharma
> for a raja
> who wishes to rule a kingdom:
> the welfare of his subjects.
> Such welfare
> preserves the world.

The raja drew his authority from the people who, in return for his protection, gave him one fiftieth of their animals and gold, a tenth of their grain and the loveliest of their daughters

(*Shanti Parva,* 67.23-24). It was a time when money did not exist and writing was unknown. Wealth acquired by the raja consisting of precious metals, gems, cattle, but not land, was distributed by him during yagyas and other ceremonies. Succession to the throne was not by primogeniture alone and needed ratification by the people.

For instance, Bharata disinherited his nine sons finding them unfit to rule and adopted the Brahmin Bharadvaja as his successor, naming him Vitatha. Yati, Nahusha's eldest son, was not his successor but the younger Yayati. Yayati had to explain to the people why he gave the throne to his youngest son Puru. Brahmins did not agree to enthrone Pratipa's eldest son Devapi who became a sanyasi. So the youngest, Shantanu, became king. Again, it was Vichitravirya's younger son Pandu who was made king.

McGrath makes out a strong case for the MB being about the establishment of Yadava hegemony (pointed out in 2002 in my paper "Leadership and Managing Power: Insights from the Mahābhārata"). The displacement of Yayati's eldest son Yadu in favour of the youngest Puru comes full circle. However, it is not "a son of Krishna" (an error repeated twice) who becomes king at Indraprastha, but his great grandson Vajra, while his sister's grandson rules at Hastinapura. McGrath expands this idea to envisage a conflict in which a matriline defeats a patriline. Actually, it is Satyavati's line that is displaced by her daughter-in-law Kunti's. McGrath appears to be supporting the idea that the matriline represents "indigenous" Dravidian traditions that defeat "intrusive" Indo-Aryans. Thankfully, he refrains from stepping further into this morass.

We find here a new insight: royal authority is portrayed as dualistic, being shared by Yudhishthira with Krishna in both the major rituals of *rajasuya* and *ashvamedha*. Before that, authority is shared between Satyavati, Bhishma and Vyasa. Royal power depends upon support of the community who are represented in the group of ministers chosen from all four classes. Yudhishthira's is also a fraternal kingship shared with his brothers and even with Dhritarashtra. Thus, after Karna is dead, Yudhishthira tells Krishna that now he is raja of the world

along with his brothers. McGrath pertinently points out that "kingdom" has its origins in the Old English "cyn" standing for "kin" and means "the situation or location of kinship" which does not connote rule by one person, which is the model Bhishma presents in the *Shanti Parva*.

When Vyasa is called "brahmarshi kavih" McGrath has problems finding an English equivalent for "rishi". Not happy with "wizard" he leans towards "shaman". The Oxford English Dictionary glosses "rishi" as "A Hindu sage or saint". The exact equivalent would be "seer" in the sense that MB uses it. The "kavi" is a seer-poet.

Shantanu is the only one called "adhiraja", superior monarch. This is significant because it is the dynasty of his step-father with which Vyasa is concerned, having been inserted into it by his mother to carry it forward. The royalty of the bloodline, therefore, becomes dubious, particularly when Pandu's wives gets sons from multiple devas. It is interesting that McGrath does not examine this aspect of Yudhishthira's claim, despite Duryodhana questioning it bluntly. The need for the people's acquiescence to legitimise the kingship seems to be more implicit than voiced explicitly. McGrath overlooks that Yayati has to explain to the people why he is choosing his youngest son. However, we do not see Shantanu doing the same in the case of Devavrata, nor do the people protest. They only object vociferously when the Pandavas are exiled, but this carries no weight with Duryodhana who appears to represent the "later" type of autocrat, though not a tyrant since the people tell Dhritarashtra they were happy under his reign. The installing of Yudhishthira as crown-prince requires no consent from the public. Their applauding him is not evidence of public opinion featuring as a crucial element in making that decision as McGrath asserts. When he refers to Krishna in his peace-embassy appealing to the kings in the assembly to speak as evidence that Dhritarashtra has to heed the "sangha", this would be because that is the mode of governance obtaining among the Yadavas. No one in the court responds to this appeal, because the modality of Hastinapura's monarchy does not envisage such consultative rule. Duryodhana is not bothered about Krishna's

exhortation to behave so that the great warriors install him as crown-prince. He successfully asserts his right singly.

The dharma of a raja had three qualities: punishing, protecting, donating. He rules, as Kunti tells Krishna, by conciliation, giving gifts, causing division, using force and strategy. Yudhishthira always speaks in terms of not just himself but always including his brothers (the most significant being sharing a wife). All decision-making is fraternal for him, except for the game of dice twice over.

Krishna is referred to as *sanghamukhyo*, leader of the association. According to V.S. Agrawala, in Panini's time the Bharatas' profession was *ayudhajivin* (weaponry) and they lived as a *sangha*. The MB seems to be showing political systems changing from an oligarchic *sangha* and a kinship type of rule to absolute monarchy. Neither Parikshit as full-fledged monarch nor Janamejaya share power with anyone. The Yadavas end up with Krishna's great grandson Vajra ruling in Indraprastha, and the sons of Satyaki and Kritavarma ruling in nearby kingdoms.

McGrath argues that three forms of time coalesce in the MB. There is the recalled pre-monetary, pre-literate time of *sanghas*; the time poetry creates representing an ideal; and both are conveyed through the time of actual performance. Thus there is "a compounding of the historical, the mythical and the performative which coalesce into a single instance or event that has been simply transmitted and then recorded in our present text of the poem." An impressive thesis indeed.

A very interesting proposition in the book is that Parashurama's genocide of Kshatriyas might represent destruction of Buddhist kingdoms east of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. But where is the evidence for this? J. Bronkhorst proposed that the MB's earliest written text is from the time when Brahmanism was imposing itself on eastern regions viz. Magadha. The Bhargava Brahmins, whose tales feature prominently in the MB, would have been linked to this expansion.

It is not clear why the MB should be recalling "an imagined former era" of war-chariots, when Persian armies used them against Alexander. Nor is there a shift away from the Rigvedic

sacrifice which remains central to the MB. In the *Shanti Parva*, however, other ways of achieving liberation are described such as *Sankhya* and Yoga. Ritual sacrifice is even shown as of no consequence compared to the life of *unchavritti* (gleaning). These, as McGrath writes, could certainly be a response to Buddhism and Jainism. There are references to *caityas* (funeral monuments) and *edukas* (ossuaries) in the kingdom of Gaya. Bhurishrava is said to be meditating on *mahopanishadam* and engaged in yoga. The earliest Upanishads are dated to the middle of the first millennium BC. McGrath points out that Arjuna's sword is described as *akashanibham* (blue like the sky). This is the wootz steel which was produced in North India in the 3rd century BC. Further, prior to the battle Uluka refers to the rite of weapon-worship (*lohabhihara*). *Loha* means "coppery, red." McGrath interprets this as indicating bronze weaponry, thus bolstering his thesis about this being a bronze-age heroic culture.

A significant point is that the term *chakravartin*, turner-of-the-wheel, is only applied to ancient rulers, never to Yudhishthira, who, therefore, was never given the status of an emperor despite the *rajasuya* yagya. When finally installed at Hastinapura, he is called *patim prithvyah*, lord of the earth. Other terms used are *mahipati, nripa, bhumipa, narendra, nareshvara,* synonymous with "raja". *Chakravartin* is a term that was used by Buddhists and Jains, particularly in the Andhra region along the Krishna River.

There is a curious incident usually overlooked which McGrath points out as an indication that kingship was oligarchic. After the Pandavas have been exiled, Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni offer the kingdom to Drona considering him as protector, ignoring Dhritarashtra and Bhishma who appears nowhere at the close of the *Sabha Parva*. Where is the consent of the public? This recurs when Duryodhana, rescued by Pandavas from the Gandharvas, offers the kingship to Duhshasana. McGrath proposes that this is the consequence of the *rajasuya* having gone wrong so that royal authority seems to have become mobile. The *Udyoga Parva* has the subjects discussing Duryodhana's destructive thoughtlessness (as

citizens do in Shakespeare's plays), a feature that never occurs in the type of kingdom Bhishma describes in the *Shanti Parva*. The mobile nature of kingship is seen when Karna tells Krishna that Yudhishthira would not accept the kingdom were he to know about Karna's birth. Gandhari, however, is quite categorical that the Kuru kingdom passes by succession. The *rajasuya* instead of making kingship permanent for Yudhishthira completely upsets it. The MB seems to be presenting different claims to kingship without projecting a single model. It is subject to family, kinship, the clan, the public etc.

The king's primary duty is as a sacrificer, which McGrath analyses at length. The primary model is Indra, *shatakratu* (performer of a hundred sacrifices) the rain-bringer, promoting fertility. Satyavati urges Vyasa to provide a successor to the throne as a kingless kingdom gets no rain. As an offshoot of this, in old age the king finally takes to the forest as a renunciant, which does not form part of the paradigm of the later "classical" model of monarchy where he rules till death.

Besides the pattern of the displaced eldest son in the line of succession, there is the feature of sons being born to queens not from their husbands (Ambika, Ambalika, Kunti, Madri). Further, the earliest kings did not take princesses as wives. Yayati has sons from Brahmin and Asura women; Uparichara from Girika, a riverine woman; Shantanu from Ganga and Satyavati, both riverine women. Only in subsequent times we find the practice of restricting the choice to royal families.

McGrath is mistaken in stating that during Pandu's rule Dhritarashtra declares Yudhishthira's right of succession. By the time Duryodhana is born – which is the context of Dhritarashtra's comment – Pandu has long given up the throne to his elder brother, retreated to the Himalayas, been cursed by the deer-sage and has persuaded Kunti to beget a son by the god Dharma. It is interesting that Yudhishthira is referred to as "ajatashatru" (whose foes are unborn), since this is name of Bimbisara's son (491 BC) who killed his father and founded Pataliputra. It is not a name shared with Ashoka's father, as McGrath states, who was Bindusara. Both expanded the

Magadha kingdom considerably. Without conquering Magadha, Yudhishthira cannot become *samraj* (emperor). There is a historical memory here.

Regarding the dice game, McGrath quotes Yudhishthira as having vowed never to refuse a challenge, which overturns the "fraternal kingship" paradigm. He seeks to cover this in a footnote pointing out that on the second occasion all the Pandavas were invited, not just Yudhishthira. He observes that while Draupadi was treated contemptuously, "there is no overt violence and a certain etiquette is observed." What about being dragged by the hair and sought to be stripped naked?

McGrath points out a fact that has been overlooked by others: Krishna's report to Yudhishthira about what Dhritarashtra and Gandhari said supporting his rightful claim to the throne do not tally with what we have heard in the Hastinapura court! Similarly, Krishna's report to Uttanka and to Vasudeva about the events of the war differ significantly from what Sanjaya has reported. Why?

Another interesting sidelight is provided: Karna tells Krishna that Brahmins will recount the Mahābhārata sacrifice. Why not the half-kshatriya *sutas*? This hints at the Bhargava redaction of the epic.

Yudhishthira is said to have been guilty of lying only once although there is a series of lies all the brothers tell Virata. A very rare example of the fury Yudhishthira is capable of even against his own family is the curse he lays upon all women after finding out that Karna was his elder brother. In his aversion for the kingdom his parallel is Balarama who avoids the war. Yudhishthira's renunciant bent has parallels in Buddhism and Jainism. In the *Shanti Parva* he uses a metaphor to describe worldly predicament which Shakespeare's King Lear repeats: "Thus on this various wheel of samsara, like a chariot wheel…" A similar disgust for the kingdom won by slaughtering kinfolk is voiced by Arjuna the perfect kshatriya in the *Ashvamedha Parva*.

McGrath holds that Vyasa is older than Bhishma and is not mortal. The timeline does not indicate that. Devavrata is returned to Shantanu as a teenager. Four years after that

Shantanu weds Matsyagandha who has given birth to Vyasa earlier. Vyasa would be around the same age as Bhishma. Further, he is definitely mortal, not *chiranjivi* like Ashvatthama and Kripa. He is divine only in the sense that much later he tells his disciples that he is an avatara of Narayana.

On page 107 there is a curious error: "Shalya's driver is killed by Kripa". This is a good example of the sort of mistake the editors of the critical edition made by ignoring logic to follow blindly the maximum manuscripts agreeing with the Sharada script version. It is Bhima who does this, following up by killing the horses and cutting away Shalya's breastplate. Further, though displeased, Yudhishthira does not reprimand Bhima for kicking prone Duryodhana's head, despite being urged by Krishna who does not justify this act as McGrath has it (p.108). Rather, Yudhishthira justifies Bhima's kicking.

It is good to find McGrath speculating about why the movement of the narrative was impeded by introducing the didacticism of the *Shanti, Anushasana* and *Anugita* portions instead of peremptorily rejecting them as interpolations. It is necessary to find out what possibly motivated the redacteurs to do this, and how it happened. Why stitch together such widely divergent types of poetry? This could only happen in a literate period.

The manner in which Vyasa exhorts Yudhishthira to be king-like and emerge from depression by drawing upon traditions of ancient monarchy can be seen in the Old English poems "Deor's Lament" and "The Wanderer". McGrath compares this to the Gupta dynasty seeking to revive the *ashvamedha* rite to legitimise power and using the MB recital for this purpose. Why should we not see this as valid for the revival five centuries before that by Pushyamitra Shunga, a Brahmin general who assassinated his king and attacked Buddhists? The wrongs a raja commits are said to be removed by performing such yagyas and distributing donations.

The archaic nature of MB culture is further exemplified by the absence of icons of deities. There is just a solitary mention of images of devas shaking, laughing, dancing, weeping before Bhishma's fall. Yet, McGrath mentions Yudhishthira offering

puja to deities before entering his palace after investiture. The first statues come in Ashoka's time and are of animals and *yakshas*. In the late Shunga period (the closing years BCE), we find decorative sculptures depicting human and mythical figures. The MB makes no references to worship of deities in homes or temples or to building of memorials. McGrath opines, "This is because stone sculpture at that time was a solely Buddhist or Jaina phenomenon."

McGrath points out what is seldom realised, viz. that the warrior's way, *kshatradharma*, is first spoken of by Hanuman and is similar to the catalogue in *Arthashastra*. The raja's dharma is first enunciated by Narada at the beginning of the *Sabha Parva*. The *Gita* does not touch upon this, being directed solely at the hero. McGrath examines three instances when Yudhishthira is advised in practical terms how to function as a raja. Arjuna propounds practical tenets of governance; Draupadi holds forth on what is to be done in crisis; Yudhishthira has his own craving for liberation of the spirit. There is no mention of any ministers counselling him in Hastinapura. This characterises Bhishma's picture of kingship. However, it overlooks the episode in the *Adi Parva* where the Machiavellian counsellor Kanika expounds his *niti* to Dhritarashtra for getting rid of the Pandavas.

McGrath argues that the shift in oligarchic monarchy of the earlier books to a single person's rule in the *Shanti Parva* is matched by development of a pre-monetary barter economy into one where currency is exchanged for goods. This is the time dominated by Jain and Buddhist merchant classes when fraternal kingship is replaced by autarchic rule. It is also the time of urbanisation when coins gradually replace land, agricultural produce and cattle as mediums of exchange. The lack of mention of coinage in the *Shanti Parva* is explained away as because it is describing a mythical time, "blurring historic and poetic reality." That is not a satisfactory explanation and undermines the argument.

When McGrath believes that the culture MB depicts is primarily a pre-monetary, pre-literate Bronze Age one as Homer's epics do, why does he contradict himself by saying that it is only "an idealised old world" and "not a portrait of an

historical reality, but a pictured heroic time"? Hasn't evidence of the Homeric world turned up?

The peculiar incident of the Brahmin Charvaka condemning Yudhishthira, which McGrath finds so puzzling, becomes clearer if we look at Duryodhana's dying speech. Here he says that if the ascetic Charvaka, master of eloquence, hears how he has been killed in unfair combat, he will definitely avenge him. Even more intriguing is how Kripa, despite his role in the massacre of the Panchalas and Draupadi's sons, goes unpunished and continues as guru to Parikshit. McGrath proposes that perhaps *Sauptika Parva* was a later phase of the epic's growth featuring Kripa in assisting in the massacre.

Vidura's precepts and Bhishma's discourses on kingship come to be collected in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which is also an action-less monologue. This picture is an urban one of a classical king and his entourage. What is particularly shocking is Bhishma's advice that Yudhishthira ought to fear kinsmen like death, because Yudhishthira's is all along a familial kingship. But why is the use of spies Bhishma advocates "a new practice" (p. 156) when Duryodhana had all along been using them to track the Pandavas in exile? The two *parvas* are concerned with the king's morals and are devoid of dramatic effect on either Bhishma or Yudhishthira. Only at the very end the *Anushasana Parva* says that Yudhishthira was anointed having obtained the kingdom. The heroic epic re-starts with the *Ashvamedha Parva*. These two books surely belong to a radically different poetic tradition, being upanishadic, not heroic.

In sum, Yudhishthira is not the king Bhishma describes, for he shares his power with Krishna and with his brothers, with approval of his public. He is incredibly gentle and intensely humane. The only instance in which he does not involve his brothers is the disastrous decision to participate in the game of dice. Only twice he displays anger: against Arjuna and Kunti. He is unique for the world-renouncing remorse he feels, unwilling to be king even after the horse sacrifice. Curiously, he shows no signs of spiritual liberation despite the massive discourses of Bhishma. As McGrath pertinently writes, "dharma for him concerns praxis, and it is in no way a medium of

enlightenment. He is a moralist, not a mystic.” This is tellingly brought out in his encounters with Dharma-as-crane and Nahusha-as-python. His counterpoint Duryodhana might have been drawn from a different tradition because of the paradoxical presentation of his death. Why McGrath feels this could be Buddhist or Jain is not clear, nor why “his truculence and minatory belligerence…have been laid upon another kind of earlier character.”

Vyasa presents us with three portraits of kingship: Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana and Yudhishthira. All display a dependence upon public opinion and the subjects appear to have been happy under the rule of all three. When Yudhishthira exits, he hands over the throne to the dual authority of Yuyutsu and Parikshit (the courtiers surround the former; the women the latter). He advises Subhadra to protect Vajra in Indraprastha and not follow adharma (*i.e.* seek to supplant him by her own grandson Parikshit). Like Arjuna much earlier, Yudhishthira enters heaven in his mortal frame – and yet he does not, because he has to experience hell. He is said to be filled with bitter rage here. He will not accept heaven without his brothers, just as he shared earthly power in their company. Only thereafter, having discarded his mortality, is he taken to Swarga.

McGrath makes the very interesting point that the MB is recited at Takshashila, the capital of Gandhara (Kandahar), the land of Gandhari and Shakuni. Kautilya composed his *Arthashastra* here. Ashoka was viceroy here. The oldest manuscripts of the MB are from Kashmir. In his conclusion McGrath puts forward a very important suggestion for studying how the commentator Nilakantha prepared his edition of the text. While McGrath very rightly points out the puzzling omission of the Sindhu-Sarasvati civilization’s urban heritage in one place, in another he asserts it is “obviously recalled” without citing evidence.

Just as in late 6th century BC Athens, in the Panathenaia festival, brought a re-conceived Bronze Age epic poetry into a single Pan-Hellenic form, so the MB integrated all available material on social living in a single collection. McGrath sees it depicting a religion of hero-worship which continues today. He

is certain that the war books and parts of the *Virata Parva* are older, depicting an ancient Bronze Age warrior tradition, than the *Shanti-Anushasana Parvas*. Does the poem hark back only to the older world of Vedic deities? Does it not stress repeatedly the primacy of the Nara-Narayana duo and the underlying presence of Rudra-Shiva? Nor does it elide all Buddhist and Jain experience. There are negative references to *kshapanaka* (naked Jaina mendicant) and *pashanda* (Jains/Buddhists). The *Mokshadharma Parva* incorporates much of their concept of world-abandonment for the sake of individual salvation, quite contrary to the stance of the *Gita* and the kingship the MB portrays. The very concept of the supreme value of yagya is completely undercut at the end of the horse-sacrifice where the half-golden mongoose shows it is much inferior to what is achieved by those living by gleaning. The archetypal seer-king, *rajarshi* Janaka is thoroughly debunked by the female sanyasi Sulabha! In Yudhishthira's intense remorse and obsession with dharma much of Ashoka is surely assimilated.

Despite the MB's final message that in Swarga there is no animosity, the entire epic has presented mutually destructive rivalry between cousins for the throne. Its message is dualistic like the model of monarchy it presents of a ruler making decisions in consultation with kin and with implicit, if not explicit, approval of the public. This portrait undergoes a development summarising "all the historical possibilities, if not temporal developments, of kingship in Northwestern India" around 950 BCE onwards.

There are two appendices on epic time and on epic pre-literacy. McGrath suggests that the war books plus the *Sauptika Parva* amounting to 23,795 stanzas are the 24000 slokas constituting the *Jaya* that is mentioned by Ugrashrava Sauti. The archaic Bharata legends were combined with Bhargava myths of the classical period. This stitching together occurs within a ring structure: Sanjaya recites to Dhritarashtra; Vaishampayana recites this to Janamejaya; Sauti recites all this and more to Shaunaka. Sanjaya's recital uniquely combines past and present, always beginning with death of a general and then going back to describe how it happened. Time is projected

triply: Dhritarashtra's lament summaries most of the action in 56 verses; the *anukramanika* gives a digest of 100 mini-tales; the *parvasangraha* lists the books and chapters. There is the crucial importance of fertilising women at the right time that is reiterated repeatedly, and it is the violent disturbance of this in the assault on Draupadi that engenders the sterility of war and of the Kuru and Yadava lineages. Narrative time, chronological time and mythical time are "compounded in one unitary sequence of worlds or poetic montage."

McGrath's description of the *krita yuga* as a timeless, changeless, deathless utopia is not correct because monarchs and sages of that period are shown as dying. It is the passage of time that leads to the onset of the *treta yuga*. While acknowledging that no dates with full astrological data are supplied, McGrath seems to accept A.N. Chandra's date for the battle as 3137 BCE. Based upon the same data, widely different dates have been arrived at by a range of scholars, showing that interpretation is highly dubious. McGrath estimates the time-span for the core narrative as spanning fifty years from the infancy of the Pandavas to the investiture of Parikshit. Into it are interwoven tales from the past featuring Vedic divinities as well as the ethos of early Gupta monarchy. The poem oscillates between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Centripetal in form, the stories are narrated in manifold voices creating a tapestry of coruscating brilliance that evokes willing suspension of disbelief.

Just as time in the MB is an illusion, so is space. There is very little description of interiors and topography except in very general terms. It is place-names that feature, not details of terrain. Similarly, details of physique are elided. Individuals are made out mostly by their speech, for it is a world of drama. It is not a poetry of realism but of emotional theatre and didacticism. There is no reference to plastic and visual arts (except a single mention of Shikhandini being adept at "lekhya" *i.e.* writing or painting), which might be because the first statuary is Buddhist, mention of which the MB seems to avoid.

In the appendix on epic pre-literacy McGrath takes the position that the MB was first written during Samudragupta's

reign combining the pre-literate and literate. Writing is dateable to Mauryan times. The different *parvas* exhibit great stylistic differences, incorporating popular songs about heroes, folklore and formulaic compositions of professional poets. Sanjaya's inspiration, which is visual, differs from Vaishampayana's which is a recital of remembered text. Sanjaya's is filled with formulaic terms and comparatively little narrative. An excellent example of such epic inspiration is found in the Russian *bylina* recorded in 1925 by N. Misheyev.[3] Different periods of theological and political thought have been combined along with varied cultural strands. Preliterate narrative is not chronological but proceeds structurally, which we see in the MB. Further, it is based upon the functions of kinship, and its performance is dramatic and metaphorical. Preliterate poetry is also characterised by a pattern of duality (as seen in the *Iliad* too) which is a function of pre-monetary culture where no single currency existed. Society functioned on exchanging services and loyalties defined by rites. Value depended upon kinship. Wealth was distributed in great yagyas and weddings in the form of jewels, weapons, cattle, servants, but not land (gambling is the exception). Writing and coinage seem to have occurred together. This, of course, begs the question about Harappan culture which had seals and a specific system of weights, neither of which the MB mentions despite featuring Jayadratha as king of the Sindhu area.

McGrath's slim volume is a densely written book offering new and rich insights into an aspect of the MB that has not been researched so thoroughly in the past. No one interested in the MB can afford not to read it.

Pradip Bhattacharya

[3]A woman of 80 in the far north of Russia in an out-of-the-way village suddenly created a new lay, "How the Holy Mountains let out of their deep caves the mighty Heroes of Russia" after reciting the traditional tale of "Why the heroes have vanished from Holy Russia." http://www.boloji.com/articles/49556/a-modern-russian-bylina

STEPHAN HILLYER LEVITT, *Collected Papers in Dravidian Studies*, Kaviri Pathippakam, Chennai, 2017.

The latest volume by Stephan Hillyer Levitt is dedicated to Aaron and Rachel Herlick, who instilled a feeling of "A Love of Books and an Interest in Cultures around the World" in him. These values and the extent of his interests can be thoroughly seen in his bibliography, listed at pages XVIII-XXVII, ranging from Art History studies (the latest is *Early Nurpur Nagamala Paintings*, in the "Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art", n. 28-29, 2013) to the ones on Buddhism (his most recent paper, published in 2011, is entitled *Stories of the Enlightenment Being, Jātakas 201-250*), on *Purāṇa* (for example *Pollution and* karman *in the* Pātityagrāmanirṇaya published in 1993) and on *Veda* (a recent one is *What does 'Noseless' Mean in the* Ṛgveda, published in 1990 in the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*), and even on Costume History (see *Chess – Its South Asian origin and Meaning*, in the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 1993). However, in his latest book Stephan Levitt has mostly collected comparative linguistics essays.

Driven by the thought that "Dravidian studies is still very much in its infancy" (p. VIII) and that many fields of research have not been sufficiently explored yet, the author shares again some of his controversial articles, which has generated both positive and negative reactions among the academics, as he himself admits and reports. His works have been published on eminent international Journals, such as *Studia Orientalia*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*, *Indologica Taurinensia*, *Folia Linguistica Historica*, *Journal of Tamil Studies*; however, he thinks that many of them "are not as well known as they should be" and "were published with major printing errors" (p. X, in bold) making it necessary to publish them again to clear up the theories he is supporting.

Levitt's approach to linguistic problems is comparative, and aims to underline, in a nostraticistic perspective, the links

between the Dravidian and Indo-european languages; to do so, he uses the idioms of the Dravidian family as a starting point, certain that – contrary to what many other academics claim – the Dravidian languages were the first ones to separate from the Nostratic and that “the wealth of information that Dravidian has to offer us has hardly been tapped” (p. VII). He is convinced that “the semantic connections expressed by etymological connection reflect the cultural categories implicit in the languages concerned” (p. 271); most of the times however his studies start from the linguistic and phonological phenomena and examine them with specific attention.

One of the themes he insists on is the alternation of *r* and *l* in the Dravidian languages (*The Alternation of* r *and* l *in Dravidian*, pp. 231-245) and of ***-l-**/*-l- and *t- (*The Alternation of* ***-l-**/**-l- and *t- in Metathetical Forms in Dravidian*, pp. 215-230). In the first of these essays (1988) Levitt deals with the numbers ‘one’ and ‘nine’ and states that the euphonic alternation of the allophones *r, l* and *n* is not different from the one documented in the ancient and middle Indo-European; in the second one (2003) he recreates the genesis of the alternation phenomenon of ***-l-**/*-l- and *t- assuming that it could be the outcome of a process occurred during the Proto-Dravidic phase of the language, not far from what happened to the Nostratic.

He outlines the same problem in more general terms in the study entitled *Is There a Genetic Relationship between Indo-European and Dravidian?*, already published in *The Journal of Dravidian Studies* in 1998. Relying on a wide bibliography, here the author deals with the etymological relationship between a series of Indo-European terms that he considers “culturally relevant” such as “cow, calf, king, god, fruit, milk, people, speak, leg, kill, folk, dog, skr. *pur*, gr. *dendron*” (pp. 3, 6-10, 14-15), and with some numbers, adjectives, prepositions or articles (pp. 10-13), highlighting the connections with their Dravidic correlatives. The knowledge and the accurate study of the vowel and consonant metamorphosis occurring in the Dravidic languages for euphonic reasons (and that explains why it is difficult to catch the affinity between Indo-European words

and their correlatives from the Indian sub-continent) persuades Levitt to find new evidence to support the theories regarding the existence of deep relations between different groups of languages. Most of the times Levitt starts from English, but immediately he broadens the word boundaries and indicates its etymological correlatives in the Indo-European world – for example: "Eng. *God*, Germ. *Gott* (Pokorny 1.413-14, PIE **ghau-, *ghaue-* 'call, summon, invoke […]", p. 8), where the possible link with Greek and Latin roots *genos* e *gens* is not considered – than he compares his item with Tamil or Telugu words (respectively *kōvil* and *kōyila* in this case, defining the temple, the "house of God", where the suffix *–il* defines the "house"). To better demonstrate his theories, to these considerations he sometimes adds a comparison with the Sanskrit root (in this case "*hu-* 'to call, invoke') which takes the reasoning to an end. With a new bibliography and further examples, Levitt gets back to the same subject in 2000, in a paper published on the *Journal of Indo-European Studies* (28. 3-4, here at pp. 21-41, *Some more Possible Relationships Between Indo-Europan and Dravidian*) and in *Dravidian and Indo-European* (in his volume at pp. 42-46). In this essay he discusses and essentially accepts Gnanamuthu Devaneyan's suggestions; the same topic is resumed in 2014 in *Indo-European and Dravidian: Some Considerations* (published on *Mother Tongue* 19, here at pp. 47-68), where he clears up and explains his thoughts, reaffirming their originality and the chance they could open new fields of research. Comparing his work to some other pioneers' comparative studies, he states: "Just as when Sir William Jones turned to Persian and Sanskrit, he was able to see the connection between different branches of IE; so, when we turn to Tamil, the most conservative of the Dravidian languages, with a classical literature going back to the early centuries BCE, we are able to see the connection between different families of languages – pointing to a monogenesis of language. It is to this that I attribute the independent observations of G. Devaneyan and myself that Dravidian is related to IE; and within IE, that it is related most closely to Germanic" (p. 47). His method "is to keep semantic

transparency paramount, and to see if there are logical connections between forms that can be argued on this basis, using attested sound correspondences" because, as he says, "It is my contention that many of the sound changes and alterations that appear in Dravidian are very ancient and can be seen in Nostratic in general, no doubt from pre-Dravidian" (p. 48). In fact, Levitt wants to demonstrate how the thesis on the origin and spread of the Proto-Indoeuropean – he quotes a lot of studies dealing with this subject from different points of view, such as those written by Colin Renfrew, Marija Gimbutas, Haarmann, Goodenough, Telegin and Kuznetsov – should be revised in a nostraticistic perspective, considering Nostratic as the language spoken by the first "anatomically modern man (AMH)" (p. 49) living on the planet. Connecting the common elements of the Australian Aborigine and Dravidic languages and assuming a common substratum, Levitt adds to these evidences the genetic ones ("the Y-chromosome genetic marker M130") and considers the reconstruction of the migration flows that, according to Oppenheimer, would have led the first men to move from Africa to Asia and Australia; in that way he not only underlines the similarities between the Dravidic languages and other linguistic groups, but he also emphasizes how ancient this bond is.

Leaving out to discuss here Levitt's fascinating hypotheses about some specific terms, such as the number one (*The number 'One'*), the words defining the dog and the horse (*Words for 'Dog' and 'Horse' in Finnish and Tamil*) – linked because both belonging to the eastern branch of the Nostratic languages, gathering agglutinating languages such as the Dravidic and Ural-Altaic ones, in addition to the Japanese and Corean, and the Andean-Equatorial – or the word referring to the horse in Chinese and in the Dravidic languages (*A Word for 'Horse' in Chinese and Dravidian*) or to some specific phenomena as in *Sanskrit ātmán/tmán and Dravidian *āl, A Possible Solution to a Problem Based on a Postulated Nostratic Sound Correspondance*, it is useful to remind how his investigations aim to support those academics' studies that, more and more,

deal with the deep bonds that connect (or have connected at the dawn of human history) the big linguistic families.

Besides, the study of specific phenomena allows Levitt to raise some great problems which have not found solutions yet: among these, just to make an example, that of the language (or the languages) spoken by the Indo Valley populations. In this case, the author leads us through evocative theories and shares the results of another of his studies, *The Ancient Mesopotamian Place Name "Meluhha"* (here at pp. 322-345), related to the etymology of the Sumerian word Meluhha; this research allows him to infer that "the Indus Valley Civiliazation was Dravidian […] in fact North Dravidian" (p. 155).

The same method and the same show of great and deep learning can be seen in the other articles in the volume; the reader can really find a lot of incentives and some starting points to research a field that indeed can still give many important study possibilities.

In the end, this is a book that, even if it is published with a polemical spirit and with the purpose to reaffirm some ideas not shared by all of the academics, is extremely fascinating, has a very rich and up to date bibliography and cannot be missed by scholars of comparative linguistics.

Gabriella Olivero

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA: *Narrative Art in the Mahābhārata: The Ādi Parva,* Dev Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2012, 389 pages.

The subject of this book is the first canto, the Ā*di Parva*, of the *Mahābhārata*, the epic-of-epics, eight times larger than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined, denounced as "a literary monster" by Winternitz and as a "monstrous chaos" by Oldenberg. Besides the Introduction, a very exhaustive Bibliography, a genealogical chart of the Kuru dynasty and, most interestingly, a map of India of the *Mahābhārata* days, it contains eighteen chapters analysing each of the seven sub-*parvas* of the *Adi Parva* in minute detail. A mere perusal of the list of contents may well mislead the reader as the book contains many more stories, besides extremely well-informed commentary underlining the narrative art of an expert raconteur recounting the epic, its grandeur, the conflicts, the tragedies, the comedies, the intricately woven complexities of situations and relationships and how all these combine to lead inevitably towards the ultimate clash of Kurukshetra, annihilating almost all the dynasties in one climactic stroke. The study analyses the baffling nebulous mass of material with which the epic begins, bringing out the central theme of each of the sub-*parvas* to provide insights into the Vyasan vision and the Master's mastery of his epic art. Truly, the reader does gather an understanding of the "intricate web of inter-connections of events and characters so that a clear, logical and intelligible picture emerges of the very involved and confused panorama of the *Mahābhārata*."

One of the assets of this work is the effortless elegance of its language. Consider the opening of the Introduction: "Vyasa, master raconteur, weaves together a bewildering skein of threads to create a many-splendoured web from which there was no escape for the listener of those days and there is none even for the reader of today." Elsewhere, elaborating on the existential predicament of man, he says, "Passions do indeed spin the plot and we are betrayed by what is false within. Then, as now, there is no need to look for a villain manoeuvring

without.” The author handles poetry, too, with equal facility. He translates a Sanskrit text describing the encounter of Surya and Aruna: “When darkness-destroying mighty Surya arose, he saw this pink son of Vinata as resplendent as himself, shining with vitality. Impressed, Surya made him his charioteer and this son of Vinata became immortal when he stepped into the chariot of the all-illuminating, infinitely powerful Surya.”

Bhattacharya presents interesting concepts while leading us through the socio-cultural milieu of an age when the Aryan civilization was steadily taking root. The sanctity of the Guru-Shishya relations, narrated in the stories of Ayodha-Dhaumya and Aruni, Uddalaka and Veda and Veda and Utanka, is one such concept. Curses, flung with great alacrity earlier, had lost some of their inexorability by this time. Under some circumstances the effect becomes conditional. Paushya’s curse on Utanka is futile since his assumption was wrong; Kadru’s curse on her sons needs ratification by Brahma.

The position of women in society is one of the major themes engaging the author’s attention. He has, with empathy and incisive analysis, gone into the very core of the epic to introduce us to the indomitable spirit of women, which has been much appreciated by Wendy Doniger. Shakuntala proudly asserts her integrity and berates the cowardly Dushyanta in open court; Devyani demands that Kacha return her love and imperiously brushes aside a lust-crazed husband; Kunti refuses to pervert herself into a mindless son-producing machine to gratify the twisted desires of a frustrated husband. “Time and again it is woman standing forth in all the splendor of her spirited autonomy as a complete human being that rivets our attention and evokes our admiration.” He then has traced their fall from grace – from being powerful, knowledgeable and independent members of society, enjoying almost equal status with men, to becoming “mere chattel first of the father, then of the husband and finally of children”. The concept of *sahadharmini* gives way to the concept of *putrarthe kriyate bharya*, thanks to sages like Shvetaketu, Dirghatama, Manu and their ilk.

Ethical degeneration too is taking place. Gods are lobbying and sages are indulging in machinations. *Kshatriya* values are

taking a beating; Brahmins are taking bribes. Takshaka succeeds in bribing Kashyapa not to cure Parikshit. Drona, a Brahmin, selling his knowledge to the Kuru princes for a price and manipulating Ekalavya, is a far cry from Dhaumya teaching Aruni just for the sake of teaching.

The *Adi Parva* throws up "a multitude of salient features– thematic, stylistic and eschatological." The main theme, Bhattacharya holds, "is the recurrent motif of Lust with its attendant Quest for Immortality. Initially they emerge as two separate themes… which coalesce in the existentially tragic figure of Yayati." This poison seed ultimately destroys the Kuru dynasty. He elaborates this thesis with copious examples from the epic, narrating and analysing the tales of lust of Dushyanta, Pururava, Nahusha, Yayati, Mahabhisha-Shantanu, Vichitravirya, Pandu, Dirghatamas, Parashara and many others. Another important theme that emerges is that of the disqualified eldest son. None of the eldest sons, Yati, Yadu, Devapi, Devavrata, Dhritarashtra, becomes king. Arjuna's grandson Parikshit becomes king not his elder son, Babhruvahana, or the sons of the other Pandavas. The next motif brought out is the difficulty in begetting successors, beginning with Bharata. The original dynasty disappeared much before the principal actors came on stage, continuing just in name. The Pandavas and Kauravas had no Kuru blood in them though they continued to be known as Kauravas. He discusses the concept of divine or demonic origin of kings and sages and avatarhood to posit a counterpoint to the western lack of understanding of Indian lore. Stylistically, Vyasa uses various methods. He uses prose, Vedic chants, the technique of presenting the pith first and then developing the theme through questions and answers, etc.

It is fascinating to read the remarkable discussion on the historico-political situation of India of the time. Bhattacharya traces the roots of all the political actors and the matrix of alliances that followed casting long shadows on future incidents. He has eminently succeeded in providing "some basic information about the locale" of all the dynasties involved "so that readers approaching the epic can establish some geographical bearings".

But in this “monstrous chaos” one tends to miss the central point of the epic. The Kurukshetra battle was inevitable, pre-ordained by divine will. Behind all the trials and tribulations of the Pandavas and the intrigues and conspiracies of the Kauravas, lies the tale of Yama’s sacrifice during which death did not occur and the earth became over-populated. “It is to reduce the burden of over-crowded earth that the gods plan the battle of Kurukshetra.” Very perceptive indeed! That is why Krishna says to Arjuna in the *Gita* that it did not matter whether he fought or not; the battle would still occur. We are but pawns in the well-laid plans of the gods!

What enriches the book immensely are the frequent references to other literatures, both oriental and occidental – China, Egypt, Scandinavia, Iran, etc. He has taken help from all editors and commentators in supplementing his discussions. An extremely interesting chapter is devoted to a comparison between Yayati, Yima-Jamshid of Iran, Eochaid Feidlech of Ireland and Uparichara Vasu, indicating how parallels in the themes of the First King dividing and populating the earth, special favour of the Divine, loss of status because of Luciferan hubris, etc are also found in Yayati and Uparichara Vasu. However, not much is mentioned about Feidlech in the discussion. Unfamiliar words pertaining to other cultures like Yggdrasill and Ragnarok pose a bit of a stumble for ordinary readers. Some footnotes would have been helpful.

The book has beautiful pictures portraying various scenes from the epic as added attractions. The printing is good and without any mistake. The book leaves one with a feeling of joy and satisfaction. One does not very often come across a work of such elegance and depth. But this is only the first chapter; there are seventeen more. Here is hoping that we shall hear from him again soon.

Shekhar Sen

The reviewer is a retired Major General. His is the first English translation of the Jaiminiya Ashvamedhaparva.