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ARUN VINAYAK JATEGAONKAR
VASANTI ARUN JATEGAONKAR

DRAUPADĪ'S HAIR, HER PATH, AND THE PHRASE
PADAVĪM √GAM

Abstract: The usual meaning of the phrase *padavīm √gam* (\sqrt{car} , $\sqrt{yā}$, etc.) is “to go the way of” or “to follow someone’s trail”. This paper claims that, in the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*) and elsewhere, that phrase is sometimes used in an idiomatic sense; and, when so used, it means “to exact revenge for something” or “to avenge someone or something”, a meaning that appears to have gone unnoticed by most commentators and translators. Once this meaning of the phrase in question is taken into account, several well-known episodes in the *MBh* acquire a meaning that is different from and more apposite than the prevalent one.

**1. Hildebeitel’s interpretations of the phrase *padavīm*
 \sqrt{gam}**

In his 1981 paper entitled “Draupadī’s hair”, Hildebeitel refers to verse 12.16.25 from Bhīma’s speech in the Śāntiparvan,¹ a speech in which Bhīma tries to persuade

¹ With the exception of Appendix A, all verses mentioned in this paper are, unless explicitly stated otherwise, from the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*), edited by Sukthankar, V. S. et al., general eds., (1933-66). That edition of the *MBh* is henceforth referred simply as *the Critical Edition* (*CE*). The text of the *MBh* supplied by the Critical Edition is referred to as *the CE text*.

All verses mentioned in Appendix A are from the Critical Edition of the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, edited by Bhatt et al (1960-75).

Yudhiṣṭhira not to abdicate the throne. The Critical Edition Text (henceforth, the CE text) states that verse thus:²

*diṣṭyā duryodhanaḥ pāpo nihataḥ sānugo yudhi |
draupadyāḥ keśapakṣasya diṣṭyā tvam padavīm gataḥ ||
12.16.25*

The relevant literal meaning of the word *padavī* is “a road, path, way, etc.”; and the literal meaning of the phrase *padavīm √gam* (*√car, √yā, etc.*), (henceforth, *padavīm √gam*, for short), is ‘to go the way of’, or ‘to follow someone’s trail’; cf., Apte (1998: p. 585); Monier-Williams (1997: p. 583); see also Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on 5.135.19, quoted in footnote #12.³ In accord with these meanings, Hiltebeitel (1981: pp. 200-1) translates the preceding verse thus: “By good luck, the sinful Duryodhana has been slain with all his followers in battle. By good luck, you have gone the way of Draupadī’s mass of hair.” That verse is translated more or less the same way in Hiltebeitel (2009: p. 175) except that “*padavī*” is translated there as “path” rather than as “way”. When read this way, the verse seems to invite the reader to see some hidden meaning in that phrase. Based on all this, and based, perhaps, on the idea, stated in Hiltebeitel (1981: p. 186), that “the *Mahābhārata* seems to know more about Draupadī’s hair than it ever makes explicit”⁴, Hiltebeitel has several things to say about Draupadī’s hair that he thinks are implicit in the epic. For example, Hiltebeitel (1981: p. 201) asserts: “This passage [verse 12.16.25, quoted

² An interesting variant of this verse is discussed in Appendix B.

³ A search in the e-text of the *MBh* maintained by Smith (1999) revealed that the phrase *padavīm √gam* occurs 26 times in the CE text and occurs 8 times in the additional passages – i.e., the passages which are mentioned in the CE but are not accepted in the CE text.

For the use of the phrase in question in the sense of “to follow someone’s trail”, see verses 3.252.14, 16 and 3.253.12, 17. (They are discussed in footnote #6.)

⁴ The study of the attempted disrobing episode in Hiltebeitel (2001: pp. 250-2) contains a cautionary remark which, although along similar lines, is far more encompassing in its scope. It states: ‘*Mahābhārata* poets often imply more than they tell, as when Draupadī’s hair is called a “path” that the Pāṇḍavas followed to victory (12.16.25) – without it ever being clear what Draupadī did with her hair (Hiltebeitel 1981, 200-1).’ This interpretation of that verse is different from Hiltebeitel’s interpretation of it in his 1981 paper and in his 2009 paper. (For more on his 2009 paper, see below).

above] establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that Draupadī has worn her hair loose since the dice match.” After making a few comments on Ganguli’s translation of 12.16.25,⁵ Hiltebeitel then remarks, ‘In “following the way of Draupadī’s mass of hair” [Hiltebeitel’s quotation marks], the Pāṇḍavas have moved from the depth of defilement to rebirth, from rebirth to revenge, and from revenge to coronation.’

In section B of his 2009 paper, Hiltebeitel partially quotes, translates, and discusses seven verses from the CE text. Five of them contain the phrase *draupadyāḥ* (or *yasyāḥ* or *mama*) *padavīm* √*gam*; one contains the phrase *draupadyāḥ keśapakṣasya padavīm* √*gam*; and the remaining one contains the phrase (*tasyāḥ*) *padam* √*gam*.⁶ Hiltebeitel translates those

⁵ Ganguli (1991, vol. VIII, p. 30) translates the second hemi-stitch of 12.16.25 thus: “By good luck, thou too hast attained the condition of Draupadī’s locks.” In a footnote on that verse, mentioned by Hiltebeitel (1981: p. 201), Ganguli then adds: “*The condition of Draupadī’s lock[s]* – i.e., thou hast been restored to the normal condition. [Ganguli’s italics.] Draupadī had kept her locks disheveled since the day they had been seized by Duḥśāsana. After the slaughter of the Kurus, those locks were bound up as before, or restored to their normal condition.” Ganguli provides no reference in support of that statement. He is referring to a version of a misconception that seems prevalent in various parts of India. We knew a version of it even as teens. Our version matched more closely with that of *Veṅṭsamhāra* (long before we had heard of that work).

⁶ The seven verses quoted by Hiltebeitel can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of verses 2.68.45, 5.88.79, 5.135.19 and 12.16.25. The first three of these verses contain the phrase *draupadyāḥ padavīm* √*gam*; for the first of them, see section 2 (i); for the next two, see section 2 (ii-iii) and section 3. The fourth verse, quoted above, contains the phrase *draupadyāḥ keśapakṣasya padavīm* √*gam*. A search in the e-text of the *MBh* maintained by Smith (1999) revealed that those are the only verses in the CE text that contain those precise phrases. The second group consists of verses 3.252.14, 16 and 3.253.12. All three of them are from the episode from the *Āraṇyakaparvan* in which Jayadratha attempts to abduct Draupadī. The first two verses are from a speech by Draupadī, and contain the phrase (*yasyāḥ* or *mama*) *padavīm* √*gam*. The third one is from a speech by Yudhiṣṭhira’s charioteer, and contains the phrase (*tasyāḥ*) *padam* √*gam*; (that phrase is discussed in section 4). A search of the e-text of the *MBh* maintained by Smith (1999) revealed that, apart from the first group of four verses mentioned earlier in this footnote, these three are the only verses in the CE text that use the phrase *padavīm* √*gam* or *padam* √*gam* in reference to Draupadī. (The only exception is verse 3.253.17 from the above-mentioned *Āraṇyakaparvan* episode. In the context of Draupadī’s abduction, the fourth quarter of that verse contains the words *śīghram padavīm vrajadhvam*. However, the context makes the intended meaning of that verse clear: To rescue Draupadī from Jayadratha, the Pāṇḍavas should take off after her right away. Hiltebeitel (2009) does not mention this verse.) In all three of these verses, van Buitenen (1978: pp. 712, 715) reads the

phrases as “walk the path of Draupadī” (with appropriate modification when the relevant phrase contains other words). Once again, if read that way, those phrases almost invite one to speculate and expound on “the path of Draupadī” – which Hildebeitel duly does. For instance, concerning verse 12.16.25, quoted above, this is what he now has to say: “Bhīma describes Duryodhana’s death to Yudhiṣṭhira as a resolution toward which Draupadī’s path has led”; see Hildebeitel (2009: p. 175).

2. The idiomatic use of *padavīm* √*gam*

Be that as it may, it seems doubtful whether the epic refers to any such thing as “the path of Draupadī” or “the path of Draupadī’s hair”. It also seems doubtful whether verse 12.16.25 has anything to do with the manner in which Draupadī wore her hair since the dice match. (See section 5 for further remarks on Hildebeitel’s 1981 paper on Draupadī’s hair.) Indeed, we think that the verse in question should be translated thus: “By good fortune, the sinful Duryodhana has been slain with all his followers in battle. By good fortune, you have repaid the debt owed to Draupadī’s tresses.”⁷ One reason we believe the verse should be so translated (as opposed to Hildebeitel’s above-quoted translation of it) is the endnote in CE on that verse by

phrases in question in the sense of following someone’s trail. Ganguli (1990, vol. III, part II, pp. 522-3) also reads those phrases in a similar manner. We agree with those translations.

Curiously, as noted by Hildebeitel, Draupadī, in her speech to Jayadratha, seems to be describing how the latter “will be killed in the Mahābhārata war, not how her husbands will rescue her now from his grasp.” It should be noted though that Jayadratha was killed for his role in the killing of Abhimanyu, not for abducting Draupadī.

Apropos verse 3.252.14, mentioned by Hildebeitel (2009). The phrase *kṛṣṇau* [. . .] *samāsthītāv ekarathe* in that verse seems to refer to the compact reported in verse 3.48.15 that, in the coming war, Kṛṣṇa was to become Arjuna’s charioteer. This raises questions as to the originality of the episode in the Udyogaparvan in which Duryodhana and Arjuna happen to visit Kṛṣṇa at the same time and ask him to join their side in the upcoming war; see 5.7.1-21.

⁷ The notion underlying this verse as well as all the verses mentioned later in this section is that any act of enmity perpetrated by one’s enemies (or just the enmity by itself) creates a debt which has to be repaid in the same coin; cf., 3.36.7-8; 3.38.41; 8.60.App. I, #28, lines 9-12.

Belvalkar, the editor of the CE's Śāntiparvan; (for other reasons, see below). According to that endnote, the phrase *padavīm* √*gam* is used in that verse in the sense of exacting revenge for something.^{8,9} (See also footnotes #12 and #13 where Nīlakaṇṭha's glosses on some relevant verses are stated.)

Belvalkar's endnote on verse 12.16.25, quoted in footnote #8, deals just with that one verse. It gives no indication that the phrase *padavīm* √*gam* may have an idiomatic meaning and that it may have been used in the idiomatic sense elsewhere as well; cf., the endnote on 12.16.25 by Fitzgerald (2004: pp. 200, 694), quoted in footnote #8. Nevertheless, the unambiguous assertion in Belvalkar's endnote is one of the several things¹⁰ that led us to look systematically for other places in the text where the phrase *padavīm* √*gam* may have been used idiomatically in the

⁸ Belvalkar's endnote on 12.16.25 states: "*padavīm* 'the [final] procedure in the matter of [reaping revenge for] the seizure of Draupadī's hair'. [Belvalkar's quotation marks and rectangular brackets.] Cv [Vādirāja's commentary] explains: 'yathā draupadyāḥ keśapakṣasparśakarṣaṇādīnā tairghātītām, tathā mayāpi keśādau pādasparśena itastata ākarṣaṇena ca te ghātītā iī bhāvaḥ'." Nīlakaṇṭha has no gloss on verse 12.16.25.

Fitzgerald (2004: pp. 200, 694) translates the second hemi-stitch of verse 12.16.25 thus: "Fortunately you have followed the lead of Draupadī's tresses." In the endnote on the translation of that verse, Fitzgerald states: 'I believe the editor Belvalkar is correct when he sees this statement as Bhīma's approving Yudhiṣṭhira's participation in the revenge his brothers (in *MBh* 2.68) and then Draupadī (at *MBh* 2.71.18-20) pledged against the Kaurava villains who molested her during the dicing match. This pledge of revenge is frequently signified in the *MBh* by Draupadī's unbound hair (she is often described as *muktakeśī*, "her hair unbound"). See Alf Hildebeitel, "Draupadī's hair," and the first note to 11.9.10 [from Fitzgerald (2004)].' However, a search of the e-text of the *MBh* maintained by Smith (1999) revealed that, in Draupadī's context, the word *muktakeśī* occurs only twice in the CE text (at 2.70.9 and 2.71.18), and occurs only once in the additional passages (at 2.70, App. I, #41, line 58). For some remarks on Hildebeitel's 1981 paper on Draupadī's hair, see Mehendale (1997). See also section 5.

⁹ Hildebeitel's 1981, 2001 and 2009 studies do not mention Belvalkar's endnote, quoted in the preceding footnote. In view of that endnote, Hildebeitel's interpretations of that verse in those papers seem doubtful. It also seems doubtful whether there is such a thing as "the path of Draupadī" that Hildebeitel sees in the seven verses he quotes in his 2009 paper; see footnote #6 for details.

¹⁰ That something was the matter with the way the phrase in question was being interpreted was clear to us when we encountered it for the first time in the endnote on translation of 10.3.24 in Johnson (1999: pp. 16, 106). (For verse 10.3.24, see section 2 (v) below.) For, even as children, we "knew" that Aśvatthāman is *cirañjīva*, a word we took to mean "deathless" (*amara*). Kṛpa, mentioned in section 2 (iv) and (vi) below, is another person from the *MBh* we knew to be *cirañjīva*. See, however, footnote # 16.

sense of exacting revenge for something, or avenging someone or something.¹¹

In our opinion, that phrase is used idiomatically in the sense of exacting revenge for something, or avenging someone or something, not only in verse 12.16.25 but also in the sixteen instances listed below; (in case of several of them, the ‘correct’ meaning, once pointed out, is obvious).¹²

Instances from the CE text:

(i) Verse 2.68.45 from Nakula’s vow to exact revenge in the aftermath of the second dicing match. The CE text states it thus:

¹¹ The phrase *padavīm √gam* has two other idiomatic uses as well. Thus, under appropriate circumstances, that phrase can also mean “to go (or come) to the aid of”; see, for instance, verses 7.85.89; 87.6, 26; 88.27; 102.9, 14, 42 from the Jayadrathavadha episode in the *MBh* in which Yudhiṣṭhira instructs Sātyaki, and later Bhīma, to go to the aid of Arjuna. See also verse 7.152.33 from the episode describing the fight between Bhīma and a *rākṣasa* named Alāyudha where, seeing that Bhīma is succumbing to Alāyudha, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to go right away to Bhīma’s aid (*padavīm asya gaccha tvam mā vicāraya pāṇḍava*). (For later reference in section 4, we note that the variant of that verse in a few northern mss. has *padam asya anugaccha* in place of *padavīm asya gaccha*). For another idiomatic use of that phrase in the sense of *pāpaprakṣāṇa*, see Appendix B.

¹² From the sixteen passages mentioned below, Nīlakaṇṭha glosses only on three of them: 5.135.19; 8.25.App. I, #5, lines 50-1; and 10.3.24. (As noted in footnote #8, he has no gloss on 12.16.25.) Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on the last two passages states: *padavīm āṇṛṇyam*; see Aināpure (1901). His gloss on 5.135.19 states: *padavīm cara mārgam anusara | śatrustrīṇām vaidhavyārtham yatasva ityarthah |* (Curiously, Nīlakaṇṭha has no gloss on 5.88.79 although its relevant part is identical with that of 5.135.19, and the former precedes the latter in the text.) The first sentence in Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on 5.135.19 gives one pause: It can be read as a reference to “the path of Draupadī”. However, it is not just that there is no such thing as “the path of Draupadī”, (or, for that matter, “the path of Draupadī’s hair”), as can be seen from the preceding discussion of 12.16.25 and from some of the sixteen other instances discussed below. We believe Nīlakaṇṭha did not mean to refer to any such thing as “the path of Draupadī” since, as can be seen from his above-quoted gloss on 8.25.App. I, #5, lines 50-1; and on 10.3.24, he is aware of the idiomatic use of the phrase in question. It thus appears that the first sentence in Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on 5.135.19 gives the literal meaning of the phrase in question, and the second sentence, stating the intended meaning of that phrase in the present context (*ityarthah*), appears to be another way of saying *āṇṛṇyam*. (There may be an implicit reference in the second sentence of that gloss to Draupadī’s speech as she was leaving for forest with her husbands (2.71.18-20); see also the next footnote.)

*nideśād dharmarājasya draupadyāḥ padavīm caran |
nirdhārtarāṣṭrām pṛthivīm kartāsmi nacirād iva ||
2.68.45*

(ii-iii) Verses 5.88.79 and 5.135.19 from Kuntī's messages to Arjuna urging him to exact revenge; (see footnote #12 for Nīlakaṇṭha's gloss on verse 5.135.19; see section 3 for comments). The CE text states the latter verse thus:

*taṁ vai brūhi mahābāho sarvaśastrabhṛtām varam |
arjunam puruṣavyāghram draupadyāḥ padavīm cara ||
5.135.19*

Verse 5.88.79 is identical with the one quoted above except that it has *gatvā* in place of *taṁ vai* and *pāṇḍavam vīram* in place of *puruṣavyāghram*.

(iv) Verses 8.18.44-7 in Saṁjaya's description of what the warriors on the battlefield were saying concerning the spirit of exacting revenge in which Kṛpa was attacking Dhṛṣṭadyumna. The CE text states them thus:

*tatrāvocaṁ vimanaso rathinaḥ sādinas tathā |
droṇasya nidhane nūnam saṁkruddho dvipadām varaḥ ||
8.18.44
śāradvato mahātejā divyāstravid udāradhīḥ |
apī svasti bhaved adya dhṛṣṭadyumnasya gautamāt ||
8.18.45
apīyam vāhinī kṛtsnā mucyeta mahato bhayāt |
apy ayam brāhmaṇaḥ sarvān na no hanyāt samāgatān
||8.18.46
yādṛśam dṛśyate rūpam antakapratimam bhṛśam |
gamiṣyaty adya padavīm bhāradvājasya saṁyuge ||
8.18.47*

(v) Aśvatthāman's resolute words in 10.3.23-4 about exacting revenge for the dastardly way in which the Pāṇḍavas

had killed Duryodhana and Droṇa.¹³ The CE text states them thus:

*dhārayitvā dhanur divyaṃ divyāṅy astrāṇi cāhave /
pitarāṃ nihataṃ dṛṣṭvā kiṃ nu vakṣyāmi saṃsadi ||
10.3.23*

*so 'ham adya yathākāmaṃ kṣatradharmam upāsyā tam /
gantāsmi padavīm rājñāḥ pituś cāpi mahādyuteḥ ||
10.3.24*

(vi) Dhṛtarāṣṭra's query in verses 10.8.2-3 as to whether, in the planned night raid on the *pāṇḍava* camp, Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman succeeded in exacting revenge for the way Duryodhana was killed. The CE text states them thus:

*kaccin na vāritau kṣudrai rakṣibhir nopalakṣitau /
asahyam iti vā matvā na nivṛtau mahārathau || 10.8.2
kaccit pramathya śibiraṃ hatvā somakapāṇḍavān /
duryodhanasya padavīm gatau paramikām raṇe || 10.8.3
pāñcālair vā vinihatau kaccin nāsvapatām kṣitau /
kaccit tābhyām kṛtaṃ karma tan mamācakṣva saṃjaya ||
10.8.4*

(vii) Verses 10.8.137-8 from Saṃjaya's account of the way Aśvatthāman, during the night raid on the *pāṇḍava* camp, avenged his father's killing. The CE text states them thus:

sa niḥśeṣān arīn kṛtvā virarāja janakṣaye /

¹³ As noted in the preceding footnote, Nīlakaṇṭha's gloss on verse 10.3.24 states: "padavīm ānṛṇyam". In reference to third quarter of 10.3.24, the CE notes that the manuscript K₁ has *yāsyāmi apacitīm rājñāḥ* written in the margin. The latter phrase (which, in the present context, means, "I shall avenge the king") clarifies the meaning of the corresponding words in the CE text; it recurs in the additional passage 10.5.15*, which occurs in K_{2-4, 6}.

There are several passages in the Sauptikaparvan that contain the phrase *padavīm* √gam – all of them are mentioned in this section – verse 10.3.24 being the first among them. Thus, even though Nīlakaṇṭha does not gloss on that phrase again in that parvan, it seems to be understood that his gloss on 10.3.24 is applicable to those other verses in that parvan as well (specifically, to verses 10.8.3, 138, mentioned below) and, perhaps, also to 12.16.25, discussed in section 1.

yugānte sarvabhūtāni bhasma kṛtveva pāvakaḥ ||
10.8.137

yathāpratijñam tat karma kṛtvā drauṇāyaniḥ prabho |
durgamām padavīm kṛtvā pitur āsīd gatajvaraḥ ||
10.8.138

Since the massacre is over at this point, the intended meaning of these verses has to be that Aśvatthāman exacted a nearly impossible revenge. The variant of the latter verse in manuscript G₁ has *gatānṛṇaḥ* in place of *gatajvaraḥ*., making the intended meaning of the verses unmistakable. See also (xi) below.

(viii) Verses 16.4.24-7 from the scene in the *Mausalaparvan* in which Sātyaki suddenly decapitates Kṛtavarman stating that he is doing so to exact revenge for the latter's role in the night massacre. The CE text describes that scene thus:

tata utthāya sakrodhaḥ sātyakir vākyam abravīt |
pañcānām draupadeyānām dhṛṣṭadyumnaśikhaṇḍinoḥ ||
16.4.24

eṣa gacchāmi padavīm satyena ca tathā śape |
sauptike ye ca nihatāḥ suptānena durātmanā ||16.4.25
droṇaputrasahāyena pāpena kṛtavarmanā |
samāptam āyur asyādyā yaśaś cāpi sumadhyame ||
16.4.26

itīdam uktvā khaḍgena keśavasya samīpataḥ |
abhidrutya śiraḥ kruddhaś ciccheda kṛtavarmanaḥ ||
16.4.27¹⁴

¹⁴ This footnote is about verse 7.122.30 (not mentioned elsewhere in this paper). That verse is from a conversation between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa just after the killing of Jayadratha. Arjuna points out to Kṛṣṇa that Karṇa was aggressively approaching Sātyaki, and – referring to the recent decapitation of Būriśravas by Sātyaki – tells Kṛṣṇa to follow Karṇa, saying: *yatra yāti eṣa tatra tvaṁ codayāśvān Janārdana | mā somadatteḥ padavīm gamayet sātyakim vṛṣaḥ ||* (In the preceding verse, Būriśravas is referred to as Somadatti). Since the recent decapitation of Būriśravas by Sātyaki was in complete contravention of dharma, the motive of revenge on part of the Kaurava side is palpable in the situation. Thus, the translation of the second hemi-stitch of that verse by Ganguli (1998, vol. VI, p. 326) – “Let not Vrisha (Karṇa) cause the Satwata hero [Sātyaki] to follow in the wake of Bhurisravas” – is viable. We wonder though whether the intended meaning of the second hemi-stitch of that verse is, “Let not Karṇa avenge (the killing of) Būriśravas by killing Sātyaki”. Some southern manuscripts have *somadattestu padavīm* in place of *mā somadatteḥ padavīm* in that

Instances from variants of verses in the CE text:

(ix) Arjuna's wishful words in verses 7.77.20-1 about killing Duryodhana when the latter, clad in an impenetrable coat of mail, faces Arjuna in battle, Kṛṣṇa told him to kill that *kulādhama* right then and there to end the war, and Arjuna consented. The CE text states them thus:

*yenaitad dīrghakālam no bhuktaṁ rājyam akaṅṭakam /
apy asya yudhi vikramya chindyāṁ mūrdhānam āhave //
7.77.20
api tasyā anarhāyāḥ parikleśasya mādharma /
kṛṣṇāyāḥ śaknuyāṁ gantum padaṁ keśapradharṣaṇe //
7.77.21*

We shall attend to these verses in section 4 (where we shall attend to the phrase *padam* √gam). For the moment, we just note that the southern recension has “*padavīm kalahasya ca*” in place of “*padam keśapradharṣaṇe*” in its variant of 7.77.21. This variant then has to be read in the sense of exacting revenge.

(x) Aśvatthāman's resolute words in 10.3.32 concerning Duryodhana, Karṇa, Bhīṣma and Jayadratha. The CE text states that verse thus:

*duryodhanasya karṇasya bhīṣmasaindhavayor api /
gamayisyāmi pāñcālān padavīm adya durgamām //
10.3.32*

The phrase *gamayisyāmi pāñcālān padavīm* in this verse is usually read in the sense of sending the *Pāñcālas* to heaven by killing them on the battle field; see the translation of this verse by Johnson (1999: p. 17) and his endnote on verse 10.3.24 on p. 107; however, see Appendix B. Be that as it may, in this verse, all but one of the nine southern manuscripts in the Sautikaparvan's Critical Apparatus have *gamiṣyāmi niśāveḷām*

verse; (the resulting hemi-stitch is, presumably, to be read as a question). The preceding remarks apply to this variant too.

in place of *gamayiṣyāmi pāñcālān*. This variant then has to be read in the sense of exacting revenge.

(xi) In verse 10.8.137 quoted above in (vii), several relevant northern manuscripts (and also the vulgate) have *durgamām padavīm gatvā* in place of *sa niḥśeṣān arīn kṛtvā*. Since the massacre is over at this point, the intended meaning of this variant – just as in the case of 10.8.138 – has to be that Aśvatthāman exacted a nearly impossible revenge.

(xii) Verse 15.43.13 from Āstika's speech to Janamejaya towards the end of the Āśramavāsikaparvan. The CE text states it thus:

*śrutam vicitram ākhyānam tvayā pāṇḍavanandana /
sarpās ca bhasmasān nītā gatās ca padavīm pituḥ ||
15.43.13*

The phrase in question is usually read in this verse in the sense of following someone; see Ganguli (1998: vol. XII, Āśramavāsika parva, p. 55), Smith (2009: p. 750) (?); however, see Appendix B. Nevertheless, several manuscripts in the Āśramavāsikaparvan's Critical Apparatus (and also the vulgate) have *gatās ca* in place of *gatās ca*; this variant then expresses the sense of exacting revenge in explicit terms.

Instances from the additional passages (i.e., the passages which are mentioned in the CE but are not accepted in the CE text):

(xiii) Lines 87-8 from the southern passage 2.63, App. I, #38 which contain a verbatim repetition of Nakula's vow in 2.68.45 to exact revenge. That vow is quoted above in (i).

(xiv) Lines 13-4 from the southern passage 4.45, App. I, # 41 in which Karṇa tells the raiding Kaurava army that they can go home, and that he will single-handedly take care of the Virāṭa army that was coming to exact revenge. The CE states those lines thus:

āgamiṣyanti padavīm mātṣyāḥ pāṇḍavam āśritāḥ |

tān ahaṁ nihaṅṣyāmi bhavatā gamyatām gṛham ||

(xv) Duryodhana's request to Śalya in the passage 8.25, App. I, #5, lines 50-1 to become Karṇa's charioteer and thus help him, Duryodhana, exact revenge for the deaths of his brothers and others. The CE states those lines thus:

*tvatḥṣṭe padavīm gantum iccheyāmi yudhi māriṣa |
sodarāṅgām ca vīrāṅgām sarveṣām ca mahīkṣitām ||*

As noted in footnote #12, Nīlakaṅṭha's gloss on this verse states: *padavīm āṅṅyam*.

(xvi) Passage 10.3.10* from Aśvatthāman's speech to Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman resolutely stating that he was going to avenge the five warriors – presumably, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śalya, and Duryodhana – each of whom was killed by the Pāṇḍava side using *adharma*. The CE states that passage thus:

*gamiṣyāmi atha pañcānām padavīm adya durgamām
|10.3.10**

In translating the seventeen instances mentioned above – the sixteen quoted in this section and verse 12.16.25 discussed in section 1 – (and also the three instances from the *Rāmāyaṇa* discussed in Appendix A), none of the translations listed in the references to this paper employ the idiomatic use of the phrase *padavīm √gam*. (The same holds for the commonly used Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi translations of the *MBh*.) The closest to come is Fitzgerald (2004: pp. 200, 694) in his translation of 12.16.25; see footnote #8 for details.

The preceding considerations show that, once the idiomatic use of the phrase *padavīm √gam* in the sense claimed here is taken into account, several well-known episodes in the *MBh* acquire a meaning that is different from, and more apposite than the prevalent one. Based on the same considerations, it should be clear at this stage that there is no such a thing as “the path of Draupadī” or “the path of Draupadī's mass of hair” that Hildebeitel sees in his papers mentioned in section 1.

The preceding evidence establishes our point beyond any reasonable doubt. Indeed, as was suggested by Prof. Robert Goldman in a private communication, the phrase in question appears to be a *lectio difficilior*.

3. Some comments

An excellent illustration of the way the phrase under consideration is used in the sense of exacting revenge for something, or avenging someone or something occurs in Kuntī's martial messages in the Udyogaparvan, the ones she sent to her sons with Kṛṣṇa; see adhyāyas 5.130-5. Her message to Arjuna at that time, and also on an earlier occasion, was: “*draupadyāḥ padavīm cara*”; see verses 5.88.79; 5.135.19, quoted above in section 2 (ii-iii). Van Buitenen (1978: pp. 371, 439, 550) translates that message thus: “Walk the path of Draupadī!”¹⁵ Other translators and commentators listed in the references to this paper read that message in a similar manner. See also Hildebeitel (2009: p. 175). However, it is unlikely that this *ksatriyā* was thinking of any such thing as “the path of Draupadī”. For, on those occasions, Kuntī also reminds Kṛṣṇa of the martial prowess of Bhīma and Arjuna, and asks him to remind them of something they were hardly likely to have forgotten: Just the fact that Draupadī was brought to the assembly hall is an insult to both of them (5.88.80-1; 5.135.20-1). It seems that, in her pointed message to Arjuna, “*draupadyāḥ padavīm cara*”, Kuntī was urging – perhaps, ordering – her martial son, the greatest of all bearers of arms, a man-tiger, to avenge the thing she had found utterly unpardonable in what had taken place in the Kuru assembly hall during the two dicing matches and their aftermaths: Neither the loss of the Pāṇḍava kingdom nor the exile of her sons, but her daughter-in-law's maltreatment by the Kauravas; see 5.88.84-6, 5.135.15-8. To Kuntī, avenging that maltreatment was a matter

¹⁵ In an endnote on verse 5.88.79, van Buitenen explains: “*Walk the path of Draupadī: sc., of vengefulness.*” See also Nīlakaṇṭha's gloss on verse 5.135.19, stated in footnote #12.

of honor.

Verses 10.3.24, 10.8.3, 138, mentioned in section 2 (v), (vi) and (vii), respectively, provide another excellent illustration. In translating these verses, the word *padavī* is usually translated as “a path”; the verses themselves are read in reference to attaining heaven by dying on the battle field; cf., Crosby (2009: pp. 29, 67, 91, 350); Johnson (1998: pp. 16, 34, 45, 107), Smith (2009: p. 566, 574). However, Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on these verses, indicated in footnote #12 and in the second half of footnote #13, (to wit: *padavīm ānṛṇyam*), leaves little doubt as to how these verses (and others in the Sauptikaparvan) were traditionally read. To us, Aśvatthāman’s speeches during his discussion with Kṛpa in the beginning of the Sauptikaparvan, and his later actions in that parvan, are neither about treading the path of Droṇa and Duryodhana (there is no such thing as far as we can see) nor about dying on the battle field; they are about avenging at all costs the *adharma* that was involved in the way in which Droṇa and Duryodhana were killed by the Pāṇḍava side.¹⁶ To Aśvatthāman, avenging that *adharma* was a matter of honor!

4. Another idiomatic phrase related to *padavīm √gam*

The phrase *padam √gam* is related to (but is less often used than) the phrase *padavīm √gam*. The usual meaning of both phrases is ‘to go the way of’, or ‘to follow someone’s trail’. For the use of the former phrase in this sense, see verse 3.253.12 (mentioned in footnote #6); verse 3.295.10 from the Āraṇeya episode; verse 7.87.13 from the Jayadrathavadha episode in which Sātyaki tells Yudhiṣṭhira that he shall infiltrate the Kaurava army following the trail left by Arjuna. That phrase can also mean “to go to the aid of”, as can be seen from the variant of 7.152.33 in a few northern mss. (That verse and its northern variant are mentioned in footnote #11.) However –as in the case

¹⁶ In case of verses 10.3.24 and 10.8.3, there is also the fact that Aśvatthāman and his uncle Kṛpa are supposed to be unslayable (*avadhya*); see verse 8.64.21; see also footnote #10; for Kṛpa, see also verse 6.41.69. However, that fact is hard to reconcile with verse 10.8.4, quoted in section 2 (vi), and with verses 10.11.14-25.

of the phrase *padavīm √gam* – the phrase *padam √gam* is sometimes used in the sense of exacting revenge for something or avenging someone or something. For instance, that phrase is used in that sense in verse 7.77.21, quoted in section 2 (ix); see Ganguli (1998: vol. VI, p. 205) and Pilikian (2009: p. 285) who translate it that way. Also, as noted in the CE's *Sabhāparvan*, in the variant of the additional passage (2.63, App. I, #38, lines 87-8) in the manuscript G₄, Nakula's vow has *draupadyāḥ padam icchatām* instead of *draupadyāḥ padavīm caran*. Since meaning of the latter phrase is, by now, clear, so should be that of the former. (For Nakula's vow, see section 2 (i), (xiii)).

5. Remarks on Hildebeitel's paper on Draupadī's hair

A few words on Hildebeitel's 1981 paper on Draupadī's hair may not come amiss.

One of the several claims in Hildebeitel (1981) is that Draupadī had worn her hair disheveled throughout the thirteen years of exile. (Verse 12.16.25, quoted and discussed in section 1, is but one verse he uses to support that claim.) Mehendale's 1997 paper on that topic contains a point-by-point refutation of Hildebeitel's claims, including refutation of the specific claim stated above. Although we do not quite agree with some of Mehendale's arguments, his paper contains, in our opinion, enough evidence to raise serious doubts concerning several of Hildebeitel's claims, including the one specifically stated above. All we shall do in this section is to draw attention to verse 4.8.1 along with its northern and southern variants, and point out that they provide textual evidence which Mehendale could have used to further strengthen his arguments against Hildebeitel's above-stated specific claim.

Verse 4.8.1 is part of the scene in which Draupadī approaches Sudeṣṇā, the Virāṭa queen, seeking employment as Sairandhrī. The CE text states the verse thus:

tataḥ keśān samutkṣipya vellitāgrān aninditān |
jugūha dakṣiṇe pārśve mṛdūn asitalocanā || 4.8.1

The point to ponder here is the appropriate meaning of the verb *samutkṣip*.

Van Buitenen (1978: p. 37) translates this verse thus: “Then black-eyed Kṛṣṇā braided her perfect, curly-tipped locks, hid them at her right side, [. . .].” Since Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on that verse states, “*samutkṣipyā veṅīkr̥tya*”, and since the word *veṅīkr̥tya* means “having braided her hair”, that would seem to settle the issue. However, Hildebeitel (1981: p. 191) also discusses this verse and translates it thus: “Then, having tossed back her curly ended faultless soft hair, that dark-eyed one concealed it on her right side.” Hildebeitel neither mentions van Buitenen’s translation of that verse nor mentions Nīlakaṇṭha’s gloss on that verse. Also, in keeping with his claim about Draupadī’s hair, the word “braided” is conspicuously absent in his translation of that verse. Since none of the three dictionaries listed in the references translate the verb *samutkṣip* quite the way Nīlakaṇṭha and van Buitenen do,¹⁷ it seems advisable to take a closer look at the information on which that reconstituted verse is based, particularly since the northern and the southern variants of that verse differ considerably.

Let us start with the northern variant. Most northern manuscripts in the Virāṭaparvan’s Critical Apparatus (and also the vulgate) have the following additional line inserted after the first hemi-stitch of the above-quoted verse 4.8.1:

kṛṣṇān sūkṣmān mṛdūn dīrghān samudgrathya śucismitā
/ 195*

It should be clear at this stage that *samutkṣip* is not the only crucial verb involved; one has to pay attention also to the verb *samudgrath*. Apte and Monier-Williams do not cover

¹⁷ Among the meanings of the verb *samutkṣip* given by Böhtlingk and Roth (2000) (see under *kṣip*), the relevant one for our purpose is “auseinanderwerfen, lösen, anwerfen”. Böhtlingk and Roth also quote *keśān samutkṣipyā* and mention *MBh* 4,244, which, in terms of the CE text, is 4.8.1 with the additional line 195* (quoted below) inserted after its first hemi-stitch. Taking into consideration their interpretation of the verb *samudgrath* (discussed in the next paragraph), it seems that Böhtlingk and Roth took (the northern variant of verse in question) to mean that Draupadī loosened her hair and then rebraided it; (for the rebraiding part, see the next paragraph.)

samudgrath (or *samudgranth*)¹⁸, and Nīlakaṇṭha has no gloss on *samudgrathya*. However, according to Böhtlingk and Roth (2000), the verb *samudgrath* means, “in die Höhe binden” (to tie up); they also quote *keśān samudgrathya* and mention *MBh* 4,244, which, in terms of the CE text, is 4.8.1 with the above-quoted additional line 195* inserted after its first hemi-stitch. (This is the same verse as the one quoted in footnote #17 in connection with the verb *samutkṣip*.) All this along with the information in footnote #17 shows that, according to the northern recension, Draupadī's hair was tied up – not dishevelled – en she met Sudeṣṇā for the first time.¹⁹

Now, the Southern recension. It has the following additional line inserted before the above-quoted verse 4.8.1:

*tataḥ kṛṣṇā sukeśī sā darśanīyā śucismitā | 194**

More importantly, in place of the word *tataḥ* in the first hemi-stitch of the above-quoted verse 4.8.1, it has the word *veṇī-*. Thus, out of the ten southern manuscripts in the Virāṭaparvan's Critical Apparatus, three have *veṇīkeśāntamutkṣipya* in place of *tataḥ keśān samutkṣipya*; one has *veṇīkeśāntamutkṣipya*; and six have *veṇīkeśānsamutkṣipya*. No matter how those words are interpreted, the word *veṇī-* in all these variants shows that either Draupadī's hair was already braided and she then unbraided them, or the other way around.²⁰ Neither interpretation is in accord with Hildebeitel's claim.

To sum up: Although the two recensions of the *MBh* use different wording and different additional lines for verse 4.8.1,

¹⁸ An internet search showed that, under *samudgranth*, the second edition (1899) of Monier-Williams has the following entry: *samudgrathya*, ind. p., to bind up together, tie or fasten up, *MBh*.

¹⁹ Ganguli (1998: vol. IV, p. 15) translates the passage consisting of verses 4.8.1, with 195* inserted in it, thus: “Binding her black, soft, fine, long and faultless tresses with crisped ends into a knotted braid, Draupadī of black eyes and sweet smiles, throwing it upon her right shoulders, concealed it by her cloth.”

²⁰ See also the additional passage (4.8. App. I, #6) from the southern recension. The relevant lines in it are 12-6, which occur in all but one relevant southern manuscripts. Those lines describe the scene in which Draupadī meets Sudeṣṇā for the first time and contain the words *samudgrathya* and *nibadhya* in connection with Draupadī's hair.

both of them independently and clearly contradict Hildebeitel's claim that Draupadī had worn her hair disheveled throughout the exile.

Appendix A: The phrase *padavīm √gam* in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*

A search of the e-text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* maintained by Smith (2014) revealed that the phrase *padavīm √gam* occurs at just three places in the Critical Edition of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, edited by Bhatt et al (1960-75).²¹ Those three places, verses 3.19.4, 3.20.12, and 6.31.54, are commented upon below. These comments show that the idiomatic use of the phrase *padavīm √gam* pointed out in this paper is not restricted to the *MBh*.

The first two of the three places mentioned above, verses 3.19.4 and 3.20.12, are from the Śūrpaṅakhā disfigurement episode in the Aranyakāṇḍa. Verse 3.19.4 is where Rāma notices that Śūrpaṅakhā, who had ran away from them after her disfigurement at Lakṣmaṇa's hands, has returned and was accompanied by fourteen *rākṣasas*. He then says to Lakṣmaṇa:

*muhūrtam bhava saumitre sītāyāḥ praty anantarah |
imānasyā vadhiṣyāmi padavīm āgatāniha || 3.19.4*

Pollock (1991: p. 128) translates this verse thus: “Look to Sītā for a moment, Saumitri [Lakṣmaṇa], while I slay these creatures here that have come to the aid of the *rākṣasa* woman.”

In an endnote on this verse, Pollock (1991: p. 278) states: “Here and in 20.12 I am inclined to see an idiom of sorts.” He then provides some references.

As remarked in footnote #11, in some situations, the phrase *padavīm √gam* can mean “go (or come) to the aid of”. (That is the idiomatic meaning of sorts that Pollock seems to have in

²¹ This fact was kindly pointed out to us by Prof. John Brockington in a private communication.

All verses as well as references to verses mentioned in this Appendix are from the Critical Edition of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, edited by Bhatt et al (1960-75).

mind.) Nevertheless, we believe that the second hemi-stitch of verse 3.19.4 should be translated thus: “while I slay these creatures here that have come to avenge the *rākṣasa* woman.” First of all, it should be clear by now that this translation is not off the mark. Secondly, from the details in sargas 3.17 and 3.18, we, the readers, know what had transpired on the *rākṣasa* side between the time Lakṣmaṇa hacked off Śūrpaṅakhā’s ears and nose and the time Śūrpaṅakhā returned to Rāma’s āshrama accompanied by fourteen *rākṣasas*. Specifically, we know that those fourteen *rākṣasas* were servants of Khara, Śūrpaṅakhā’s brother, and were instructed by him to kill Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. But Rāma does not know any of this. The moment he saw them, he, of course, would have gathered the obvious: Those fourteen *rākṣasas* are here to avenge the *rākṣasa* woman. There seems no reason why Rāma should have assumed that they “have come to the aid of” her. Indeed, Rāma would know that those *rākṣasas* were not there to “aid” Śūrpaṅakhā: She was not going to be an active participant in what was needed to be done to avenge her. Brockington and Brockington (2006: p. 81) translate the second hemi-stitch of verse 3.19.4 thus: “I’ll kill these creatures approaching along the path with her.” This is accurate. Perhaps, the translation we suggest captures the revenge motif more clearly.

Let us turn to 3.20.12. That verse is a part of Śūrpaṅakhā’s speech to Khara when she goes back to him and tells him that Rāma had killed the fourteen *rākṣasas* he, Khara, had ordered to accompany her. The verse states:

ete ca nihatā bhūmau rāmeṇa niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ |
ye ca me padavīm prāptā rākṣasāḥ piśitāśanāḥ || 3.20.12

Pollock (1991: p. 131) translates it thus: “All the *rākṣasas*, eaters of raw flesh, who came to my aid now lie dead on the ground, killed by Rāma’s sharp arrows.” Since this is part of Śūrpaṅakhā’s speech, the situation here is less clear than the one in verse 3.19.4. Nevertheless, we would prefer “came with me to avenge me” in place of “came to my aid” in that translation. Brockington and Brockington (2006: p. 82) translate 3.20.12

thus: “Those flesh-eating *rākṣasas* who followed where I led have been butchered by Rāma’s sharp arrows.” The translation we suggest captures the revenge motif more clearly.

Let us now turn to verse 6.31.54 from the Yuddhakāṇḍa. That verse is part of Rāma’s bellicose message to Rāvaṇa just before the beginning of the epic war, a message telling Rāvaṇa that his days as a tyrant are over and that he is about to get his comeuppance. The Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* states that verse thus:

*padavīm devatānām ca maharṣīnām ca rākṣasa /
rājarṣīnām ca sarveṣām gamiṣyasi mayā hataḥ || 6.31.54*

Goldman et al. (2009: p. 201) translate that verse thus: “Once I have killed you, *rākṣasa*, you shall attain the realm of the gods, the great seers, and all the royal seers.” In their commentary on this verse, all the commentators mentioned by Goldman et al. (2009: p. 746) seem to take it for granted that Rāvaṇa, once killed by Rāma, will go to heaven; however, there is no unanimity among them about the reason this would happen. (It appears to us that the phrase *padavīm* √*gam* may have been used here in the sense explained in Appendix B.) Be that as it may, several relevant northern manuscripts have *gamiṣyāmi yudhi sthitaḥ* in place of *gamiṣyasi mayā hataḥ*. Since Rāma was thinking of killing Rāvaṇa rather than being killed by him, this variant has to be read in the sense of Rāma exacting revenge for Rāvaṇa’s maltreatment of the gods and others.²²

²² The following remarks by Professor Robert Goldman are from a private email correspondence with the authors, and are included here with his kind permission: ‘The situation in which the phrase [*padavīm* √*gam*] and its variants are used, in both epics, definitely fits the context of avenging an injury or killing (in case of the YK [Yuddhakāṇḍa] many killings). The interesting thing also is that the phrase does not appear to have been understood by the commentators. This is signaled, typically, by their proposing a number of alternative explanations as in the YK example. The seeming obscurity of the phrase may also be seen in what may well be a gloss on part of the northern scribes. [. . .] It has been generally observed that N [northern recension] frequently appears to rephrase obscure passages in S [southern recension]. [. . .] So although N’s *gamiṣyāmi yudhi sthitaḥ* is perfectly lucid as a phrase, it is also a bit awkward in the context and may well be one of the northern “corrections” of the south.’

Appendix B: Another idiomatic use of *padavīm √gam*?

It appears that, in some situations, the phrase *padavīm √gam* has yet another idiomatic meaning. To see this, let us go back to verse 12.16.25, quoted and discussed in section 1. From the details given in the CE, it is clear that the Bengali version of the epic and southern recension of the epic read the second hemi-stitch of that verse in thus:

draupadyāḥ keśapakṣasya diṣṭyā te padavīm gatāḥ ||

A literal (and wrong) translation of this would read thus: “Fortunately, they followed the path of Draupadī’s hair”. The “they” in this variant are, of course, the sinful Duryodhana and his followers. Now, as seen before, there is no such thing as “the path of Draupadī’s hair” (or, for that matter, the path of Draupadī) so far as the Pāṇḍava side is concerned. It would then be preposterous to assume that such a thing exists for the Kaurava side. Thus, as in the variant of that verse in the CE text (quoted in section 1), the phrase *padavīm √gam* in this variant must also be read as an idiom. And, as is clear, that phrase is not used in this variant in the sense in which it is used in seventeen instances cited in sections 1 and 2 and in the three instances cited in Appendix A. We thus have something new here.

The question then arises: What is the sense in which the phrase *padavīm √gam* is used in this variant? Perhaps, we should indicate our suspected answer to that question in the form of another question: Could that sense be that of *pāpaprakṣāḷana*? i.e., the “they” referred to in that verse paid for their sin (*pāpa*) incurred in what they had done to Draupadī’s hair? The answer, we think, should be: Most likely! That then leads to another question: Should verses 10.3.32 and 15.43.13, quoted, respectively, in section 2 (x) and (xii), and verse 6.31.54 from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, quoted in Appendix A, be read in a similar manner? Keeping in mind that these three verses make some sort of sense even if the phrase in question is assigned its usual meaning of following someone’s trail, our

hesitant answer: Probably!²³

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²³ For a clearer answer in case of verse 6.31.54 from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, see the preceding footnote.

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