

GENDERED SOTERIOLOGY

Marriage and the *karmayoga*

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This chapter explores the interface of gender, analogy, and narrative.¹ The Sanskrit tradition up to and including the *Mahābhārata* contains certain gendered discourses which, when applied as background to our reading, yield a new perspective on one reiterated *Mahābhārata* motif: that of the man who, for individual interpersonal circumstantial reasons, wants to leave his wife. I will consider this motif as an allegory of a soteriological situation in which the soul 'wants to leave' *saṃsāra*,² and, *vice versa*, I will consider that soteriological situation as an allegory of this motif.

By 'soteriology' I mean the post-Vedic (or, at the very least, late Vedic, and also non-Vedic) *mokṣa/nirvāṇa/kaivalya* soteriology, which inverts and debases the parallel conventional *telos* of long life, family success, fame, wealth, heaven, excellent rebirth, etc. From this soteriological perspective, as *Mahābhārata* 12.190–1 has it, any rebirth is 'hell' (*niraya*), including this one. Textual traditions variously labelled 'Vedic', 'Hindu', 'Buddhist', 'Jain' etc. all admit a soteriological step in which an individual karmic career comes to an end. Varying perspectives are immediately possible. Is one thing, the 'subject' of the soteriological process, separating from and discarding another? In what sense does the 'subject' become transformed? Is there really a 'subject' both before and after the step?

If unsaved (and this is the soteriological situation – it is aspirational), we look at this step 'through a glass, darkly';³ and so although we may think in terms of the departure of a soul (as in Hindu and Jain philosophy and in the *Mahābhārata*), we may also think of the situation as psychological and existential, and as invoking secondary and derivative metaphysical postulations – emergent properties, as it were, of a human social predicament. For the possibility of radical change to appeal, one must be persuaded that things are currently awful; but the turn to the psychological and the existential suggests that the idea of possibly effecting change may be a key component of any current awfulness. Hence determinism may be a meta-soteriological discourse;⁴ hence also the traditional idea that marriage is

indissoluble; and the *lokāyata* idea that there is no soul separable from the material world.

Early Indian soteriological discourse is androcentric, and soteriological achievement is narratively associated with men leaving their possessions, family, and social obligations, and going forth to wander.⁵ Fellowship with other seekers may initially be useful (and apparently is the basis of many early Indian texts), but ultimately, as the *Suttanipāta* has it, 'One should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn' (1.3.35, tr. Norman).⁶ The wife is left behind along with everything else, even if she is relinquished last.

Initially, my proposal is threefold: firstly that there is considerable narrative cross-fertilization between the motif on the human level (a man wanting to depart on a private quest) and the soteriological situation on the metaphysical level (a soul or spiritual entity could depart or emerge from a gross material process); secondly that, either as a result of or as a contributing factor to that cross-fertilization, the motif and the soteriology are at least implicitly gendered, perhaps even in contexts where the gendered aspect is not stressed; and thirdly that the *Mahābhārata*, at least in part, resists and/or modifies the motif and the soteriology. In the *Mahābhārata*'s narrative, Yudhiṣṭhira and many others lose or relinquish or attempt to relinquish or nearly relinquish or nearly lose their wives, but do not actually do so, or at the very least only do so temporarily; and the text's more didactic sections – most famously the *Bhagavadgītā* – contain the message that soteriological success is attained not through physical renunciation, but through an inner renunciation which neutralizes *karmabandha* (the bondage generated by good and bad action) at source, allowing continued performance of social *dharma*s in a spirit of *karmayoga* (see also Chapter 12).

The chapter will pan out into an examination of Yudhiṣṭhira's masculinity – so-called because this character turns on his negotiation of the duty of *rakṣaṇa* (protection; Fitzgerald 2004a: 10–13), which, in the presumably male-authored *Mahābhārata*'s patrilineal world, is an almost entirely male prerogative. (Maternal child-protection is a rather neglected theme in the text⁷ – usually *rakṣaṇa* does not figure as a duty for mothers, and *kṣatriya* ladies willingly send their sons to possible death in battle.⁸) The discussion of Dharmarāja's masculinity will proceed, as it does in the *Mahābhārata*, in counterpoint with another idea of how to be a man, that is, the renunciative ethos of what might very loosely be termed the '*śramaṇa* traditions', which the text presents in terms of defective masculinity, with *nāstika* and *klība* (impotent)⁹ being partially interchangeable. In the *Mahābhārata*'s *kṣatriya* discourse, the king's duty to wield the *daṇḍa* and satisfy Śrī and Earth (see below) is presented in quasi-sexual terms, and soldiers who die heroically in battle are fit for sexual pleasures with the *apsarās* in heaven. Insofar as it implies a rejection of these duties, renunciation is by implication the rejection of a certain normative masculinity.¹⁰ Such a normative masculinity is of course not unknown outside ancient India; indeed,

recent European and North American narrative traditions (such as the 'cop show', the 'western', and the normative presentation and discussion of 'news' in the national media) regularly evoke something like *rakṣaṇa* as a baseline of moral masculinity, particularly in the justification of violent action.

Gendered genesis and its soteriologico-narrative ramifications

Our project is complicated because the terms in which the *Mahābhārata* presents the dualism of 'spirit' and 'matter' (often *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, though many other words are also used) are often not explicitly gendered within the text, and there is debate over the extent to which we may understand them as such. The general scholarly presumption has been that these are gendered categories (and such an interpretation is encouraged by the feminine grammatical gender of '*prakṛti*' and the basic meaning of '*puruṣa*' as 'male person', as well as by several textual suggestions¹¹), but Knut A. Jacobsen has recently suggested – mentioning also the work of Mackenzie Brown (1986) in this regard – that *prakṛti* was 'feminized' only latterly, in a period post-dating the *Mahābhārata* and the basic philosophical *sāṃkhya* texts, through the influence of tantric ideas of *śakti* and the goddess (Jacobsen 1996).¹²

Jacobsen is an expert on *prakṛti* (Jacobsen 1999), but in the present context it is important that we sidestep certain implications of his work, in two ways.¹³ Firstly, there are suggestions of *prakṛti*'s femininity in the philosophical literature even preceding *prakṛti*'s 'feminization': gendered metaphors are used to explain what *prakṛti* is. Jacobsen mentions some of these, principally the 'dancing girl' image of *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 59, and interprets them as mere metaphors. From this perspective *prakṛti*, as an impersonal unconscious principle, must be non-gendered;¹⁴ but this is an analytical philosophical edge of a wider discourse in which two basic principles, variously labelled, feature in narratives many of which emphasize the gendered aspects omitted or at least downplayed by Jacobsen and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. Our concern is narrative interpretation, and hence much of the more philosophical literature is peripheral. Secondly, and relatedly, Jacobsen's argument that *prakṛti* was originally non-gendered is in many ways an argument *ex silentio*, and as such is overdependent on the choice of what exactly to listen for. If we listen for basic conceptual patterns, we find evidence in the late Vedic texts, Dharmaśāstras, and *Mahābhārata* that a polarity similar to that expressed in *sāṃkhya* texts by the terms *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* was narratively portrayed in explicitly gendered terms.

From the *Rgveda* onwards cosmogony is often presented, by analogy with human son-production, as dependent on a union of gendered entities. This analogy is pervasive, and it is often impossible to tell whether the main

subject of discussion is the cosmos, or the individual person within it.¹⁵ The gendered entities combining to create the cosmos are also indispensable personal constituents: every person has two parents, and also two metaphysical aspects. Selected quotations will demonstrate the gendered idea of the cosmic parents at some length (although examples could easily be multiplied), as this idea forms an essential backdrop for the remainder of the chapter. Procreation is not the only evident old Indian cosmogonic theory;¹⁶ but nonetheless the identifiable gendered cosmo-parental mythology formed an implicit symbolic background for the *Mahābhārata*'s gendered narratives and metaphysical speculations.

The *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* says that 'the Lord who is Self-existent, himself unmanifest, caused this (universe) to become manifest . . . he of whom all creatures are made – he is the one who actually appeared' (1.6ab, 7cd, tr. Doniger with Smith).¹⁷ Then we are told how:

first he emitted the waters, and then he emitted his semen in them. That (semen) became a golden egg,¹⁸ as bright as the sun with his thousand rays; Brahmā himself, the grandfather of all people, was born in that (egg) . . . The one who is the first cause, unmanifest, eternal, the essence of what is real and unreal, emitted the Puruṣa, who is known in the world as Brahmā.

(*Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 1.8c–9, 11, tr. Doniger with Smith)¹⁹

The Lord is male, the waters female,²⁰ and the son (cosmos-as-person) differs from the father only in name, age, and level of manifestation. This cosmogony draws on a tradition of thinking apparent in the Veda in many variations. Sometimes the waters (*āpaḥ*, *salila*) appear to produce the incipient cosmos by themselves, without fertilization.²¹ Sometimes both Lord and waters apparently preexist, neither being marked out as primary.²² Sometimes, as here, the preexisting male produces the waters.²³ Often, as here, the incipient cosmos is a male person, and the two males are identified.²⁴ The role of the waters as the means for a non-manifest male to become manifest has unilineal implications matching the patrilineal emphasis on the obtaining of a son.²⁵ The unilineal tendency may render the gendered aspect less visible:

. . . Such is his greatness, and Puruṣa is yet more than this. All creatures are a quarter of him; three quarters are what is immortal in heaven. With three quarters Puruṣa rose upwards, and one quarter of him still remains here. From this [quarter] he spread out in all directions, into that which eats and that which does not eat. From him Virāj was born, and from Virāj came Puruṣa. When he was born, he ranged beyond the earth behind and before.

(*Rgveda* 10.90.3–5, tr. O'Flaherty)²⁶

Here Virāj appears to be the mother through whom the father manifests one-quarter of himself as the son.²⁷

In cosmogony, unity is perhaps instinctively more original than duality. Although one might suppose that the pre-cosmic Lord should initially be non-gendered, only latterly polarizing into male and female sexually productive aspects,²⁸ his gender is pronominally marked in advance, and carries over into the cosmic person. Clearly one must be (or become) two before one can be (or become) another one or many; and the prioritization of the pre-cosmic male, requiring as it does his ability independently to create a mate for himself, explains how, if the Lord and the waters only have one cosmic son (per universe), that son might himself manage to procreate.²⁹

In the beginning this was self (*ātman*), in the likeness of a person (*puruṣa*). Looking round he saw nothing but himself (*ātman*) . . . He was afraid . . . He had no pleasure either . . . He desired a companion. He became as large as a woman and a man embracing. He made that self split (*pat-*) into two: from that husband (*pati*) and wife (*patnī*) came to be. Therefore Yājñavalkya used to say, 'In this respect we two are each like a half portion'. So this space is filled up by a wife. He coupled with her, and from that human beings were born.

(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.1–3, tr. Roebuck)³⁰

Puruṣa's way of creating human beings³¹ mirrors the way the Lord created him. Only when offspring are multiple and of both genders (as implied here by their being human) can the line continue in the normal manner.

In the *Mahābhārata* Kṛṣṇa combines the extra-cosmic and intra-cosmic scenarios: 'Great Brahman is my womb; I put the embryo in it. Thence arises the production of all beings. Brahman is the great womb; I am the seed-giving father of the forms which arise in all wombs' (*Bhagavadgītā* 14.3–4).³² Here 'brahman', despite its grammatically neuter gender, plays an explicitly female role often played by (*mūla* or *avyakta*) *prakṛti* or the waters. But Kṛṣṇa claims his fertile companion as a possession or a part of himself.³³

In the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, after Puruṣa-Brahmā hatches, he bifurcates and reproduces sexually, and the son is called Virāj; but the text then presents another reproductive method: 'By heating himself up with ascetic toil, that man, Virāj, brought forth a being by himself – know, you best of the twice-born, that I [Manu] am that being, the creator of this whole world' (1.33, tr. Olivelle).³⁴ Here *tapas* replaces the 'other half', and the female is unnecessary in all but name ('Virāj'). Manu then uses the same method to produce the ten 'mind-born' *ṛṣis*. To be productive the male must polarize into himself plus another (*tapas*, mind, waters), so some mate/mother may always be identified, however disguised: 'the general principle of necessary gender complementarity is symbolically maintained' (Pintchman 1998: 271; see also Zwilling and Sweet 2000: 101). In the *Mahābhārata*, in microcosmic versions

of the cosmogonic scenario where the Lord is paired with his *māyā* or *vidyā*,³⁵ Droṇa, Kṛpa, Śuka *et al.* are produced when a sage sees an *apsarā* and his consequent seminal emission is incubated in some impersonal or makeshift *yonī*.

The gendered cosmogonic principles necessarily pre-exist the infant cosmos, but are also integral aspects within it: thus sexual production is iterated at different levels in the ongoing analogical process. The analogy between microcosm and macrocosm is persistent and extensive;³⁶ and so, like the cosmos (male Puruṣa is male-plus-female), a human person has two essential constituents (*prakṛti* and *puruṣa* in *sāṃkhya* theory), internal representations of the parents.³⁷

This analogical approach,³⁸ when applied iteratively, throws up a specific type of problem. Although each individual human is physically and nominally of unipolar gender, he/she has two gendered parents, and two gendered aspects (Goldberg 2002: 77). So if male and female characters are narratively to 'stand for' the Lord and the waters, or heaven and earth, or *puruṣa* and the material principle, it appears that there is sleight of hand. But we cannot allow this interesting problem³⁹ to stop us reading in this way, for that would be to scruple where some authors do not, and would impoverish our textual understanding.

If the cosmic parents are ranked (the male creates the waters), so are the two constituents of humans: the microcosmic Lord ('soul', *dehin*, *ātman*, *jīva*, *puruṣa*, *prāṇa*) is presented as essential; the body-stuff is not. The *mokṣa* soteriology attempts to re-claim the essence entirely: traditionally, according to the *nivṛtti* impulse, to be saved is to abandon materiality, the cosmic and microcosmic representation of the female principle⁴⁰ – by analogy, the wife of the soteriological subject. We see this in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, where the three colours of the female goat remind us of *prakṛti*'s *guṇas*: 'With the nanny-goat, red, white and black, who brings forth many offspring like herself, lies one billy-goat, taking pleasure. The other billy-goat abandons her, who has had her enjoyment' (4.5, tr. Roebuck).⁴¹ Old Indian narrative traditions prominently juxtapose soteriological attainment and wife-abandonment: Yājñavalkya, Mahāvīra and the Buddha abandoned their wives.⁴² The *Buddhacarita* makes this into a general rule: 'All the *bodhisattvas* of matchless character, knowing sensual enjoyments, pleasures and delights, went to the forest once a son was born to them' (2.56).⁴³ This allows a man's wholehearted pursuit of *mokṣa*/*nirvāṇa* to follow the fulfilment of patrilineal duties within one lifetime,⁴⁴ and resembles the classical Hindu scheme of four successive *āśramas*, which however values social duties more highly, prohibiting renunciation until much later (when the man's sons are independent, *Mahābhārata* 12.277.8; when he has grandchildren, *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 6.2).⁴⁵ In all these cases a wife is necessary because sons are necessary.⁴⁶

When, in the *Mahābhārata*, we see men ambivalent towards their wives, we can read this, on one level,⁴⁷ as discussion of the *mokṣa* soteriology (which

resembles the gendered cosmogony in reverse). However, in the *Bhagavadgītā* Kṛṣṇa proposes a soteriological variant whereby one need not abandon one's wife to attain *mokṣa*.⁴⁸ In allowing both procreation and *mokṣa*-attainment, the *karmayoga* – or the *rājavidyā*⁴⁹ – parallels the mature *āśrama* system and the *bodhisattva* rule; but it is more thoroughgoing, obviating in principle the need ever to renounce the wife.⁵⁰ Hence many *Mahābhārata* stories dramatize the possibility of the man abandoning the wife: she is sometimes temporarily abandoned, but never for long. Our heroes must learn to live with her. The next two sections of the chapter will explore several such stories in terms of the soteriological dynamic between *puruṣa* and the material principle; but this is only possible now that we have established that there is already a long narrative tradition of presenting this dynamic in hierarchically gendered terms.

In emphasizing the wife, we single out one of several female symbolic units in the *Mahābhārata* which may stand for that which must be physically abandoned, according to the traditional soteriology, for salvation to occur. Others are Śrī (the goddess of fortune) and Earth (Pṛthivī, Bhūmi, Mahī). The king husbands Earth (his realm),⁵¹ and Śrī is his consort; the queen represents his being Lord of Earth (*mahīpati*) and Śrī's favourite.⁵² Because the *Mahābhārata*'s main characters are royal *kṣatriyas*, it exemplifies the renunciative impulse in terms of abandonment of the duties and trappings of kingship (including the citizens), and/or the wife. Wife-abandonment is sometimes partial or implicit, since she may still be there with the husband in emaciated form, suffering, without her finery.

The matter is complicated because in the *Mahābhārata* the wife is not just a cipher, an object in connection with male subjects; she is also a subject herself. As Olivelle has made clear (1997: 437–42), the traditional *mokṣa* soteriology implies every person's soteriological independence. The *Mahābhārata* is probably the earliest Sanskrit text explicitly to anticipate (Sanskrit-knowing subsets of) women and the 'lower' classes amongst its audience, and Kṛṣṇa's new soteriology is universally available.⁵³ The brief for women and *śūdras* is one of unstinting service; but the *pativrata* wife, who cleaves to her husband for better, for worse (even if and as he rejects her), and who refuses to be abandoned because her destiny depends on him, could be a soteriological exemplar herself, regardless of her symbolic role in *his* story.

The case of Yudhiṣṭhira

Our primary example is the story of Yudhiṣṭhira, who becomes Dharmarāja.⁵⁴ As mentioned earlier, we are particularly interested in aspects of his masculinity bearing on the duty of *rakṣaṇa*, which in his case – his being a king – is theorized in specific symbolic and gendered terms, whereby his relations with his queen are glossed with his relations with the seven *prakṛtis* that constitute

kingship ('The king, the minister, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and the ally', *Arthaśāstra* 6.1.1, tr. Kangle).⁵⁵ In light of the dialogue with the renunciative traditions, particular attention will be paid to the ideas of loss or abandonment of one's wife, and loss or abandonment of one's (i.e. the king's, the good protector's) proper self, the primary ordinal of the *prakṛtis*, the *prakṛti*-that-is-*puruṣa*-too.

We will survey Yudhiṣṭhira's biography selectively, highlighting events particularly indicative of his character and his attitude to wife and kingdom, and comparing the stories of Pāṇḍu, the Buddha, Nala, and Rāma along the way. We will see that in Yudhiṣṭhira's case, focused as it is through these allied stories, brief wife-abandonment, despite and through being a failure of *rakṣaṇa* in the face of *śramaṇa* ideology, marks the way to self-knowledge and eventual dutiful success. But the dilemma arises for Yudhiṣṭhira repeatedly, and in different forms, and in my view the cumulative effect cannot properly be dealt with unless the dramatic situations are seen in Yudhiṣṭhira's biographical context. Hence this section is organized chronologically, like Norbert Klaes's book of 1975, with details of the story sketched in when required. The section is further broken down into subsections dealing with Yudhiṣṭhira's father; Yudhiṣṭhira's acquisition of a spouse and the Khāṇḍava kingdom; his loss of the same; his rehabilitation while in exile; his acquisition of the united kingdom; and his last days.

Yudhiṣṭhira's father Pāṇḍu (1.105–16)

Yudhiṣṭhira hardly knows his father Pāṇḍu; since he has problems coming to terms with his masculinity, this omission seems significant. It would then also be significant that Pāṇḍu doesn't know *his* father (Vicitravīrya) either.⁵⁶ Pāṇḍu's story may be viewed in light of the absence of a paternal example; and, since apparently he doesn't hear this story, so may Yudhiṣṭhira's.

Pāṇḍu, tired of kingship, retired childless, with his wives, to a forest life of hunting. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, regent in his absence, obtains many sons, and the narrators explain Pāṇḍu's childlessness: after a hunting accident, he is cursed to celibacy or death, and decides on a solitary ascetic life, striving for *mokṣa*. His wives are 'intent on the world/s of our husband' (1.110.27)⁵⁷ and insist on joining him in the ascetic life, and he agrees with apparent indifference; but when eventually 'he set out together with his wives from the hundred-peaked (mountains) facing north, wanting to cross to the other side of heaven' (1.111.5),⁵⁸ the *ṛsis* prevent him, saying the path is too hard for women. But Pāṇḍu blames his childlessness, which now obsesses him, and eventually sons are produced *via* celestial sperm-donation, Yudhiṣṭhira's 'biological' father being the god Dharma. 'Then Pāṇḍu, seeing those five beautiful sons guarded by the strength of his own arms in the great mountain forest, became happy' (1.116.1);⁵⁹ but his death by sexual misadventure follows immediately.

Pāṇḍu shows no desire for children until the *ṛṣis* check his progress, even though one might have expected the king's childlessness to have caused concern much earlier. The text describes three separate renunciations: of the kingdom, of sex (enforced, with one fatal exception), and of hunting (in favour of *mokṣa*). We might superimpose these renunciations, imagining that Pāṇḍu's accident and curse led to his renouncing the kingdom, sex, and hunting all together. The narrators are particularly concerned with the question of royal heirs (Pāṇḍu's premature renunciation of the kingdom helps set up the conflict between the cousins), but Pāṇḍu's triple renunciation is due to *duḥkha*, the down-side of knowledge about mortality: you may enjoy yourself, but it can't last (Piatigorsky 1993: 111–25). Pāṇḍu 'misunderstands' the *ṛṣis*, whose reason for intervening fits the traditional renunciative soteriology: perhaps they would expect Pāṇḍu to dismiss his wives and continue alone, but instead he comes to terms with his ancestors, his wives, and his sexuality. His career has three phases: comparatively carefree early days; asceticism; and dharmic compromise. His death in Mādrī's arms, though ostensibly the result of desire, is also a paradigm of desirelessness: we know from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that 'As a man embraced by a woman he loves is oblivious to everything within or without, so this person embraced by the *ātman* consisting of knowledge is oblivious to everything within or without' (4.3.21, tr. Olivelle);⁶⁰ and in a karmayogic light this may be seen as more than a simile.

Yudhiṣṭhira before the dicing

Kuntī brings the children to the Hāstinapura court, but they soon find themselves in exile for their own safety (1.137ff.). Disguised as brahmins, the Pāṇḍavas attend Draupadī's *svayamvara*, where all five fall in love with her and Arjuna wins her hand. They already know that Draupadī was not born from a womb, but was summoned from the fire for *kṣatriya* doom in a rite of black magic (1.154–5). Yudhiṣṭhira, perhaps fearful of trouble, perhaps green with envy, hastens from the *svayamvara* scene even before Draupadī has given Arjuna the garland. Kuntī proposes they share Draupadī; Yudhiṣṭhira tells Arjuna to have her; Arjuna, speaking also for the others, tells Yudhiṣṭhira to have her; and Yudhiṣṭhira, realizing they all love her, and mindful of Vyāsa's earlier advice, acquiesces to Kuntī's proposal. Drupada is persuaded that this is dharmic, the marriage is held (1.190–1), and the Pāṇḍava juggernaut has begun to roll, with Yudhiṣṭhira, bewitched by Draupadī and bound by his priority, inadvertently in the van.

Yudhiṣṭhira's other wife is Devikā, mentioned only once (1.90.83):⁶¹ daughter of Govāsana Śaibya, she chose him at her *svayamvara*, and they have a son Yaudheya.⁶² Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla, Yudhiṣṭhira's royal wife, is first his brother's wife; when he later tries to leave her and the kingdom, Yudhiṣṭhira might regret how things have turned out.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra partitions the kingdom between his own sons and Pāṇḍu's, who found Indraprastha. Arjuna, sensitive to Yudhiṣṭhira over their wife,⁶³ spends some time away, contracting various other marriages; when he seeks Yudhiṣṭhira's blessing for his abduction of Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadra, it is immediately provided. Subhadra produces Abhimanyu, and Draupadī (only later?) five sons, one per husband (1.213.58–82).

The juggernaut rolls: Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn Khāṇḍava Forest; *asura* Maya builds the Pāṇḍavas a *sabhā* (at Kṛṣṇa's suggestion – the deal is done before Yudhiṣṭhira knows of it); Indraprastha hosts celebrities (2.1–4). Nārada reports Pāṇḍu's post-mortem wish for Yudhiṣṭhira to perform the *rājasūya*, and Yudhiṣṭhira considers the idea. He is urged by brothers, friends, and ministers; Kṛṣṇa proposes to canvass support by killing Jarāsaṃdha in his name. Yudhiṣṭhira is uneasy ('I think that if it is begun, the principal object will not be obtainable', 2.14.5),⁶⁴ but Kṛṣṇa uses emotional blackmail for his assent,⁶⁵ his brothers perform the *digvijaya* for him, and, overtaken by the momentum of events, Yudhiṣṭhira orders the *rājasūya*.

At the ceremony, the host is unsure which *kṣatriya* guest should receive his primary honour: his choice of Kṛṣṇa, proposed by Bhīṣma, is opposed by Śiśupāla, and a rumpus ensues, during which Kṛṣṇa kills Śiśupāla (2.33–42). Welcome to the hot seat, *samrāj* (universal monarch)!

Yudhiṣṭhira the gambler

Dhṛtarāṣṭra invites Yudhiṣṭhira to Hāstinapura to dice with Duryodhana (2.44–67).⁶⁶ Yudhiṣṭhira accepts the invitation,⁶⁷ despite Vidura's warnings and his own uneasiness. Finding that Śakuni, a dice expert,⁶⁸ will be playing for Duryodhana, he still goes ahead. He stakes and loses his wealth and land, his brothers, himself, and finally, at Śakuni's suggestion, Draupadī. But she will not be lost, and protests that her staking was unlawful, Yudhiṣṭhira having already lost himself and thus any claim over her; and Dhṛtarāṣṭra is convinced (by her protest, by Karṇa, Duryodhana, and Duḥśāsana's insults to her during the ensuing debate, and by other omens) to grant her boons and annul the match. Duryodhana persuades his father to recall the Pāṇḍavas for a shorter game: the stake this time is exile for thirteen years, with Draupadī, and when Yudhiṣṭhira loses she accepts the result. During their exile Bhṛhadāsya tells them the story of Nala and Damayantī (3.50–78, after Yudhiṣṭhira calls himself the unluckiest man), and Mārkaṇḍeya tells them the story of Rāma and Sītā (3.258–75, after Yudhiṣṭhira repeats the claim), amongst others.

Yudhiṣṭhira gives Vidura several explanations for his initial acceptance of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's invitation (2.52.14–18): the *kṣatriyadharma* of accepting challenges, the *kuladharmā* of obeying one's uncle, and the inexorability of Dhātṛ (the 'Placer') and *daiva* (the business of the gods). Such dharmic-explanatory details are a *Mahābhārata* speciality, but may obscure a more

direct narrative sense. That dicing was an integral part of the *rājasūya* ritual⁶⁹ the *Mahābhārata* nowhere mentions: although this is suggested by Vedic ritual manuals, and may help explain why the authors put the dice match here, such a proposal can only take us so far – it would be one more dharmic explanation to add to Yudhiṣṭhira's list. Behind his excuses and fondness for dice, where Yudhiṣṭhira's real motivations should be, questions remain. Why did Yudhiṣṭhira agree to play this game, and then, why did he stake Draupadī?

In terms of our interest in the soteriological overtones of wife-abandonment, we can observe immediately that Yudhiṣṭhira did not play in order to lose his wife. But that is not the whole story. Yudhiṣṭhira knows nothing of his destiny in terms of the destruction of the demonic *kṣatriyas* (1.58–61), and his comments about *daiva*, though correct, are out of range. In the wider picture, the puppet-masters play out their drama with Yudhiṣṭhira in a leading role, and at his expense (amongst many others; see Brodbeck in press a) – but we are presently interested in his business, not theirs. Perhaps, spurred by his recent success, he was trying to play politics – in those terms there was something to be gained. Shulman says that 'Latent desire appears to motivate a gesture rationalized as *noblesse oblige*' (1992: 362). Mehendale highlights Balarāma's speech at 5.2.9–11: 'According to Balarāma's version, the compulsion for playing the game was Yudhiṣṭhira's own urge to play; he lost, because his confidence was misplaced' (1995b: 37). Mehendale also highlights Yudhiṣṭhira's account to Bhīma (3.35.1–5): he wanted Duryodhana's half of the kingdom;⁷⁰ when Śakuni's superiority became clear, instead of cutting his losses, he became angry.

Perhaps Yudhiṣṭhira, if allowed, would have led a quiet dharmic life; but he is led into power by circumstances (his being 'first-born'; his brothers' extraordinariness, including Arjuna's winning Draupadī; Kuntī's sealing the polyandrous marriage; Dhṛtarāṣṭra's partitioning the kingdom; Maya's *sabhā*; his various advisors' machinations). In this position, he tries to make more of himself. He agrees to dice; going it alone, he overreaches himself – and second-hand ambition is precarious. Having willingly contrived a situation of maximum embarrassment, his self-confidence misplaced, he responds by throwing it all away.⁷¹ He loses control, effectively tries to burn his bridges.

The renunciative urge is presented, in soteriological texts, as *duḥkha*'s consequence, and for our purposes this existential prompt outweighs the hypothetical goal. The Buddha-to-be sees an old man, a diseased man, and a dead man (*Buddhacarita* 3.26–62); learning the facts of life, in *duḥkha* he rejects his harem (4.1–103); meeting a *śramaṇa*, he decides to renounce (5.16–21; cf. Pāṇḍu). Yudhiṣṭhira, recently in splendour, discovers his success is ill-founded, unsustainable by his own merits; he is *samrāj par hazard*, and the coin's dark side looms. What now? Remain in the *pravṛtti* game, and strive in pain, embarrassment, and uncertainty to restore what's

lost, however ephemeral and (now) hollow the prize? This is not his first-choice option.

Yudhiṣṭhira stakes himself, and loses. Śakuni says, 'This is the worst you could have done, losing yourself! Self-loss is wicked, king, when a stake remains' (2.58.29).⁷² Draupadī is 'something left', and now becomes Yudhiṣṭhira's final stake at Śakuni's suggestion. Śakuni's critique fits the *Mahābhārata*'s quarrel with the *śramaṇa* paradigm: accepted responsibilities must be taken seriously, or others suffer – the renouncer leaves someone behind.⁷³ Yudhiṣṭhira cannot choose the quiet life now; he is already rolling on other tracks. From Draupadī's perspective, if Yudhiṣṭhira lost himself while another stake remained, then he forfeited rights over that remainder: she had better now seek protection (*rakṣaṇa*) elsewhere, or even take charge of herself, rather than remaining 'his'.⁷⁴

Yudhiṣṭhira errs in ordering his stakes, but perhaps only having lost himself is he able to stake his wife. To illuminate this suggestion, which implies a severe critique of renunciation, we will compare Nala's story, where loss of self precedes loss (i.e. renunciation) of wife.⁷⁵ King Nala is possessed by the demon Kali, and falls prey to gambling; challenged by his brother, he loses his kingdom (the dice are possessed by another demon, Dvāpara); retaining only himself and his wife Damayantī (whom he would not stake), the two of them go to the forest. Nala, ashamed, cannot persuade Damayantī to abandon him, and dithers over abandoning her. 'But he was dragged away by Kali; Nala, deluded, fled, moaning pitifully again and again, leaving that wife sleeping' (3.59.24).⁷⁶

Kali makes Nala abandon Damayantī: he is not himself (hence, perhaps, the question of staking himself never arises). Yudhiṣṭhira, *sans* demon, must lose himself to get to this point. The renunciative urge, marked by wife-abandonment, requires loss of self.⁷⁷ Thus the text can reverse events by having the character regain himself.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra intervenes and restores to Yudhiṣṭhira whatever was lost; then, when called back for the re-match (his stated reasons for accepting are the same as for the first match), Yudhiṣṭhira stakes neither himself nor his family members. The Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī are exiled in rags, but though down they are not out.⁷⁸

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's role is played in Nala's story by the snake Karkoṭaka,⁷⁹ who, rescued by Nala from a forest fire, bites him, turning him temporarily into a hunchback but also poisoning Kali within him, thus initiating his gradual restoration. By returning for the second dice match Yudhiṣṭhira rescues Dhṛtarāṣṭra from the Duryodhana-fire; by losing it he is bitten, and temporarily transformed, distorted, and diminished. Yudhiṣṭhira's Kali to conquer is Duryodhana (who incarnates him),⁸⁰ and the urge to abandon self and wife.

Nala is apart from Damayantī for some time before she engineers their reconciliation, but Draupadī wins back Yudhiṣṭhira on the spot, through

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's boon. After this they are somewhat estranged: Draupadī, without regal apparel, says that until her humiliation is redressed she will have no husbands at all.⁸¹ While Draupadī fears that Yudhiṣṭhira has no intention of activating his patrilineal *kṣatriya* self and demanding that redress,⁸² this seems appropriate; but 'he thought about it for almost an hour and worked out the proper thing to do' (3.37.2).⁸³ She accepts that he is just biding time, and after the exile they are a public couple again, and scores are settled. As Paul Bowlby observes, 'the war between the Pāṇḍavas and their cousins . . . is the completion of the . . . dice match for Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers' (1991: 4). Structurally, the Kurukṣetra war matches Nala's second, triumphant dice game, at which, after reuniting with his wife, he wins back his kingdom. On that occasion Nala stakes Damayantī and himself, both at once; but by that stage he is self-possessed and has learned to play expertly.

Comparing Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala's wife-abandonment with the Buddha's, we note that in the former, dicing frames the motif, and no soteriological goal is explicitly mentioned. But because of this second difference, the stories converge: each man succeeds, in rajadharmic or in soteriological terms. In the *Mahābhārata*'s terms, wife-abandonment is a failure of *rakṣaṇa*, but for all three characters it marks the way to self-knowledge and eventual success. The *Mahābhārata*'s dharmic *kṣatriyas* may lose self, wife, and kingdom through death in battle; but if they lose these through folly or mistaken attraction to the *śramaṇa* life, they must survive and come back the stronger for it. According to Kṛṣṇa's soteriological variant, discarding proper self, wife, and kingdom in hope of avoiding further embodiment just leads to further, probably degraded, embodiment; but a dharmic *kṣatriya* death leads to glorious heavens, and, for *karmayogins*, perhaps *mokṣa* too. And in Yudhiṣṭhira's case, though he leaves the kingdom, he keeps his self and wife,⁸⁴ a preferable option should one's career involve *duḥkha*, leading as it does to his subsequent restoration.

Whatever potlatch-esque or men's-club scenarios may lie behind an inferred tradition of high-stakes gambling,⁸⁵ *Mahābhārata* dicing stories comment on the *śramaṇa* option in the context of kingship as well as exploring the marital responsibilities of both genders in terms of the twin ideologies of *rakṣaṇa* and *pativratā*. The interrelationship of these two is shown when a failure of the former is answered by a demonstration of the latter, and the former's resumption. (Presumably a similar story can be told with the boot on the other foot – i.e. a negligent wife won back through her husband's faith in his duty – but we do not see that here.) Whilst wife and kingdom fall out of the Buddha's story before the main event occurs, the *Mahābhārata*, using the same pieces, focuses elsewhere.

Compare Rāma's career. Like Yudhiṣṭhira, he seems initially uninterested in kingship: he goes into exile with his wife and brother ostensibly in fidelity to his father's word, but this may be a dharmic mask concealing distaste for the throne the squabbles for which have killed his father. Due to

a political error of Rāma's, Sītā is abducted; eventually he locates her and kills her captor Rāvaṇa. At the reunion, Rāma takes a good look, and rejects Sītā.

Rāma suspected her of having been touched, and he said to Vaidehī, 'Go, Vaidehī, you are free. I have done what I had to do. Once you found me as a husband, good woman, you were not to grow old in a Rākṣasa's house – that is why I killed the night-stalker. For how would a man like me, who knows the decision of the *dharma*, maintain even for an instant a woman who had been in another man's hands? Whether you are innocent or guilty, Maithilī, I can no more enjoy you, no more than an oblation that has been licked by a dog.'

(*Mahābhārata* 3.275.10–13, tr. van Buitenen)⁸⁶

Here again is the dharmic mask. Perhaps Rāma wants no longer to do what he had/has to do. After kingdom troubles, he left the kingdom; after wife troubles, he would leave the wife. Perhaps Lakṣmaṇa would have been next – but Sītā, like Draupadī, will not be abandoned: at her call, Wind, Fire *et al.* confirm her purity, and Rāma's deceased father bids him take back the kingdom too. He cannot refuse.

If Rāma is to be seen in allegorical terms, like Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala, as a *mokṣa* seeker, a would-be renouncer, then Sītā and the kingdom are his *prakṛti*, his body – Sītā is replete with telluric symbolism. Like Yudhiṣṭhira, Rāma shies away from the burden of kingship (of patrilineal householdership writ large, and/or of embodiment writ sideways – the burden of *rakṣaṇa*). Like Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala, after suffering he tries unsuccessfully to throw it all away. But while Rāma's scene with Sītā ends his exile, and he takes up his kingdom forthwith, Yudhiṣṭhira must wait, and fight.⁸⁷

With regard to the stories of Yudhiṣṭhira, Nala, and Rāma, one might wonder whether the *Mahābhārata* sets up renunciation/exile/attempted wife-abandonment as a necessary and prescribed stage in the archetypal king's career, in the manner of the *āśrama* system with its successive stages. On the whole I think not. Although at some level there is a symbolic need for the king to experience and subdue the wilderness (Falk 1973; Parkhill 1995), this can happen in a variety of ways. The drama of the wife-abandonment stories adds to their didactic effect, but surely they are told at least partly in hope that audience members and future kings may learn from these characters' mistakes, and not repeat them. We see such a possibility when the Pāṇḍavas hear the story of how Sunda and Upasunda fought over a woman, and so take measures not to fight over Draupadī (1.200–4). On the other hand, the situation in which Yudhiṣṭhira hears Nala's story and Rāma's shows that these stories may also reassure kings who *have* made grave mistakes, demonstrating that it is not all over yet.

Draupadī's other indignities

While exiled Yudhiṣṭhira recovers composure and resolve for kingship, partly due to Draupadī's promptings. But the focus of his shame drifts easily from Draupadī's plight to his own self-image: when she faints at high altitude on their *tīrthayātrā*, he comforts himself with self-pity, and Dhaumya and other brahmins minister to him, Draupadī's recovery being secondary (3.144). This example may show Yudhiṣṭhira's love for Draupadī (Mary Brockington 2001: 257), but also reveals his self-absorption – rare now is the crisis in which he does not make himself the centre of attention. It seems that the authors are trying to keep Yudhiṣṭhira at the centre of audience attention, and to emphasize, in his case, the existential negotiations attendant upon being a dharmic actor.

Draupadī is abducted by Jayadratha (3.248–56),⁸⁸ and molested at Virāṭa's court (by the *sūta* Kīcaka and family, 4.13–23) as she was at the dicing (2.60–3). During Draupadī's dice-match molestation Yudhiṣṭhira remained silent; Bhīma came to her defence, thirsting for vengeance; and Arjuna steered a middle course, sympathetic to Bhīma's instincts but mindful of Yudhiṣṭhira's authority. But when Jayadratha abducts Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira, sensing trouble, brings the Pāṇḍavas home from their hunting trip. He scolds the maid for reminding them to rescue their wife, and all the brothers fight against Jayadratha. Once Draupadī is safe, Yudhiṣṭhira makes Bhīma spare Jayadratha.⁸⁹ So here Yudhiṣṭhira demonstrates *rakṣaṇa* towards Draupadī.

When Kīcaka molests Draupadī,⁹⁰ their need to remain unrecognized during the last year of exile – Draupadī blames Yudhiṣṭhira⁹¹ – compromises the Pāṇḍavas' ability to protect her. However, through virtue and piety Draupadī has obtained an invisible *rākṣasa* bodyguard from the sun,⁹² so her 'husbands' need not intervene: Yudhiṣṭhira restrains Bhīma, and Draupadī's public outrage targets Virāṭa, the host. Yudhiṣṭhira's frustration is clear, but when Bhīma privately kills Kīcaka, this is impolitic: Kīcaka's kin now seek Draupadī's death, so Bhīma kills them too, making Virāṭa wary of continuing to host Draupadī.

King Yudhiṣṭhira

After the exile, Yudhiṣṭhira's old *kṣatriya* advisors and allies reappear. Unprompted, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Śalya, who will fight on Duryodhana's side, to turn this to the Pāṇḍavas' advantage by weakening Karṇa somehow (5.8). To Saṁjaya, the Hāstīnapura emissary, Yudhiṣṭhira proposes to regain his kingdom whatever it takes; but just as Saṁjaya is leaving, Yudhiṣṭhira offers to settle for five villages (5.31), and then he sends Kṛṣṇa on a similarly futile peace mission. These gestures suggest ambivalence towards needless slaughter rather than towards *rakṣaṇa* – and the strength of Duryodhana's armies

is well known. Overall, in Books 5–11, Yudhiṣṭhira follows Kṛṣṇa's advice (Klaes 1975: 88–107).

Yudhiṣṭhira fights valiantly but loses relatives, allies, and his son Prativindhya. Afterwards, discovering Karṇa to have been his elder brother, he is overcome by *duḥkha*, curses all women (for Kuntī's secret), and wants to retire.⁹³ His brothers reason with him. Draupadī takes it personally, calls him mad (i.e. not himself), and groups him with the *nāstikas*:

My mother-in-law, who knows all and sees all, lied to me. 'Yudhiṣṭhira will bring you the highest happiness, O princess of Pāṇḍala, after he who is so quickly aggressive kills many thousands of kings.' I see that that was wrong, because your mind is muddled, O lord of people. When the eldest in a group is insane, all the others follow after him; so all the Pāṇḍavas are insane, O Indra among kings, because you are insane. If they were not insane, O lord of people, your brothers would imprison you along with the unbelieving *nāstikas*, and govern the earth.

(*Mahābhārata* 12.14.30–3, tr. Fitzgerald)⁹⁴

She then recommends pharmaceutical treatment. *Nāstikas* recur in these rajadharma arguments against Yudhiṣṭhira:⁹⁵ this brahmanical objection to *kṣatriya* renunciation highlights the failure to protect and please females (kingdom and citizens being symbolically female).

Arjuna tells Yudhiṣṭhira about Janaka (12.18), who exchanged wife and kingdom for asceticism as Yudhiṣṭhira threatens to, but did so with clear soteriological intent – his story can help us understand Yudhiṣṭhira's otherwise vague intentions.⁹⁶ Janaka's wife seeks out Janaka and scolds him for irresponsibility, using – as do the other Pāṇḍavas⁹⁷ – karmayogic arguments already heard by Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā* in a similar situation. Allegedly Janaka, presumably after his wife's speech, became a *karmayogin*,⁹⁸ although Arjuna does not say so here.

Earlier, Yudhiṣṭhira has heard hints of the *karmayoga* and mentioned it to Draupadī (3.2.30; 3.32.2–5, 24). Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna trust Kṛṣṇa; but do they become *karmayogins*? The text, describing deeds and words only, will not tell us, for *karmayogins* are externally unmarked. Kṛṣṇa says, 'As the unknowing ones act, attached to action, Bhārata, just so should the knowing, non-attached one act, desiring to effect the holding-together of the world/s' (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.25).⁹⁹ Arjuna says (for Janaka's wife), 'Behaving as if attached, though non-attached, aloof, free of bonds, impartial towards enemy and friend: that one indeed is released, O lord of the earth' (*Mahābhārata* 12.18.30).¹⁰⁰

Yudhiṣṭhira is persuaded to rule the reunited kingdom from the Hāstīnapura throne.¹⁰¹ After his coronation he receives the local trade secrets from Bhīṣma at length. The *mokṣadharma* section of these teachings, despite

occasional karmayogic moments, has a *nivṛtti* tone contrasting with the *rājadharmā*, *āpaddharma* and *dānadharma* sections and the *Bhagavadgītā*. The two teaching sessions – Kṛṣṇa's to Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, and Bhīṣma's to Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Śāntiparvan* and *Anuśāsanaparvan* – fit their characters. Arjuna's *Bhagavadgītā* paralysis and *nivṛtti* impulse¹⁰² are uncharacteristic of him (except when deferring to Yudhiṣṭhira), and Kṛṣṇa is a *pravṛtti* paradigm (Great Brahman's impregnator, his incarnation corrects the local dharmic balance in protection of Earth). Bhīṣma, however, who rejected kingship and swore celibacy years earlier,¹⁰³ is an imperfect sovereign representing a *kṣatriya* problem, so his *mokṣadharmā* is hardly surprising.¹⁰⁴ That he also teaches the family *rājadharmā* he has personally refused matches his geriatric conversion to Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti*: before Bhīṣma teaches, Kṛṣṇa puts his *buddhi* into him (12.54.27–30). Yudhiṣṭhira represents the same *kṣatriya* problem (von Simson 2000a: 311, 316), but is also on the turn, having rallied after his latest lapse.¹⁰⁵ However, after Bhīṣma's *mokṣadharmā* and death, Yudhiṣṭhira again wants to renounce (14.2.11–13). Kṛṣṇa repeats the gist of the *Bhagavadgītā* (minus the *bhakti*, which has served its purpose), recommending that Yudhiṣṭhira conquer his inner enemy (14.11–13); but although Yudhiṣṭhira performs the *aśvamedha* and rules, he is unhappy, burdened by his grisly past and denied his preferred tonic.

Yudhiṣṭhira's rule is something of a biographical gap. He did not like being king, but we hardly see him being king; his reign's salient feature is his distaste for it. Practically, he acquiesces, and his idealistic instincts have been immaterial, except (there's the rub) as a tale for others: he is paternally commanded from beyond the grave, pushed around by teachers, spooked by his indominable devoted wife. His self-assertions are fancies – the identity he proposes is not his. He joins the ancient dharmic kings who were beloved of Śrī, sponsored rituals, overcame difficulties, made donations, fought glorious battles, and went to heaven. But reading Yudhiṣṭhira's story we suspect they might not have liked it; after the dicing, Yudhiṣṭhira never believes the hype. Those kings are in stories, we now suspect, to encourage others – otherwise (the story goes) the world degenerates, women are molested, and brahmins go hungry. Perhaps this message is subversive. Yudhiṣṭhira, like the war-widows, is royally ruined; resistance is futile, but also *right* somehow – and so Yudhiṣṭhira can be a hero (Mary Brockington 2001: 256–7). His integrity as Dharmarāja requires him to distrust his *rājadharmā*.

Yudhiṣṭhira's retirement and death

When Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks permission to retire, finally leaving him in sole charge (Dhṛtarāṣṭra has been King Yudhiṣṭhira's close consultant), Yudhiṣṭhira says the kingdom is a disease, and if Dhṛtarāṣṭra is retiring, he will too – Yuyutsu, for example, should be king (15.6.5–8). Yudhiṣṭhira allows Dhṛtarāṣṭra's retirement because Vyāsa insists. Later, while visiting the elders in the forest,

Yudhiṣṭhira is weirdly entered by Vidura, whose body is left lifeless. At the end of the visit Yudhiṣṭhira, loath to return to Hāstinapura, tells Gāndhārī: 'O queen, my heart [*buddhi*] no longer turns as of old towards kingdom. My mind [*manas*] is wholly set upon penances now' (15.44.30, tr. Ganguli 15.36, p. 57)¹⁰⁶ – he must again be ordered to rule, this time by Kuntī. But eventually he does retire, with his brothers, Draupadī, and a dog, to circumambulate the subcontinent (17.1).

Beyond the Himavat, Yudhiṣṭhira's human companions severally fall and die.¹⁰⁷ Draupadī falls first, and Bhīma asks why; Yudhiṣṭhira identifies her partiality for Arjuna. Is he jealous? Does his ambivalence suggest he thinks Draupadī is ambivalent towards him? Do his explanations for his brothers' deaths suggest jealousy of their qualities and skills? Yudhiṣṭhira continues without looking back, finally alone with the beasts; but while becoming alone he demonstrates desire and aversion.

Yudhiṣṭhira, citing particulars of *dharma*, will not let Indra take him to heaven without the dog (he must protect it – or he is clinging to life). He says he did not abandon his brothers and Draupadī while they were alive, which we suspect for a lie; but the dog reveals itself as Dharma, whose test he has just passed.¹⁰⁸ He ascends to heaven in his own body, apparently a rare honour¹⁰⁹ (but a prakritic connection nonetheless), and he is immediately desperate to find Draupadī and his brothers. He wanted to do without them, but now cannot do without them; the renunciative impulse is presented as symptomatic of attachment. Indra and Nārada rib Yudhiṣṭhira for retaining human affections and enmities, but he is furious that Duryodhana *et al.* are in heaven, and when he finds Draupadī and his brothers in hell he resolves to stay with them, censuring Dharma and the gods (he cannot remain non-attached to the fruits of their deeds).¹¹⁰ This is a key double response; now hell becomes heaven, Indra says Yudhiṣṭhira may cease fretting, Dharma says he has passed another test by choosing hell for love,¹¹¹ and Yudhiṣṭhira bathes in the celestial Gaṅgā, obtains a celestial body, and sheds all grief and enmity.

Kṛṣṇa emphasizes the moment of death:

The ancient governor-sage, more minute than the minute, *dhātṛ* of all, of unthinkable form, the colour of the sun beyond the darkness: the one who, at the time of death, thinks about this one with unwavering, devoted mind, yoked with the forces of *yoga*, delivering the entire breath between the eyebrows, attains to that divine highest *puruṣa*.

(*Bhagavadgītā* 8.9–10)¹¹²

Yudhiṣṭhira may have died when he went to heaven after the dog test; but he still has his body. His death comes after he passes the next test by censuring Dharma and accepting *duḥkha*. It is unclear whether we should view this as

the death of a human, or the end of a karmic life-chain; if the latter, then this implies a framing *mokṣa* validation, a definitive level outside what is said to be dharmic. But the end is as fluid and various as the beginning. Yudhiṣṭhira has passed Dharma's third test; but having rebuked Dharma, what can this mean? Is Yudhiṣṭhira pleased to be para-dharmically dharmic? Is there any interval in which to react? No indication is given: he is told, and he bathes. Perhaps the key double response, and bathing in the celestial Gaṅgā, are somehow the same, not successive events. And are the two prongs of the response successive? Does he accept hell before or after censuring Dharma, or neither?

After his celestial bath 'Yudhiṣṭhira' is shown his old earthly acquaintances in their celestial bodies, and is told who incarnated whom. He has a question for Draupadī, but, out of time, he dissolves into Dharma. This final episode, expanding out of logical nowhere, hardly provides Yudhiṣṭhira (it is no longer him) with closure over *daiva*'s mysteries, and leaves the first two 'levels of death' – respectively, a *pravṛtti* frame, and a *niṣṛtti* frame with two prongs (traditional *mokṣa* soteriology and the *karmayoga* variant) – undercut and contextualized by an axiomatically unformulable question from the male to the female.

Listening to the wife

When a king is inclined to abandon his wife, *Mahābhārata* stories often trace his failure to do so (his success not to do so) to that wife.¹¹³ We see this with Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira, Rāma, Janaka, and also Duṣṇanta. Duṣṇanta promises the kingdom to the son of his brief liaison with Śakuntalā, but when mother and child come to court he refuses them both (1.62–9). His stated doubts resemble Rāma's – tongues will wag if he accepts Bharata as his on her authority – but Śakuntalā unleashes a detailed *pravṛtti* defence, invoking the need for sons, the benefits of conjugality, and the evils of deception, particularly self-deception. As with Draupadī and Sītā (who wastes few words of her own), her perspective is accredited through a hypernatural intervention. Śakuntalā is justified by a voice from the sky (the celestials speaking through a messenger, Vaiśampāyana suggests); Draupadī is protected from Duṣṣāsana by an unseen hand, and from Kīcaka by the sun's *rākṣasa*; Sītā calls upon the five elements.¹¹⁴

In other stories too a man's failure of *rakṣana* is remedied by instigation of the neglected female: Kaśyapa and Earth (12.49.56–79); Indra and Śacī (5.10–18); Satyavat and Sāvitrī (3.277–83).¹¹⁵

Rāma Jāmadagnya, who has massacred the *kṣatriyas*, gives Earth to Kaśyapa, who banishes Jāmadagnya, gives Earth to 'the brahmins', and retires. (Kaśyapa's initial negligence is qualified – he is no *kṣatriya*.) Suffering unprotected, Earth finds Kaśyapa and says: 'Brahmin, there are some *kṣatriya* bulls who were born in the clan of the Haihayas whom I have

preserved in the midst of other men; let them guard me, sage' (12.49.66, tr. Fitzgerald).¹¹⁶ Kaśyapa installs these and other survivors as kings.

Indra, mortified at having killed Viśvarūpa and Vṛtra,¹¹⁷ retires. 'He lived hidden in the water, moving like a snake' (5.10.43).¹¹⁸ We recall Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala's ophidian encounters; living hidden in the water suggests the disguised state of the defected *kṣatriya*, as well as the gestation of the true-*kṣatriya*-to-be. New king Nahuṣa covets Indra's abandoned wife Śacī; after stalling him at Bṛhaspati's suggestion, she invokes her wifely dharmicness and truthfulness, and with the aid of Night and Whisper (*upaśruti*) visits Indra beyond the Himavat. After giving him her news, Śacī agrees to facilitate Indra's plan for overcoming Nahuṣa; but on returning she also, through Bṛhaspati, sends Agni in the form of a woman¹¹⁹ to find Indra so that he might come and fight Nahuṣa. By the time Indra is ready Nahuṣa has already fallen thanks to Indra's plan.¹²⁰ These parallel plans for Nahuṣa's defeat have different gendered emphases, but each requires both genders; in any case, Śacī starts the ball rolling.

Sāvitrī marries Satyavat, knowing that he has one year to live and that his blind father has lost his kingdom. She performs an ascetic *vrata* and insists on accompanying Satyavat into the forest on what should be his last day alive; when Yama comes for Satyavat, Sāvitrī's punditry makes him grant her boons, eventually including the restoration of Satyavat's family's kingdom and his life.¹²¹ Satyavat's loss of kingdom and impending loss of life and wife are involuntary – the renunciation is impersonal, not his – but Sāvitrī reverses them.

We return now to the analogy between a person's origin (mother plus father) and composition (*prakṛti* plus *puruṣa*), and to the *karmayoga* soteriology. By viewing narrative through philosophy and philosophy through narrative, that is, by seeing how the *Mahābhārata* discursively superimposes (as well as juxtaposes) these categories, we can move towards a description of the text's gendered soteriology.

Kṛṣṇa locates the salvation process (leading to the isolation of *ātman* or *puruṣa*) within the person's *buddhi*, that is, within the female, material pole.

Action is far less important than being yoked with *buddhi*. Seek refuge in *buddhi*! The miserable ones are those whose motive is the fruit. The one yoked with *buddhi* leaves both good and bad actions here. So be yoked for *yoga*! *Yoga* is skilfulness in actions. The wise, yoked with *buddhi*, having renounced the fruit born of action, free from the bond of [re]birth, go to the undiseased station.

(*Bhagavadgītā* 2.49–51)¹²²

This fits our stories. If the person is composed as a polarized couple, the husband cannot be saved except through his wife. If he attempts solitary salvation, abandoning her physically while still prey to *kāma* and *krodha*,

he will be joined to another body, another parcel of materiality, the wife. Similarly, suicide (body-abandonment) results in rebirth whenever *kāma* and *krodha* are operating (Sullivan 2006).

In fact *ātman* cannot act, nor try, however futilely, to save himself.¹²³ So whence is the attempt at renunciation, the urge to separate from *prakṛti*? It comes from *prakṛti*, not *ātman*. As Kṛṣṇa points out (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.6), renouncers can be as self-centred as anyone. So counter-productive renunciation and salvific *karmayoga* may be correlated with, respectively, mental ascendancies of *ahaṁkāra* and of *buddhi*.¹²⁴ Within the person-couple, one of two competing females gets her way. Sulabhā, descendant of Pradhāna, appearing as a belle, says that, to be saved, Janaka must renounce (12.308); his wife says he must come home (12.18). These separate events are not explicitly linked – we cannot say which comes first¹²⁵ – and this seems to emphasize (as Yudhiṣṭhira's story does) the recurring nature of the internal battle.¹²⁶

In the *Mahābhārata*'s principal statement of the *karmayoga* soteriology, Arjuna's renunciatory impulse is refuted and *varṇadharma* enforced by Kṛṣṇa, a man.¹²⁷ Kṛṣṇā Draupadī, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, and Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa are united in name and, at least partly, in effect (Hiltebeitel 1976: 60–76; 1984; 1991b). Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is Arjuna's charioteer at Kurukṣetra; this role, following the chariot metaphor of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3.3–9, would make him *buddhi* to Arjuna's *ātman*.¹²⁸ 'Kṛṣṇa', as mentioned earlier, spans both genders: 'Kṛṣṇa' plants the world-seed; 'Kṛṣṇā' is the womb; 'Kṛṣṇa'/Kāla sustains then devours the product.¹²⁹ When he revives the stillborn Parikṣit, Yudhiṣṭhira's non-biological heir (14.65–8), Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva appears to be the only man in the delivery room. Using a truth-act (a technique elsewhere in the text used largely by women), he invokes his own dharmic record to miraculous effect.

Collins writes that 'enlightenment for a man connotes a sex-change' (2000: 61): it is the realization that *ahaṁkāra*, part of *prakṛti*, has been mistaken for *ātman*, together with the realization that this very realization (and so on) is *buddhi*'s. If this marked-male body-and-mind is to be the last in an *ātman*'s career, it must feature, in *buddhi*, correct discrimination between *ātman* and non-*ātman*, and the knowledge that *ātman*, the subject of potential *mokṣa*, is soteriologically helpless; thus it must feature coexistence with the consort, without contrary ideals. Perhaps *ātman* will become henceforth non-embodied, but making this happen is none of his business. We see that the *karmayoga* soteriology is a logical concomitant of *ātman*'s non-agency, and an analogical concomitant of the almost infinitely attenuated role of the father in reproduction. But it is no longer clear that a separative soteriological ideal can be sustained.

Conclusion

In the Vedic and epic traditions traced here, cosmos and person have gendered parents. Cosmic *pravṛtti* implies cosmo-parental superimposition; cosmic *nivṛtti* follows cosmo-parental disjunction (the 'night of *brahman*'). People have personal parents (father and mother) and metaphysical 'parents' (*ātman*/*puruṣa*, and prakṛtic karmic stains from before); together these compose a person as *ātman*/*puruṣa* plus mind-and-body. Personal *nivṛtti* is the physical death of a mind-and-body; the *nivṛtti* of a karmic life-chain is the wiping-off of karmic stains and the removal of *ātman*/*puruṣa* from *prakṛti*.

In disjunction, the perspective of either gender is unbalanced. But in Vedic and epic cosmogonies, the duality is usually not original: first there was an incipiently male *tād ēkam*. Or, what was *ātman* before it met (or made and mated with) the material principle, making a karmic life-chain (or cosmos)? If *ātman* can attain *mokṣa*, this must be a return, not just a departure. The initial solitary male features at the (pre-)cosmic level, but, because *duḥkha* is existential, the final solitary male¹³⁰ features on the (post-)personal level (the days and nights of *brahman* continue indefinitely). In any case the subject is male, so, irrespective of the *karmayoga* variant, female *mokṣa*-seekers are symbolically anomalous,¹³¹ and we see longstanding debates elsewhere over whether or not a karmic life-chain can end in a female body. In the *Mahābhārata*'s royal patriline, too, the paradigmatic person – the protective *kṣatriya* king – is male, as are his origins and ends: he may have female relatives, but his cultural 'who's who' is largely male,¹³² and his main task is to obtain an heir.

What would it be to say that the text's patrilineal, androcentric concerns are self-selected by its authorial culture? Ostensibly it would be to say nothing about *my* gender or culture! Elsewhere in Indian tradition there are gynocentric cosmologies and soteriologies (this is labelled, '*śakti*-ism'). Some might suggest that their stellar role in the procreative process makes the production of such discourses less pressing for women as a whole than for men. Though it has no special connection with female seekers, philosophical *sāṃkhya-yoga* texts mention the salvation-state of *prakṛtilaya* (dissolution into *prakṛti*; Jacobsen 1999: 273–320), attainable without knowledge of *puruṣa*; but this is trumped as merely penultimate.

We can imagine a tradition of seeking *mokṣa*/*nirvāṇa*, and by analogy a tradition, which threatens the brahmanical economy/ideology, of (thinking of) abandoning wives, kingdoms, bodies, or other *prakṛtis*. The *karmayoga* response, stressing *ātman*'s non-agency, makes the female the leading partner in the male's salvation, combines *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* impulses in one lifestyle, and elevates the gendered ideologies of *rakṣaṇa* and *pativrata* to soteriological as well as practical importance. But there is now a means/ends paradox dogging Yudhiṣṭhira and his *alter egos*, who doubt whether being dutiful is really worth it. And if the mutually supportive ideologies of *rakṣaṇa* and

pativratā are especially orientable to *mokṣa* through *karmayoga*, might they not become false external markers just like physical renunciation? Perhaps Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī, slightly ambivalent towards *rakṣaṇa* and *pativratā*,¹³³ fear their becoming ideal pathologies.

Kṛṣṇa states that women also are soteriological subjects (*Bhagavadgītā* 9.32). This remains fully to be explored: might the hypothetical unitary gendered extremities (beginning and end) somehow lose rhetorical power, even while we are gendered bodies, extrapolating wildly from the fact of sexual reproduction in past, present, and future generations, prey to possibilities, anxieties, holy *duḥkha*, and its standard emollients? A Godhead or a soteriological subject, to have an existential analogical counterpart, cannot be non-unitary or neuter,¹³⁴ since from birth we are unitary and non-neuter. In theory certain Buddhist philosophies tackle this problem most thoroughly (by dismantling the soteriological subject, dismissing cosmogony as speculation, and/or setting up the *bodhisattva* paradigm of remaining in *saṃsāra* voluntarily even after enlightenment), but with mixed results.

In closing, we visit the scene where Arjuna and Śikhaṇḍin fell Bhīṣma.¹³⁵ Bhīṣma cannot consider union with a woman, and is non-committal with regard to *pravṛtti*, but Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa's friend and disciple and Kṛṣṇa Draupadī's favourite husband, represents – whether or not he actualizes it – the new *karmayoga* soteriology, a spiritualized *pravṛtti* outlook requiring union with the female. Having spent a year in female guise, he moves the Bhāratas beyond Bhīṣma (and dharmic neglect) by standing behind Draupadī's brother-sister Śikhaṇḍin, whom Bhīṣma regards as female and will not face. Bhīṣma is defeated through Arjuna's partnership with the female Bhīṣma has rejected (Śikhaṇḍin was previously Śikhaṇḍinī, the reincarnation of Bhīṣma's would-be wife Ambā), a partnership that involves each sharing the other's gender. Arjuna receives Śikhaṇḍin's *rakṣaṇa*, and Ambā, having given up looking for a *pati*, finds one in Arjuna. But this is Ambā's revenge against Bhīṣma, and if instead of pursuing it she had settled for the forest, then Arjuna would not have had the power to fell Bhīṣma alone.

Notes

- 1 The chapter contains what to scholars will be some shocking generalizations; but it does so on the supposition that the *Mahābhārata*'s formative cultural context did so too. Some of these ideas have been aired in papers given at the 213th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Nashville, April 2003, and at the Annual Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions, Harris Manchester College, Oxford, April 2005. I am grateful to those who responded to those papers; and also to Sian Hawthorne, Adam Bowles, and Knut Jacobsen.
- 2 On this perspective, see also Bailey 1983a: 119–26; Biardeau 1984–5; Collins 2000; Hildebeitel 1980a: 107; 2000: 117–20; 2001a: 272–3; see also the final pages of Chapter 6.
- 3 1 Corinthians (King James version) 13.12.

- 4 See Brodbeck 2003: xvi–xxi; 2003/4: 98; 2004: 88–101.
- 5 See also Brodbeck in press a.
- 6 The Indian rhinoceros has one horn.
- 7 With one prominent exception: Karṇa's basic complaint against Kuntī at 5.139 and 144 is her failure of *rakṣaṇa* towards him. Like Draupadī, in trying to provide for himself what others who should have known better did not, Karṇa acts more assertively than his station would normally allow; the text problematizes this, but also contextualizes it, making it understandable.
- 8 The *Strīparvan*'s female mourners do not blame themselves for the deaths of their menfolk in terms of their own failures of *rakṣaṇa*.
- 9 See Zwilling and Sweet 2000: 101–2 (on 'the virility obsession or complex of the late vedic period'), 105–9, 120 (on *klība* as defective male).
- 10 See *Bhagavadgītā* 2.1–38; *Mahābhārata* 12.7–34 (discussed below); Fitzgerald 2004a: 692–3. '*Klība*' is usually an insult – sometimes translated 'coward' (van Buitenen) or 'sissy' (Fitzgerald); see also Hejib and Young 1981 – and is applied to Yudhiṣṭhira on many occasions (at 8.49.104 by himself). At 12.281.23 it refers to the wise, humble, friendly, dharmic *ārya* – quite possibly a *śramaṇa*; but at 3.198.35 the proliferation of *klības* is a symptom of negligent kingship.
- 11 See *Mahābhārata* 12.206.8; 12.292.27; 12.293.12–19; 12.295.
- 12 For the presumption of *prakṛti*'s femininity, see Jacobsen 1996: 61–3; Indradeva 1966; Falk 1977: 106–8; Collins 2000; Natarajan 2001; Kelkar 2003. Jacobsen has elaborated his thesis with specific reference to the *Mahābhārata* (2005); it fits in part with Ruth Vanita's claim that *ātman* is not male (2003: 81).
- 13 Others are possible: perhaps *prakṛti*'s gender was downplayed in order that the *sāṃkhya* be philosophically relevant, without narrative symbolic interference, to a wide audience including women and *karmayogins*.
- 14 In *sāṃkhya* texts the terms *avyakta* and *pradhāna*, both of neuter gender, are often used as synonyms of *prakṛti*.
- 15 On this problem in the classical texts of the *sāṃkhya* system, see Parrott 1986; Bronkhorst 1999; Burley 2007: 108–32.
- 16 On Vedic cosmogony, see Kuiper 1983; Roy 1996. Other scenarios include the creator as craftsman; the Indra–Vṛtra fight (on which see Thomas 2006a); and the churning of the ocean (featured at *Mahābhārata* 1.15–17 and perhaps symbolically continuous with the 'gendered parents' scenario). See also Penner 1965–6; Bailey 1983b: 85–121 (featuring *Mahābhārata* cosmogonies); Pintchman 1998; N.N. Bhattacharyya 1971; and, for gendered Norse cosmogonies, Linke 1989.
- 17 *tataḥ svayambhūr bhagavān avyakto vyañjayann idam / sarvabhūtamayo . . . sa eva svayam udbabhu* // For a study of this text's cosmogony, see Laine 1981.
- 18 The egg is an apt image, being dually composed – and it is the yolk which grows and hatches. An egg is externalized as a womb is not: unlike mammalian birth, the mother is not necessarily present when it hatches (and the albumen has all but gone). In a variant (see *Mahābhārata* 12.200.8–13), the Lord lies on the waters face-up, and the egg is replaced by the flower of a lotus plant.
- 19 *apa eva sasarpādau tāsu bījam avāśṛjat // tad aṇḍam abhavad dhaimaṇ sahas-rāṃsusam aprabham / tasmīṇ jāñe svayaṇ brahmā sarvalokapitāmahaḥ // yat tatkāraṇam avyaktaṇ nityaṇ sadasadātmakam / tad visṛṣṭaḥ sa puruṣo loko brahmeti kīrtiyate //*
- 20 Rivers also are female, and often personified: 'all of them are the mothers of everything, and indeed all of them are very powerful' (*viśvasya mātaraḥ sarvāḥ sarvās caiva mahābalāḥ // Mahābhārata* 6.10.35). For the waters as mothers, see also *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1.2.1; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.8.2.2–6.
- 21 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.1.6.1–2; *Rgveda* 10.82. Kuiper stresses the fatherless picture, seeing it as primary, both logically (1970; 1975; 1983: 10, 98–103) and

- chronologically ('The mystery of Agni's birth is unquestionably the central motif of the Indo-Iranian mythology', 1983: 29). Neither judgment is material to our purpose.
- 22 *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 5.6.4 (Prajāpati and the waters); *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.1.3–5 (Agni and the waters); *Rgveda* 9.74.5 (Agni and Aditi). This matches the *sāṃkhya* tradition (*prakṛti* and *puruṣa* as twin ultimates).
- 23 *Rgveda* 10.121.7–9; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.3.1; *Mahābhārata* 12.321.28–9; 12.327.24–5; 12.339.17. At *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.1.8–10 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.1 the waters are created through Vāc (speech), an intermediate fertile female offshoot (on whose creative role see Norman Brown 1968; Sutherland Goldman 2000: 71–2). *Rgveda* 10.129.1–3 presents several scenarios (Brereton 1999).
- 24 *Rgveda* 10.121 ('he' is the son in v. 7, the father in vv. 8–9); 10.129 ('that one' is the father in v. 2, the son in v. 3). See Varenne 1977–8: 383–4 – Agni is father, husband, and son of the waters – and 386: 'fire is at the very centre of . . . nature and its relation to it resembles the relation of *ātman* to an individual (or *puruṣa* to *prakṛti* in the *Sāṃkhya*)'. For the equation of father and son, see also *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.2.26; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.13; *Mahābhārata* 1.68.36, 47–8, 62–5; Olivelle 1997: 431–3.
- 25 Patrilineal males must offer regular *śrāddha*, feeding the heaven-dwelling ancestors, and have sons (who have sons, etc.) that this may continue (Kane 1968–77, vol. 4: 334–515; *Bhagavadgītā* 1.38–44). Several *Mahābhārata* characters (e.g. Droṇa, Jaratkāru, Pāṇḍu) produce a son only to satisfy the ancestors.
- 26 *etāvān asya mahimāto jyā yāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ / pādo 'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāṃṣṭaṃ divi // tripād ūrdhvā úd ait pūruṣaḥ pādo 'syehābhavat pūnaḥ / tato viśvaḥ vi akrāmat sāśanānaśanē abhi // tasmād virāḷ ajāyata virājo ādhi pūruṣaḥ / sā jātō ūty aricyata paścād bhūmim ātho purāḥ //* The suggestion that the father is the son risen upwards (rather than or in addition to the son being the father descended) has interesting implications concerning the phenomenologically situated order of enquiry.
- 27 I take manifesting one-quarter of oneself and reproducing *via* a self-created female as the same process. On Virāj, see *Mahābhārata* 12.254.*704 (she is Earth); *Atharvavedasamhitā* 8.9–10 (she is also Svadhā, Māyā, and Tirodhā); Penner 1965–6: 288, 292, 294.
- 28 Goldberg insists that the Godhead which is a juxtaposition of polarized opposites is not the ultimate Godhead (2002).
- 29 This stage may also involve the intermediate or superimposed duality of heaven and earth. When the egg hatched, the shell's two halves became the sky and earth (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.19; see also *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.1.11–2.4; *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 1.12–13; *Mahābhārata* 12.299.4); these two may then parent all creatures in between, the father fertilizing the mother through rain (Gonda 1974: 93–117; Macdonell 1974: 126–7; *Atharvavedasamhitā* 12.1.12, 42; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 4.27; Das 2000: 244–5). This fertilizing function is evident in the *Mahābhārata* character Bhīṣma, incarnation of the sky god, whose celibacy infuriates Ambā ('mother', who consequently changes her name and gender) and causes problems for the Bhārata dynasty. See also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.4.20 ('I am sky, you are earth: let us two join together, mix our seed together, to get a male child', *dyaus aham prthivī tvam tāv ehi saṃrabhāvahai saha reto dadhāvahai punse putrāya vittaye iti //* tr. Roebuck); *Mahābhārata* 12.183.15. The vertical dualism (sky/earth, Lord/waters) fits the 'missionary position'.
- 30 *ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ so 'nuvikṣya nānyad ātmano 'paśyat . . . // so 'bibhet . . . // sa vai naiva reme . . . sa dvitīyam aicchat sa haitāvān āsa yathā strīpumāṃsau sampariṣvaktu sa imam evātmānam dvedhāpātayat tataḥ patīś ca*

- patnī cābhavatām tasmāt idam ardhabṛgalam iva svaḥ iti ha smāha yājñavalkyaḥ tasmād ayam ākāśaḥ striyā pūryata eva tām samabhavat tato manuṣyā ajāyanta //*
- 31 Elsewhere *Puruṣa* divides into the components of the cosmos, including the four *varṇas*: see *Rgveda* 10.90.6–14; *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 1.31; John Brockington 1998: 13 (for *Mahābhārata* examples).
- 32 *mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbhaṃ dadhāmy aham / saṃbhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata // sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ saṃbhavanti yāḥ / tāsāṃ brahma mahad yonir aham bījapradāḥ pitā //*
- 33 See also *Bhagavadgītā* 7.4; 9.8, 17. *Sat* and *asat* at *Bhagavadgītā* 11.37 (also *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2; *Rgveda* 10.129) could denote male and female principles.
- 34 *tapastaptav āsṛjad yaṃ tu sa svayaṃ puruṣo virāḷ / taṃ mām vittāsyā sarvasya sraṣṭāraṃ dvijasattamaḥ //*
- 35 For Lord plus *māyā*, see 12.206.2–3; Roy 1996: 13–14; for Lord plus *vidyā*, see 12.224.33 (where Ganguli 12.232, p. 157 reads *avidyā*); 12.326.66–7; 12.332.12; 12.335.17.
- 36 On this analogy, see Schreiner 1999b: 132–7; Brodbeck 2003: xxii–xxiv; 2003/4: 91–103; 2004: 90–2. The end and re-beginning of the cyclic cosmos (on which see *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.1, with *śakti* as the female; *Bhagavadgītā* 8.17–19) matches the death of one body and *ātman*'s taking another. The 'evolutionary' cosmic model, whereby the material principle is gradually 'unpacked', fits the sexual model: the fertilized egg/foetus develops and grows. The four sets of five in the *sāṃkhya tattva*-lists are like fingers and toes. For other embryological connections see *Rgveda* 10.162.3; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.3; *Mahābhārata* 12.308.116–20; Kuiper 1970; 1983: 134 n. 90, 135–6. Knowledge of the emanation-process 'is a condition or a help for turning away and for advancing towards the goal of isolated worldlessness, unworldly isolation' (Schreiner 1999a: 775). Ascetics may burn off their limbs: see 3.135.28; 9.47.20–4.
- 37 *Mahābhārata* 12.293.12–19 presents *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* as female and male, and indicates which physical aspects of the person come from which human parent. The female constituent is often multifarious: consider the proliferation of the material principle into the various *tattvas*; see *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 4.3–18; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.1.1–13; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.2.1–2. 'Plurality is mentioned as one of the characteristics of the perishable, unity of the imperishable' (Schreiner 1999a: 768). On 'She-of-a-hundred-forms', see Pintchman 1998: 272–4.
- 38 It rests on the *bandhu* principle: see Gonda 1965; B.K. Smith 1989; 1994:11–12; Hegarty 2006; Kuznetsova 2006: 118–22.
- 39 For example, consider *Bhagavadgītā* 8.23–6. Rebirth and *mokṣa* are correlated with time of death: death during the daytime, the waxing fortnight, or the year's first half (after the winter solstice, before the summer) means no rebirth; death during the night, the waning fortnight, or the year's second half means rebirth. Added up, the auspicious times comprise seven-eighths of the year, as do the inauspicious times; six-eighths are ambiguous. Yet each ending life must either have or not have a karmic sequel. Similar iterative analogical interference could indefinitely retroject the pre-cosmic male's solitude: to make *Puruṣa* he needs the waters, to make them he needs *Vāc*, to make *Vāc* . . . But although this collects cosmogonies in strings, the concept 'beginning' is nonetheless retained (*Mahābhārata* 12.175.35). Semantically parallel items appear in series; a poet describes a scene of simultaneous birds and bees by using words *in sequence*.
- 40 See 12.237.13. On *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, see Bailey 1985.
- 41 *ajām ekām lohitasuklakṛṣṇām bahvīḥ prajāḥ sṛjamānām sarūpāḥ / ajo hy eko juṣamāṇo 'nuśete jahāty enām bhuktabhogām ajo 'nyaḥ //* *Aja* also means 'unborn' (see above, p. 133); married goats/unborns are unknown.
- 42 For *Yājñavalkya* see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4 and 4.5; for *Mahāvīra*

- (Śvetāmbara tradition; the Digambara Mahāvīra never marries), Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacaritra*, *Mahāvīracaritra* 2.125–55; for Buddha, Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* 2–6. Polygyny means that the wife is rarely left for another woman – but see the Śārngaka story discussed in Chapter 6.
- 43 *vanam anupamasattvā bodhisattvās tu sarve viṣayasukharasajñā jagmur utpan-naputrāḥ* / For an in-depth study of the *Buddhacarita* as a response to the Sanskrit epics, see now Hildebeitel 2006, esp. pp. 247–53, 268, 271–5 on the narrative contrast between the Buddha's and various epic kings' attitudes to *dharma* and the necessity of householdership.
- 44 These duties comprise one of the three (or more) debts, usually to the *pitṛs*, *devas*, and *ṛṣis* (and to people) (Olivelle 1993: 47–53). Son-production is sometimes presented as unnecessary: Medhāvīn tells his father that salvation does not depend on sons (*Mahābhārata* 12.169; Olivelle 1993: 150–1), and the father is convinced. The sonless Bhīṣma tells this story to Yudhiṣṭhira (who has lost his) by way of example. A *paramparā* may replace a *vaṁśa*, the sonless man (Bhīṣma, Yudhiṣṭhira, Vyāsa) leaving a text instead: 'Scholarship, in establishing and indulging a nexus of authority, serves a reproductive function' (Hawthorne 2004: 42).
- 45 On the *āśrama* scheme, see Olivelle 1993: 136–60. Apparently following a *Buddhacarita*-type model, Jaratkāru considers marriage only at his endangered ancestors' request, and then insists that his wife have the same name as him, and that he not have to support her or the child. He as it were tests the universe, which confirms the ancestors' request as valid, but he then makes the additional condition that his wife never displease him (*Mahābhārata* 1.43.7–8; cf. Gaṅgā's demand that Śamtanu never criticize her, 1.92.34–5), enabling him to abandon her while she is yet pregnant (1.34.10–36.7; 1.41–3).
- 46 Yājñavalkya's sons are not mentioned, but nor is their non-existence; he seems to have the best of both worlds successively. Nonetheless, as Brian Black points out, 'he is the one philosopher in the Upaniṣads who challenges the soteriology that is based on having sons' (personal communication, May 2006; see Black 2007: 94–8, 146). At *Mahābhārata* 4.20.27 Draupadī says that self-protection depends on child-protection and hence on wife-protection.
- 47 This is not to dispute or replace other interpretations. Note von Simson's qualification of his calendrical interpretation of the Nala story: 'An open disclosure would have made the text a dull, pedantic allegory' (2005: 133). Using a musical analogy, we may think of overtones, resonances, and/or simultaneous accompaniments in different registers.
- 48 The karmically deleterious effect of activities (*karmabandha*) can allegedly be neutralized by knowledge (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.6.1.21; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.23; 5.14.8; *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.4; 3.1).
- 49 See *Bhagavadgītā* 9.2–3; Biarreau 1981b; Malinar 1996; Slaje 2000a.
- 50 Just as the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* model obviates in principle the need ever to stop being reborn: see Kuznetsova 2006: 123.
- 51 His failures of husbandry may cause drought, i.e. depletion of the waters.
- 52 On royal representation, see Chapter 4; on the king, Earth, and Śrī, see Hara 1973; 1996–7; Gonda 1969: 176–231; on Draupadī, Śrī, and Earth, see Bailey 1983a: 118–19; Brodbeck in press a.
- 53 See *Bhagavadgītā* 9.30–2; *Mahābhārata* 14.19.56. For discussion of the *Mahābhārata*'s anticipated female audience, see Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.
- 54 On Yudhiṣṭhira, see also Klaes 1975 (following him step by step); Zaehner 1962: 114–24 and *passim*; Fitzgerald 2004a: 81–142. In terms of the *Mahābhārata* as a whole Janamejaya might be considered the 'primary example', but his context is more complicated and will not be treated here.
- 55 See also *Arthaśāstra* 8.1.5; *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 9.294; *Mahābhārata* 12.69.63.

- 56 Moreover, after Bhīṣma's abdication, Śamtanu died while his new heirs Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya were yet young (1.95.4). Pāṇdu and Yudhiṣṭhira are both produced through *niyoga*; there are specified biological fathers and adoptive fathers in both cases, but one aspect of the net result is the marking of a contrast with the (narratively) normative paternal situation in which the son is raised to adulthood by the biological father, in his patriline. I am grateful to Paul de Villiers for stimulating discussions of Pāṇdu's story.
- 57 *bhartṛlokaparāyaṇe*; see Olivelle 1997: 436–7.
- 58 *svargapāraṇi tīrṣṇan sa śataśṛṅgād udainmukhaḥ / prastathe saha patnībhyām. . . /*
- 59 *darśanīyāms tataḥ putrān pāṇduḥ pañca mahāvane / tān paśyan parvate reme svabāhubalapālītān //*
- 60 *tad yathā priyayā striyā sampariṣvako na bāhyaṃ kiṃ cana veda nāntaram evam evāyam puruṣaḥ prājñenātmanā sampariṣvako na bāhyaṃ kiṃ cana veda nāntaram*; see also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.1.19.
- 61 Though also a river (6.10.15; 13.26.9; 13.134.16; 13.151.14; *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 3.9), 'Devikā' has brahmin connections (2.47.5; 3.80.110–15; 3.212.20–4).
- 62 Yaudheya is not mentioned again, although 'the Yaudheyas' attend Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya* (2.48.13) and fight at Kurukṣetra (7.18.16; 7.132.25 – against Yudhiṣṭhira himself; 7.136.5; 8.4.46).
- 63 On this triangle, see Hildebeitel 2001a: 264ff. Later, during the thirteen-year exile, while the family visit *tīrthas*, Arjuna visits Indra.
- 64 *ārambhe pārameṣṭhyam tu na prāpyam iti me matih //* See also 2.15.1–5.
- 65 'If your heart knows, if you have confidence in me . . .' (*yadi te hrdayam veti yadi te pratyayo mayi* / 2.18.7, tr. van Buitenen). Gönc Moaçanin says 'Yudhiṣṭhira did nothing on his own. He acquired the title of *samraj* with the help of Kṛṣṇa who obviously had his own plans'; as she points out, these are implicit in Kṛṣṇa's speech at 2.30.23 (2005: 153).
- 66 For bibliographical references on the dicing episode, see Gönc Moaçanin 2005: 149. On Yudhiṣṭhira in the dicing scene, see Mary Brockington 2001; 2003.
- 67 At 2.44.18 and 2.45.38 Śakuni says Yudhiṣṭhira loves gambling; at 2.60.43 Draupadī says he is inexperienced.
- 68 Commentators have pointed out that Śakuni does not seem to cheat (Gönc Moaçanin 2005: 156), but nonetheless there is a common misperception that he did.
- 69 See van Buitenen 1972. The main weakness of this position is that in the *Mahābhārata* dicing is not part of the *rājasūya*, and not a formality. Claiming dicing as a cultural necessity for kings (Gönc Moaçanin 2005: 158–9) is susceptible to similar criticism: the text does not show us that culture. (Hence also I discuss Yudhiṣṭhira without reference to the *vrātyas*.)
- 70 Discrepancies between the two accounts of Yudhiṣṭhira's motives may or may not indicate that different versions (or texts) of the dicing have been combined. Such is Mehendale's conclusion from these and other data, but he does not factor in Yudhiṣṭhira's addressees.
- 71 This is to traduce the gambler's role. Howsoever infinitesimal the chances of victory, the universe could provide it; definitive agency falls beyond the gambler. Cf. Jaratkāru, n. 45 above.
- 72 *etat pāpiṣṭham akaror yad ātmānam parājitaḥ / śiṣṭe sati dhane rājan pāpa ātmaparājayaḥ //* I follow van Buitenen for the first half of the *śloka*.
- 73 Youthful renouncers leave parents bereft (e.g. Vyāsa: see Hildebeitel 2001a: 278–322, esp. the final page). For proud *kṣatriya* parents, any son refusing family expectations is effectively renouncing – (although) the *Mahābhārata*'s main parental losses are military.
- 74 Draupadī calling on Kṛṣṇa for help (2.60.26; also 5.58.21; 5.80.26) compares with Earth calling on Brahmā when *asura* kings oppress her (1.58.25–51), and with

- Ambā calling on Rāma Jāmadagnya and Śiva after Bhīṣma rejects her (5.176, 188). The substitute *pati*'s identity is often ambiguous or multiple. On Draupadī in the dicing scene, see Hiltebeitel 1980a: 103, 108 (contrasting and comparing Earth); 2000: 114–15; and Chapter 6. See *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.16 for a similar scene.
- 75 On Nala (with further references), see Hiltebeitel 2001a: 215–39 (also comparing Nala and Yudhiṣṭhira); von Simson 2005.
- 76 *so 'pakṣṣas tu kalinā mohitah prādravan nalah / suptām utsrjya tām bhāryām vilapya karuṇaṃ bahu ||*
- 77 We are reminded of Buddha's *anātman* theory, and of the possibility of faulty discrimination of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, *ahamkāra* and *ātman* (see further below).
- 78 In exile Yudhiṣṭhira hears Nala's story, of a lost kingdom regained through acquisition and use of the *akṣaḥṛdaya*, the heart (or secret) of the dice; Yudhiṣṭhira receives the *akṣaḥṛdaya*, and uses it for his disguise in the *Virāṭaparvan*. As Adam Bowles says, '*akṣaḥṛdaya* may reflect the adage that "the king makes the age"' (personal communication, February 2006); see González-Reimann 2002: 118–37. Paul Bowlby, following Heesterman, sees *akṣaḥṛdaya* as the knowledge and ability to rule dharmically, passions conquered, and mediate through ritual with unseen powers to prosper the *loka* (Bowlby 1991). This looks like the *rājavidyā*, but lacks the soteriological context. Bowlby suggests that a king really needs various specific skills (the *akṣaḥṛdaya*, knowledge of weapons, etc.) and the *karmayoga* (pp. 16–17). On *akṣaḥṛdaya* as text-receptive competence, see Hegarty 2001; Brodbeck 2006: 16 n. 46.
- 79 'Dhṛtarāṣṭra' is also a snake: see 1.3.142; 1.31.13; 1.52.13; 2.9.9; 5.101.15; Minkowski 1991: 388–9, 396.
- 80 And Śakuni incarnates Dvāpara: see 1.61.72, 80. On *kali* and kings, see 12.12.27 (Nakula defines Kali as any non-protective king); González-Reimann 2002: 53–62.
- 81 See 3.13.112; 10.16.28. Draupadī is labelled *anāthavat* (as though unprotected /husbandless) at 1.1.106; 2.60.24; 2.61.52; 4.17.29; 5.88.86.
- 82 3.31.1; see again Chapter 4.
- 83 *sa muhūrtam iva dhyātvā viniścītyetikṛtyatām /* The interpretation of *muhūrtam* is uncertain (it may mean just a moment, or a 48-minute measure); see also n. 86 below. Some manuscripts add a speech-to-self just before this line.
- 84 In exile, Yudhiṣṭhira builds some self-knowledge. See 3.2.66.
- 85 For the potlatch theory, see Mauss 1990; Held 1935; Tieken 2004; Gönc Moaçanin 2005.
- 86 *uvāca rāmo vaidehīm parāmarśaviśaṅkitaḥ / gaccha vaidehi muktā tvaṃ yat kāryaṃ tan mayā kṛtam || mām āsādyā patiṃ bhadre na tvaṃ rākṣasaveśmani / jarāṃ vrajethā iti me nihato 'sau niśācaraḥ || katham hy asmadvidho jātu jānan dharma-viniścayam / parahastagatāṃ nārīm muhūrtam api dhārayet || suvṛttām asuvṛttām vāpy ahaṃ tvām adya maithili / notsahe paribhogāya śvāvaliḍhaṃ havir yathā ||*
- 87 Compare Scharf 2003: 24–5: 'Rāma represents pure consciousness (*puruṣa*) . . . Sītā represents the individual body, senses, mind, and intellect which are the manifest evolutes of original nature (*prakṛti*) . . . In the stage of enlightenment known as cosmic consciousness (*kaivalya*), the self, identified with pure consciousness, recognizing its own purity, views the body and other evolutes of nature as belonging to the field of change from which it dissociates itself. However, in the ultimate stage of development of consciousness (*brahman*), the self recognizes the transcendent original pure state of nature in all the active states of nature and embraces all levels of nature as one with itself.'
- 88 This event provides the opportunity for the *Rāma-Upākhyāna* to be told.
- 89 Although Jayadratha's grudge later contributes to Abhimanyu's death (3.256.24–9; 7.41–2), we must factor in Bhīma's humiliating him as well as Yudhiṣṭhira's leniency.

- 90 For discussion of this episode, see Bailey 1983a: 118.
- 91 She also blames *daiva*, and herself (for unknown past sins come to fruition).
- 92 Damayantī too engineers her own safety from a menacing hunter after Nala's flight; both women use a *satyakriyā* ('truth-act').
- 93 As promised at 3.173.19. Yudhiṣṭhira tells Arjuna to rule instead (12.7.40), and seems to anticipate solitary renunciation (12.9.3, 10, 15; see also Bronkhorst 1998: 33–4; Fitzgerald 2004a: 685).
- 94 *anṛtaṃ mābravīc chvaśrūḥ sarvajñā sarvadarśinī / yudhiṣṭhiras tvām pāñcālī sukhe dhāsyaty anuttame || hatvā rājasahasrāṇi bahūny āśuparākramaḥ / tad vyarthaṃ saṃprapaśyāmi mohāt tava janādhipa || yeśāṃ unmattako jyeṣṭhaḥ sarve tasy-opacāriṇaḥ / tavonmādena rājendra somnādāḥ sarvapāṇḍavāḥ || yadi hi syur anun-mattā bhrātaraḥ te janādhipa / baddhvā tvām nāstikaḥ sārthaṃ praśāseyur vas-unmharām ||* Yudhiṣṭhira married Draupadī in order that Kuntī not be a liar. See also *Bhagavadgītā* 3.21.
- 95 See also 12.10.20; 11.27; 12.4; 12.25; 15.33; 19.23; 36.43.
- 96 Janaka is bald, with water pot, triple staff, and robe (adopted by *śaiva* ascetics pursuing *mokṣa*). His interest in *mokṣa* is proverbial; see also 12.18.26, 30. At 12.9 Yudhiṣṭhira implies that he wants *mokṣa*, but this is rarely explicit. At 12.161.40–6 he insists on *mokṣa* as a transcendent other to *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*; as Bowles suggests (2005), that scene continues the family's discussion here (which continues those in Books 3 and 5).
- 97 See 12.11.14–25; 12.19–23, 33–5; 13.1–11; 16.21–4; 18.29–33; Hiltebeitel 2005c: 250–8.
- 98 See *Bhagavadgītā* 3.20; *Mahābhārata* 3.2.30–2; 12.297; 12.308; 14.32.
- 99 *saktāḥ karmaṇy avidyāṃso yathā kurvanti bhārata / kuryād vidvāṃs tathāsaktas cikīrṣur lokasaṃgraham ||*
- 100 *asaktāḥ saktavad gacchan niḥsaṅgo muktabandhanaḥ / samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca sa vai mukto mahīpate ||* See also Slaje 2000b: 176–7, 183.
- 101 Vyāsa, who suggests ritual expiation of the war-guilt (12.34–6), probably tips the balance by addressing Yudhiṣṭhira's problem at face value.
- 102 Arjuna voices *pravṛtti* concerns (for his family, not *mokṣa*), but proposes *śramaṇa*-type behaviour.
- 103 Ostensibly that his father might enjoy Satyavatī, a *dāśī* half his age (1.94). Bhīṣma repeatedly refuses responsibilities (kingship; marriage; impregnating widows) from behind a dharmic mask, invoking his old filial vow. Like Rāma, having seen his father brought to irresponsibility through passion and manipulation, he himself doesn't feel inclined towards or fit for responsibility. Both characters renounce kingdom then wife (Ambā, Sītā), but Bhīṣma is the more stubborn – Śaṃtanu doesn't re-instruct him after dying.
- 104 It fits also that he champions Sulabhā when narrating her debate with Janaka (12.308; see Chapter 12), and fails to support Draupadī in the dice-match debate.
- 105 Yudhiṣṭhira is heirless *pro tem*. (see above, n. 44), Parikṣit unborn.
- 106 *mamāpi na tathā rājñi rāje buddhir yathā purā / tapasy evānuraktaṃ me manaḥ sarvātmanā tathā ||*
- 107 On this and the subsequent scenes, see Hiltebeitel 2001a: 271–7.
- 108 On the dog episode, see Bailey 1983a: 126. Yudhiṣṭhira earlier encountered Dharma as a heron/*yakṣa* (3.295–8; Leslie 1998: 475, 481). On Dharma's tests, see also Adarkar 2005b.
- 109 Von Simson links this with Yudhiṣṭhira's connections, *via* Dharma and his *alter ego* Kaṅka, to Yama: 'It might have occurred to the authors . . . that Death himself cannot die' (2000a: 318). On dogs, dice, and death, see White 1989.
- 110 On this scene, see Shulman 1996: 158, 160–4; Emily Hudson 2005. At 12.192.119–21 Bhīṣma says that delighting in heaven indicates attachment, 'But

- if on the other hand he goes there freed from passion, and hesitantly, wishing for the highest immutable, he enters exactly that' (*atha tatra virāgī sa gacchati tv atha saṁśayam / param avyayam icchan sa tam evāviśate punaḥ* // 12.192.121). But Yudhiṣṭhira reacts to others' deserts, not his own. He reminds us of *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66: 'Abandon all *dharma*s and go to me [Kṛṣṇa], the only refuge. I will free you from all misfortunes: grieve not' (*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja / ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ* //). Dharma was cursed, for being unfair, to be born as Vidura (1.101), who is now Yudhiṣṭhira – so perhaps Yudhiṣṭhira's curse of Dharma is pre-discharged.
- 111 He has been doing this all along, in his way, but for the odd lapse – and these become increasingly theatrical. For Yudhiṣṭhira voicing renunciative intent, see Klaes 1975: 99, 109–13.
- 112 *kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsītāram aṇor aṇīyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ / sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpam ādityavarṇaṁ tamasāḥ parastāt // prayāṇakāle manasācalena bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva / bhrūvor madhye prāṇam āveśya saṁyak sa tam paraṁ puruṣam upaiti divyam* // See also *Bhagavadgītā* 2.72; 7.30; 8.5; *Mahābhārata* 5.44.16; 5.61.2; 12.207.25; 12.210.13, 20; 13.17.18; 14.46.54; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.17.6; Edgerton 1926.
- 113 On the wife as essential partner-in-*dharma*, see 12.142; 12.340–353; Jamison 1996: 29–149.
- 114 Damayantī's predator (see n. 92) dies 'like a tree burned by fire'; she later calls upon wind, sun, and moon that Nala may be assured of her purity. For discussion of the authorizing effect of the 'outside intervention' in the stories of Draupadī, Śakuntalā and Gārgī, see Black 2007: 154–5.
- 115 See also 12.215–21. Prahlāda says *svabhāva*, not Indra, has caused Indra's success (and also causes knowledge of *ātman*, 12.215.23); other defeated *asuras* identify the agent as Kāla or, usually, Śrī.
- 116 *santi brahman mayā guptā nṛṣu kṣatriyapuṅgavāḥ / haihayānāṁ kule jātās te saṁprakṣantu māṁ mune* //
- 117 'New to the Pāṇḍava narrative's symbolic version of this ancient battle is the assistance given to Indra by Śrī (i.e. in the Pāṇḍava narrative, the energizing of the Pāṇḍavas by Draupadī)' (Fitzgerald 2004b: 62). On this story see also Hiltebeitel 1977; Thomas 2006b. Indra's withdrawal links with the Pāṇḍavas' exile and with Yudhiṣṭhira's plans after the war.
- 118 *praticchanno vasaty apsu ceṣṭamāna ivoragaḥ* //
- 119 *hutāśanaḥ / strīveṣam adbhuṭaṁ kṛtvā*, 5.15.27.
- 120 This corresponds to what Śalya, the story's narrator, is hoping may happen with Karna. Nahuṣa, having angered the *ṛṣi*s, goes down the snake: see 3.175–8.
- 121 On this story, see also Aklujkar 1991; Chapple 2006: 107–9.
- 122 *dūreṇa hy avaram karmā buddhiyogād dhanañjaya / buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpāṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ // buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukrta-duṣkṛte / tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam // karmajaṁ buddhiyuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ / janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanty anāmayaṁ* // See also 2.41–3, 52–3, 63–6.
- 123 See 12.337.16–27 (creator Brahmā is impotent until Nārāyaṇa sends Buddhi); *Bhagavadgītā* 3.27–8; 5.8–9; Collins 2000; Parrott 1990; Burley 2007: 141–7.
- 124 For the *tattvas* in classical *sāṁkhya*, see Parrott 1986: 56–9. The non-renouncing Vedic hedonist of *Bhagavadgītā* 2.42–4 is also *ahaṁkāra*-ascendant.
- 125 Janaka expounds the *karmayoga* to Sulabhā, but says he learned it from Pañcaśikha.
- 126 Analogical re-application may introduce polarization within either or both poles (e.g. *Bhagavadgītā* 7.4–5). *Ātman* being inactive, the choice between *ahaṁkāra* and *buddhi* may fall to a masculinized aspect of *prakṛti*. At *Mahābhārata*

- 14.20–50 *manas* is *buddhi*'s husband, but *kṣetrajña* (i.e. *ātman*) is *manas*'s teacher. Such finesse allows the male to retain a soteriological role.
- 127 Male friends (e.g. Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers) also share this role elsewhere. At 1.57.1–31 Indra persuades Vasu, who has renounced kingship, to take it up again. Indra's gender is not unambiguous in the *Mahābhārata* (see 12.329.14; 13.34.25–6; 13.41.21); at *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 3.1 he plays Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavadgītā* role as supreme object of knowledge and paradigmatic *karmayogin*.
- 128 Arjuna must seek refuge in *buddhi* (*Bhagavadgītā* 2.49c) and in Kṛṣṇa (18.66). See Hiltebeitel 1984: 12–15; 2001a: 273 n. 90; Brassard 1999; Sutton 2000: 344–7; Dasti 2005. For *buddhi* as charioteer, see *Mahābhārata* 5.127.25–6. The charioteer is *manas* at 14.50.1–6 (with *buddhi* as reins); *sattva* at 11.7.13–15; *jñāna* at 12.228.8–12; *vooḥ* at Plato's *Phaedrus* 247. Elsewhere *ātman* (variously construed) or *kṣetrajña* plays the charioteer (3.2.62; 3.202.21–3; 5.34.57–8; 12.238.2; 12.280.1; Goudriaan 1990). The discrepancy may track the difference between a chariot of war or state (featuring a dedicated driver) and a single-occupant chariot (cart). Nala's charioteer is initially 'Vārṣṇeya'; later, in hunchback form, Nala himself is the driver (3.57, 69). The chariot analogy is applied also to the cosmos: see 8.24, where Śiva and Brahmā are warrior and charioteer. Jāmadagnya says his chariot is Earth, his horses the Vedas, his charioteer the wind (*mātariśvan*, from *mātṛ*, mother), his armour the Vedas' mothers (5.180.3–4). At 5.183.15–27 Gaṅgā drives Bhīṣma's chariot. At 12.246.9–15 the body is a city, with Buddhi its queen (*svāminī*).
- 129 See also 1.16.39–40 for Viṣṇu's female form. On Viṣṇu's three steps as covering one pole, the other, and the totality, see Kuiper 1962; 1975; 1983: 20, 41–55.
- 130 At *mokṣa* the *ātman* joins its analogical counterpart, Kṛṣṇa-*puruṣottama*, the pre-cosmic Lord (*Bhagavadgītā* 7.5; 8.20–2; 15.7).
- 131 According to an androcentric symbology. Despite the textual support for this symbology, there always were female renunciators: see e.g. Khandelwal 2004: 36–9 for Hinduism; Horner 1999 for Buddhism; Dundas 1992: 48–52 for Jainism.
- 132 There are many important women in the generations the *Mahābhārata* spotlights, but in some ways we are led to suppose that this should be anomalous, a symptom of dharmic crisis. In the frame story of Earth's oppression (1.58–61), for example, Earth features as a character only because the kings are bad.
- 133 On the contrast between Draupadī and Sītā in terms of the *pativrata* model, see Sutherland 1989.
- 134 '[S]ince this formless Brahman is also understood to be the ultimate identity of an essentially male god . . . how androgynous can Brahman really be?' (Pintchman 1998: 275).
- 135 On the gendered dynamics here, see also Dennis Hudson 1996: 72–8.

upajāti	a type of Sanskrit metre
upākhyāna	subtale
uttarāyaṇa	the first half of the year
vaiśya	the third social class, comprising artisans and agriculturists
vaṃśa	genealogy
varṇa	any one of four social classes, namely brahmin, <i>kṣatriya</i> , <i>vaiśya</i> , <i>śūdra</i>
varṇadharma	specific duties in accord with social class
varṇāśramadharma	specific duties in accord with social class and stage of life
vidūṣaka	a stock character in classical Sanskrit drama; a comical, gluttonous, degraded brahmin, he is a good friend of the hero
vidyā	knowledge; spell
virūpatva	ugliness
viṭa	a stock character in classical Sanskrit drama; a <i>bon vivant</i>
vrata	vow; regimen
vrātya	itinerant and degraded persons known for adventuring together in quasi-military groups
vyūha	any one of four stages in the cosmogony, and the particular deities (or names of deity) associated with them; battle-array
yājaka	sacrificial priest
yajamāna	'sacrificer'; the sponsor of a Vedic sacrifice and the recipient of its benefits
yajña	Vedic sacrifice
yakṣa	a type of semi-divine chthonic being, often associated with a particular locality
yakṣī	a female <i>yakṣa</i>
yati	an ascetic who has renounced the world
yoga	spiritual exercise; stratagem; any disciplined personal effort ('yoking') directed towards a specific goal
yogin	one who performs <i>yoga</i>
yoni	womb; female organs; origin

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