King Śibi in the Vahnipurāṇa
A critical edition & translation of the śiber upākhyāna

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Although the many extant Sanskrit versions of the story of King Śibi and the dove have been thoroughly studied, one version, from the Vahnipurāṇa, has so far escaped the attention of scholars. This paper presents a new, critical edition of the Sanskrit text, based on all available material — an existing edition, quotations, and a recently discovered Nepalese fragment — followed by a translation. This edition is open source; it includes diplomatic transcriptions of all witnesses, software used to collate the textual variants, the text alignments, and the stemmata used to examine certain verses. Connections to Buddhist and Jain versions of the story are discussed. The long afterlife of the text presents an opportunity to study how it has been reused and recast over the course of many centuries, quoted in dharmanibandhas and harvested for material for other stories.

Introduction

The story of King Śibi and the dove — or, more generically, syenakapotīya,1 the hawk and the dove — is one of the most widespread fables in Indian literature. In Sanskrit, a number of versions have survived intact, both in prose and in verse, along with some fragments of texts that were translated into Chinese.2 Different versions have a slightly different cast of characters or place the emphasis on different values — not only is the story found in the Mahābhārata, but also in Jain and Buddhist story collections and in the Tamil Puranāṉūṟu anthology of poems; there are even ancient Greek parallels and later Islamic reframings.3 But the basic narrative elements remain more or less intact: a dove, fleeing a hawk, goes to a king for shelter. The hawk demands its prey, and the king offers up his own flesh instead.

Although much has been written about this story, scholars have so far missed the version of it that is told in the Vahnipurāṇa. Until recently, this version was only available as snippets quoted in other texts, the longest extract being an abbreviation of the whole story found in Rādhākāntadeva’s Śabda-kalpadruma, a 19th-century Sanskrit lexicon, under the entry for ‘śiviḥ’ and attributed to the Vahnipurāṇa.4 For a long time, the Vahnipurāṇa had been confused with the Agnipurāṇa — in which

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1 In the chapter colophons of Mahābhārata manuscripts, it is also called kapotopākhyāna (Sukthankar 1942, 480).
2 Meisig 1995, 47ff.
3 Gaál 2017.

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the śyenakapotīya story does not appear — until R. C. Hazra determined it to be a different, older text, which he thought had reached something approximating its current form by the 5th century. Finally, in 2012, the Vahnipurāṇa was edited and published by Anasuya Bhowmik; the story of King Śibi, the śiber upākhyāna, is the sixty-fifth chapter in the edition.

Bhowmik used four Devanāgarī manuscripts to edit the text, the oldest one dated to 1589 CE. Unfortunately, they do not seem to have been very reliable; in many places, the text is incomprehensible. However, many of those verses can be emended based on quotations and parallels in other texts. In addition, a recently discovered fragment of a Nepalese manuscript has also aided in the reconstruction of part of the text. This manuscript, as well as most of the quotations of the text, are older than the Devanāgarī manuscripts used in Bhowmik’s edition. Moreover, the Vahnipurāṇa itself quotes from other texts that go back as far as the second century CE, and a close examination of those sources — as well as Tibetan and Chinese translations thereof — has greatly aided in clarifying the text. In this new edition, the aim has been to present the text as a link between its sources and its testimonia, showing how it transformed and reused its sources, and then, in turn, was itself transformed and re-quoted by medieval writers. We will begin by discussing the manuscript fragment, and then move on to the textual parallels that are either earlier than or roughly contemporaneous with the Vahnipurāṇa: the Vasudevahindi, the Mahābhārata, and the Śatapañcāśatka. Finally, we will look at the later medieval texts that quote the Vahnipurāṇa: the lexicons, law digests, and story collections.

Figure 1: BnF Sanscrit 1442.2, recto and verso. Photographs by the author, courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. See Li 2022a for a transcription of the fragment.

BnF Sanscrit 1442.2, the Nepalese fragment

This single talipot leaf comes from the Cordier collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. It is part of a number of fragments found together with Sanscrit 1347, which contains an assortment of excerpts from the Bṛhannāradīyapurāṇa in Bengali script.

5 Hazra 1954, 83; Hazra 1956, 516.
6 This chapter title is given in the edition as well as in the Šabdakalpadruma. Hazra counted this as the 61st chapter, based on a manuscript from the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
7 Bhowmik 2012, cxxv–cxxvi.
Palmyr Cordier (1871–1914) was a French doctor who served in the colonial medical corps and who studied Indian medicine. He spent over two years stationed in Chandernagor, from 1898 to 1900, where he collected a large number of manuscripts on both medical and non-medical topics. In addition, he was able to photograph a number of Nepalese manuscripts that had been obtained by Sylvain Lévi and Haraprasāda Śāstrī; it seems likely that this fragment was given to Cordier by one of them. Cordier died at the beginning of the First World War, and his collection was rediscovered by Jean Filliozat in 1932, at an antiquarian bookseller’s in Paris, and acquired by the Bibliothèque nationale shortly thereafter. This fragment was later given its own shelfmark by Filliozat, as No. 2 of Sanscrit 1442, ‘Fragments mutilés d’ouvrages divers, etc.’

The folio is numbered 18, indicating that it was part of a larger collection of stories. Certainly, there are many other Sanskrit story collections, either unpublished or lost, which the fragment could have come from, but the text is a close match with the Vahnipurāṇa. It covers verses 15 to 34 of the present story, written in an old Nepalese script, often described as Bhujimol. Although it is undated, it is visually similar to manuscripts produced in Nepal between the 12th and 15th centuries; in fact, it bears a striking similarity to a manuscript of the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha that Lévi obtained from Nepal in 1898 — around the same time as he was sharing manuscripts with Cordier — which Félix Lacôte surmised to be from the 12th century. However, Lévi’s manuscript was not reported to be missing a folio 18. Cordier is known to have created calques of Nepalese manuscripts, but this does not seem to be the case here; at the very least, this folio was not copied from any known manuscript of the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha, since its extant portions, which were edited and published by Lacôte, do not contain this story.

Jain parallels

But perhaps there remains the possibility of a link to the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha. A portion of Vahnipurāṇa text in the manuscript matches the śyenakapotīya story of the Vasudevahindi, a Jain compendium of stories composed in Prakrit, possibly dating to the 3rd century. The Vasudevahindi is known to be closely related to the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha — since they are both related to the legendary Brhatkathā — and scholars have even used it to reconstruct lost parts of the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha. It is possible that the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha also once contained a version of this story, although without further evidence, it is impossible to say more.

The śyenakapotīya story in the Vasudevahindi, where the protagonist is King Megharatha, is very short, and it is not similar overall to the Vahnipurāṇa story beyond the plot points that are common

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8 For example, see BnF Sanscrit 1154 (gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10091342g).
10 Cabaton 1907, 317.
11 For example, see the 17th-century Kathāprakāśa (Eggeling 1896; Eggeling 1904, 1571–1573).
12 For examples, see MS Add.1686 (dated 1165 CE, cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01686) and MS Add.2137 (dated 1407 CE, cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-02137) from Cambridge University Library.
13 Lévi 1899, 78; Lacôte 1908a, i–iii, plate after x. H. P. Śāstrī was also collecting Nepalese manuscripts of the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha around the same time (1893, 254).
14 Li 2022c. See also BnF Sanscrit 1235.3 (tst-project.github.io/mss/Sanscrit_1235_3.xml).
15 Ludwig Alsdorf considers the Vasudevahindi to be many centuries older than the 6th century (1936, 320), while Jagdishchandra Jain dates it to before the end of the 3rd century (1979, 167).
16 Mayrhofer 1975a. See also Mayrhofer 1975b and Nelson 1974. See also Sarma 2006 on the Brhatkathāślokasamgraha and the Mahābhārata.
to all versions. Nevertheless, it does contain a half-verse that matches one in the *Vahnipurāṇa* text. That verse is quoted fully in a later Jain śyenakapotīya, from Nemicandra’s 12th-century Ṭīkā on the *Uttarādhyayanasūtra* (*Uttarajjhayaṇa Sutta*) that forms an even closer match.

BnF Sanscrit 1442.2\textsuperscript{17}  
\begin{verbatim}  yathā hi te jīvitam ātmanaḥ priyaṃ  
 tathā pareṣām api jīvitam priyaṃ |  
 saṃrakṣase jīvitam ātmano yathā  
 tathā pareṣām api rakṣa jīvitaṃ |  
 tasmin nāham imaṃ bhītam  
 avyayiṣye kapotakaṃ |  \end{verbatim}  

\begin{verbatim}  Uttarādhyayanaṭīkā\textsuperscript{18}  
 jahā jīviyām tuha piyām  
 niyayaṃ taha hoi savvajīvāṇaṃ | \textsuperscript{19}  
 piyajīvāṇaṃ jīvāṇaṃ  
 rakkha jīvaṃ sajīvaṃ va || 2 ||  
 
 tamhā u na juttam inaṃ,  
 caḍapphaḍhaṃtaṃ\textsuperscript{20}  
 vivāeuṃ || 3 ||  \end{verbatim}  

Although the amount of text reused is not very large, this Sanskrit verse does not appear in any other extant version of the śyenakapotīya to date. It would seem that this verse, or at least some version of it, and its association with this story, goes back further than the 5th-century date that Hazra gives for the *Vahnipurāṇa* as a whole.

**Buddhist leanings**

Of the different extant Sanskrit versions of the śyenakapotīya, the *Vahnipurāṇa* text is closest to the version found in *Āraṇyakaparvan* 131 of the *Mahābhārata*. It uses the same frame story: King Śibi is about to perform a great sacrificial rite, and Indra and Agni decide to test him, in the guise of the hawk and the dove.\textsuperscript{21} There are also many textual parallels — most notably, the speech of the hawk in verses 21 to 26 of the *Vahnipurāṇa* story match Āraṇyakaparvan 131.6 to 131.12, although the version of these verses in the Āraṇyakaparvan is closer to the Nepalese manuscript than to the Bhowmik edition.

However, the *Vahnipurāṇa* story is much longer than that of the Āraṇyakaparvan, having been elaborated mainly by the insertion of didactic subhaṣīta verses and hymns of praise, usually spoken by either the hawk or the king. The result is a sort of extended debate on the morality of kindness and on the imperative to protect the weak. Some of these verses can be found in other purāṇas, but, surprisingly, six of them seem to come from the *Śatapañcāśatka*, a famous and widespread collection of Buddhist hymns composed by Mātṛceṭa sometime between the 2nd and 3rd centuries.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} See verses 19–20 in the present edition.

\textsuperscript{18} Ed. Vijayomaṃgasūri 1936, 244v. Oberlies translates: ‘Wie dein Leben dir lieb ist, so ist allen Lebewesen ihr [Leben lieb]. Schütze das Leben der Wesen, denen ihr Leben lieb ist, wie dein eigenes Leben.... Und deshalb ist es nicht recht, diese [vor Furcht] zitternde [Taube] zu töten’ (2009, 309). Meyer translates: ‘As your own life is dear to thee so it is to all living beings; do thou preserve (spare) the life of life-loving beings and thy own life (i.e. in having regard for others you secure your own welfare).... Therefore it is not right to kill the one who trembles with fear’ (1909, 301). The Kahāvalī also quotes verse 3 (ed. Kalyāṇakīrtivijaya 2012, 75). See Dundas 2013, 17 for further versions of this story and Jacoby 1895, xi–xli on other commentaries on the *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*.


\textsuperscript{20} Compare with mṛtyubhayatrastāḥ in verse 15 of the present text.

\textsuperscript{21} See Parlier 1991 and Oberlies 2001 on the ritual context of the story.

\textsuperscript{22} ‘Mātṛceṭa... lived approximately either between A.D. 160 and 260 or else nearly a century earlier’ (Shackleton Bailey 1951, 15); In an addendum, he presents evidence that Mātṛceṭa was posterior to Nāgārjuna (237).
Those verses, in praise of the Buddha, are here used in praise of King Śibi, mostly clustered near the end of the story and spoken by Indra. In Buddhist tradition, Śibi is a previous incarnation of the Buddha, and the Śatapañcāśatka alludes to this: verse 12 of the Śatapañcāśatka, appearing here as verse 75, speaks of how the Buddha even gave his own flesh to protect others. As D. R. Shackleton Bailey points out, this verse is paralleled in Aśvaghoṣa’s Saundarānanda, which explicitly mentions Śibi and the hawk. Verse 13 of the Śatapañcāśatka, which does not appear here, again praises the Buddha for sacrificing his own body, and the Chinese translation — although inaccurate — renders it as 全軀救一鴿, ‘your whole body to save one dove’.

There are also structural parallels between the Śibi story in the Vahnipurāṇa and Chinese Buddhist versions of the tale, which were ostensibly translated from lost Sanskrit texts. The climactic episode, in which the king offers up his whole body to the hawk, is marked by heavenly drums and a rain of flowers; although this set piece is not exclusively Buddhist, it is very prevalent in Buddhist tales and is mirrored in one Chinese version of the Śibi story, but not found in any other extant Sanskrit version. The end of the story, in which Indra and Agni return to heaven — in the Vahnipurāṇa, this is described as tridaśālaya, the abode of the 33 gods — is also found, apart from in a few manuscripts of the Mahābhārata, only in two Chinese versions. So while the story in the Vahnipurāṇa starts out like the version in the Āraṇyakaparvan, it ends more like a Buddhist fable; it may have even been adapted from or inspired by a Buddhist text.

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23 See, for example, verse 69 of the present text, where the vocative nātha in the Śatapañcāśatka has been replaced by rājan in the Vahnipurāṇa. In verse 70, the Buddhist term kleśa has also been replaced by the generic duḥkha.

24 Shackleton Bailey 1951, 155.

25 Shackleton Bailey 1951, 42.

26 See note to the translation of verse 64.

27 See note to the translation of verse 82.
Figure 2: Extent of the witnesses, including quotations & parallels. In order of appearance. Hatched lines represent significantly different readings. Sanscrit 1442.2 and the Vikramacarita/Dvātriṃśatputtalikā place verse 32 before verse 30.

A text with a split personality

Given its Buddhist influences, the parallels from the Jain Vasudevahāndī and the Uttarādhayayanatīkā, as well as further quotations found in the Karuṇāvajrāyudha — a 13th-century Jain dramatic rendering of the āṣyanakapotīya —, the story of King Śibi in the Vahnipurāṇa is uniquely situated at the nexus of Buddhist, Jain, and brahmanical traditions. This is perhaps unsurprising, giving the agglomerative quality of the text, being a mashup of narrative and su bhāṣita verses culled from various sources. Some of the subhāṣita verses seem out of place, breaking up the flow of the narration; the text bears the hallmark of the kind of additive composition that so characterizes purāṇic stories. And by looking at parallels of these verses in other texts, we can get a better idea of how the story evolved over time, and how it was transformed and mined for content by later writers.

Despite the text having been neglected by scholars, it seems to have been very well known, appearing in the Śabdakalpadruma as the definitive telling of the story of King Śibi. But as seen in the figure above, the Śabdakalpadruma presents a significantly abbreviated version of the story; it is mainly concerned with the narrative elements, cutting out many of the subhāṣitas and sometimes omitting entire speeches. On the other hand, the many quotations found in medieval dharmanibandhas, or law digests — the Aparārka, the Bhagavantabhāskara, the Caturvargacintāmani, the Dānasāgara, the Kṛtyakalpataru, and the Vidhānapārijāta — do the very opposite: in fact, they are mainly interested in the subhāṣita verses spoken by King Śibi, especially those that extoll abhayadāna, the gift of

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28 For example, see verse 56.
29 A similar phenomenon can be seen in the Sanskritusumāñjali, which abbreviates story 11 from the Vikramacarita. As seen in the figure above, it hollows out the speech between verses 15 and 19, retaining the beginning and the end, while removing the middle.
safety. Similarly, the *Vikramacarita* also reuses the subhāṣita verses, since they are the most amenable to being taken out of context and inserted into a different story altogether. Consequently, the quotations in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, on the one hand, and in the dharmanibandhas and the *Vikramacarita*, on the other, almost never overlap.

It is possible that the *Śabdakalpadruma* preserves a different, shorter recension of the *Vahnipurāṇa* text; however, some of the subhāṣitas excluded from that abbreviated version are found quoted in the definitions for other words. In fact, one verse, quoted in the *Śabdakalpadruma* definition for ‘siddhiḥ’, and supposedly from this story, is not found in Bhowmik’s edition of the story at all. Perhaps the subhāṣitas were not so skillfully integrated into the story of King Śibi; it is as if this additive text was, in the medieval period, deconstructed again, with later writers untangling the narrative threads from the pithy maxims inserted within it, each taking from the story whatever suited their own purposes.

The ironic afterlife of King Śibi

While the dharmanibandhas quote the subhāṣitas in earnest, casting King Śibi as the epitome of a just and generous ruler, later texts, perhaps inevitably, reuse the king’s words ironically. For example, verse 18, in which the king urges the hawk not to hurt the dove, is recast in the *Hitopadeśa*, spoken by a cat who feigns non-violence so that he can get into a bird’s nest to eat all the hatchlings.

In another story collection, the *Vikramacarita*, 19 verses have been taken from the Śibi story and reused, split between two episodes chronicling the exploits of the legendary King Vikrama. Some of

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30 The *Smṛticandrikā* seems to be the only dharmanibandha to quote from the speech of the hawk (verses 25–26). On *abhayadāna*, see Heim 2004, 122ff. Commenting on verse 12, Bhowmik records a marginal note in manuscript C — *abhayadānasamaye* (2012, 530).
31 See verse 40bis.
33 Ludwik Sternbach has placed the composition of the *Vikramacarita* between the ‘first decade of the fourteenth century’ and ‘the first half of the sixteenth century’ (1964, 414). As part of his evidence, Sternbach mentions quotations
these verses are, perhaps, borrowed via the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, whose author, Hemādri, the *Vikramacarita* quotes by name.\(^{34}\) In story 11 of the *Vikramacarita*, the verses are used without irony.\(^{35}\) This story is, interestingly, also about self-sacrifice and also involves friendship between birds and humans: a village is forced to sacrifice one person each day to a rākṣasa who eats humans, and the next sacrifice will be a certain brāhmaṇa’s son, who, in a previous life, was the friend of a certain bird — perhaps a sly reference to the *śyenakapotīya*. While that bird is telling his father — the king of birds — about the rākṣasa, Vikrama is sitting nearby and, overhearing their conversation, decides to go and offer himself to the rākṣasa in place of the brāhmaṇa’s son. When the rākṣasa arrives, he praises Vikrama in verse, using lines borrowed from the speech of Śibi in the *Vahnipurāṇa*. Vikrama, in turn, recites a series of subhāṣitas to him, again borrowed from the *Vahnipurāṇa*, convincing him to stop eating humans. These are the final verses in the story; thereafter, the rākṣasa commits himself to non-violence.\(^{36}\) But in the story of King Śibi, these pithy maxims are not enough to sate the hunger of the hawk (it is unclear what the rākṣasa in the *Vikramacarita* eats thereafter). In fact, the hawk counters the king’s subhāṣitas with solid legal reasoning, which is later quoted in the *Smṛticandrikā*, a 13\(^{\text{th}}\)-century legal digest, as the conclusion to a chapter on how to deal with scriptural laws that contradict one another.\(^{37}\)

On the other hand, in story 13 of the *Vikramacarita*, ten verses borrowed from King Śibi are used ironically, recited by a sage to an audience in a shrine which Vikrama is visiting.\(^{38}\) The sage extols the virtue of putting one’s life on the line for the sake of others, as well as the merit accrued in providing safety for all creatures. But when a brāhmaṇa and his wife fall into the river, neither the sage nor anyone else in the crowd rushes to help them; Vikrama, on the other hand, saves the couple by pulling them out of the river. In that story, a contrast is created between merely reciting subhāṣitas and actually taking action, putting one’s own life at risk. Perhaps there is some of that contrast in the *Vahnipurāṇa śiber upākhyāna* as well; while King Śibi is well versed in the dharmaśāstras, as he himself declares, none of his words can persuade the hawk to give up its prey. In fact, the extended debate between king and hawk serves to heighten the tension between action and speech, filled as it is with didactic verses intoned by the king, which later became standard reference material incorporated into legal digests. But eventually, the king must offer up his own flesh; his words are not enough.

\(^{34}\) Ed. Edgerton 1926, II, 79.

\(^{35}\) See verses 15, 16, 18, & 19, as well as 76–79 of the present edition, spoken by Indra. Verse 56, although not attributed to a speaker, may be imagined to have been spoken by King Śibi. These correspond to verses 7–15 in story 11 of the *Vikramacarita*.

\(^{36}\) Edgerton 1926, I, 109–113. See also the Buddhist story of Maitrībala, in which the Buddha, in a previous life, offers his flesh to a yaksā.

\(^{37}\) See verses 25–26 of the present edition.

\(^{38}\) See verses 27–34 & 53–54 of the present edition, corresponding to verses 4–13 of story 13 in the *Vikramacarita*.

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from the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, which he places in the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century (413). Scholars now believe that it was composed in the 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century (Yamashita 1998, 31), but this does not change Sternbach’s overall argument.
The question of how to edit a purāṇic story, or whether it is practical or even possible to do so, has been debated since at least the mid-twentieth century, especially following the publication of the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*.\(^{39}\) When some scholars began to produce critical editions of purāṇas, using the same principles that V. S. Sukthankar developed for the *Mahābhārata*, other scholars objected; in particular, Madeleine Biardeau rejected the attempt to reconstruct an archetype from multiple recensions, declaring that ‘such a text never existed.... for this reason the main concern of the editors should be to publish not only the different recensions as they are, but also, when necessary, the different versions of each recension’.\(^{40}\) In the case of the present edition, there is currently not enough material evidence to speak of different recensions of the *Vahnipurāṇa śiber upākhyāna*, let alone an archetype with any sort of historical relevance. The oldest manuscript — the Nepalese one — dates, speculatively, to the 12th century; the oldest quotations of the text, similarly, are also found in 12th-century dharmanibandhas, such as the *Krtyakalpataru*. But these witnesses do not cover even half of the text. Thus, it has not been possible to create a stemma for the entire text, with every witness represented; for example, it would be impossible to infer a relationship between the *Śatapañcāśatka* and the *Liṅgapurāṇa*, since they never overlap. Moreover, since many verses are attested in only a couple of witnesses with very little variation, it has not been necessary to take recourse to a stemma. However, there are a number of verses for which there are a large number of attestations, and, in those cases, an individual stemma has been created for each of those verses.

**Methodology**

In the spirit of Biardeau’s assertion that every version of the text is important, the starting point for this edition has been the diplomatic transcription of each and every available source — the Nepalese manuscript, Bhowmik’s edition with all its variant readings, as well as all excerpts quoted in later texts, also with variant readings if they are given. These transcriptions — alongside digital images, where possible — are included in the supplementary material. For published texts, information about the edition which has been transcribed — the location of the physical copy, as well as the provenance of the digital facsimile — has been provided where available.

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39 Bakker 2019, 178ff.
40 Biardeau 1968, 123.
The transcriptions of each verse were normalized and aligned with the help of computer software, and then a critical text was produced from that alignment. For the majority of the verses, this involved correcting scribal errors that obscured the meaning of the text. But for each verse that had a large degree of variation, the alignment was used to create a phylogenetic tree, using the neighbour joining algorithm. The tree was rooted by taking a branch that encompassed all witnesses of the Vahnipurāṇa — including quotations attributed to it — as an ingroup, and this rooted tree was used as a stemma. The text at the root was then reconstructed using the Fitch algorithm. If there was a split, i.e., two viable readings for a given lemma, one from the Vahnipurāṇa branch and one from the other branch (the outgroup), the reading from the Vahnipurāṇa branch was favoured, since, when a verse is used outside of the Vahnipurāṇa śiber upākhyāna, it often bears contextual differences: for example, vocatives are changed, since the addressee of a speech is different. In the instance of multiple viable readings even within the Vahnipurāṇa branch, the readings from VpBH and VpN were favoured. Using this as a starting point, grammar, syntax, and context were then taken into consideration, which may have resulted in a different variant being chosen. In a few cases — verses 44, 58, 64, and 68 — the text was emended.

41 Li 2022b. See Li 2017 for details on the normalization of Sanskrit texts.
42 As implemented in SplitsTree (Huson & Bryant 2006).
43 Fitch 1971. See the documentation in Li 2022b for a more detailed treatment of the procedure as well as further bibliography.
The effective result of this method is thus: if the reading from the Vahnipurāṇa ingroup agreed with the reading from more distant sources, that reading was accepted. Otherwise, among the sources of the Vahnipurāṇa itself, preference was given to Bhowmik’s edition and the Nepalese manuscript over the quotations found in medieval dharmanibandhas. The text that emerges, then, is a text in transition: it brings into focus the Vahnipurāṇa śiber upākhyāna as it reuses older sources and is in turn quoted and reused by later writers, highlighting its influence on medieval and early modern Sanskrit literature and beyond.

The fully positive critical apparatus presents variant readings from Sanskrit printed editions, manuscripts, quotations, and parallels. A Pali parallel is given for verse 7. For the Mahābhārata, variants have mainly been taken from the text of the critical edition and the southern recension; some verses which appear only in the apparatus of the critical edition have also been collated. Commentarial glosses, as well as Prakrit, Tibetan, and Chinese parallels have been noted in the translation, on the page facing the text edition. In the online supplementary material, a digital edition has been included, which was the basis for the critical text in this article. In addition, all transcriptions, alignments, and trees used in the process of its creation have also been provided. The aim has been to present the critical edition as a fully open and reproducible procedure: an interested reader may examine each step in the process and critique or modify any element of it. It is hoped that this will also make it easier to reuse the work in future scholarship, whether on this text specifically or on a larger corpus.

44 As seen in the figure above, selecting all Vahnipurāṇa sources to use as an ingroup usually results in other closely aligned sources, such as from the Mahābhārata, being included in the ingroup.
45 Many of these parallels were discovered thanks to the Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (GRETIL) and the Resource Library for Dharmaśāstra Studies of the University of Texas at Austin.
46 The present work forms part of an effort toward creating digital editions that are, at once, critical, diplomatic, and documentary; see Li 2020 for a discussion on the topic.
Metre

The text is mostly composed in anuṣṭubh ślokas, with the occasional verse expanded to three lines. The following vipulās are found:

- na-vipulā (˘ ˘ ˘ -̆): 38c, 72c
- bha-vipulā (- ˘ ˘ -̆): 35a, 70a, 79a
- ma-vipulā (- - - -̆): 6a, 23c, 26a, 66c, 77a

Verses 19-20 are in jagatī, and a variant reading in 19 renders it in vaṃśasthā metre.

Structural differences from the Bhowmik edition

The verse numbering in the present edition is identical to the numbering found in the Bhowmik edition, with the following exceptions:

- in verse 64, pādas b and d have been switched
- verse 58 now encompasses 3 lines, and verses 59–73 have shifted up one line
- an extra verse, 40bis, has been inserted between 40 and 41

Sources & abbreviations

Vahnipurāṇa, and quotations thereof

VPB, VPBH, VPBL-A Vahnipurāṇa (ed. Bhowmik 2012, 530–537)
VPM Nepalese manuscript (BNF Sanscrit 1442.2)
VPMN AN ante correctionem
VPMPC post correctionem
VPCC Caturvargacintāmaṇi (ed. Siromaṇi 1871, 948–949)
VPVS, VPVŚ Sabdakalpadruma, quoting the siber upākhyāna chapter (Rādhākāntadeva)
‘duḥkhī’ (1857, 962; 1886, pt. 2, 723)
‘śiviḥ’ (1848, 5393–5395; 1886, pt. 5, 105–106)
‘siddhiḥ’ (1848, 6151; 1886, pt. 5, 351)
VPVS(D) Sabdakalpadruma, quoting the dānāvasthānirnaya chapter
‘śaraṇāgataḥ’ (1848, 5155; 1886, pt. 5, 28)
‘sādhuh’ (1848, 6081; 1886, pt. 5, 329)
VPV Vācaspatya (Tarkavachaspati 1962, 5279)
VPVŚ Vidhānapārijāta (ed. Śāstrī 1951, vol. 3, 423)

Mahābhārata, and quotations thereof

Āraṇyakaparvan (vol. 3, 427)

For an explanation of anuṣṭubh metre and its variations, as well as their distribution in the Mahābhārata, see Ingalls & Ingalls 1991 and Tokunaga 1995. See Shackleton Bailey 1951, 19 for the distribution of vipulās in the Śatapañcā-śatka.

VPVS is only used to indicate readings in the 1886 edition that differ from the older edition.

This is not found in the Bhowmik edition.

Quotations attributed to the Mahābhārata may not appear in any edition of the Mahābhārata itself.

47 For an explanation of anuṣṭubh metre and its variations, as well as their distribution in the Mahābhārata, see Ingalls & Ingalls 1991 and Tokunaga 1995. See Shackleton Bailey 1951, 19 for the distribution of vipulās in the Śatapañcā-śatka.

50 Quotations attributed to the Mahābhārata may not appear in any edition of the Mahābhārata itself.
MBH^c \quad Āraṇyakaparvan\ verses found only in the critical apparatus
   \quad Šāntiparvan\ (vol. 13, 95–96; vol. 15, 957)
   \quad Anuśāsanaparvan\ (vol. 17, 855, 1014)
MBH^g \quad Mahābhārata\ southern\ recension\ (ed. Śāstrī 1933–1936)
   \quad Āraṇyakaparvan\ (vol. 4, 651–653)
   \quad Šāntiparvan\ (vol. 14, 905)
MBH_A \quad Aparārka\ (ed. Āpaṭe 1903, 375)
MBH_BH \quad Bhagavantabhāṣkara — Dānamayūkha\ (ed. Bhaṭṭa 1909, 250)
MBH_CC \quad Caturvargacintāmaṇi\ (ed. Śiromaṇi 1871, 947)
MBH_D \quad Dānasāgara\ (ed. Bhattacharya 1956, 562)
MBH^D-A \quad witness\ A\ (or\ IO)\ variants\ from\ apparatus
MBH^D-K \quad Kṛtyakalpataru — Dānakāṇḍa\ (ed. Brick 2009, 490)
MBH^D-J \quad witness\ J\ (A,\ C, etc.)\ variants\ from\ apparatus
MBH_SM \quad Smṛticandrikā\ (ed. Srinivasacharya 1914, 17)^51
MBH_VP \quad Vidhānapārijāta\ (ed. Śāstrī 1951, vol. 3, 423)

Nandipurāṇa\ quotations^52
NP_A \quad Aparārka\ (ed. Āpaṭe 1903, 375)
NP_CC \quad Caturvargacintāmaṇi\ (ed. Śiromaṇi 1871, 946)
NP_D \quad Dānasāgara\ (ed. Bhattacharya 1956, 563)
NP_K \quad Kṛtyakalpataru — Dānakāṇḍa\ (ed. Brick 2009, 490)
NP-K-AI \quad witness\ A (C, J, etc.)\ variants\ from\ apparatus

Vikramacarita,\ editions\ and\ quotations\ thereof
VC^c \quad Vikramacarita\ (ed. Edgerton 1926, 101–102, 115)
VC^v \quad Dwātrimśatputtalikāsimhāsana\ (ed. Vidyāsāgara 1936, 118–121, 130–131)
VC_K \quad Śaṃskṛtakusumāñjali,\ abbreviation\ of\ story\ 11\ (Śāstrī 1958, 159)^53

Hitopadeśa
HP^C \quad Hitopadeśa\ (ed. Church Mission Press 1847, 11)
HP^K \quad Hitopadeśa\ (ed. Johnson 1840, 19)
HP^K-I \quad variant\ reading\ in\ footnote

other\ parallels
KV \quad Karuṇāvajrāyudha\ (ed. Caturavijaya 1916, 23, 38)
LP \quad Liṅgapurāṇa\ (ed. Bhaṭṭācārya 1885, 418)
NMP \quad Nāradīyamahāpurāṇa\ (ed. Kṛṣṇadāsa 1867, 24v)
ŚP \quad Śāṅgadhorapaddhati\ (ed. Peterson 1888, 231)
ŚPS \quad Satapaṃcāśatka\ (ed. Shackleton Bailey 1951, 42, 46, 54, 77, 81, 125)
ŚPS-A \quad witness\ A (B, D, etc.)\ variants\ from\ apparatus
T \quad Taishō Tripiṭaka\ (SAT Daizōkyō\ Text\ Database)

em. \quad emendation

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^51 Quotation\ is\ attributed\ to ‘Vyāsa’.
^52 See\ Hazra 1954, 108ff.\ on\ a certain ‘Nāndipurāṇa’\ and\ its\ relation\ to\ the\ Vahnipurāṇa.
^53 The\ same\ abbreviated\ story\ can\ be\ found\ in\ the\ Śaṃskṛtaṃuktāvalī\ (Candra 1986, 36–37).
śiber upākhyāna

maitreya uvāca —

śṛṇu rājan pravakṣyāmi svamāṃsam śibinā yathā |
samāṃsam dattavān satyaṃ purā hy auśinaro yuvā || 1 ||

satyadānarataṃ jñātvā śibim indrāśuśukṣaṇī |
jijñāsārthaṃ sameyātāṃ vartamāne mahādhvare || 2 ||
vahnir bhūtvā kapotas tu hariśyenāt puraḥsaraḥ |
śaṇārthī mahīpālaṃ nililye bhayavihvalaḥ || 3 ||

trāhi māṃ prthivipaśty avadac chyenajād bhayāt |
sa tam āśvāsāyāmāsa kapotāṃ śaṇāgatam || 4 ||

rājānam upagamyātha śyenaḥ provāca saṃsadi |
vacanaṃ śṛṇu me rājan kṣudhārtasya kuṭumbinaḥ || 5 ||
dharmātmānaṃ tvām āhur vai pṛthivyāṃ sarvapārthivaḥ |
tadviruddham kathāṃ karma kartum icchasi pārthiva || 6 ||
The story of King Śibi

Maitreya said:

Listen King! I will speak of how Śibi truly gave an equal share of his own flesh!
For once upon a time, there was a prince of the Uśīnaras:

Knowing that Śibi was devoted to truth and giving, Indra and Agni,
wanting to test him, went to him while a great sacrifice was taking place.

A dove, who had been Agni — pursued by Indra as a hawk —,
overcome with fear and seeking shelter, alighted on the king.

‘Help me, Protector of the Earth!’ it said, in fear of the hawk;
and so the king comforted the shelter-seeking dove.

Then the hawk reached the king, and it said, in distress:
‘Listen to me, King, I am a householder sick with hunger!
All the lords of the earth say you are a just person;
would you commit this act, contradicting them, Ruler?’
King Śibi in the Vahnipurāṇa

Kṛtaghnā bhavatā dānaḥ sādhunāsādhavo jitāḥ | kṣamayā krūrakarmāṇaḥ satyenāṁtavādinaḥ || 7 || sarāgā vitarāgena tathākopena kopinaḥ | satṛṣṇā vītṛṣṇena tvayā lokalḥ parājitāḥ || 8 || sarāgā vītaraṇeṇa tathākopena kopinaḥ | satṛṣṇā vītṛṣṇena tvayā lokalḥ parājitāḥ || 8 ||

nopakārapare 'py evam upakāraparo janaḥ | apakārapare 'pi tvam upakāraparāḥ sadā || 10 ||
mamaiva vihito dhātrā bhakṣo 'yam tam samutsṛja | rakṣantam ātmano dharmaṃ kṣudhitasya kapotakam || 11 ||

sa śyenam āha samprāptas trāṇārthi sannidhau mama | khago 'syāsmin kathāṃ kuryāṃ tyāgaṃ sadbhīr Vigarihitaṃ || 12 ||


8ab vītarāgeṇa Vṛ-B Vṛ-BH; vītarāgeṇa Vṛ-BH-C -B Vṛ-BH-D. 8cd tathākopena VṛB; kopinaḥ VṛB-A. 9ab svārthāḥ svaparārthās VṛB; svārthāniparārthās VṛB-Ś -A. 10ab nopakārapare VṛS; nopakāraparo VṛB; nāpakāraparo VṛB-A. upakāraparo VṛB; upakāraparo VṛB-A. janaḥ VṛB; VṛB-S; yathā Śṛ. 10cd apakārapare VṛS; apakāraparo VṛB. sadā VṛB; VṛB-Ś; yathā Śṛ. 11ab mamaiva VṛB-A VṛP; mamaśa VṛB; yas tu me Mbh-Ś Mbh. vihito dhātrā VṛB; VṛP; daivavihito Mbh-Ś Mbh. bhakṣo 'yam VṛB; VṛP; bhakṣo 'yam VṛP; bhakṣaḥ Mbh-Ś Mbh. tam samutsṛja VṛB VṛP; tvam samutsṛja VṛP; tvam samutsṛja VṛP-S; ksatriyapunāgava Mbh-Ś Mbh. Cf. also Mbh Anūśāsanapurāṇa, appendix I, 8.41: yas tu me vihito bhakṣaḥ svayaṃ devaiḥ sanātanaḥ (vol. 17, 855).

11cd rakṣantam VṛB-A; svam rakṣam VṛB. For the second half of the verse, Mbh reads: tam utsṛja mahīpāla kapotam imam eva me. Mbh reads mahīrāja in place of mahīpāla. 12ab trāṇārthi VṛB VṛP; trāṇārtho VṛP; sannidhau VṛB VṛP; sannidhau VṛP; sannidhau VṛP-S. 12cd khago VṛB; tyāgo VṛB-A. 'syāsmin VṛB; syama VṛB-A. kathāṃ VṛB; kathāṃ VṛB-A.
You conquer the ungrateful by generosity, the evil by good, cruelty by forgiveness, liars by truth.

The raging by detachment, the angry by calm, the lustful by dispassion, — so are the people conquered by you.

Everyone is concerned with their own benefit, while some aim to benefit others too. You aim always to benefit others, like a fruiting tree.

People don’t even help others who help them; you, even when others intend to harm you, are always there to help.

That food has been furnished by the maker, just for me! Release the dove — protecting your own dharma — to the one who hungers.’

He said to the hawk: ‘This bird which has arrived at my side for protection — how could I abandon it, an act reviled by the wise?

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54 The syntax of this verse is unclear. Grammatically, it seems to read, ‘the dove, which is protecting its own dharma’, but that does not seem to make sense in this context. The parallel in the Mahābhārata reads: ‘That food which has been divinely appointed to me, Chief of Warriors, is this very dove; release it to me, Protector of the Earth!’ Cf. also the hawk’s response in the Uttarādhyayanatīkā: bhukkhito haṃ, na maham dhammo mone thāi (ed. Vijayomaṅgasūri 1936, 244v), ‘Ich bin hungrig. Da denke ich nicht an den Dharma’ (Oberlies 2009, 309).
lohbhā dhveśād bhayād vāpi yas tyajec charanāgatam | 
brahmahatyāsamaṃ tasya pāpam āhur maniśināḥ | || 13 ||
sāstreu niskṛtir drṣṭā mahāpātakinām api | 
saraṇāgatahātus tu na drṣṭā niskṛtīh kvacit | || 14 ||
yathātmānah priyāh prāṇāh sarvesām prāṇinām tathā | 
tasmān mṛtyubhayatrástrā trātavyāḥ prāṇino budhaih | || 15 ||
janamṛtyujāra duḥkhhair nityaṃ sāṃśārasāgare | 
jantavah parikliśyante mṛtyos trasyanti te yataḥ | || 16 ||
yannimitmā bhavc chokes trāso vā krodha eva vā | 
āyāsō vā yato mūlaṃ ekāṅgam api tam tyajet | || 17 ||
marisāyāmiti yad duḥkham puruṣasyapajāyate | 
śakyaṃ tenānanaṃ para ipi parirakṣitum | || 18 ||


14ab drṣṭā | VpSl | MbhC MbhKv; drṣṭvā VpBr.


15cd mṛtyubhayatrástrā | VpBr VpNc; mṛtyubhayāt te 'pi Vc Cc Vc'. trātavyāḥ prāṇino budhaih | VpN Vc Cc Vc'; raksitavyāḥ prayatnatah VpBr.

16ab janamṛtyujāra duḥkhhair | VpBr Vc Cc Vc'; janamamṛtyujāra duḥkhhait VpN nityaṃ VpN Vc Cc Vc, magnāh VpBr.

sāṃśārasāgare | VpBr Vc Cc Vc'; sasārasāgare VpN.

16cd jantavah parikliśyante | VpBr; jantavah parikliśyante VpN; kliśyanti jantavah ghore Vc Cc Vc', mṛtyos | VpBr VpN Vc Cc; marto-
yās Vc'; trasanty te yataḥ | Vc'; trastam tv ime tatāh VpBr'; trasanty te 'pi ca VpN; trasanty mṛtyutah Vc'.


18ab marisāyāmiti | VpBr VpN Vc Cc Vc'; maritvam iti Hc Hp HcHp.

18cd śakyaṃ tenānanaṃ | Vc'; śakyaṃ tenānanaṃ VpBr; śakyaṃ nānumānaṃ Hc Hp HcHp Vc'; yuktas tenānananaṃ VpN HcHp Vc'. paro 'pi | VpBr VpNc HcHp HcHp-Vc'; pārena Hc Hp HcHp; tad Vc'; parirakṣitum | VpBr VpNc HcHp-Vc'; parivarṇitum Hc Hp HcHp; vaktum kenacit kvacit Vc'.
Whether from greed, enmity, or fear, if one abandons a seeker of shelter, the learned say his crime is equal to killing a brāhmaṇa.

In the Śāstras, you see even great criminals being pardoned, but someone who abandons a shelter-seeker nowhere finds pardon.

Just as your own life is dear to you, so it is the same for all creatures. Thus the wise say, you should protect those creatures trembling from fear of death.

In the ocean of saṃsāra, mortals are forever tormented by the pain of birth, death, and old age, since they tremble before mortality.\(^{55}\)

The cause of distress, fear, or anger, that root of misery should be renounced, even if it is a part of the body.\(^{56}\)

From the suffering that arises when a man realizes, ‘I will die’, it can be inferred that others should be protected as well:

\(^{55}\) See the wordplay in the variant reading in Vc:\(^2\): *marttyās trasyanti mṛtyutaḥ*, ‘mortals tremble before mortality’.

\(^{56}\) Many slight variations of this verse are found in different chapters and versions of the *Mahābhārata*, as well as in later quotations. Most editions have *yatamūla* in compound; however, Nilakanṭha comments: *yataḥ āyāsas taṁ mūlam kāranaṁ āyāsādeh ekāṅgam śaṅkaraśabdabhūtam api tyajet kim uta dhanadārādi* (ed. Kinjawadekar 1932, 296). In VP\(^n\), this verse has been added in the margin.
yathā ca te jīvitam ātmanaḥ priyam
tathā paresām api jīvitaṃ priyam |
saṃrakṣase jīvitam ātmano yathā
tathā paresām api rakṣa jīvitam || 19 ||
tasmāt tavāhaṃ na samarpayiṣye
kapotakāṃ śyena yad atra yuktam |
tvaṃ manyase tat karavāṇi sarvam 
ṛte kapotā khalu satyam atra || 20 ||
śyena uvāca —
āhārat sarvabhūtāni sambhavanti janeśvara |
āhāreṇa vivardhante tena jīvanti caiva hi || 21 ||
āhāram puṣkalam kurvan ciraṃ jivati prāṇabḥṛt |
na tv āhāravihino ’pi śakyam varttayitum ciraṃ || 22 ||
bhaksyād vilopitasyādyā mama prāṇāḥ viśāṃ pate 
visrjya kāyaṃ yāsyanti panthānam apunarbhavam || 23 ||
For just as your life is dear to you,
the lives of others are dear to them.
Since you protect your own life,
so protect the lives of others too.  

Therefore, I will not yield
this dove to you. Hawk — whatever
you deem appropriate,
I will do it all, truly; but please, not the dove!’

The hawk said:
‘Lord of Humans — it is because of food that all beings exist.
Through food they prosper; really, it is through food that they live.

Stocked up with food, a creature lives for a long time,
but deprived of food, it could not live long.

If food is withheld from me today, Sovereign of the People,
my vital breaths will leave my body and go the path of no return.

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57 See the discussion in the introduction on parallels in the Vasudevahinidi and the Uttarādhyayanaṭīkā.
mṛte ca mayi sarvam me putradāraṃ vinasyaṭi |
rakṣamānaḥ kapotaṃ tvam bahun prañān na rakṣasi || 24 ||
dharmaṃ yo bādhate dharma na sa dharmaḥ parantapa |
avirodhī tu yo dharmaḥ sa dharmaḥ sadbhir ucyate || 25 ||
tasmād virodhe dharmasya niścitya gurulāghavam |
yataḥ śriyas tato rājā kuru dharmavinirṇayam || 26 ||
rājovāca —

ekataḥ kratavah sarve samagravaradakṣiṇāḥ |
ekato bhayabhītasya prañānākṣiṇaṃ || 27 ||
nāto gurutaro dharmaḥ kaścid anyo 'sti khecara |
prañīnāṃ bhayabhitānāṃ abhayam yat pradiyate || 28 ||

24ab mṛte ca mayi sarvam me] VN; mṛte mayi nrpaśreṣṭha VP; pramṛte mayi dharmātman MV; pramṛte mayi sarvam me MV. putradāraṃ vinasyaṭi] VN; putradāraṃ kulaṃ VP; putradāraṃ marisya MV; yatra dārāṇaṃ kulaṃ VP-A.
24cd rakṣamānaḥ kapotaṃ tvam] VN; vinasyaṭi katham dharma VP; rakṣan kapotaṃ rājams tvam MV. bahūn prañān na rakṣasi] VN; bhavīṭa te nrpottama VP; bahūn prañān naśisyasi MV; bahūn prañān haniṣyasi MV. Witnesses N T G M of MV also read na rakṣasi.
25ab dharmaṃ] VP; dharma MV. dharma VP; dharma MV; dharmaviniścayam] VN; satyavikrama MV; siddhir ucyate MV; Witnesses D1,2,5 of MV also read siddhir ucyate.
25cd dharma] VP; dharma MV; dharma MV; dharmaviniścayam MV. sadbhīrya] VP; satyavikrama MV; siddhir ucyate MV. Witnesses D1,2,5 of MV also read siddhir ucyate.
26ab tasmād virodhe dharmasya] VP; vīrodhiṣu mahīpāla MV; vīrodhi MV. 26cd yataḥ śriyas tato rājā] VN; manyase gauravam yatra tat VP; yato bhūyas tato rājān MV; yato bhūyāṃs tato rājān MV; yato bhūyas tato vidvān MV. kuru] VN; kuru MV; kurusva VP. On kurusva dharmāniścayāṃ, MV comments, 'unepic cadence!' dharmavinirṇayam] VN; MV; dharmaṇiścayam MV; nrpottama VP.
Between the two halves of this verse, MV inserts: na bādhā vidyate yatra tāṃ dharmaṃ samudācaret || guru-lāghavam ajñāya dharmādharmāniścayē MV reads samupācaret for samudācaret.

rājovāca

rājovāca VN; śīvīr uvaça VP; śīvīr uvaça VCP; rājā MV.
27ab samagravaradakṣiṇāḥ] VP; NMVP VC; saṃpātavaramadakṣiṇāḥ VCP; MV. Witnesses MV. 27cd ekato bhayabhītasya] VP; VCP; MV; ekato bhavabhītasya VP-A; bhītasya VP. prañārakṣaṇaṃ VP; VCP; NMVP VC; caiva rakṣaṇam varam ekataḥ VP; prañādārakaṇaṃ MV.
28ab nātō] VP; VNP; VCP; VC; jaṅe VC; gurutaro] VP; VPC; VCP; gurudharo VP-A; bhūyāḥ paro VN; bhūyāṃs tato VC E VC. kaścid anyo] VP; VNP; VCP; VC; kaścin nānyo VC E. khecara] VN; khecara VP; bhūtale VCP; dehinām VC E; dehināḥ VC E.
28cd abhayam] VP; VNP; VCP; VC E VC; aḵṣayam VP-A; yat pradiyate] VP; VNP; VCP; yaḥ prayacchati VC E VC. 22

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And with my death, all my family will be destroyed.
You, while protecting the dove, fail to protect many other creatures.

Conqueror — a law which obstructs another law is no law;
but, the virtuous say, a law which is non-contradictory is really law.

Therefore, having ascertained which is weightier in a contradiction among laws,
on the basis of prosperity,⁵⁸ King, make a determination on the law!⁵⁹

The king said:

‘On the one hand are all the sacrifices with all their precious offerings,
on the other, protecting the life of a creature in fear.

Bird — there is no weightier law at all
than safety given to creatures in fear.

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⁵⁹ The Mahābhārata expands this to two verses, but the quote in the Smṛticandrikā, attributed to Vyāsa, uses this version here.
varam ekasya sattvasya pradattaṃ jīvitābhayam |
na ca viprasahasrasya gosahasram alaṅkṛtam || 29 ||
hemadhenuḍhādānāṃ dātāraḥ sulabhā bhuvi |
durlabhaḥ puruṣo loke sarvabhūtābhayapraṇaḥ || 30 ||
mahatām api yajñānaṃ kālena kṣiyate phalam |
bhitābhayapradānasya kṣaya eva na vidyate || 31 ||
abhayaṃ sarvabhūtebyo yo dadāti dayāparaḥ |
tasya dehād vimuktasya kṣayo nāsti kutaścana || 32 ||
dattam iṣṭam tapas taptaṃ tīrthasevā śrutaṃ tathā |
sarvāny abhayadānasya kalāṃ nārantaṇi soḍaśīm || 33 ||


30ab hemadhenuḍhādānāṃ dātāraḥ] Vp Vc Cc; hema-dhenu-dharā-dātā VpV; sulabhā bhuvij] VpB Vp Np VcC; sulabho jagati tale VpV.

30cd sarvabhūtābhayapraṇaḥ] VpB Vp Np VcC; sarvajīvadayāparah VcF; sarvajive dayāparah VcV.

31cd bhitābhayapradānasya] VpB Vp Np VcC; dattvābhayam pradānasya VcF; kṣaya] Vp Np VcC; kṣayam VpB.


It is better that a single being be granted life safety than a thousand adorned cattle granted to a thousand priests.\textsuperscript{60}

On the earth, it is easy to find givers of gold, cattle, land, and such; hard to find in the world is a man who gives safety to all beings.

The merit of even great sacrifices diminishes with time; there is absolutely no diminishing of the gift of safety to the terrified.

For he who, filled with compassion, gives safety to all beings, when he is sundered from his body, there is no diminishing\textsuperscript{61} at all.

Something offered, or sacrificed, a religious austerity performed, a pilgrimage, and even scripture — all together are not worth a sixteenth of the gift of safety.

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. \textit{Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad} 3.1.1: \textit{sa ha gavāṁ sahasram avarurodha | daśadaśa pādā ekoikasyāḥ śṛṅgayor ābaddhā babhūvuh}, ‘So he corralled a thousand cows; to the horns of each cow were tied ten pieces of gold’ (ed. & trans. Olivelle 1998, 76–77). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this passage. The variant reading \textit{go-sahasram sadaksinam}, ‘a thousand cows accompanied by offerings’, also bolsters this interpretation.

\textsuperscript{61} Here, as in the preceding verse, \textit{kṣaya} seems to refer to the diminishing of merit.
catuḥśāgaraparyantām yo dadyāt prthivīm imām |
sattvebhya hy abhayam yaś ca tayor abhayado 'dhikaḥ || 34 ||
api tyaje rājyam aham śārīram vāpi dustyajam |
na tv enaṃ bhayasantrastam tyaje dinām kapotakam || 35 ||
yan mamāsti śubham kīcchit tena janmani janmani |
bhavet trātā mahārtānām ārtināśāya dehinām || 36 ||
na hy aham kāmaya rājyam na svargaṃ nāpunarbhavam |
prāñināṃ duḥkhhataptānāṃ kāmaya duḥkhānāsanam || 37 ||
yathā tv anānṛtaṃ vāṇīṃ aham etāṃ udāhare |
satyena tena bhagavān prasīdatu maheśvara || 38 ||
āhārārthe samārambhas tava cāyam vihaṅgama |
tad yathaiva tavāhāraṃ manyase tad dadāmy aham || 39 ||
syenaḥ prāha mamāhāro na ṛte 'tra kapotakam |
tat tyaktvā kāmaya nāyam āhāraṃ rājyam || 40 ||
tasmāt tvam api bhpāla dehi nyāyārjitaṃ dhanam |
dānāj jñānaṃ tataḥ prāpya jñānāt siddhim avāpsyasī || 40 bis ||

34ab prthivīṃ] Vdp; Vp; VpC; Mbh; MbhC; MbhD; MbhK K; vasudhām Vc; VcY.
34cd sattvebhya hy abhayam yaś ca] MbhC; MbhK-A; abhayam yaś ca bhūtebhya Vdp; sattvebhya hy abhayam yac ca
VpC; yajec ca sarvvaṇajīaṣ tu VpC; abhayam yasya bhūtebhya VpC; sattvebhya 'tābhāyam yaś ca MbhA;
sattvebhya hy abhayam yasya MbhK; sattvebhya hy abhayam datte MbhD; sattvebhya hy abhayam dattvā MbhD-A; sa-
ebhya hy abhayam tasya MbhC-C; sarvebhya hy abhayam yasya MbhK-O; sattve sa hy abhayam yasya MbhK-J;
sattvebhya hy abhayam yasya MbhK-L; yās cābhāyam ca bhūtebhyaś Vc; yac cābhāyān ca bhūtebhyaś Vc; ekaś ca
jitām dadāyāt K. 
tayor abhayado 'dhikaḥ] VpN; MbhA; MbhC; MbhD; MbhK Vc; VcX K; yo dadāti tato 'dhikaḥ Vdp; yo
dadāti tato 'dhikam VpC; dharābhayaprado 'dhikaḥ MbhD-A; tayor adhikadehikaḥ MbhK-J.
35ab tyaje] VpC; tyajet Vdp.
36ab yan mamāstī] Vdp; Vp; VpC; janmanāsti Vdp-B; janmamo sti Vdp-C; janmamo sti Vdp-D.
36cd bhavet trātā] Vdp; bhavetrātā VpC; mahārtānām] Vdp; VpC; mahātmānām Vdp-A.
37ab nāpunarbhavam] Vdp-B; Vdp-C Vdp-D VpC; nāyur na bhavam Vdp.
38ab yathā tv anānṛtam] Vdp-B; Vdp-C Vdp-D; yathā stutibhṛtāṃ Vdp; yathātra nānṛtam VpC.
38cd satyena tena] Vdp; satyenaṃna VpC; mahēśvara] Vdp; maheśvarah VpC.
39ab āhārārthe] Vdp; āhārārtham Mbhś Mbhś; vihaṅgama] Mbhś Mbhś; vihaṅgamah Vdp.
39cd tad yathaiva tavāhāraṇam] Vdp; sākṣaya cāpy anyathā kartum Mbhś Mbhś. 
manyase tad dadāmy aham] Vdp; āhāro
40ab 'py adhikas tvāyā Mbhś Mbhś.
40cd āhāraṇa] Vdp; āhāri Vdp-U.

* This verse is only present, isolated, in VpS, under the entry for 'siddhiḥ', but attributed to the siber upākhyāna. It has been tentatively inserted here.
Between the one who gives the earth bounded by the four oceans,
and the one who gives safety to all beings, the safety-giver is greater.\(^{62}\)

I would surrender even my kingdom, or even my body, so hard to give up,
but I will not abandon this pitiful dove, trembling with fear.

By whatever good fortune I have accrued, in birth after birth,
let there be a protector of beings in great pain, to destroy their suffering.

For I do not desire kingdom, nor heaven, nor liberation;
I desire the destruction of suffering for suffering-stricken creatures.

As I have presented a valid explanation,
please let this truth be to your satisfaction, Great Lord!\(^{64}\)

This mission of yours is just for the sake of food, Bird,
so whatever food you wish, I will get it for you!’

The hawk declared: ‘My food is none other than the dove.
I want no other food apart from that, Your Majesty!

Therefore, Protector of the Earth, give me this deserved prize!
From giving you will obtain knowledge, and from knowledge attain fulfillment.

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\(^{62}\) In \(\text{VP}_{\text{N}}\), a scribal addition reads, ‘and who performs all the sacrifices’.

\(^{63}\) There are many variations on this verse; in particular, the \textit{Caturvargacintāmani} has two versions, one attributed to the \textit{Mahābhārata} (\text{MBhC}) which is closer to \(\text{VP}_{\text{N}}\), and the other attributed to the \textit{Vahnipurāṇa} (\text{VPC}) which is closer to \(\text{VP}_{\text{BC}}\). It is not found in \text{MBh}\(^{C}\) or \text{MBh}\(^{S}\).

\(^{64}\) The vocative \textit{mahēśvara} and the polite \textit{bhagavān} here suggests the king is speaking to a god, which contrasts with the vocative \textit{vihāṅgama} and the second-person \textit{tava} in the next verse. The quotation from the \textit{Caturvargacintāmani} ends here, at verse 38; verse 39 is only found, loosely paralleled, in the \textit{Āranyakaparvan}. 
śyenaḥ kapotakān hanti sthitir esā sanātani |
mā rājan mārgam ajñātva kadalīskandham āruha || 41 ||

rājāvocad amārgena varte nāham kvacit khaga |
dharmaśāstropadiśto 'yam dharmah sattvadayāparaḥ || 42 ||
sarvasattvesu yad dānām ekasattve tu yā dayā |
sarvasattvapradānāc ca dayaikātra viśiṣyate || 43 ||
sarvavedā na tat kuryuḥ sarvaśāstrāṇi khecara |
sarvatīrthābhiṣekaḥ ca yaḥ kuryāt prānīnāṃ dayām || 44 ||
vāṁmanahkarmabhīr ye tu sarvabūtahite ratāḥ |
dayādarśitapanthāno brahmaḷokam vrajantī te || 45 ||
gacchāṃs tiṣṭhan svapana jāgrad yo hitam na samācaret |
narebhyāḥ sa pāsur jñeya ātmano 'py ahitaḥ sa vai || 46 ||
duḥkhino 'duḥkhino vāpi prāṇino labdhacakṣuṣaḥ |
ātmavat paripaśyanti te yānti paramāṃ gatim || 47 ||
A hawk kill doves; this has been established forever,
King — if you can’t find the path, don’t go climbing a plantain tree!⁶⁵

The king said: ‘Bird — nowhere have I taken the wrong path;
this dharma, whose aim is compassion for all beings, is prescribed in the Dharmaśāstras.

Between a gift given to all beings and compassion for a single being,
it is compassion which is greater than a gift to all beings.

All the Vedas and all the Śāstras, Bird, and bathing at every pilgrimage site,
do not cause someone to have compassion for living beings.

But those who devote their speech, thought, & action to the well-being of all,
those whose path is guided by compassion — they proceed to the Brahma world.

Moving, standing, sleeping, or awake, he who does not work toward the benefit
of humans is known as a beast, and he is of no benefit even to himself.

Those creatures endowed with eyes, who see others — suffering
or not — as themselves, proceed to the ultimate path.

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⁶⁵ Nīlakaṇṭha, reading sāram ajñātva kadalīskandham āsaja, comments: kadalīskandham āsajeti kadalīskandhatulye niḥśāro ‘smi dharmē mā sajjo bhavety arthaḥ (ed. Kinjawadēkār 1930, 203). The simile of the trunk of the plantain tree (Pali kadalīkkhandha) being insubstantial is common in Buddhist literature (Bronkhorst 2007, 102; Cone 2001, 629; Lindtner 1981, 170). In fact, the plantain is not a tree, and its trunk is a pseudostem, formed of tightly packed leaves. Cf. also dhammakkhandha (Pali dhammakkhandha).
prāṇināṃ vadhyaṃmāṇaṁ tu yaḥ śaktah samupekṣate |
sa yāti narakaṁ ghoram iti prāhur maniṣinaḥ || 48 ||
tubhyaṃ hi sumahad rājyaṃ prayacchāmi vihaṅgama |
yathā kāmayase vānyad varjayitvā kapotakam || 49 ||

śyenaḥ prāha kim etat te prītir khage dhṛdā |
kathaṃ ced asya tulyāṇi svamāṃsāni prayaccha me || 50 ||

rājā tam abravid dhṛṣṭo yan me māṃsāni yācase |
etad yacchāmi te sadyah svamāṃsam tulayā dhṛtam || 51 ||
yat prāṛthito 'ṣmi bhadrāṃ te priyam etad dadāmi te |
satyadharmaratasātha sataḥ sumahad aprīyaṃ || 52 ||
adhruvena śārīreṇa pratikṣanavīśinā |
dhruvam yo nārjayed dharmam śocyo 'sau mūḍhacetaṇāḥ || 53 ||
yadi prāṇyupakārāya deho 'yaṃ nopayujyate |
tataḥ kim upakāro 'syā pratyaham kriyate vrthā || 54 ||

49ab prāṇināṃ] VṛBhi MaHc; MBHd; MBHk; prāṇināṃ MaHa; MBHk-J MBHk-L. vadhyaṃmāṇaḥ] VṛBhi MaHa; MBHc; MBHd; MBHk; badhyamāṇaṃ MBHv; radhyamāṇaṃ MBHv-U1; MBHv-U2. tu] VṛBhi; hi MaHa; MBHc; MBHd; MBHk; MBHv-U. śaktah] VṛBhi MaHa; MBHc; MBHd; MBHk; MBHv; Sakrah MaHk-L. samupekṣate] VṛBhi MaHa; MBHc; MBHd; MBHk; MBHv; samupekṣyate MBHd-A MBHk-C. 1
48cd val prāhur maniṣinaḥ] VṛBhi MaHa; MBHc; MBHk; iti hy āhur maniṣiṇaḥ VṛBhi-B VṛBhi-C; idam āhur maniṣiṇaḥ MBHd; MBHk-AI MBHk-C; itiḥ āhur maniṣiṇaḥ MBHk-J MBHk-L; idam ākur maniṣiṇaḥ MBHk-U1; MBHk-U2; yāvad indrāś caturdāsa MBHv.
49ab tubhyaṃ] VṛBhi VṛPs; tulyam VṛBhi-B VṛBhi-C.
49cd vānyad] VṛBhi; cānyad VṛPs.
50cd ced] VṛBhi; cid VṛPs.
51ab rājā tam abravid dhṛṣṭo] VṛBhi VṛPs; anugraham imam manye MBHc; MBHd; yan me māṃsāni yācase] VṛBhi VṛPs; śyena yan mābhīyacase MBHd; yan mām śyenābhībhasa MBHd. 1
51cd etad yacchāmi te sadyaḥ] VṛBhi VṛPs; tasmit te 'dya pradāsyāmi MBHc; MBHd; Cf. also MBHd Anuśāsanaparvan, appendix I, 8.44: tatas tvam me prayacchāya svamāṃsām tulyā dhṛtam (vol. 17, 855).
52ab dadāmi] VṛBhi; vadāmi VṛBhi-B VṛBhi-C VṛBhi-D.
52cd syāthā] VṛBhi; syāsya VṛBhi-B VṛBhi-C VṛBhi-D.
But the powerful one, who neglects a creature being slain, goes to a terrible hell — so declare the wise.

I offer you my marvellous kingdom, Bird, or whatever else you desire, apart from the dove!’

The hawk said: ‘Why is your favour so stuck on that bird? How about if you offer me an equal amount of your own flesh?’

The king replied: ‘I am pleased that you ask for my flesh! I offer you my flesh right away, weighed to measure. I will give what is asked of me, Sir, this which is of worth to you; since for one who is devoted to the law of truth, it is utterly worthless. With his perishable body in continual decay, he who does not strive for imperishable dharma is deplorable, a fool. If this body is not employed in the service of living beings, then why serve it every day, in vain?’

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66 See note to verse 66 below.
ekā eva satāṃ mārgo yad aṅgīkṛtapālanam  
parārtham udyatāḥ santaḥ santaḥ kiṃ kiṃ na kurvate  
paraduḥkhāturā nityaṃ svasukhāni mahānty api  
antaḥpuravarastrīṣu na rājye na ca jīvite  
dahantam akarot kroḍe pāvakaṃ yad apāṃpatiḥ ||

na vidyate yadā māṃsānā tapaṇaṃ suvandanaḥ  
nauaḥ māṃsānā tapaṇaṃ suvandanaḥ  
paraduḥkhāturā nityaṃ svasukhāni mahānty api  
nauaḥ māṃsānā tapaṇaṃ suvandanaḥ  
paraduḥkhāturā nityaṃ svasukhāni mahānty api  
paraduḥkhāturā nityaṃ svasukhāni mahānty api  
apālaṃ kroḍe parārthuḥ santaḥ santaḥ kiṃ kiṃ na kurvate  
tādṛg apy ambudher vāri jaladais tat prāpīyate ||

ekā eva satāṃ mārgo yad aṅgīkṛtapālanam  
dahantam akarot kroḍe pāvakaṃ yad apāṃpatiḥ ||

56ab tyaktvātmasukhahbhocchāṃ] VpSp Cs; tyaktvātmasukhahbhocchāṃ VpBr; tyaktvātmasukhahbhocchāṃ VpSp.  
56cd nityaduḥkhāturā] VpBr VpSp VpSp(a) VpV; 'tyantaduḥkhāturā VcV.  
57ab tu ṣa vāṣaṭaḥ] VpBr VpSp VpSp(a) VpV; 'tvaṃśaṭaḥ VcV.  
57cd tataḥ] VpBr VpSp; 'tyantaduḥkhāturā VcV.  
58ab kāvita] VpBr VpSp; dhṛtyamāṇas tu tulayā mahānta VmV.  
58cd prakaṭīmāṃsā] VpBr VpSp; āruṭā māṃsā VmV.  
59ab satāṃ mārgo] VpBr, VpSp; 'tvaṃśaṭaḥ VmV.  
59cd satāṃ mārgo] VpBr, VpSp; 'tvaṃśaṭaḥ VmV.  
59ef vāṣaṭaḥ VmV & MmV; utkṛttamāṃsā VmV.  
62cd kroḍe] VpBr VpSp VpSp(a); kāḍhe VmV-A; kroḍe VpV.
Having said this, the king tore off his flesh, and weighed an amount equal to the dove, with delight.

The noble, having abandoned their desire for their own happiness and pleasure, who tend toward the happiness of all beings, constantly suffer from the suffering of others.

But the dove weighed more on the scale, so again, the ruler tore off more flesh and gave it up.

When no amount of flesh equalled the dove the noble one, even bereft of flesh, experienced the highest joy; when it did not weigh enough, he himself climbed onto the scale.

Not among the excellent women of the palace, nor in the kingdom, not among the living, no one could compare to him, whose mind was devoted to compassion.

Perpetually pained by the suffering of others, the great-souled do not expect their own pleasures to abound; they are devoted to the welfare of all beings.

Striving for the sake of others, there is nothing the virtuous could not achieve, just as the water of the ocean is drunk by the clouds.67

There is only one path for the virtuous: keeping one’s promises, as the lord of the waters made a burning fire in his chest.68

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67 Verses 61–63 seem to be about water and fire, the ocean and the sun. Although jalada, ‘rain-giver’, is typically a cloud, in the Ṛgveda, Agni is also associated with rain because he is identified with lightning (Jamison & Brereton 2014, 204). The underwater fire (see the next verse) is also said to drink the ocean and let it out again. These verses may also pertain to the worship of Agni, since this story is part of the Vahnipurāṇa.

68 This seems to be a reference to vadavāgni, the ‘submarine doomsday fire’ that is held at the bottom of the ocean (Doniger O’Flaherty 1971, 13). It may also be a reference to Varuṇa creating fire on the waters in Ṛgveda V.85, or to Agni as Apām napāt, the child of the waters who ‘shines without kindling wood within the waters’ (X.30, trans. Jamison & Brereton 2014, 1423). Śibi is also currently sheltering Agni (as a dove) in the story, although there does not seem to be a version of the story in which he holds the dove to his chest (Meisig 1995, 115–116). Jayadāl Śarmā, seemingly quoting from the Šabdakalpadruma entry for ‘sādhuḥ’, comments: sādhu janoṃ kā eka yahī mārga hai ki ve aṅgikṛta (svīkṛta) kā pālana karate haiṃ, dekho! samudra ne prajvalita agni ko goda mem dhārana kara rakkhā hai (1920, 231).
śātu mahākāra

atha tasmin samārūdhā tulāmauśīnare nṛpe

devadundubhayo nedyapuspavarṣam papāta ca || 64 ||

tatas tasya tadā jñātāvā vākyamvaīaīāvā ṣaithāya dharme rājñāḥ parām sthitim || 65 ||

indro haham asmihadhām te kopoto havyavāhanah || 66 ||

prānasamksayalabdhesu na sā prāṇesu dehinām || 68 ||

parārthaikāntakalyāṇī svāṣayārthārthaniṣṭhurā || 69 ||

tvayy eva kevalam rājan karuṇākaruṇābhavat || 69 ||

63ab sukhāyate] VpBv; sukhayate VpSP VpDh Vp-

63cd hlādayat[ VpBv; hlādayan VpSP VpDh Vp-

65cd dharme rājñāḥ] VpBv VpSP; dharmarajñē VpBv-A. parām sthitim Vp-

66cd tvām rājann] VpBv VpSP; dharme tvām Mbh2; dharmam svam Mbh. imam yajñām] VpBv VpSP; imam deśam

67ab yat kṛtaṃ tat suduṣkaram] VpBv VpSP; makṛtam etat supuṣkalam VpBv-A. Cf. Suvarṇavarnāvadāna 77.6cd: mahā-

67cd cakruna] VpBv VpSP; cakrunam Vp-

68cd prānasamksayalabdhesu] em.; prānasamṣayalabdhesu VpBv; na sā naṣṭopalabdhesu Śp. na sā prāṇesu dehinām] Vp-

69ab parārthaikāntakalyāṇī] VpBv Śp.; parārthe yān na kalyāṇi VpBv-A; parārthaikāntakalyāṇī Śp.-A.


69cd kevalam] Śp.; kevalā VpBv. rājan] VpBv; nātha Śp. karuṇākaruṇābhavat] Śp; karuṇā karuṇāpara VpBv; karuṇā bhavet Śp-S.
The noble one who even neglects himself experiences the highest joy, as a tree delights those sheltering under it, while it endures its own suffering.\(^{69}\)

When the king of the Uśīnaras had mounted the scale, heavenly drums sounded, and there was a rain of flowers.\(^{70}\)

From this, Śakra had understood enough, and, taking his own form, he said this to the paragon of a lawful king:

‘I am Indra, Sir,\(^{71}\) and the dove is fire.
Wanting to test you, King, we came to this sacrifice.

Here, you performed something difficult, with great compassion.
Never before have kings done this, nor will others do it again.

Your joy from abandoning your vital breaths in the service of another exceeds\(^{72}\) the joy of creatures whose lives were lost and gained again.\(^{73}\)

Kind exclusively to others, cruel to the interests of the one in which she resides,\(^{74}\) only toward yourself, King, was compassion uncompassionate!\(^{75}\)

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\(^{69}\) In the parallel from the \textit{Karuṇāvajrāyudha}, the tree causes joy (sukhayati) by protecting travellers from the heat. Here, on the other hand, sukhaṃ vedayate means ‘experiences joy’ according to \textit{Aṣṭādhyāyī} 3.1.18, sukhadībhyaḥ karyrvedanāyām. As the \textit{Kāśikāvṛtti} explains, sukham vedayate sukhaṃ, ‘sukhāyate means “experiences joy”’ (ed. Shastri & Shukla 1965, 374). For metrical reasons, it would be impossible to read sukhayati in this verse. See also verse 58.

\(^{70}\) This verse has been rearranged. Cf. the Śibi story in the \textit{Chinese 大莊嚴論經} (dà Zhuāngyán lùn jīng), thought to be the \textit{Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā}: 諸天作音樂 空中雨香花 鍾鼓等衆音 (T201, 343b10-11), ‘All the gods made music / fragrant flowers rained from the sky / bells, drums, etc. sounded together’. See also Meisig 1995, 94; Huber 1908, 240.

For the extant Sanskrit fragments of the Śibi story in the \textit{Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā}, see Lüders 1926, 181.

\(^{71}\) Here bhadrāṃ te is translated as a vocative, analogous to Pali bhadante. The \textit{Mahābhārata} reads dharmajīna here, also in the vocative.

\(^{72}\) On ‘exceeds’, cf. the Chinese translation: 此喜過於彼 (ed. Shackleton Bailey 1951, 45), ‘this joy exceeds the other’.

Shackleton Bailey translates the Sanskrit more literally: ‘not such could be the delight... as was yours’ (155).

\(^{73}\) prāṇasamśayalubdhēṣu has been emended to prāṇasamśayalabdheṣu, following the \textit{Śatapāñcāśatka} which reads naṣṭopaladbheṣu (Tibetan 'gum pa las bsos pa rams, Chinese 死忽重蘇).

\(^{74}\) Although his edition reads svāśrayaniṣṭhurā here, Shackleton Bailey hypothesizes a possible svārtha based on the Chinese translation, 自利 (1951, 164). This is also supported by a variant reading in the Tibetan translation, ǹid kyi don (1951, 82). Vṛ\(^{\text{Bn}}\) reads svāsrayārthāthanisthūrā.

\(^{75}\) In the \textit{Śatapāñcāśatka}, this verse is one in a series which personifies karuṇā, compassion.
svakarmapāśaih sudr̥dhaire baddhām kṛṣṇam idam jagat|
tvam jagadduḥkhamokśārtham baddhāh karunayā nṛpa || 70 ||
anāthe vikale dīne nirdhane 'rthini rogini |
adṛṣṭe dṛṣṭapūrve vā tulye ca karunā tava || 71 ||
yathābhibhūya sarvānī jyotiṃṣy arko 'vatiṣṭhate |
tathābhibhūya karunā tava dharmān avasthitā || 72 ||
ākṛtverṣyāṃ viśiṣṭeṣaḥ hinān anavamanya ca |
agatvā sadṛśaiḥ spardham tvam lokottamatāṃ gatah || 73 ||
ātmprānaiḥ paraprānān yo naraḥ parirakṣati |
sa yāti paramaṃ sthānaṃ yasmān nāvartate punah || 74 ||
prāṇair api tvayā rājan rakṣitāḥ kṛpano janāḥ |
svamāṃsāy api dattāni dravyeṣv anyeṣu kā kathā || 75 ||
pāsavo 'pi hi jivante kevalātmodaraṃbharāḥ |
tasyaiva jīvitaṃ ślāghyaṃ parārtham yas tu jīvati || 76 ||
kīṃ cātra citraṃ yat santath parānugrahatatrapāḥ |
na hi svadehaśaityārtham jāyante candanadrumāḥ || 77 ||

svakarmapāśaiḥ sudr̥dhaire baddhām kṛṣṇam idam jagat | tvam jagadduḥkhamokśārtham baddhāh karunayā nṛpa || 70 ||
anāthe vikale dīne nirdhane 'rthini rogini | adṛṣṭe dṛṣṭapūrve vā tulye ca karunā tava || 71 ||
yathābhibhūya sarvānī jyotiṃṣy arko 'vatiṣṭhate | tathābhibhūya karunā tava dharmān avasthitā || 72 ||
ākṛtverṣyāṃ viśiṣṭeṣu hinān anavamanya ca | agatvā sadr̥śaiḥ spardham tvam lokottamatāṃ gatah || 73 ||
ātmprānaiḥ paraprānān yo naraḥ parirakṣati | sa yāti paramaṃ sthānaṃ yasmān nāvartate punah || 74 ||
prāṇair api tvayā rājan rakṣitāḥ kṛpano janāḥ | svamāṃsāy api dattāni dravyeṣv anyeṣu kā kathā || 75 ||
pāsavo 'pi hi jivante kevalātmodaraṃbharāḥ | tasyaiva jīvitaṃ ślāghyaṃ parārtham yas tu jīvati || 76 ||
kīṃ cātra citraṃ yat santath parānugrahatatrapāḥ | na hi svadehaśaityārtham jāyante candanadrumāḥ || 77 ||

70ab svakarmapāśaiḥ sudr̥dhaire baddhām kṛṣṇam | tvam jagadduḥkhamokśārtham baddhāh karunayā nṛpa || 70 ||
70cd jagadduḥkham | baddham kṛṣṇam || 70 ||
72ab jyotiṃṣy arko | tathābhibhūya karunā tava dharmān avasthitā || 72 ||
72cd bhūya | baddham kṛṣṇam || 72 ||
73cd sadṛśaiḥ | paraprānān yo naraḥ parirakṣati || 73 ||
74cd paramaṃ | paraprānān yo naraḥ parirakṣati || 74 ||
75cd rājan | rājan || 75 ||
76cd tasyaiva jīvitaṃ | tasyaiva jīvitaṃ || 76 ||
77cd svadehaśaityārtham | svadehaśaityārtham || 77 ||
This whole world is bound firm by the snares of its own karma; you, for the sake of liberating the world from suffering, are bound by compassion, King!

Helpless, frightened, distressed, poor, begging, diseased, whether seen before or not, they receive your kindness equally.

Just as the sun abides, surpassing all the stars, so your kindness abides, surpassing the laws.

Not envying the distinguished, nor spurning the low, not competing with equals, you became the best of the world.

The one who protects the lives of others with his own life goes to the highest place, from which there is no return.

Even with your life, King, you protected helpless people, you gave even your own flesh, not to speak of other things. 76

For even animals live to fill only their own belly, but he who lives for the sake of others — his life alone is praiseworthy.

And how wonderful, that the virtuous are devoted to helping others! For sandalwood trees are not born to cool their own body. 77

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76 In the Śatapāñcāśatka, this verse seems to refer to the Buddha as King Śibi in a past life; see the discussion in the introduction.

77 This simile is unclear, but cf. verse 63 above. This verse may also be referring to the cooling properties of sandalwood paste; in the Arthaśāstra, sandalwood is said to be ‘able to bear heat’ and ‘absorbing heat’: uṣṇasaham dōha-grahī... iti condanagunōh (2.11.56, ed. Kangle 1960, 53; trans. Olivelle 2013, 124).
paropakāravyāpāraparo yaḥ puruṣaḥ sadā |
sa param padam āpnoti parād api hi yat param || 78 ||
paropakāraikamanāḥ svasukhāya gataspr̥haḥ |
jaḍaddhitāya jáyante sādhavas tv iḍrśā bhuvi || 79 ||
yat te māṁśāni gātrebhyaḥ samutkṛtāni pārthiva |
esē te śāśvati kārīr lokān anu bhaviṣyati || 80 ||
divyarauppadaṛṣṭa caiva pālayātva mahīṁ cīram |
sarvām lokoṁ atikramya brahma lokom gaṁiṣyasi || 81 ||
evam uktvā tam indrāgni jagmatos tridaśālayam |
rājā tu kratum iṣṭvā tam mumude devaवत tadā || 82 ||
yā idam śṛṇuyān nītyaṁ śibeś carītaṃ uttamam |
vimuktah sarvāpebhyaḥ svargalokaṁ sa gacchati || 83 ||

iti vahnipuruṇe śiber upākhyaṇam nāma ||

78cd sa param padam āpnoti [Vṇ]Vc; sa sampadaṁ samāṇpotsi Vc; sampadaṁ sa samāṇpotsi Vc. parād api] [Vṇ]Vc; paraṁ padam Vc. hi yat param] [Vṇ]Vc; ca yat param Vc; param padam Vc. Vc.
79ab paropakāraikamanāḥ [Vṇ]Vc; paropakāraikadhānāḥ [Vṇ]Vc-C Vc-D; paropakāraṇirataḥ ye Vc. svasukhāya gataspr̥haḥ] [Vṇ]Vc; svasukhāya gataspr̥haḥ Vc; svārthasukhāya gataspr̥haḥ Vc.
82cd kratum iṣṭvā tam] Vp; rtubhiḥ syātaṁ Vp-A; kratum iṣṭā taṁ Vps. devavat] Vp; devatāt Vp-D; devatām Vp. Čf. [Mbh]: ity uktvā taṁ dānapatim indrāgni taṁ tadā nṛpa | pūrṇadehaṁ svakaṁ kṛtvā jagmatos tridaśālayam ||
A variant reading for pada c reads sarvadhaṁadvacma[l]̄ kṛtvā.
83cd sa] Vp; ca Vp-B Vp-D; Vp-D.

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The man who is devoted to the work of helping others obtains the highest position, even higher than the highest.

Minds bent on helping others, without desire for their own happiness, such noble men are born on the earth for the welfare of the world.

That you cut flesh from your own limbs, King — this will be your eternal glory, encompassing the worlds.

And, bearing your divine form, you will protect the earth for a long time, and then, surpassing all the worlds, ascend to the Brahma world.

Having said this to him, Indra and Agni left for the abode of the thirty-three gods while the king, after performing his sacrifice, rejoiced like a god.

He who listens repeatedly to this story of the supreme conduct of Śibi, released from all evils, will go to heaven.

Thus ends the story of Śibi in the Vahnipurāṇa.

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78 This ‘divine form’ seems to refer to Indra restoring Śibi’s missing flesh with a newly divine body. A parallel from the Mahābhārata to verse 82 reads pūrnadeham svakam kṛtvā, ‘having made his own body whole [again]’; a variant reading gives svarnadeha, ‘golden body’ (see critical apparatus).

79 Cf. the ending of two Chinese versions: 還于天宮 (T201, 343c.2–3), ‘returned to the heavenly palace’; 還天上 (T1509, 88c26), ‘returned to heaven’. 
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Supplementary material

The online version of the critical edition can be found at tst-project.github.io/siberupakhyana. It contains the critical text as well as all diplomatically transcribed witnesses. The transcriptions are linked to digital images from institutional repositories, where available. These files, as well as the text alignments, can be found in the code repository: github.com/TST-Project/siberupakhyana. The alignment files also include phylogenetic trees, if they were used in the reconstruction of a particular verse. The repository is archived by Zenodo (doi:10.5281/zenodo.7446515). For the software used to create the alignments, see Li 2022a.

Figure 5: The online edition, with one lemma highlighted. Witness sigla are linked to diplomatic transcriptions and images, where available.