*Approaches to the Ur-*Mahabharata

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1 The problem of the Ur-*Mahabharata*

There is a sloka in *The Mahabharata* which can be translated like this: 'Whatever is found here can be found elsewhere; what is not found here cannot be found anywhere else'.[1] This illustrates very well the variety of approaches to, and interpretations of, the epic for over a hundred and fifty years. Yet, when all of them are taken into account, it can be seen that they fall into a combination of one or two of four categories:

1) *The Mahabharata* as a unitary epic;
2) *The Mahabharata* as a composite epic;
3) *The Mahabharata* as a *symbolic* representation;
4) *The Mahabharata* as a *real* event.

Of course, it is possible to combine (1) or (2) with (3) or (4), but it is not possible to hold (1) and (2) at the same time. Holding both (3) and (4) together is possible, but has not so far been put forward.

In the nineteenth century Max Müller stated that all the gods of the *Rig Veda* were aspects of the sun. If, as Mary Carroll Smith argues, the key to *The Mahabharata* lies in the *Rig Veda*, then this proposition must be looked at. It was Adolf Holtzmann, Sr, who first intimated it, and his nephew, Adolf Holtzmann, Jr, who argued in 1895 that *The Mahabharata* contained various layers and reworkings, and that the present version is both an expanded and a re-worked epic (an 'analytic' approach). This thesis was rejected by Joseph Dahlmann who in the same year 1895 defended *The Mahabharata* as a unitary epic (a 'synthetic' approach).

It was a brilliant American scholar, E. Washburn Hopkins, who, in

1901, in his great classic, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin*, and in other works,[2] demonstrated that

> the epic in its present form is swollen with many additions, but they are all cast into the shade by the enormous mass added bodily to the epic as didactic books, containing more than twenty thousand stanzas ... there can be no further question in regard to the correctness of the term pseudo-epic as applied to these parts of the present poem.[3]

Washburn Hopkins also, and in my opinion rightly so, dismissed the existence of earlier material in the pseudo-epic (i.e., *parvans* XIII–XVIII) as not proving that the latter was a part of the original or Ur-*Mahabharata*:

> No one has ever denied that there are early legends found in the late parts of the epic; but the fact that this or that legend repeated in the pseudo-epic is found in other literature, no matter how old, does nothing toward proving either the antiquity of the book as a whole, which is just what the 'synthetic' method contends for, or the antiquity of the epic form of the legend.[4]

Washburn Hopkins regarded the fourth book as an 'intrusion' in order to 'fill out an extra year, not recognised in the early epic, [for] the heroes [to] live at court in various disguises'.[5] And he went on to suggest that a huge volume of extraneous legends and didactic stuff now tagged on the epic.[6]

Better than anybody before him Washburn Hopkins realised that the Ur-*Mahabharata* had been 'hijacked' by the brahmins and reshaped to suit their *Weltanschauung*:

> That the priests developed the epic for their own interests, goes without saying; hence the long chapters of priestly origin on the duty of charity—to priests.... But besides didactic and legendary masses, it was necessary, in order to popularise the poem, to keep some sort of proportion. Hence the fighting episodes were increased, enlarged, rewritten, and inserted doubly, the same scene and description occurring in two different places.[7]

His observation that 'while there is an appreciable difference in the metre of the different episodes which were inserted whole, the fighting scenes are chiefly of one sloka-type,—a type later than that of some of

the episodes, but on a par with that of the later didactic and narrative insertions'[8] was to prove of greatest importance when applied to the epic as a whole. And thus Washburn Hopkins concluded that 'its metres preclude the probability of its having been written by one poet or even several poets of the same era.... It appears to be a heterogeneous collection of strings wound about a nucleus almost lost sight of. *The nucleus, however, is a story*'.[9]

Following Washburn Hopkins' lead, Moritz Winternitz tried to extract the 'kernel' of the story: 'It is comparatively easy to extract a *kernel* from the enormous mass of songs of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, which in any case formed the subject of the actual epic.'[10] As Mary Carroll Smith points out,

> Winternitz tried to summarise the 'actual epic' by tracing the story *kernel*, but he failed to make any distinctions among the metrical, syntactic and/or formulaic constructions of the stories he summarised. When we analyse the narrative elements in the excised *tristubh* verses, the intense focuses on the dynastic quarrel of the Kauravas and the Pandavas makes Winternitz seem somewhat of a prophet.[11]

Before proposing my own approach to this problem of extracting the *kernel* or the *core* of *The Mahabharata*, let us review some recent attempts to do so.

2. Recent Approaches to *The Mahabharata*

S. B. Roy makes a distinction between a *purana*, i.e., ancient history, and *itihasa*, from *iti-ha-asa* or *itiha-asa*, which means current history. He points out that *The Mahabharata* alone was called an *itihasa*, because in c. 1400 B.C. *The Mahabharata* constituted current or recent history. Roy's *Date of the Mahabharata Battle* places it in 1424 B.C.

> Vyasa himself recorded contemporary history, from his own birth down to the Bharata battle (c. 1424 B.C.). Vyasa dictated the kernel of this history (=*Jaya*), immediately (said to be within *three* years) after the Bharata battle 1424 B.C. It was given a proper shape and recited by Vaisampayana (=*Bharata samhita*) in the victory celebration of the Pandavas over the Takshaka Nagas. The text was further elaborated and given the shape of a unitary comprehensive law book (Book of human

> conduct—as it is *and* as it ought to be) Ugrashrava. Mahabharata was recited by Ugrashrava also in the Naimisharanya conference of the sages (1316 B.C.) along with the Puranas.[12]

In Chapter 10 of his book S. B. Roy posits the existence of three layers of *The Mahabharata*, apart from the interpolations: 1. the original Mahabharata—the *Jaya* or the tale of the BATTLE AND VICTORY—was composed by Vyasa himself; 2. the main text was recited by Vaisampayana at the instance and in the presence of Vyasa himself; this text—the *Vaisampayana* recension—will be called the *Bharata samhita* or the Ur-*Mahabharata*; 3. the text recited by Ugrashrava Sauti ... 'say within 100 years of the battle at the latest'. This third recension is said to be made up of 100,000 slokas, whereas the *Vaisampayana* text was made up of about 24,000 slokas, without the *Upa-akhyanas,* i.e., the subsidiary tales and legends.

Roy divided *The Mahabharata* into two parts: the so-called *Purva-Bharata* which deals with the great war and ends with Yudhisthira's triumphal entry into the city of Hastinapur and the beginning of his reign, i.e., up to *Santi Parva* XII–40; and the so-called *Uttara Bharata* which contains the rest.[13] He concluded that A) 28,125 slokas belonged undoubtedly to the Ur-*Mahabharata*; B) 6,720 were doubtful; and C) 38,940 plus an unspecified number of unnumbered slokas is made up of the didactic material, and did not belong to the original version.[14] He justified such a classification by quoting R. C. Majumdar thus: 'The proper meaning of the word Mahabharata is the great battle. For, according to Panini, Bharata means the battle of the Bharatas (*Bharatas sngrama*) and in the Mahabharata itself we find *Mahabharatayuddha* (XIV.18.8) "the great Bharata battle", the title Mahabharata being an abbreviation of the latter.'[15] Roy's conclusion is that 'the Ur-Mahabharata is therefore likely to be the text "A" proposed above. The text "A" when recovered and purified of interpolations will give the history of India at the time of the battle, i.e. a few centuries before the Buddha. Its evidence will be reliable *prima facie*, i.e. it will be accepted unless controverted by any written evidence of an earlier inscription'.[16]

John D. Smith, on the other hand, is justifiably sceptical of Roy's and other scholars' supposition that the Ur-*Mahabharata*, once extracted, could serve as a *prima facie* history of India:

> As far as the question of historicity is concerned, there is little that *can*

> be said–and this is itself the chief thing that *must* be said ... The *Mahabharata* ... contains a great deal that was probably regarded as historical fact by the early bards and their literate successors; which is not to say that it bears any discoverable relationship to what *we* might regard as historical fact.... At an indeterminate point in the remote past, in the North-West of India, there may have been a dynastic struggle between people calling themselves Kauravas and Pandavas; or there may not. We have no way of knowing.[17]

Most important of the several recent approaches for this study has been Mary Carroll Smith's computer analysis of the irregular verses of the *tristubh* type in the epic. Her study, 'The Core of India's Great Epic', though undertaken as a Ph.D. thesis at Harvard in 1972, was published only in 1992 as a book entitled *The Warrior Code of India's Sacred Song*.[18] In it she outlined her approach thus:

> First, the metrical differences between the perfectly regular and non-regular *tristubh* verses are paralleled by significant narrative variations in the epic story and setting. Second, there are discernible connections of narrative line and detail occurring between passages in similar metre, even when the passages are widely separated over the presently constituted text. I have found that the metrical irregularities may be clues to complete kernels of a very old warrior story that has been expanded and amplified by *sloka* text, but never entirely lost within the gigantic whole. The inter-relatedness of groups of *tristubh* verses from one book of the epic to the other appears much more dramatic once the *tristubh* verses are excised and read as a text on their own.[19]

Carroll Smith proceeded to isolate and take out ('excise') from the bulk of the present epic the various kinds of *tristubh* verses. She concluded that 94 per cent of the Poona text of the epic was composed in *anustubh sloka* (four lines of eight syllables each) and the remaining verses were in *tristubh sloka* (four lines of eleven syllables).[20]

Using her new approach Carroll Smith was able to gain an overview of the whole *Mahabharata*: 'The *tristubh* verses constellate the Pandava/Dhartarastra struggle into five major groupings: Marriage Alliance; the Gambling Match; the Pandava Exile, the Embassies for Peace, and the Final Battles.'[21] She then passed this judgment on the epic as a whole:

> I discovered a discrete text of 2000 non-regular, 'Vedic-type', *tristubh* verses. Within these non-regular verses is the long-suspected warrior 'kernel' of the epic.... At the heart of the *Mahabharata* is a warrior text devoted to ethical concerns.... The presence of ritual in the *tristubh* epic identifies the text as belonging to the 'archaic' level of epic history.... Excising the *tristubh* verses creates ... the chance to view the warrior class without the intervening filter of a brahmanic commentary.... My position ... is that the excised *tristubh* verses present us with an heretofore unknown example of the Aryan warrior code.... The community of Aryan peoples is characterised by a polar opposition of 'us' and 'them'.[22]

Proceeding to apply her method to the first book, Carroll Smith found out that 'the *tristubh* verses create an actual epitome of the text in Book One.... The *tristubh* verses of *Adi Parvan* cluster into five discrete areas for metrical and narrative analysis: Table of Contents; Hymn to the Asvins; Snake Sacrifice; Yayati Episodes; Courtship and Marriage of Draupadi. Sections of the Table of Contents, and the Courtship and Marriage of Draupadi contain essential elements of the Kaurava-Pandava conflict in *tristubh* metre'.[23] This has already been noticed by J. A. B. van Buitenen, a translator of the University of Chicago edition of *The Mahabharata* who calls the Framework section an 'independent text which gives a story summary through Book Eleven, The Book of the Women'.[24]This leads Carroll Smith to argue that 'what is beyond question is the focus of the Framework verses on the Pandava-Kaurava conflict, which makes it difficult not to seize on the Frame as adequate proof of the warrior "kernel" that eluded Winternitz'.[25]

The second book, 'The Book of the Assembly Hall', is central to the epic as it exists, and to the Ur-Epic as well. It is dominated by the 'Gambling Match'.[26] Its meaning and importance will be analysed in the next section. According to Carroll Smith, 'from a narrative perspective, the "Gambling Match" serves as an excuse for the sons of Dhrtarastra to wrest the Kuru kingdom from their Pandava cousins'.[27] Applying her method to the game of dice, Carroll Smith came up with an astounding result:

> If we consider *tristubh* verses alone, we have a complete scene in which Duryodhana persuades his father, Dhrtarastra, to build a gambling hall so that he can invite Yudhisthira and his brothers to play. Dhrtarastra

> warns Duryodhana that there will be a disaster leading to a war (2.51.11), since it is clear that Duryodhana intends to win the right to rule all the Kuru lands. Duryodhana replies that the rules of the game had been handed down from ancient times without evil, or combat.... The one verse response made by Dhratarastra sets the epic theme of Fate into play. He says that the quarrel would not concern him for otherwise Fate would run counter to dicing. Without the need for any *sloka* verses, the basic disaster of the Bharata war is set in forward motion. The motive of greed and jealousy is all too clear when Duryodhana says (2.51.13) 'We will stand on an equal footing'.[28]

Another important recent approach to *The Mahabharata* has been by a Russian scholar, Grintser. His book, *The Ancient Indian Epic*,[29] has solidly established both *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* as *oral epics*, and this has been widely accepted by Indian scholars. Applying Albert B. Lord's oral-formulaic approach to the Indian epics, Grintser posited several layers in *The Mahabharata*: 'Grintser had made three classifications of epic: archaic, classical heroic, and late. He had placed the *Mahabharata* in the "classical heroic" and "late" categories. "Archaic" is the classification for epic "in which the mythological way of thinking predominates"; "classical heroic" describes epic in which "myth is viewed not as prototype, but as artistic background"; and "late" is the classification for epic "in which the religious didactic element predominates". The "classical heroic" epic also shows a strong reliance on Fate.'[30] Carroll Smith found that this emphasis on Fate is present in the *tristubh* verses of the Gambling Match.[31]

It is specifically the metrical analysis of the 'Gambling Match' that convinced Carroll Smith that there probably was an earlier version of it in the *tristubh* verses alone.[32]

Book IV, 'The Book of Virata', is, according to both Washburn Hopkins and van Buitenen, a later appendix to the third book, 'The Book of the Forest'. The latter contains many additions as well, but as its recent translator pointed out, 'though one can hardly imagine that in a more original form *The Book of the Forest* had the same size as in the present, it can also not be doubted that it always formed an important part of it'.[33] It should be emphasised that the Pandavas were to spend twelve years in the forest, and the thirteenth travelling unrecognised (*incognito*) around the country. The significance of the number 12 is

pointed out by van Buitenen: 'At the final game of dice it was stipulated that the loser would spend twelve years in a forest and a thirteenth year unrecognised in the open.'[34] We shall return to the significance of number twelve as far as the gambling match is concerned. It is the fifth book, however, which Carroll Smith concentrated on next:

> Book Five of The *Mahabharata*, *Udyoga Parvan*, has a preponderance of irregular type *tristubh* verses. That the material of the 'Peace Effort' was central to the most ancient versions of the epic is suggested by the large clusters of *tristubh* verses in Book Five. One sub-parvan, the *Samjayayana Parvan,* is a straight run of irregular *tristubh* verses from chapters 22 through 32 of the Poona text.... Even though the *tristubh* verses are split apart by long sections of *slokas*, it is possible to establish a continuous narrative when the excised *tristubhs* are rejoined for analysis.[35]

The sixth book contains the famous *Bhagavadgita*. It has been suspected by some scholars that it was a later interpolation, but, following Grintser, Carroll Smith argues that it 'is an essential part of an epic story devoted to warfare, its causes and results. The song itself is an expansion of advice that the warrior chieftain Krishna gives to the hero, Arjuna Pandava, as he is about to engage in battle with his cousins and their designated champion, his grandfather Bhisma.... The core reality of the *Bhagavadgita* is to be found in military violence.' Out of the 700 verses, 67 are composed in eleven-syllable *tristubh* metre. The rest of the verses are composed in eight-syllable *sloka* metre. 'The *tristubh* text gives us the long-suspected key to the warrior code in India's "Sacred Song".'[36] Carroll Smith has advanced the most persuasive arguments yet for regarding the *Bhagavadgita* as a part of the Ur-*Mahabharata*.

Already in Book IV, *The Book of Virata*, the importance of Time is spelled out by Bhisma in connection with the Pandavas' exile for twelve (or to be more precise, as Bhisma points out himself, thirteen, years): 'The instants are joined together, and so are the hours, days, fortnights, months, lunar houses, planets, seasons, and years: thus the wheel of time revolves with the divisions of time.'[37] Now Krishna reveals himself as Time incarnate; I am Kala, he says.

> The Sanskrit *kala* also means 'death' as well as 'time', but the most significant meaning, by way of making connections with other Indo-

> European epics, is the translation of *kala* as 'Fate'. Krishna's message to Arjuna is that he is merely an instrument of the divine plan that numbers the enemy as already dead.[38]

According to Alf Hiltebeitel, who adopted Madeleine Biardeau's theory at the opening of his chapter 'Two Theophanies, Three Steps' in his book, *The Ritual of Battle*, 'the very idea of the dissolution or destruction of all things at the end of the world is rooted in Indo-European hero mythology. At some archetypal level, the heroic task of saving the world from all of the evils that threatened their heroic claims, became the essential religious vision of the Aryan peoples'.[39] Thus Mary Carroll Smith finds herself in complete agreement with Rudolf Otto who claimed half a century ago that 'the *Original Gita* then ... is no doctrinal *Text*, no doctrinal writ of *Bhakti* religion, but rather Krishna's own voice and deed, referring directly to the situation in which Arjuna finds himself; intended, however, not to proclaim to him any transcendent dogma of salvation, but to render him willing to undertake special service of the Almighty Will of the God.... This portion of the narrative, then, is the very climax of the whole Epic....'[40]

The vision of universal destruction presented to Arjuna by Krishna is related to the warrior's fury, similar to that that is the central motif of *The Iliad:* 'Menin aeide, thea, Peleiadeo Achilleos....' ['Sing to me, o Goddess, of Achilles' wrath...]. Mircea Eliade explains how this 'warrior's fury' is an aspect of 'Fire':

> In modern India, the (Muslims) believe that a man in communication with God becomes 'burning hot'. Anyone who performs miracles is called 'burning'. By extension, all kinds of people or acts involving any magico-religious power are regarded as burning. This sacred power, which causes both the shaman's heat and the heating of the warrior, can be transformed, differentiated, given various colorings, by subsequent efforts.... The 'wrath' and the heat induced by a violent and excessive access of sacred power are feared by the majority of mankind.[41]

The *Bhagavadgita* is the last extensive 'portion' of the original 'core' of *The Mahabharata*, though I think that the present version contains many subsequent interpolations and modifications to suit the Brahmin taste and vision. Carroll Smith regards the Ur-*Mahabharata* as including

one fragment of later *parvans*: 'With the exception of a passage of four verses in Book Nine, and one of ten verses in Book Fifteen, there are no other irregular *tristubh* verses in the present text which need be considered part of the narrative core of the Bharata war epic.'[42] Thus she argues that the entire Book Twelve, *Santi Parvan*, is 'one of the greatest expansions known to world literature' while originally Bhisma's death-bed advice was put into four lines:

> Four non-regular *tristubh* verses (6.116.47–51) give the death-bed advice of Bhisma to the Pandavas and the Kauravas:
>
> Let half the kingdom be given to the Pandavas!
> Let the Dharmaraj rule Indrasprastha!
> Avoid violating your contract by deceit: It is the meanest thing
> among chieftains.
> You will have a soiled fame, O Indra of the Kurus!
>
> With Vedic conciseness, four non-regular *tristubh* contain Bhisma's dying advice to the ancient warriors.[43]

Carroll Smith regards Book VIII, *Karna Parvan*, as 'the last book of the *Mahabharata* to give sustained evidence of one having had a narrative core of irregular *tristubh* verse at its center'.[44] Her analysis of *The Bhagavadgita* leads her to question Wikander's and Dumézil's theory of tripartite functions of the Indo-Europeans:

> For reasons that often seem more related to later stratifications of Indo-European cultures in India and in Rome, Dumézil and Wikander place the King in the functional category of priests.[45]

Carroll Smith argues that 'the flaw in the tripartite function theory ... is that by limiting the warrior function to "the exercise of physical prowess" it loses sight of the most creative aspects of the ancient *ksatriya* order which finds political activity, whether in fighting or negotiation, a simultaneous religious and political activity. The Dharma code of the warriors governs all'.[46]

I propose to examine briefly Georges Dumézil's theory of the Indo-European tri-function theory transposed from the realm of the myth into that of the epic. The three basic functions according to Dumézil are:

1. The first function embraces sovereignty and is marked by a priestly

> stratum of society which maintains both magico-religious and legal order. The gods assigned the sovereign function are often presented as a pair, each of which reflects a specific aspect: religious such as the Indic Varuna, and legal such as Mitra.
>
> 2. A second military function assigned to the warrior stratum and concerned with the execution of both aggressive and defensive force, for example, Indra.
>
> 3. A third estate conceptualising fertility or sustenance and embracing the herder-cultivators. Here the mythic personages normally take the form of divine twins, for example, the Indic Asvins (horsemen).[47]

Following the pioneering research of Stig Wikander in 1947, Dumézil showed that the group of five heroes of *The Mahabharata*, the Pandava brothers, 'were duplications as to their characters, their actions, and their relationships (beginning with the very order of their birth) of the hierarchised group constituted in the earliest Vedic mythology by the gods of the three functions: the just king Yudhisthira is modelled on Mitra (simply rejuvenated as Dharma), the two kinds of warrior, Bhima and Arjuna, on Vayu and Indra, and the two twins Nakula and Sahadeva on the Nasatya twins'.

It has also been well known for quite some time what happened to the original *Mahabharata*. John D. Smith summarises the whole question admirably:

> The reason for the very marked dichotomy between the *Mahabharata* and what preceded it is not difficult to ascertain. As the Vedas and their supporting literature were the 'property' of the Brahmans, so the epic was the 'property' of the Ksatriyas, the caste of warriors and princes. The Epic dealt with 'their' legendary heroes, and put forward 'their' code of conduct: it was the statement of 'their' mythology. The two leading castes were not merely concerned with different events, personages, and conventions of behaviour; they were often, it would appear, specifically antagonistic towards one another.[48]

Smith goes on to say that the present *Mahabharata* bears little resemblance to this Ur-*Mahabharata* of the Ksatriyas, for the latter was taken over by the Brahmans who radically altered its structure as well as its tenor. Not only were numerous insertions and accretions added to the core, but the whole tenor of the whole was completely changed

which accounts for many inconsistencies and contradictions. Smith concludes that 'by the end of the process, the text had, so to speak, changed hands: it was now the "property" of the Brahmans, and came even to be dignified as "the fifth Veda" '.[49]

3. The meaning of the Ur-*Mahabharata*

Thus, John D. Smith is indubitably correct when he argues that 'the "core" of the *Mahabharata*, whether by that we mean the narrative told in "irregular" *tristubhs* as excerpted by Mary Carrol Smith, or any other imaginable nucleus, is certainly a heroic story'.[50] If we take this approach to the Ur-*Mahabharata*, then we are in a position to try to tackle the big question: can we extract its mythopoeic essence—in other words, what does the Ur-*Mahabharata* mean, stand for, represent? Taking into account Carrol Smith's strictures that the four battle-books contain an increasing number of later insertions, I propose to deal only with the second book of the great epic, *The Book of the Assembly Hall*, that is, according to its modern translator, van Buitenen, 'the pivotal one of the eighteen Major Books of *The Mahabharata*'.[51] It is in turn dominated by the game of dice. The game of dice has a much deeper significance, but, according to one of the greatest modern Indian scholars, A. L. Basham, 'its import is not wholly clear'.[52] Van Buitenen argues that the game of dice was a part of the Vedic ritual of the *rajasuya*, called also *digvyavasthapana,* the 'separate establishment of the quarters', which, according to him, 'takes place when the king-to-be sets foot in each of the "five" quarters, i.e, the regular four and the one above. Accordingly, the manuals prescribe that the king take a step in each of the five directions, *so that he can be king on a cosmic scale. The five quarters sum up the entire universe: each one is associated with components of the Veda, the pantheon, the year—old symbol of the cycle of all natural life—and people.*'[53] [*my emphasis*]

In his book, *The Destiny of a King*, Georges Dumézil has investigated this concept of the division of the world as a part of his explanation of Yayati's parceling of his inheritance among his five sons, which is one of the cardinal points in the beginning book of *The Mahabharata*. This is how he explains this concept:

> These words surely have to do with five human groups. The expression

> is sometimes equivalent to the totality of the arya ... sometimes, in a comprehensive way, to the whole of humanity living on the earth.... This double interpretation is not contradictory: it was the arya who primarily interested the poets, and in many cases the arya constituted the only 'humanity' which concerned them.
>
> The division into five probably corresponded to an ancient conception, purely terrestrial, of the five *dísah,* or *pradísah,* the directions of the world, that is, the four cardinal points and the center ... When the expression was taken in its most comprehensive sense, the center might refer to the arya, surrounded on all sides by the barbarians (cf. the Chinese expression 'Empire of the Middle')....
>
> It is likely that this conception of the world and its occupation was even part of the Indo-Iranian tradition. To be sure, the Zoroastrian texts divide the world into seven parts ... ; but beneath these, in the very names and the distribution of the 'sevenths', one perceives a division into five with the four cardinal points and the center. Put simply, it is a question of a conception that is not purely terrestrial, *but which has been enlarged, cosmicized.*[54] [*my emphasis*]

Dumézil argues that the original five-part system has been changed into a seven-part system 'perhaps under the influence of Babylonian thought in which the number seven played such an important role'.[55] Taking Dumézil's suggestion that the division of the world has been cosmicized as our lead, we can argue that, like all such cosmic myths, it goes back to cosmogony. In Indian cosmogony 'five' is the constituent number, according to E. W. Hopkins:

> According to the old belief, the universe comes from a cosmic egg. The philosophical schemes, of course, discard this egg, but we hear of it in the popular accounts often enough and meet it in the first verses of the epic [*The Mahabharata*, I, 27]. 'Then he produced Brahman, born in a golden egg. Brahman lived in the egg a year. Then he came out and put together the four forms of all beings, and earth and heaven above—and then the middle space. After this he created egoism, a being, *bhuta*, and four sons besides, who are the fathers' fathers.'[56]

We can also apply this system to the totality of the arya, in which case it would refer to the Vedic 'five tribes'. But if we concentrate on the four quarters of the world and leave out the centre, then we can apply

the four sides to the four castes of the *arya* and un-*arya*, as E. W. Hopkins explains:

> There were ... three Aryan castes in the Epic period. The ruling caste, comprising the king, his great lords and vassals, together with the knightly part of the army; the priestly caste, elevated by religious knowledge, often individually powerful as guiders of the king's will ... ; lastly the third caste called collectively the people, exalted only through their Aryan blood and their fully allowed claim to all Aryan privileges in the matter of legal rights and religious rites.... There was, too, another and un-Aryan caste.... These had, barring pretense, no spiritual or legal privileges. They possessed no property. Their wives were so in name. Their lives depended on their owner's pleasure. They were 'born to servitude', for they 'came from the foot of God'.* [57]

In the footnote to the last quotation [marked *] Hopkins states that 'it is an old myth that the people-caste came from the loins or thighs of God (Brahma or Manu), while the warrior-caste came from his arms, the priestly, from his head (mouth), and the slave-caste from his foot'.[58] But what is especially important is his next observation: 'The colour-distinction between the castes—the slave being black; the people, yellow; the warrior, red; the priest, white—may possibly indicate a real difference of hue.'[59] The four castes are, of course, *brahmana* ('priest'), *ksatriya* ('warrior', 'man of the ruling order'), *vaisya* ('Inhabitant', 'man of the people'), *sudra* ('slave').[60] Hopkins then concludes with this rider: 'Out of these elements was made the theoretical state of the Hindus. Yet earlier only the three upper castes were recognised as *tout le monde*.'[61]

We are now in a position to go back to the game of dice in the second book of *The Mahabharata*, and try to find out its inner, cosmic meaning. It is extremely important for this study that Hopkins claims that 'the Epic' [i.e., *The Mahabharata*] 'confines "playing" ' [of dice] 'to two things, *in hyperbole to war,* and in matter of fact to gambling'.[62] [*my emphasis*]. The game of dice is, moreover, the pivot of the *Ur-Epic,* of the original core of the epic: 'The whole plot of the Epic turns on a game of dice.'[63] The result is that 'the king plays away all he has, wealth, crown, brothers, and self; then his wife'.[64] After he himself became a courtier at another king's court he continued to 'fling out the charming *beryl, gold, and ivory dice, dotted black and red*'.[65] [*my emphasis*] In a

footnote Hopkins says that 'the comm[entary] would make the words for materials refer to colour, blue, yellow, red, and white',[66] though he claims he cannot follow it. It seems to me that Hopkins did not pay attention to the *identity of colours* of dice with those of *the four elements of the state, the three Aryan and a non-Aryan caste.* Van Buitenen has argued that the entire second book, *The Book of the Assembly Hall*, is modelled on the ceremony of the Royal Consecration or *rajasuya*, and that the game of dice is an integral part of this ceremony.[67] In footnote 1 on page 71 van Buitenen cites J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (Thesis Utrecht, The Hague, 1955), ch. XVII. He then proceeds to state that 'Apastamba and Hiranyakesin have the king play with a brahmin, *ksatriya, visya* and *sudra*, for parts of a cow (= earth ?)....'[68] He then argues that 'as the mode is clearly a yes-or-no game, with no scores being kept from play to play, every one throw decides the play; terms like *krta, treta, dvapara* and *kali, which require score-keeping*'.[69] Be that as it may, this only strengthens my argument that the individual games were regarded as a part of the Royal Ceremony *symbolising the Conquest of the World.* Van Buitenen sensed that himself: 'The game presented shows an interesting structure. It goes on in two sessions, each of ten throws. This parallism [*sic*] between the two sessions cannot be accidental; and I take it that, actually, or in the intention of the composer, it was to last for twenty throws exactly. This number is easily seen as the multiple of four and five; but, while we may point to the fact that both these numbers are important in early Indian dicing and that both represent totality, the typical obsession with number combinations in gaming anywhere, inclines me to discount any specific significance.'[70] The last sentence makes no sense: why bring up all these elements if they do not amount to anything?

In my opinion the twenty throws represent the *loss* over the four castes, *brahmin, ksatriya, vaisya* and *sudra* in the five quarters (the four quarters plus the fifth *dis*, the zenith, the centre). The throws are summarised by Van Buitenen thus:

During the first half the stakes are increasing; Yudhisthira gambles away (1) the initial stake; (2) multiples of one thousand *niskas*; (3) his chariot; (4) a hundred thousand serving wenches; (5) a thousand male servants; (6) a thousand bull elephants; (7) a thousand chariots; (8) his horses; (9) ten thousand bullock carts with their teams; (10) four hundred *nidhis* .... In the second half, Yudhisthira stakes and lose untold millions,

in fact all his riches in chattels; (2) all his cattle; (3) all his land; (4) his pages; (5) Nakula; (6) Sahadeva; (7) Bhima; (8) Arjuna; (9) himself. At the tenth throw of this phase he stakes his wife Draupadi.[71]

My explanation of the throws is as follows: in the first half, the loss of: (1) the initial stake (2) *vaisya*; (3) *ksatriya;* (4) *sudra*; (5) *sudra*; (6) *ksatriya*; (7) *vaisya;* (8) *ksatriya*; (9) *vaisya*; (10) *vaisya.* In the second half, (1) the initial stake, (2) *sudra* (3) *vaisya* (4) *sudra*; (5) *brahmana;* (6) *Brahmana*; (7) *Brahmana*; (8) *Brahmana*; (9) *Brahmana*; (10) *incomplete.* An explanation is in order: (2) represent the wealth of the land garnered by the 'people', i.e., *vaisya*; (3) though the chariot stands for the *ksatriya*; for it is the instrument *par excellence* of the Aryan warriors, in this case it may stand for the brahmins, as explained by the Vedas (*Ratha*);[72] (4) and (5) expressly designate *female* and *male slaves*; (6) bull elephants are said to be 'death to any noise on the battlefield': they are another instrument of the *khsatriya*; as are the chariots (7) and horses (8); (9) stands for the 'people', 'sixty thousand broad-chesten men, who drink milk and feed on rice and grain' and (10) is again the riches ('400 coffers encased in copper and iron, each holding five buckets of beaten gold').

It should be pointed out that the order given by van Buitenen in his article is not the same as in his translation of Book II of *The Mahabharata*: (6) is (4) in the latter, and vice versa, which, if adopted, would give the following scheme: (1) X (2) V (3) B ? (4) K (5) Ç (6) Ç (7) V (8) K (9) K (10) V. I am inclined to regard (3) as pertaining to the brahmins since there is an analogy between the two sets of 10 throws (though not perfect), and the loss of brahmins in the first set calls for another in the second set. The second half should read as follows: (2) 'cattle ... milch cows ... etc.' stands for the *brahmins* ('our color of people east of the Indus'); (3) 'my city, my country, the wealth of all my people, *excepting* brahmins, all my people themselves, *excepting brahmins*' will represent *vaisya* (having already *staked and lost* the brahmins Yudhisthira makes that clear: 'excepting brahmins'); (4) the pages represent *sudra*; (5) through (9) will be explained below; and (10) there is a question of whether Yudhisthira was a slave (*sudra*) when he gambled Draupadi away; in that case it would be impossible for him to give away Draupadi. If he was still free, then she could be regarded as his slave, *sudra.* Thus the scheme looks like this: (1) X (2) B (3) V (4) Ç (10) Ç? Following Dumézil,[73]

it is possible to break down (5) through (9) differently: either as: (5) V (6) V (7) K (8) K (9) B; or as: (5) K (6) B (7) K (8) K (9) B.[74] I would opt for the former, for in that case there would be a totality of the Arya in the fifth or royal quarter, i.e., the representatives of the three Aryan castes rather than associating the five brothers with only the first two privileged Aryan castes. This is precisely how Dumézil chose to interpret it in *The Destiny of the Warrior*: Arjuna represents Brahminic spiritual power, whereas Bhima represents the *ksatriyas*.[75] The result would then be: (5) V (6) V (7) K (8) B (9) B.

This five-region or five-quarter formula is also found in the very gaming table which is similar in design to the traditional Indian pachisi board: it consists of four sides and a centre.[76] As a part of the Vedic rite of the *rajasuya* the king held five dice in his hand which symbolised the five regions: 'He is become king of the regions.'[77] According to one version, the king played four games with a brahmin, *ksatriya, vaisya* and *sudra*; but according to another, he played games with a brahmin, *suta, gramani, ksattar*, and *samgrahitar*.[78] Thus, there is a difference between four and five which stems from the fact that sometimes four and sometimes five castes are mentioned in the Vedas, e.g., at Bharata's *rajasuya* there is this remark: 'This great achievement of Bharata, neither former nor later persons [have equalled]; the five classes of men have not attained his feats, any more than a mortal [can reach] heaven with his hands.'[79] But 'The Hymn of Man' [*Purusa Sukta*] knows only of four classes: 'His mouth became the Brahmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born.'[80]

In his well-known *Dictionary of Symbols* Cirlot makes the connection between time and the game of dice:

> The division into four parts—quite apart from the importance of its relationship with the four phases of the moon—coincides with the solar process and the annual cycle of the season as well as with the spatial arrangement of the four points of the compass on the conceptual plane. The cosmic ages have been applied to eras of human existence, and also to the life of a race or an empire. In Hindu tradition, the *Manvantara,* also called *Maha-Yuga* (or the Great Cycle), comprises four *yuga* or secondary periods, which were said to be the same as the four ages in Greco-Roman antiquity. In India, these same ages are called after four

throws in the game of dice: *krita, treta, dvapara* and *kali.*[81]

A. L. Basham in his classic, *The Wonder that was India*, comments that 'oblong dice [*aksa*] with four scoring sides were used; like the European gamester the Indian employed a special terminology for the throws at dice: *krta* (cater, four), *treta* (trey), *dvapara* (deuce), and *kali* (ace). So important was gambling in the Indian scheme of things that these four terms were applied to the four periods (*yuga*) of the aeon'.[82]

The four throws in the game of dice, namely, *krta, treta, dvapara,* and *kali* represent attempts to establish control over the four castes making up the (Aryan) world: *sudra, vaisya, ksatriya, brahmana.* But from a cosmic point of view the four throws of dice symbolise the conquest of Time, by trying to establish control over the four periods of the cosmic cycle, symbolised by the colours blue, yellow, red, and white. Basham comments that 'their lengths are respectively 4,800, 3,600, 2,400, and 1,200 "years of the gods", each of which equals 360 human years. Each yuga represents a progressive decline in piety, morality, strength, stature, longevity and happiness. We are at present in the Kali-yuga, which began according to tradition, in 3102 B.C., believed to be the year of the Mahabharata War.'[83]

The four periods of the cosmic cycle or *Maha-Yuga* are the descending ages following the mythical Golden Age. This Golden Age is symbolised by the Centre: 'The Golden Age stands ... for the "Centre" which precedes time....'[84] This 'Centre', according to Cirlot, 'is always reserved for the Creator, so that he appears as if surrounded by ... concentric circles spreading outwards, and by the wheel of the Zodiac, the twelve-monthly cycle of labour upon the land, and a four-part division corresponding both to the seasons and to the tetramorph.'[85] It should be pointed out that 'Hindu doctrine declares that God resides in the centre, at that point where the radii of a wheel meet at its axis'.[86]

At this point let us introduce the Russian folk-tale of the type 301 in which the hero visits three kingdoms—golden, silver and copper—in the underworld, fights the three Dragons, and rescues the three princesses. On his way back to the surface of the earth he puts each of the three kingdoms into an egg.[87] The egg, as we know from Vedic Indian mythology, represents chaos. As Toporov points out, 'the motif of the egg out of which the kingdom emerges (usually there are three eggs and three kingdoms hypostatising three cosmic zones); [the egg]

is obtained in the underground kingdom in the final analysis as the reconstruction shows, from the Dragon.'[88] In the *Rig Veda* the unknown creator of the universe is identified as the Golden Embryo or Egg. The latter figures in the cosmogonic myth of the golden egg separating into two shells that become sky and earth, and the yolk becomes the sun: 'In the beginning the Golden Embryo arose. Once he was born, he was the one lord of creation. He held in place the earth and this sky.'[89] Agni is the son of these two parents, the earth and the sky ('the two world halves'), and it swallows his parents, 'a graphic image which points to the change that takes place with the emergence of the third factor. Spirit and substance, in their ultimate, original essence, disappear as such, but to reappear under a different garb.'[90]

Jeannine Miller explains that to the Sun the task is given of propping up Heaven and Earth;[91] but the Sun is also intimately related to poets (which in this context can mean primarily epic poetry): thus in the *Rig Veda* VIII.6.10 the birth of the poet as a sun is described.

In this context it should be pointed out that there is an intimate link between Indra, the slayer of the primordial monster (the Dragon) *Vrtra*, and Agni:

> A link between Agni in his lightning aspect and Indra's bolt is found in III.34.3: 'he who fiercely burns (*usadhag v anesu*) amidst the forests killed Vyamsa', the demon of draught. In I.103.2 Indra 'strikes the serpent' and 'slays Vyamsa'. Whether the two are identical and whether both refer to Vrtra, the idea is the same. As Agni—as well as being 'Vrtra's slayer' (VI.16.14 & 48: *vrtrahan*) —is also the breaker of strongholds which is really Indra's prerogative, the question comes up whether the Indra-Vrtra myth was not grafted upon an earlier tale of the fire which gives release by disintegrating that which constricts and thereby grants liberation.[92]

The end result of the slaying of the Dragon is the coming out of the Sun: 'Indra ... also found the sun hidden away in darkness (*Rgv. III.39.5 suryam viveda tamasi ksiyantam*) ... and after slaying Vrtra raised it on high.'[93] And though it is not stated how and when gods [*devas*] gained immortality themselves, Miller comments that they 'were once bound by a curse as one may gather from *Rgv.* VII.13.2. Since they originally were not immortal, this curse may be the same as that which binds men: birth, growth, decay. Agni set them free, as he does men.'[94]

Accordingly, Agni must be seen as the most important of the trinity (Savitr, Agni, Soma) which is found as a principle active in all gods:

> Agni is the quickening flame, the dynamic power at the core of all beings moving all forward, the ruler of thought who grants illumination and ecstasy, for 'mightiest of all is his rapture and utterly inspired his wisdom' (Rgv. I.127.9). Of all the gods he is perhaps the most precious one both for deities and for men. So the gods having established the boon-bestowing (*dravinodam*) Agni protect him as their own immortal state (Rgv. I.96.6.).[95]

Agni is the link between Earth and Heaven which raises the mortal to highest immortality (*amrtatve uttame martam, Rgv.* VII.5.7). In Heaven he dwells in the third sphere, but he pervades all seven of them, and on earth he sits 'within the house, king immortal of mortals' (*Rgv.* III.1.18).[96]

Thus in Vedic mythology Agni as the Sun is seen as the centre of the universe. In a hymn entitled appropriately 'Guard Us from the Monstrous Abyss' Agni in the form of the Sun is called the embryo and seen as symbolic of all creatures ('teeming').[97]

The significance of Agni was pointed out almost a century ago by A. A. MacDonell:

> Born on earth, in air, in heaven, Agni is frequently regarded as having a triple character ...: 'From heaven first Agni was born, the second time from us (i.e. men), thirdly in the waters.' This earliest Indian trinity is important as the basis of much of the mystical speculation of the Vedic age. It was probably the prototype not only of the later Rigvedic triad, Sun, Wind, Fire, spoken of as distributed in the three worlds, but also of the triad Sun, Indra, Fire, which, though not Rigvedic, is still ancient. It is most likely also the historical progenitor of the later Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Civa [*sic*].[98]

In the *Purusa-Sukta* (The Hymn of Man) the dismemberment of the primeval cosmic giant Purusa leads to the creation of the four classic classes or *varnas* (according to O'Flaherty, the first time this concept appears in Indian civilisation): '12. His mouth became the Brahmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born. 13. The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born. Indra and Agni came from his mouth,

and from his vital breath the Wind was born.'[99] In *The Golden Embryo* hymn the four quarters of space are parted by the cosmic giant Purusa's arms.[100]

When applied concretely to *The Mahabharata* Agni's position is pivotal: in Book I, 'The Book of the Beginning', there is an episode on 'The Burning of the Khandava Forest', where Agni as Fire God enjoins Krisna and Arjuna to help him burn the forest that belongs to his enemy and superior, Indra/Varuna. In return Agni demands of Indra a gift of invincible weapons to the warriors, giving to Krisna a disc (a symbol of himself as the Sun) and to Arjuna the bows, quivers, and a chariot: 'Hand over at once that bow that King Soma once gave, and the two quivers, and also the chariot with the sign of the monkey. For the Partha shall accomplish a very great task with the bow Gandiva. And let the discus be presented to Vasudeva [Krisna] on my behalf.'[101] It is thus Agni who arms the two foremost warriors.

I already pointed out that Indra raised the sun, hidden in darkness, and raised it on high following the slaying of Vrtra. It must be emphasised that the 'second' creation of the world followed Indra's victory, for the unreleased waters symbolise chaos. The release of waters and the dismemberment of Vrtra's body leads to the restoration of the world.

There is no question that behind this cosmogony/cosmology lies the calendar-based progression of the sun within the Zodiac. At this point it must be emphasised that the Vedic year consists of *five*, not *four seasons*, and this is brought out beautifully by Mircea Eliade in his *The Myth of the Eternal Return*:

> The Vedic altar, to employ Paul Mus' apt formula, is time materialised. 'That fire-altar also is the Year,—the nights are its enclosing stones, and there are three hundred and sixty of these, because there are three hundred and sixty nights in the year; and the days are its yagushmati bricks, for there are three hundred and sixty of these, and three hundred and sixty days in the year' (X, 5, 4, 10). At a certain moment in the construction of the altar, two bricks called 'of the seasons' (*rtavya*) are laid, and the text comments: 'And as to why he lays down these two in this (layer):—this Agni (fire-altar) is the year.... Again, ... this fire-altar is Prajapati, and Prajapati is the year' (VIII, 2, 1, 17–18). To reconstruct Prajapati by means of a Vedic altar is also to reconstruct

> cosmic time. 'Of five layers consists the fire-altar (each layer is a season), five seasons are a year, and the year is Agni (the altar).... And that Prajapati who became relaxed is the year; and those five bodily parts of his which became relaxed are the seasons; for there are five seasons, and five are those layers: when he builds up the five layers, he thereby builds him up with the seasons.... And those five bodily parts of his, the seasons, which became relaxed, are the regions (or quarters; i.e. the four cardinal points of the compass and the upper region); for five in number are the regions, and five those layers: when he builds up the five layers, he builds him up with the regions' (VI, 8, 1. 15; 1. 2, 18ff). Thus, with the construction of each new Vedic altar, not only is the cosmogony repeated and Prajapati revived, but the year is constructed; that is, time is regenerated, by being 'created' anew.[102]

Moreover, as Eliade, points out, 'a territorial conquest does not become real until after—more precisely, through—the ritual of taking possession, which is only a copy of the primordial act of the Creation of the World.

In Vedic India the erection of an altar dedicated to Agni constituted legal taking possession of a territory. 'One settles (*avasyati*) when he builds the *garhapatya*, and whoever are builders of fire-altars are settled (*avasitah*)', says the *Satapatha Brahmana* (VII, 1,1, 1–4). Thus, Eliade concludes, 'the erection of an altar dedicated to Agni is merely the microcosmic imitation of the Creation'.[103] The three hundred and sixty days correspond to twelve months, but since a year has slightly over 365 days an additional thirteenth month, an intercalary one, was added. That the twelve times thirty refer to the Sun and to Agni identified as the Sun is made explicit in the *Rg Veda*, par excellence in 'The Riddle of the Sacrifice' (*Asya Vamasya*). When broken into days and nights it gives a number of seven hundred and twenty: 'The twelve-spoked wheel of Order rolls around and around the sky and never ages. Seven hundred and twenty sons in pairs rest on it, O Agni.... All the worlds rest on this five-spoked wheel that rolls around and around. Though heavy-laden, its axle does not get hot, nor has it ever broken in its naves [1.164. 11;13].'[104] In her introduction to this hymn O'Flaherty explains that 'the three or six or five naves or spokes are seasons (variously enumerated in different sacrificial reckonings)....'[105] The hymn, as O'Flaherty points out, identifies Agni, the Sun, Indra, Varuna, Mitra

and others as One, thus establishing the interchangeability of supreme gods and their conflation into One, of supreme importance for this study: 'They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and it is the heavenly bird that flies. The wise speak of what is One in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan [1.164.46].'[106]

The representation of the Sun in the form of a wheel is possibly of Indo-European origin since it is also found among the Celts and the Germans.[107] The connection between the sun-worship and the horse sacrifice (*Asvamedha*) is brought out by Prasad Pandey:

> The horse plays a considerable part in Vedic sacrifices. The Sun is compared to and described as a white horse. Therefore, a horse was used in these sacrifices to represent the Sun-god. At the 'Sodacin' form of the Soma sacrifice, when the chant at sun-set is performed, a horse, either white or black has to be present; white colour represents the rising sun and black represents the setting sun. In the piling of fire-altar the bricks are put in place in the presence of a horse which is made to breathe over them. In the white Yajurveda, the Sun again has been addressed as a horse, while praising Savitr in Agnicayana ceremony. A white horse with black ears is mentioned in the Atharvaveda as of special value. Again, the horse has been invoked in the white Yajurveda, and a long eulogy of the horse is given in many verses. At another place, in the same work, the horse has been identified with the sun.... In Asvamedha sacrifices, the 'Adhvaryu ties an ornament of gold, perhaps a chain round the neck of the sacrificer and addresses it as a symbol of the Sun and identifies it with light.[108]

Coomarswamy's comment is that 'the wheel which later on becomes the mark of a Cakravartin, the discus of Visnu and the Buddhist wheel of Law, originally represented the sun'.[109] Since, as we have seen, the *Dharma* code of the warriors governs all, according to Mary Carroll Smith, then a representation of the Wheel as *Dharma* in a form of *Dharmaçakra* brings the two together.[110] Thus the Wheel of Agni, of the Sun, of *Dharma*, governs all.

4. The morphology of the epic: the Ur-*Mahabharata* as an example

Citing Hopkins's classic study as 'a tour de force of scholarship which remains as daunting now as it must have seemed at the turn of the

century',[111] Smith summarises Mary Carroll Smith's computer analysis which tried to apply Hopkins's crucial insight stated in 1901 that *The Mahabharata* 'appears to be a heterogeneous collection of strings wound about a nucleus almost lost sight of. The nucleus, however, is a story.'[112] Carroll Smith pointed out that 'Hopkins seemed not to have associated the story nucleus with a metrical nucleus which could be detected by scansion.'[113] This is precisely what Mary Carroll Smith proceeded to do: she used a computer to find a correlation between narrative and metrical patterns, and found one not in the sloka verses, the most numerous in the 'C' Mahabharata, but in the *tristubhs*, to be more precise in the 'irregular', pre-classical *tristubhs*. Her conclusion was that 'the Indian tradition has preserved a nucleus of old Vedic-type ['irregular'] verses. The nucleus contains the basic story of the Gambling Match, the embassies for peace, and the final battle. Encrusted over the nucleus are successive layers of stories which can be identified by increasing occurrences of the upajati ['classical'] pattern of tristubh metre. The 'Great Epic' has evolved from a nucleus which is still extant.'[114]

Taking Hopkins' and Carroll Smith's findings we can now proceed to apply to the Ur-*Mahabharata* a *morphological analysis of the tale*, for, regardless of whether or not the 'core' is *historical* or *mythical* (and my opinion is that *it is both*), its epic presentation must follow the rules of the *genre*, in this case (if Hopkins and Carroll Smith are right) that of the folktale. We are now in a position to apply to the Ur-*mahabharata* the morphological rules advanced by Vladimir Propp in his seminal work, *Morphology of the Folktale*.[115] Now, the objection can be lodged that the Ur-*Mahabharata* being *an epic* story cannot follow the same rules as a *folktale*: but I propose to demonstrate that the Ur-*Mahabharata* is an *epic* elaboration of the tale type #301 (a hero's fight with a dragon) in Aarne-Thompson's classification scheme.[116] At this point it is necessary to recall three fundamental laws posited by Propp:

1. Functions serve as stable, constant elements in folktales, independent of who performs them, and how they are fulfilled by the dramatis personae. They constitute the components of a folktale.
2. The number of functions known in the fairy tale is limited.
3. The sequence of functions is always identical.[117]

In Chapter III of his *Morphology of the Folktale* Propp enumerates the functions of the *dramatis personae*, and comes to the conclusion that 'the number of functions is highly limited. Some thirty-one functions in all may be noted'.[118] Now I shall take only those *essential* functions necessary for explicating the 'core' of the Ur-*Mahabharata* and briefly summarise them thus:

III. The interdiction is violated (Definition: violation, Designation: d). As Propp explains: 'Functions II (Interdiction, Designation: g) and III form a twin element. The second half can sometimes exist without the first.... A fulfilled injunction corresponds ... to a violated prohibition.'[119] Now a violated prohibition in the Ur-*Mahabharata* is Dhritarashtra's raising to the throne which he as a blind man, according to the law, was not entitled to, and his fathering of sons, the Kauravas, which presented the challenge, to the Pandavas.

IV. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance. (Definition: reconnaissance. Designation: e.) This corresponds to the archery contest.

VI. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings. (Definition: fraud. Designation: h). This is Duryodhana's action in the Gambling Match through Shakuni's cheating.

VII. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy. (Definition: complicity. Designation: q). This is Yudhisthira's agreement to play the gambling match. Propp goes on to list VII. 1: 'The hero agrees to all of the villain's persuasions ... One notes that ... deceitful proposals, conversely, are always accepted and fulfilled (q1) ... The deceitful agreement constitutes a special form of deceitful proposal and assent ... Assent in these instances is compelled, the villain taking advantage of some difficult situation in which his victim is caught ...'[120] In this case, this was Yudhisthira's *necessity* to have a Gambling Match *as an integral part of the rajasuya.*

VIII. The villain causes harm or injury to one member of a family. (Definition: villainy. Designation: A). This is a *multiple* function. In our case, this covers both the violation of Draupadi, and Yudhisthira's loss of everything and of his brothers and Draupadi. It thus includes: 1. The villain abducts a person (Draupadi) or, more precisely, 5. The villain performs abduction in other forms; and 16. The villain threatens forcible matrimony.

VIII.a. One member of a family lacks something, he desires to have

something. (Definition: lack. Designation: a). This is Duryodhana's claim to Yudhisthira's inheritance.

XI. The hero leaves home. (Definition: departure. Designation: î). This is Yudhisthira's and other Pandava's departure for the exile. Propp explains that 'departure ... denotes something different from the temporary absence element.... The departures of seeker-heroes and victim-heroes are also various. The former have "the search" as their goal; the latter travel along a route in which a search is not involved, which, instead, prepares a series of adventures for them.'[121]

XVI. The hero and the villain join in direct combat. (Definition: struggle. Designation: H). This is the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Propp adds the following: '1. They fight in an open field (H.1.). Fights ... with an enemy army ... etc.

XVIII. The villain is defeated. (Definition: victory. Designation: I). 1. The villain is beaten on an open field (I.1.).

XIX. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated. (Designation: K). This function, together with villainy (A), constitutes a pair. The narrative reaches its peak in this function.

The functions XX–XXX in Propp's morphology have to do with the two different actions of a folktale, namely, the victory over the villain (HI), and the difficult task and its resolution (MN). Propp, however, makes it clear that 'it is necessary to choose a single element which is obligatory for all folktales and to make the division according to its varieties. A (villainy) or a (lack) is the only such obligatory element.... If we carefully examine those folktales which consist of two moves, we will come up with the following: if one move contains a fight and the other a difficult task, then the fight always occurs in the first move and the difficult task in the second.'[122] Since the Ur-*Mahabharata* does not have MN, but only HI, we can dispense with the functions XX–XXX.

XXXI. The hero is married and ascends the throne. (Definition: wedding. Designation. W). It should be pointed out that sub-function 3. allows that 'sometimes, to the contrary, only accession to the throne is taken into consideration (W*)'.[123] This is Yudhisthira's triumphant entry into the city of Hastinapura and the beginning of his reign, i.e. *Shanti-parvan* XII-40. To this should be added parts of *Ashavedhika-parvan*, i.e. the horse-sacrifice, in my opinion, in order to close the circle: the Ur-*Mahabharata* starts with the rajasuya and ends with the rajasuya.

Talking of the ways in which characters are introduced into the course of action Propp distinguishes two basic forms of initial situations: '1) the situation presenting the seeker together with his family ... and 2) the situation introducing the villain's victim, together with his family.... Some tales give both situations.... Certain situations of this type have been handled epically. In the beginning the seeker is not at hand. He is born, generally in some miraculous manner. The miraculous birth of the hero is a very important narrative element. It is one of the forms of the hero's appearance into the initial situation. The hero's birth is usually accompanied by a prophecy concerning his destiny.'[124]

All of this, of course, applies to the Ur-*Mahabharata* where the first book, *Adiparvan*, narrates the miraculous birth of both the heroes and the villains, of the Pandavas and of the Kauravas.

Propp also included three functions which deal with the role of the donor (XII–XIV):

XII. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. in preparation for receiving either a magical agent or helper (Definition: the first function of the donor. Designation: D). 1. The donor tests the hero (D1). The Pandavas' donor was Krishna. At this point let me quote from Chapter X ('Krishna Vasudeva') of Iravati Karve's fine book, *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch*:

> Both sides started preparations. To secure allies they visited the neighbouring kings.... Duryodhana and Arjuna reached Krishna's house at the same time. Krishna was sleeping. Arjuna sat at the foot of the bed, Duryodhana at the head. As soon as Krishna woke, both requested for his help. Krishna agreed to help both sides. To one side he would give his famed soldiers, the Narayania. On the other side he himself would be present, but would not take up arms. Since on waking he had seen Arjuna first, he gave the choice to him. Arjuna chose Krishna, and Duryodhana, well-satisfied, went away with the army. Krishna, pleased at Arjuna's confidence and, at his request, agreed to be his charioteer. Arjuna had made the right choice. The Pandavas did not lack warriors, what they needed was a dispassionate, determined counsellor. That they found in Krishna.[125]

Under XII. 7 Propp listed 'Other requests' and proceeded to explain that 'the hero is presented, on these occasions, with the possibility of

rendering assistance. Objectively, this amounts to a test, although subjectively the hero does not sense it per se (d7).' This will cover Krishna's reaction to Arjuna's unwillingness to fight his own kinsmen during the very first day of the war. This gave occasion to Krishna to offer his remonstrance, a core of the *Bhagavadgita.*

XIII. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor. (Definition: the hero's reaction. Designation: E). 9. The hero vanquishes (or does not vanquish) his adversary (E9). This is clearly Arjuna's response to Krishna's remonstrance. According to Karve, 'Arjuna at last agreed to fight, but refused to stand against Bhisma. In exasperation Krishna leapt from his chariot, whip in hand, to kill Bhishma himself. Arjuna jumped down, embraced Krishna's feet, and begged him not to break his vow. The next day Arjuna wounded Bhishma, removing him from the battle.'[126]

XIV. A magical agent at the disposal of the hero. (Definition: the provision, receipt of a magical agent. Designation: F).

Propp explains that 'the following things are capable of serving as magical agents: 1) animals ...; 2) objects out of which helpers appear ...; 3) objects possessing a magical property ...; 4) qualities or capacities which are directly given, such as, the power of transformation into animal forms etc. All of these objects of transmission we shall conditionally term magical agents.'[127] He then explains XIV. 2 as 'the agent is made known (F2).' The agent made known in the Ur-*Mahabharata* is Krishna's form in Chapter XI of the *Bhagavadgita.* In this vision Krishna appears as Time/Fate' 'I am Fate' [*Kalo 'smi*]. As Carroll Smith explains, 'the Sanskrit *kala* also means 'death' as well as 'time', but the most significant meaning, by way of making connections with other Indo-European epics, is the translation of *kala* as 'Fate'.... In the *Bhagavadgita*, Arjuna is told by the God, Fate personified, to stand and fight since his enemies are all marked for destruction.... The decision to kill or be killed is a major part of the anguish in Arjuna's conundrum. Krishna's message to Arjuna is that he is merely an instrument of the divine plan that numbers the enemy as already dead.'[128]

Thus, the war that lasted for eighteen days is a logical outcome of Arjuna's 'conundrum' and Krishna's 'revelation'. As Propp makes clear, 'if all the tasks of the donor are registered under a heading, we see that these tasks are not accidental. From the point of view of the narrative

per se they are nothing other than one of the devices of epic retardation: an obstacle placed before the hero is surmounted by a means he is given for the attainment of his goals.'[129]

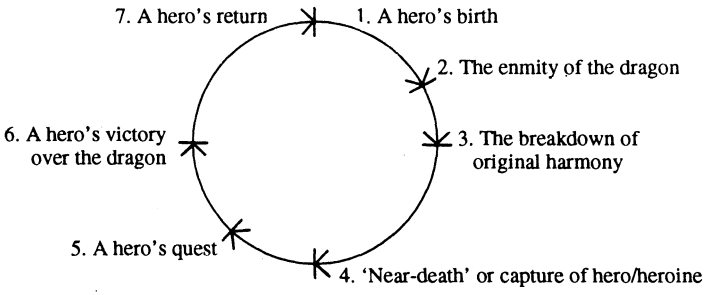
At this point Propp made one of those far-reaching conclusions that have made his work a classic: 'From the historical point of view, ... the fairy tale, in its morphological bases, amounts to a myth.'[130] He explained that 'morphologically, a folktale may be termed any development out of villainy (A), or a lack (a) through intermediary functions to marriage (W*), or to other functions used in the capacity of the denouement. Terminal functions are, at times, a reward (F), a gain or the general liquidation of misfortune (K), a rescue from pursuit (Rs) etc. This type of development is termed by us as a move.'[131] He argued specifically that '*non-fairy tales may also be drawn up according to the scheme cited.*'[132] [*my emphasis*] He then went on to posit a far-reaching hypothesis: 'We are able to unfold the picture of transformations, it would be possible to satisfy ourselves that all of the folktales given can be morphologically deduced from the folktales about the kidnapping of a princess by a dragon—*from that aspect which we are inclined to consider as basic.*'[133] [*my emphasis*]

The conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas can thus be seen as a mythological representation of the epic cycle. Grintser has offered the following epic cycle outline:

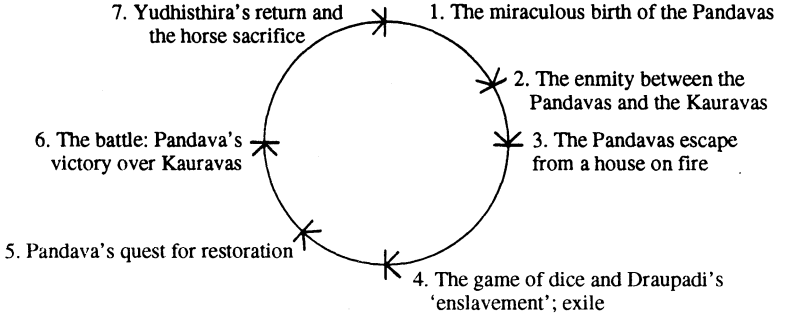
1) a miraculous birth of the hero(s)
2) his/their enemies: chthonic beings, par excellence the Dragon
3) a breakdown of original harmony caused by:
    a) the envy or enmity of their enemies
    b) the ill-will of the goddess, e.g. in *The Iliad*
4) a temporary (near-) death of the hero or heroine by:
    a) the former's exile
    b) the latter's kidnapping or enslavement
5) a hero's quest:
    a) in the underground, infernal regions
    b) his fight with the Dragon (his enemy)
6) a hero's victory over the Dragon, symbolizing his victory over death
7) a hero's return and the restoration of original harmony.[134]

Using Joseph Campbell's diagram in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces*[135]

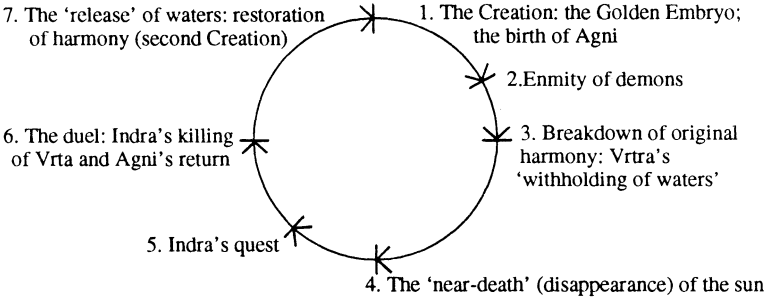
we can apply Grintser's outline to it thus:



Applying the above diagram to what is indisputably the core of *The Mahabharata* (the so-called Ur-*Mahabharata*), we can summarise its outline thus:



Grintser is right when he states that behind this scheme lies the calendar-based cosmological system. For this diagram can now be applied to the very act of cosmogony as well:



We are now in a position to offer a summary outline of the Ur-*Mahabharata*, based on Propp's morphology of the tale, and combining it with Mary Carroll Smith's and my own interpretation of the Gambling Match. In my opinion, the Ur-*Mahabharata, whether or not it was actually divided into parvans*, would entail portions of the following parvans:

I. Adi parva
II. Sabha parva
III. Vana parva
IV. Virata parva
V. Udyoga parva
VI. Bhisma parva
VII. Drona parva
VIII. Karna parva
IX. Shalya parva
X. Sauptika parva
XI. Stri parva
XII. Shanti parva (up to 40.)
+ XIV. Ashvamedhika

With the exception of the last book, *Ashvamedhika*, this is also the view of S. B. Roy who divided the present *Mahabharata* into *Purva-Bharata* and *Uttara-Bharata*, and who claims that most if not all of the Books XII (after 40) through XVIII are later additions. So is the *Prolegomena* consisting of the first seven *sub-parvan of Adi-parva.* In Table I Roy offered an analysis of the sub-parvana of the critical edition (i.e. the Poona edition) of the present *Mahabharata.* He divided all verses into three categories: A = indisputably belonging to the Ur-*Mahabharata*; B = doubtful; C = definitely not belonging to the Ur-*Mahabharata.* He came up with the following results:[136]

Purva Bharata (I.7-XII.40)
A = 27,572 B = 5,676 C = 15,674 Total = 48,922

of which *Vana parva* alone
A = 1,079 B = 327 C = 8,941 Total = 10,347

Uttara Bharata (XII.40-XVIII.95)
A = 553 B = 1,044 C = 20,974 Total = 22, 571

of which *Ashwamedhika* alone
A = 0 B = 308 (?) C = 2,467 Total = 2,775

The Grand Total is thus:

Prolegomena
A = 0 B = 0 C = 2,292 + X 2, 292

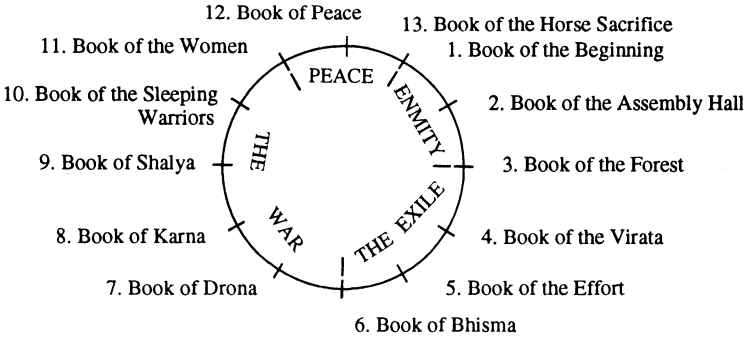
Purva-Bharata
A = 27,572 B = 5,676 C = 15,674 + X 48,922

Uttara-Bharata
A = 553 B = 1,044 C = 20,974 + X 22,571

Mahabharata
A = 28,125 B = 6,720 C = 38,940 + X 73,785

It seems to me that the Ur-*Mahabharata* (=A) *must* include the horse-sacrifice, for 'Asvamedha sacrifice was related to Sun-worship in this period.... The presiding deity of the Asvamedha sacrifice was the Sun-god, and the sacrifice was just a way of worshipping the Sun-god for various objects, *such as victory over his enemies....*'[137] In order to complete the circle started with the *rajasuya,* this ceremony of final victory must be a part of the original epic cycle. Thus 308 verses marked (?) by Roy must be included. However, verses marked (?) by Roy under A in Book VII (*Drona Parva*), numbering 3,557, and 257 as *Aishika* sub-parvan in *Sauptika parva*, should perhaps be dropped. This would bring the total to 24,619. This number is pretty close to 24,000 couplets as stated in I.1.61. If we subtract another 616 verses from the *Bhagavadgita*, which are all later additions,[138] we come as close as possible, in a preliminary study, to 24,000 verses: actually to 24,003. Accordingly, we can conclude: 1) that Mary Carroll Smith has come as close as possible to the so-called *Jaya*, i.e. the 'core' of the Ur-*Mahabharata*, whose author was supposedly Vyasa; 2) that the actual Ur-*Mahabharata*, consisted of about 24,000 verses, as stated in I.1.61 and I.56.32 ; this text, also known as the Viasampayana recension, 'will be called the Bharata samhita or the Ur-Mahabharata' (S. B. Roy, 149–150); and 3) that the Ur-*Mahabharata* must have consisted of 12 books, *the same number as the months of the lunar year, with the additional 13th book of the Horse-Sacrifice* [*Ashvamedhika-parva*] *sybmolizing the return to the 'normalcy' established by the first rajasuya in Book Two, just as the Vedic year was divided into twelve months plus an additional thirteenth period.* The whole scheme then looks like this:

period. The whole scheme then looks like this:



Notes

1 I.56.34, in J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans. and ed., *The Mahabharata*, Vol. I: *The Book of the Beginning*, The University of Chicago Press, 1973, p.130. All references, unless noted otherwise, are to this translation.

2 E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin*, New York, 1901, and other of his works: *The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India*, New York, 1889; *Epic Mythology*, Strassburg, 1915; 'The Bharata and the Great Bharata', in *American Journal of Philology* 19 (1898): 1–24.

3 E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, 381.

4 *Loc. cit* 5 *Ibid.*, p.382 6 *Ibid.*, p.384. 7 *Ibid.*, p.385. 8 *Idem.*

9 E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p.363.

10 Mary Carroll Smith, *The Warrior Code of India's Sacred Song*, New York and London, 1992, p.14. 11 *Ibid.*, p.14.

12 S. B. Roy, *Date of Mahabharata Battle*, Gurgaon, 1976, pp.43–44. For a further discussion on Iitihasa see S. N. Mukherjee, '*Mahabharata*: An Ideal *Itihasa* (History) of Ancient India', in L. S. Davidson, S. N. Mukherjee, and Z. Zlatar, eds, *The Epic in History*, Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture, Vol.II, Sydney, 1995, pp.10–11.

13 *Ibid.*, p.152. 14 *Ibid.*, p.158.

15 R. C. Majumdar, 'Myth and Reality', p.176 quoted by Roy, *op. cit.*, p.162.

16 Roy, *op. cit.*, pp.162–163.

17 John D. Smith, 'Old Indian: The Two Sanskrit Epics', in A. T. Hatto, ed., *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry*, Vol. I: *The Traditions*, London, 1980, p.51.

18 Carroll Smith, *The Warrior Code of India's Sacred Song.*

19 Carrol Smith, *op. cit.*, p.15. 20 *Ibid.*, p.17. 21 *Ibid.*, p.7.

22 Carrol Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.116–117. 23 *Ibid.*, p.24.

24 J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Vol. I, Book I: *The Book of the Beginning*, p.437.

25 Carroll Smith, *op. cit.*, p.27 26 *Ibid.*, p.55. 27 *Ibid.*, p.55.

28 *Ibid.*, pp.56–57.

29 Pavel Aleksandrovich Grintser, *Drevneindiiskii epos: Genezis i tipologiia*, Moscow, 1974.

30 Carroll Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.9–10. 31 *Ibid.*, p.58–59. 32 *bid.*, p.60.

33 van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Vol. II, Book 2:*The Book of the Assembly Hall*; Book 3: *The Book of the Forest*, Chicago, 1975, p.177.

34 van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Vol. III, Book 4: *The Book of Virata*; Book 5:*The book of the Effort*, Chicago, 1978, p.4.

35 Carroll Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.78, 88, 8. 36 *Ibid.*, pp.8, 101.

37 van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Book III, Book 4: *The Book of Virata*; Book 5: *The Book of the Effort*, p.97.

38 Carroll Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.112–13.

39 *Ibid.*, pp.108–09, summarizing Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahabharata*, Ithaca and London, 1976.

40 Rudolf Otto, *The Original Gita*, London, 1939, p.14.

41 Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, New York, 1958, p.86.

42 Carroll Smith, *op. cit.*, p.92. 43 *Ibid.*, p.94. 44 *Ibid.*, p.95.

45 *Ibid.*, p.109.

46 John D. Smith, *op. cit.*, p.110.

47 This is based on Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of the Warrior*, Chicago, 1968, p.5. It is applied to *The Mahabharata* in his *Mythe et Épopée*, Vol. I: *L'ideologié des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens* (Paris, 1968), Part I: 'La Terre Soulagée', pp.31–257.

48 *Ibid.*, p.49. 49 *Ibid.*, p.50 50 *Ibid.*, p.73.

51 van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Vol. II, Book 2: *The Book of the Assembly Hall*; Book 3: *The Book of the Forest*, Chicago, 1975, p.3; on this book, see J. A. B. van Buitenen, 'On the Structure of Sabhaparvan of the Mahabharata' in J. Ensink and P. Gaeffke, eds, *India Maior: Congratulatory Volume Presented to J. Gonda*, Leiden, 1972, pp.68–84.

52 A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-continent before the Coming of the Muslims*, London, 1954; 1963; 1967; 3rd rev. ed. in paperback, 1985, p.207.

53 van Buitenen, *Mahabharata*, Vol. II, p.18.

54 Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel, Chicago, 1973, pp.9–10; this is the translation of *Mythe et épopée:* Vol. II: *Types épiques indo-européens: un héros, un sorcier, un roi*, Paris, 1972. 55 *Ibid.*, p.11.

56 E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin*, Calcutta, 1961 (originally published in 1901), p.187.

57 E. W. Hopkins, *The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient*

India, as Represented by the Sanskrit Epic, Varanasi, 1972 (originally published in 1889), pp.17–18. 58 *Ibid.*, p.18 n.*. 59 *Ibid.*, p.18 n.*.

60 *Ibid.*, pp.18–19. 61 *Ibid.*, p.19. 62 *Ibid.*, p.66.

63 *Ibid.*, p.66. 64 *Ibid.*, p.66. 65 *Ibid.*, p.67. 66 *Ibid.*, p.67, n.*.

67 van Buitenen, 'On the Structure of Sabhaparvan of the Mahabharata', pp.68–84. 68 *Ibid.*, p.71. 69 *Ibid.*, p.80. 70 *Ibid.*, p.80. 71 *Ibid.*, pp.80–81.

72 Jeanine Miller, *The Vedas: Harmony, Meditation and Fulfilment*, London, 1974, p.52: 'The chariot plays a considerable part in Vedic, as in all ancient, lore and various meanings may be attributed to it in different contexts. More often than not it is no physical vehicle at all.... This vehicle could be a way of describing that which helps to find, perform or frame the *brahman* for in the same order of thought we find the *rsis* themselves "fashion, even as chariots, those prayers (*brahmani*) that yield fuflfilment" (*vardhana*)(V.73.10: *ima brahmani vardhana ... ya taksama rathan iva*).... Similarly praise is magnified by means of thought as though a chariot (I.94.1: *Imam stoman ... ratham iva sam mahema manisaya* "this praise even like a chariot shall we magnify with our wise insight").'

73 Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée*, Vol. I, *Idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens*, Paris, 1968: 'Dans le tableau des naissances, un seul parait: *ksatra* (I *123* 44769), avec son dérivé *ksatriya* (I *123* 4790), mais, bien que les cinq garçons soient uniformément des *ksatriya*, le mot n'est écrit qu'à propos du second et du troisième, de Phima et d'Arjuna, dont le valeur fonctionelle est en effet celle de guerriers ... le titre brahmana est hautement iterativement revendiqué par Yudhisthira (IV *123* 7226, etc.), tandis que l'un au moins des jumeaux, Sahadeva, le prétendu bouvier, se proclame *vaisya*' (IV *10 284*, 286), and the table on p.72.

74 *Ibid.*, pp.79–80: 'Les épithètes caractérisant le ballatre et le guerrier s'appliquent en partie exclusivement à Nakula (*darsaniya, atiratha, sarvayuddhavisarada,* etc.), en partie à Nakula et aux jumeaux (*yuddhadurmada, rabhasah yuddhe*), en partie aux jumeaux (*rupasampannau, yasasvinau,* etc.), mais jamais à Sahadeva seul.... Au contraire, les épithètes qui caractérisent Sahadeva à l'exclusion de Nakula semeuvent dans un domaine sémantique précis auquel Nakula n'a pas de part...les nombreaux adjectifs qui expreiment la sagesse, l'intelligence, la bonté et la pudeur de Sahadeva ne s'appliquent jamis, non plus que leurs synonymes, à Nakula.... Cette distinction de nature—qui, à la réflexion, s'accorde aisément à celle du palefrenier et du bouvier, les chevaux intéressant surtout la fonction guerrière, le ksantriya, et le bovins, par leurs produits laitiers essentiels au culte, intéressant plutot la fonction sacrée, le brahmane—explique dans la trame épique plusieurs comportements différents de Nakula et de Sahadeva, et aussi l'affinitié particulière que manifeste le premier pour ses frères guerriers, notamment pour Bhima, le second pour son frère le 'roi juste', Yudhisthira.'

75 G. Dumézil, *The Destiny of the Warrior*, p.5.

76 See the photo in Figure 13.4, 'The Game of Dice', in David Williams, ed., *Peter Brook and The Mahabharata*, London and New York, 1991, p.135, with the explanation: 'at the gaming table—similar in design to the traditional Indian

pachisi board'. Also see two color photos entitled 'The Game of Dice' (facing p.33) and 'Yudhishthira losing the game' in the Section 'The Game of Dice', in Garry O'Connor, *The Mahabharata: Peter Brook's Epic in the Making*, San Francisco, 1989. Photos are by Gilles Abegg.

77 J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (Thesis, Utrecht), The Hague, 1955, Ch. XVII quoted and cited by van Buitenen, 'On the Structure of the Sabhaparvan of *The Mahabharata*', p.71 and fn.1. 78 *Ibid.*, fn.1.

79 H. T. Colebrooke, 'On the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus', in his *Essays on History, Literature, and Religions of Ancient India: Miscellaneous Essays*, New Delhi, 1977, p.42, describing the 38th chapter (or third of the 8th book) of the *Rig Veda*.

80 O'Flaherty, ed., *The Rig Veda*, 31 [No. 10.90].

81 J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, London, 1962, 2nd ed., 1971, p.5.

82 Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p.207. 83 *Ibid.*, p.321.

84 Cirlot, *op.cit.*, p.5. 85 *Ibid.*, pp.40–41.

86 *Ibid.*, p.40, citing Marius Schneider, *La danza de espadas y la tarantela*, Barcelona, 1948.

87 V. N. Toporov, 'Parallels to Ancient Indo-Iranian Social and Mythological Concepts', in J. C. Heesterman, G. H. Schokker, V. I. Subramoniam, eds, *Pratidanam: Indian, Iranian and Indo-European Studdies Presented to Francisc us Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper on His Sixtieth Birthday*, The Hague-Paris, 1968, pp.113–114.

88 *Ibid.*, p.118.

89 *Rig Veda* 10.121, 1, in O'Flaherty, *op. cit.*, p.27.

90 Jeanine Miller, *The Vedas: Harmony, Meditation and Fulfilment* , London, 1974, pp.xxxi–xxxii. 91 *Ibid.*, p.xxxii. 92 *Ibid.*, p.30.

93 *Ibid.*, p.177. 94 *Ibid.*, p.200. 95 *Ibid.*, p.179. 96 *Ibid.*, p.189.

97 *Rig Veda* 1.185, 2, in O'Flaherty, *op. cit.*, pp.204, 205, n.4: 'The embryo or seed (*garbha*), is the sun or Agni, here symbolic of all creatures (hence teeming).'

98 MacDonnell, *op. cit.*, p.95.

99 O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, 'Purusa-Sukta, or The Hymn of Man', p.38.

100 *Ibid.*, 'The Unknown God, the Golden Embryo', p.28 and n.7.

101 van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata*, Vol. I: *The Book of the Beginning*, p.416.

102 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1954, 1989), pp.79–80, quoting *Satapatha Brahmana*, trans. Julius Eggeling in *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIII, Oxford, 1897, pp.386, 29–30, and XLI, Oxford, 1894, pp.293, 152; and Paul Mus, *Barabudur* I, Hanoi, 1935, p.384ff; on 'construction time', *ibid.*, II, pp.733–89. Eliade's work was first published in French as *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour: arcétypes et répétition*, Paris, 1949.

103 *Ibid.*, pp.10–11 citing and quoting Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Rg Veda as Land-nama-bok*, London, 1935, p.16ff.

104 O'Flaherty, *op. cit.*, p.77. 105 *Ibid.*, pp.75–76. 106 *Ibid.*, p.80.

A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanisadas*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1925, I, p.67. 108 *Ibid.*, pp.33-35. 109 *Ibid.*, p.35, fn.3.

110 *Ibid.*, p.72, fn.1: 'Allan and Cunningham take wheel as "Dharmacakra". But this symbol was never the monopoly of one sect. And, it is more than certain that originally, the wheel represented only Sun.'

111 *Ibid.*, p.52 citing Washburn E. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, New York, 1901, pp.191–362.

112 Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p.363.

113 John D. Smith, *op. cit.*, 52 quoting Carroll Smith, 'The Core of India's Great Epic', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard, 1972, p.2. 114 *Ibid.*, p.65.

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